

# Great Gransden Church Bell Ringers (GGCBR)

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## SAFETY PROCEDURES

A risk assessment has been carried out considering all activities which take place in the tower above ground floor level. This is reviewed annually.

The following procedures must be followed

### 1. BEFORE RINGING

**Clock Room** (warning notice on clock room door)

- The clock hammers must be pulled off.
  - Ratchet mechanism for the chiming apparatus.
  - Pull wire and secure on hook for the hour chime on the clock.

Both to be found under the clock gantry - **care, low beams.**

- Position the vane vertically and place a coin in the fly gear of the chiming apparatus. (This prevents the mechanism from operating and possibly hindering the bell ropes).
- Check the chiming mechanism for any broken wires connecting to the chime hammers. If any damaged is identified this must be investigated before the bell ropes are lowered and ringing commences.

### 2. DURING RINGING

Only ringers knowledgeable in the potential hazards should enter any part of the tower above the Ringing Room whilst the bells are being rung. This must be done only if necessary to observe an action.

**Extreme caution must be taken as follows:**

### **Clock Room** (warning notice of clock room door)

- Moving bell ropes.
- Tripping hazard on redundant rope bosses.
- Visitors are not allowed in the clock room if the bells are being rung due to dangerous volume of the bells and moving ropes. Exceptions are if bells 2,3, or 4 are silenced and an authorised tower tour and demonstration is being held.

### **Belfry** - (warning notice on belfry door)

- Only authorised personnel may enter the belfry.
- The belfry must not be entered if the Tenor bell is being rung. If it is necessary to observe it being rung entry to the belfry must be made beforehand and observation must be made at a safe distance on the gantry.
- Visitors may not enter the belfry if bells 1,2,3 and 6 are 'up' due to proximity which could cause injury if the bells are rung or in the event of mechanical failure.
- Care must be taken climbing on to or leaving the observation gantry.
- The safety barrier must be lowered into place to prevent falling or stepping off the gantry into the stairwell.
- Ear defenders must be worn if the bells are rung.

### **Extreme Caution**

If it is necessary to access the belfry when the tenor is up, access under the bell (which is possible) is prohibited. A printed notice suspended from the bell frame and which hinders access warns of this.

### **Old Belfry - (warning notice on door)**

- Danger of falling into old bell frame or new bell installation.

### **4. AFTER RINGING**

- The ropes must be suspended from the rope spider. If the bells are up the ropes must be tied with an 'up' knot and pulled up using the spider until they are out of reach to prevent access to unauthorised personnel.
- The bells are normally lowered after ringing except on rare occasions when they may be left up e.g. in preparation for a wedding or other event within 48 hours.
- In this event additional warning notices must be placed on the ropes, the ringing room door, turret door, clock room door and belfry.
- All doors must be locked. Keys must not be left in the church.

### **5. USE OF THE RINGING ROOM BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL**

The ringing room may be used occasionally during the morning Sunday Service for Sunday School.

Conditions of use are as follows:

- No children under the age of 8 years are allowed in the tower.
- The bells must be in the down position because the ropes cannot be pulled completely out of reach.
- All Sunday School Teachers will be given a tour of the tower as awareness training. (records are maintained). They must be aware that the prime function of the room is to ring the bells and it must be left as it is found. (See church risk assessments)
- Two adults will always accompany children and closely supervise entry and exit using the spiral staircase.

- No member of Sunday School, child or teacher is allowed into any other area of the upper floors of the tower.

## **6. ACCESS TO THE ROOMS ABOVE THE RINGING ROOM**

Access is restricted to those who need to carry out work or routine maintenance or prepare the bells for ringing. Visitors may enter the tower under the supervision of the Tower Captain, Deputy Captain or Steeple Keeper. Non-ringers must be accompanied at all times.

## **7. TOWER TOURS**

Occasionally, tower tours are arranged. These are based on the Ecclesiastical insurance Guidelines for Tower Tours. Visitors are made aware of the hazards in the tower before commencement of the tour. See website ["What's in the Tower"](#) for a virtual tour.

See risk assessment.

A tour can be halted at any stage.

## **8. WORK IN THE TOWER**

The Steeple Keeper regularly inspects the bells and fittings to ensure as far as are possible they are safe to use.

Work in the tower may include: maintenance of bell fittings, putting on and removing muffles, cleaning, replacing clock wires, silencing clappers for learner practice, adjusting louvre shutters in old belfry.

Engineering resources are available through the Ely Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers if advice or assistance is required and professional bell hangers and clockmakers are available for consultation if more detailed or specialised engineering work is required.

It is preferable not to work alone in the tower. If anyone is in the tower on their own they should inform someone of their whereabouts and expected time home.

Workers should keep a mobile telephone with them in case of emergencies.

If necessary, place appropriate notices to warn others of work being carried out.

Where possible contractors carrying out inspection or repairs will be met on site by the Steeple Keeper or delegate to ensure that relevant access is given according to the work to be carried out and potential risks pointed out.

After working in the tower the Steeple Keeper or delegate must ensure that equipment and materials have been cleared away and that it is safe to start ringing again.

**Important Note:**

Any major work, or work beyond the capability of the local ringers will be referred to the churchwardens/incumbent as necessary.

**9. ACCESS TO THE BELL FRAME**

**Important Note**

When accessing the bell pits for inspection, fixing and removing muffles or clapper stays, or other work great care **MUST** be taken not to tread on or disturb the clock wires which operate the hammers on the bells.

For this reason unless absolutely necessary the east (far) side of bell pits No 1 and 2 should not be accessed.

## 10. ACCESS TO THE TOWER ROOF

Only the Churchwardens may authorise access to the tower roof.

It is usually only contractors who will be allowed access.

Visitors to the tower roof must be warned of the dangers and risks and their capability assessed for climbing ladders and being at heights.

Provision must be made to halt the tour at any stage.

Before attempting to gain access to the tower roof, the loose laid floor boarding hatches (which are numbered) must be in place to prevent the risk of falling into the old bell frame, and the baseboard for the ladder must be placed on the boarding as marked out.

Extreme caution must be taken when moving boards and ladder.

**Extreme Caution:** The ladder is very steep and visitors must be advised of three points of contact when gaining access to the tower roof.

## 11. TRAINING NEW RINGERS

Training shall be carried out only by authorised ringers.

New ringers are taken into the tower to see the clock and bells during which safety procedures are explained.

Full and comprehensive training is given which follows the guidelines of the Learning the Ropes Scheme promoted by the Association of Ringing Teachers.

Training records are maintained for all new ringers and appropriate documentation completed for children in accordance with the PCC Safeguarding Policy.

## **12. VISITING BELL RINGERS**

All visiting bell ringers shall be met by the Tower Captain, Deputy Captain, Steeple Keeper, or person delegated by the Tower Captain. This person shall satisfy themselves of the competency of ringers present to ensure that safety in the tower is not compromised.

Unless a quarter peal or peal is attempted the local ringer shall stay with the ringers for the duration.

## **13. USE OF EQUIPMENT WITHIN THE BELL TOWER**

All equipment in the bell tower must only be used and operated by people who are familiar with and regularly use the equipment. Portable electrical items are electrically tested periodically by an approved electrician as contracted by the PCC.

## **14. USE OF BOXES FOR RINGING AND HANDLING BELL ROPES**

Instruction is given in the use of boxes during ringing and correct handling of bell ropes during and in between ringing touches.

## **15. WORKING AT HEIGHTS**

It is sometimes necessary to:

Climb on to the bell frame.

Access the clock gantry.

Access the tower roof using the ladder. (see Item 9)

Access the old belfry with loose laid boarding removed.

In all cases safety instructions are given by the Tower Captain, Deputy Captain or Steeple Keeper.

## **16. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

There is a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher in the ringing room.

There is a CO<sub>2</sub> extinguisher and foam extinguisher in the kitchen area of the tower, and a fire blanket.

### **Fire Exit**

The Ringing Room is on the first floor. The exit would normally be through the kitchen area to the north door of the church. In the event of this exit being blocked the west door or south porch door could be used. Keys for these exits are held by the Tower Captain or delegate and will always be on site when the bells are rung.

The door in the tower arch screen between the church and the tower must not be locked whilst anyone is in the church tower area.

The west tower door should be unlocked when the Sunday School meet.

Fire extinguisher and evacuation procedure awareness is given to the bell ringers annually.

The church key is in a known location in the ringing room.

## **17. FIRST AID**

There is a first aid box in the kitchen area on the ground floor of the tower.

## **18. KEY HOLDERS**

The Tower Captain and Deputy Tower Captain have sets of tower keys. A further set is controlled by the churchwardens.

## **19. IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY**

The person in charge (e.g. tower captain) should immediately assess the emergency and decide on action to be taken.

### **Medical Emergency**

If someone requires urgent medical attention telephone the ambulance service. The postcode of the church is on the notice board and details of the nearest defibrillator.

Take advice from the emergency services until they arrive.

### **Fire or other catastrophic emergency**

If the tower needs to be evacuated this should be done in an orderly way and if possible exit the church by the north door.

The person in charge should telephone the emergency services quoting the postcode of the church.

A fire should not be tackled unless it is safe to do so. Evacuation of the building is essential and is the priority.

### **Egress from the Ringing Room**

If exit is blocked by a fire on the ground floor of the tower the fire blanket adjacent to the turret door could be used as a shield.

If the exit is blocked from the base of the tower into the church exit by the west door.

## **20. Reference Documents**

Warning notices on tower doors and equipment

Risk assessment

Placement of fire extinguishers

Great Gransden Ringers' Handbook

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