

RINGING REMEMBERS

1,400 bell ringers died during the First World War. You can honour their memory 100 years after the end of the war by becoming one of 1,400 new bell ringers and joining others across the nation in ringing on the centenary of the Armistice in November 2018.

Just after the war ended, the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) wrote to all ringing associations across the country to compile the Rolls of Honour. At the time 1,077 men were reported as lost. During the First World War Centenary the CCCBR has been reviewing this list and has discovered a further 323 bell ringers who died in service. In total 1,400 bell ringers lost their lives.

Bell ringing is a British tradition and the British Isles are home to a distinctive style of bell ringing called 'change ringing' which produces a peal of bells, part of our national 'soundscape'. Most people don't realise that outside the British Isles change ringing towers are few and far between. While the British Isles has some 5,500 change ringing towers, the rest of the world put together has less than 150.

Bell ringing is woven into the fabric of our society, marking rites of passage in our lives including christenings, weddings and funerals. It often marks and forms part of important local occasions and national celebrations – recently this has included the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the London Olympics and Paralympics and the Lumiere light festival in Durham. Bell ringers have regular competitions, and often come together to ring just for the joy of it. Although bell towers are commonly in churches, you don't have to go to church to be a bell ringer. Bell ringers are a friendly, inclusive community with people of all faiths and none. With 5,500 bell towers in Britain, there's at least one near you!

If you are interested in watching the ringing at St. Mary's on a Thursday evening (practice night) you are welcome to visit the ringers (up the iron ladder at the side of the tower) between 8 and 9 pm. Please check with the Tower Captain, Mary Andrews, on 01322 523071, to be sure a practice is being held.