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## PRESS RELEASE

# Bell Tower Challenge Has Nice Ring To It

**Thursday 8 – Sunday 11 September [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)**

Churches and cathedrals are being challenged to show people the ropes by bringing to life the 400-year old tradition of English-style bell ringing as part of Heritage Open Days this September. The call to the ringing world to open up 500 sites will provide a unique opportunity for ringing bands across England to share the heritage hidden inside their bell towers as well as their passion with millions of visitors who every year venture out to discover the treasures on their doorstep.

Bell ringers across the country are already signing up to take part in Challenge 500 including enthusiasts at some of the country's most significant and interesting locations such as the ringing chamber at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich. This is where the first recorded peal took place in May 1715 and where there are plans to develop a ringing heritage and teaching centre.

The tradition of change ringing is a unique form of music that has its roots in England. Instead of 'tunes' the bells ring in orderly sequences that the ringers learn as patterns and then ring from memory. Ringers control the bell with a rope, while the bell turns full circle, mounted on a wheel. Famous people who are reported to have rung bells include comedians Victoria Wood, Jo Brand and Timmy Mallett, gardener Alan Titchmarsh and entertainer and writer Frank Muir.

In addition to the Challenge 500 ringers are invited to come together to create a collective bell ringing moment as part of the festival on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September between 1800 – 1900 hours.

Loyd Grossman, Patron of Heritage Open Days, said: "Heritage Open Days provides the perfect opportunity to join together to bring to life the four-hundred year old tradition of English-style bell ringing for a huge audience. We are keen to recruit churches and cathedrals to become involved in the festival by registering an event for visitors to discover their bell towers and to take part in hands on demonstrations."

Chris Mew, President of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, said: "We are excited that

In partnership with



bell ringers will join this annual celebration of our cultural treasures. There are 5,000 bell towers for change ringing and our challenge is to unlock the doors to 500 of them. What's more, some visitors may be able to see the bells, often locked away over our heads, discover our ringing forebears' achievements recorded on peal boards, learn about bell ringing and maybe have a go themselves."

Clara Govier, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery, said: "Ringing out the bells over Heritage Open Days is a great way to bring people's attention to the cultural and historical significance of bell ringing and its preservation. We are excited that millions of visitors will be able to discover the hidden history of bell towers in churches and cathedrals which will be free to access over four days."

To take part in the challenge and to be counted, bell towers need to register with Heritage Open Days by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016. By registering, all participants will be able to access a free marketing support pack and their event will be listed at [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk) from mid-July. For more information, visit the website or email [info@heritageopendays.org.uk](mailto:info@heritageopendays.org.uk)

## **CHALLENGE 500 EARLY REGISTERED HIGHLIGHTS**

**A selection of some of the bell tower events registered at the time of going to press.**

### **Winterbourne Medieval Barn, Bristol**

All other surviving medieval great tithes barns were built by the monastic estates, universities, or the Knights Hospitallers, but Winterbourne Barn was built by Thomas de Bradeston in 1342, just a few years before the Black Death first hit in England. In addition to touring the Barn and its grounds you can try your hand at bell ringing using the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry. The Belfry contains an excellent peal of 6 bells cast in 1998 at the world-famous Whitechapel Bell Foundry of London. Next door, at St Michael's Parish Church, there will be tours of the church tower in which there are six much heavier bells all cast in 1757 by William Evans of Chepstow. There will be CCTV coverage to show these bells in action.

### **St Michael & All Angels, Waddesdon**

In the late 19th century the settlement was extended by the Rothschild family to become an estate village alongside Waddesdon Manor, which is now a conservation area. The church dates back to 1190 with later additions and has many interesting features. The church tower was built in 1892 to replace an earlier structure and houses six steel bells. These are very unusual as although steel was a popular bell material in the late 19th century it proved to be unenduring and now only a handful of churches in the country retain steel bells. The tower is accessed via a spiral stone staircase, and will be open for visitors to climb to the ringing chamber.

## **Wybunbury Tower, Nantwich**

Climb 96 feet to the top of the beautiful leaning tower all that is left of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Church of St Chad to take in the magnificent panoramic views of the South Cheshire countryside. Restored in 1997 through a £100,000 Heritage Lottery grant to restore the 6 bells, rewire the building and clean the stone and statues. A very fine spiral staircase was also fitted on the ground floor of the building to enable easier access to the bell room

## **St Marie's Cathedral, Norfolk Row, Sheffield**

Join us to celebrate St Marie's European communities and heritage, and discover our fascinating history, stories and treasures. Find out more about the enormous contributions of European Catholics to St Marie's Cathedral: from Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine through wealthy Italian patrons to Belgian war refugees. Get ready for amazing free bell-ringing demonstrations, exhibitions, themed tours, talks, trails, family craft activities, story-telling, language learning sessions and continental treats.

## **All Saints Church, North Baileygate, Pontefract**

Climb the unique Double Helix Spiral Staircase, one of just two known types in the world. Hear about the Church's part in the Civil War and Magna Carta in Pontefract. See the model of the staircase and get hands-on with the bells.

## **PRESS INFORMATION**

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## **PHOTOS**

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## **Note to editors**

### **About Heritage Open Days**

- Heritage Open Days is co-ordinated and promoted nationally by the National Trust with funding by players of People's Postcode Lottery, and run locally by a large range of organisations (including civic societies, heritage organisations, and local councils, community champions and thousands of enthusiastic volunteers).
- Heritage Open Days is England's contribution to European Heritage Days, taking place across 50 countries. Other events in the UK are Doors Open Days in Scotland ([www.doorsopendays.org.uk](http://www.doorsopendays.org.uk)); Open Doors Days in Wales ([www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/opendoors/?lang=en](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/opendoors/?lang=en)); European Heritage Open Days in Northern Ireland ([www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk)); Open House London ([www.open-city.org.uk](http://www.open-city.org.uk))
- In 2016, Heritage Open Days and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers have joined forces to open up the heritage hidden inside England's thousands of bell towers and bring to life the four-hundred year old tradition of English-style bell ringing.

## About the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR)

- The Council represents bell ringers across England and worldwide. During its 125 years existence the Council has done much to promote the public awareness of the largely hidden but very audible art of ringing bells in the English tradition – with rope and wheel. The bells in over 5,000 towers across England are rung and maintained by members of the Council's 60+ affiliated societies.

## About People's Postcode Lottery

- People's Postcode Lottery is a charity lottery. Players play with their postcodes to win cash prizes while raising money for charities and good causes across Great Britain and globally
- People's Postcode Lottery is an External Lottery Manager and manages multiple society lotteries promoted by different causes supporting a range of charities. For details on which society lottery is running each week, visit [www.postcodelottery.co.uk/society](http://www.postcodelottery.co.uk/society)
- Postcode Lottery Limited is regulated by the Gambling Commission under certificate nr 000-000829-N-102511-010 and 000-000829-R-102513-009. Registered office: Titchfield House, 69/85 Tabernacle Street, London, EC2A 4RR
- People's Postcode Lottery players support the following Trusts – Postcode African Trust, Postcode Animal Trust, Postcode Care Trust, Postcode Children Trust, Postcode Community Trust, Postcode Culture Trust, Postcode Dream Trust, Postcode Earth Trust, Postcode Global Trust, Postcode Green Trust, Postcode Heroes Trust, Postcode Local Trust, Postcode Planet Trust, Postcode Support Trust, People's Postcode Trust and Postcode Sport Trust. These Trusts are funded entirely by players and support a variety of good causes. For further information on each charity, visit: [www.postcodelottery.co.uk/charities](http://www.postcodelottery.co.uk/charities)
- £10 for 10 draws paid monthly in advance with prizes every day. For further prize information visit: [www.postcodelottery.co.uk/prizes](http://www.postcodelottery.co.uk/prizes)
- A minimum of 27.5% goes directly to charities and players have raised £113.8 Million for good causes across the country
- Maximum amount a single ticket can win is 10% of the draw revenue to a maximum of £400,000
- Players can sign up by Direct Debit, credit card or PayPal online at [www.postcodelottery.co.uk](http://www.postcodelottery.co.uk), or by calling 0808 10-9-8-7-6-5
- This prize was part of the draw promoted by Postcode Local Trust and Postcode Sport Trust