

Chairman's Announcements

Subject:	Public Awareness of Bell-Ringing, 2014 and 2015
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Summary of announcement:

The area contains seven towers with ringable bells: Chippenham St. Andrew, Chippenham St. Paul, Grittleton, Kington St. Michael, Langley Burrell, Nettleton and Yatton Keynell.

The Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association which these seven towers belong to, holds competitions. For non-ringers, to know the dates and then to listen at one of these competitions can be the best way to appreciate the ringers' skill. But church bells are traditionally also rung – open-sounding or muffled – to commemorate great events such as the WW1 centenaries. Within the next twelve months both kinds of ringing should feature; making 2014-15 the best chance for increasing awareness and hopefully recruitment, of Chippenham area's ringers.

On the one hand the Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan's annual bellringing event rotates between its twelve branches: meaning that once every twelve years the Chippenham community area becomes the focus. This will next occur on **18th April 2015**. On that day, bands of bellringers from as far afield as Bristol, the lower Severn, the Cotswolds and Swindon will come to Langley Burrell to compete in the Croome Trophy (the six-bell event) and to Chippenham St. Andrew to compete in the Penn Trophy (the eight-bell event).

Turning to centenary commemorations the Government, through the Culture Secretary, has listed key dates which it considers should be marked by national acts of remembrance. These include the centenary of the World War 1 outbreak – of Britain's entry into war on August 4th 2014 – and the centenary of the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign in spring 2015. However the Chippenham Branch of the G&B diocesan bellringers' association has so far left it up to individual towers as to whether to mark 4th August by special ringing. Some towers in this area have few if any, ringers of their own.

Local recruitment starts from a very low base. The Communities Area Manager considers that any move to make people aware of bellringing should build around a drive to recruit new ringers. The Central Council of Church Bellringers – the national body the G & B are affiliated to, who have to be conscious of the problems of training and retention – had the same focus as Victoria Welsh when they brought a roving seminar to Bristol on May 17th last, ie. recruitment is the key. Tonight's Area Board – themed "Rural and Parish Matters" – is the right one to raise the profile of bellringing in our village churches. If I can be the focus of a recruiting campaign of which further details will be divulged at a future Area Board, I am happy to do so.