

Witney Bellringers

Activity risk assessment

Activity: Bell Ringing
 Location: St Mary's Church Witney
 Name of leader with responsibility: Amy Thomas (H&S) Andrew Goldthorpe (TC)

Date of first risk assessment: July 2023
 Time/frequency: Annual
 Date to be reviewed: July 2024

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Likelihood and Impact of risk happening | Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk? | Action by whom? | Action by when? | Done |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|----------------|
| <u>Security of the tower</u> | <i>Non ringers gaining access to the bells and ropes. Injuries occurring ranging from rope burns to death</i> | <i>Door and gate locked when not in use. Designated key holders, including 2 bellringers and church warden.</i> | <i>Low risk High impact</i> | <i>Wardens to understand that anyone entering the bell tower must be told about the risks and told not to touch any ropes.</i> | <i>AT to send reminder</i> | <i>Aug 23</i> | |
| | | <i>Internal door to belfry and clock room to be kept locked. Designated key holders – captain, steeple keeper, clock keeper and a copy held in the key safe in the church office.</i> | <i>Low risk High impact</i> | <i>Signage on the doors to warn of the dangers.</i> | <i>AT to check</i> | <i>July 23</i> | <i>yes</i> |
| <u>Access to the tower</u> <i>Condition of lighting and external path</i> | <i>Ringers and visitors to the tower. Slips, trips and falls.</i> | <i>Ensure the lights are well maintained</i> | <i>Low risk Medium impact</i> | <i>Check monthly for damage and report any defects to the church office</i> | <i>AG carries out monthly checks</i> | <i>monthly</i> | <i>ongoing</i> |
| <i>Condition and lighting of spiral staircase</i> | <i>Ringers and visitors to the tower. Slips, trips and falls.</i> | <i>Ensure the lights are well maintained and steps are free of debris. Hand rail/rope in place and secure. Warning signs in place – uneven steps.</i> | <i>Medium risk Medium impact</i> | <i>Check monthly for damage and sweep/clean on a regular basis</i> | <i>As above</i> | | |
| <u>Ringing room safety</u> | | | | | | | |
| <i>Getting caught up in moving ropes</i> | <i>Person involved in ringing or other person in bell tower</i> | <i>Visitors and non-ringers instructed not to touch the ropes. All persons not ringing instructed to keep feet firmly on the floor.</i> | <i>Low likelihood Medium Impact</i> | <i>Ensure that any new ringers continue to receive instruction. Display signs indicate core safety instructions for use of tower.</i> | <i>AT to create a new ringing room safety sheet to display</i> | <i>As part of induction for new ringers/visitors</i> | |

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| | | <i>Removal of loose clothing such as ties, scarves etc prior to ringing. Learners are closely supervised by competent instructor. Care taken when standing on a box to ensure box is correctly positioned and ringers feet are centrally placed on box ensuring toes do not overhang the front of the box.</i> | | <i>Investigate escape hatch in ringing room floor in case of medical evacuation. Ensure emergency contact information is clearly visible. Including what3words location of ringing room entrance.</i> | <i>AG to receive quote from carpenter to complete to update and implement</i> | <i>Sep 23</i> | |
| <i>Rope snapping at the sally or just above</i> | <i>Anyone in the ringing room, injuries from rope burns to broken bones and other serious injuries</i> | <i>Ropes checked on a regular basis as part of tower maintenance. Mats in place to prevent wear on the ropes.</i> | <i>Low likelihood Medium Impact</i> | <i>Continue to check rope condition</i> | | <i>Tower maintenance to take place on scheduled dates</i> | <i>Ongoing</i> |
| <i>Stay breaking or similar mechanical failure causing ringers to be lifted from the floor.</i> | <i>The ringer could be lifted off their feet as the bell 'goes over' and then dropped to the ground possibly causing serious injuries, varying from rope burns to broken bones and muscle damage</i> | <i>Ringers to be properly trained to avoid 'over pulling'. Steeple keeper ensures stays and ropes are checked as part of the tower maintenance.</i> | <i>Low likelihood High Impact</i> | <i>Continue to check condition of the stays</i> | | <i>Tower maintenance to take place on scheduled dates</i> | <i>Ongoing</i> |
| <i>Power cuts – loss of lighting</i> | <i>Loss of control of the ropes, injuries as above</i> | <i>Back up lighting is installed. A torch is available and accessible</i> | <i>Low likelihood Medium Impact</i> | <i>Inspect lighting circuit board and rechargeable torch</i> | | | |

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| <i>Items on the floor of the ringing room</i> | <i>Slips trips and falls resulting in bruises, cuts or broken bones</i> | <i>Hooks to hang belongings. Other items stored off the floor or outside the ringing room</i> | <i>Medium likelihood Medium impact</i> | <i>Continue good housekeeping and instruct all new ringers/visitors on the importance of keeping the floor clear of obstruction. New safety notice to cover this</i> | <i>All ringers</i> | | <i>ongoing</i> |
| <i>Portable electrical equipment</i> | <i>Risk to all of electric shock or trip hazards</i> | <i>No trailing leads All equipment to be unplugged before leaving the ringing room. All appliances are PAT tested regularly</i> | <i>Low risk Medium impact</i> | <i>Ensure PAT testing is added to church regime</i> | <i>AT/AG to check with church regarding PAT test dates</i> | <i>Aug 23</i> | |
| <u>Teaching</u> | | | | | | | |
| <i>Getting caught in the ropes when ringing or if bells are disturbed</i> | <i>All ringers could sustain injuries ranging from rope burns to death</i> | <i>Experienced ringers, preferably ART qualified, to teach beginners. All learners are closely supervised. Generally bells are left down and safe but occasionally they can be left up (between services). Tower is always locked; and a "Do not touch ropes" notice is displayed on ringing room door.</i> | <i>High likelihood High impact</i> | <i>Teachers to attend ART training</i> | | | |
| <i>Safeguarding issues</i> | <i>Anyone in the tower, especially vulnerable adults and children.</i> | <i>At least 2 DBS certified members in the team, at least one must be present (but not necessarily instructing) when teaching minors</i> | <i>Low likelihood High impact</i> | <i>Review safeguarding arrangements as part of overall safeguarding in the church and AGM</i> | <i>CR is safeguarding lead</i> | <i>Effective from AGM in March</i> | <i>yes</i> |

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| <u>Clock room</u> | | | | | | | |
| Getting caught up in the ropes when the bells are ringing or when the bells are up and the ropes are disturbed | All personnel could become caught up in the ropes and suffer a variety of injuries including major ones | Access door is locked and keys controlled by tower captain and secretary. Area only to be accessed when bells are down | Low likelihood High impact | Ensure key holders to the area are aware of the dangers and advice others if entering | Key holders | ongoing | |
| <u>Belfry access</u> | | | | | | | |
| Falling from or down wooden, metal or stone steps | Steeple keeper or anyone accessing the belfry. Slips, trips and falls resulting in serious injury | Ladder and steps are secure and maintained as part of steeple keepers 6 monthly inspection | High likelihood medium impact | Ensure checks are regularly taking place | AG regular inspections | ongoing | |
| <u>Belfry</u> | | | | | | | |
| Getting caught up in moving bells/ropes | Anyone with access to the area could sustain minor to major injuries | Door is kept locked, area to only be accessed by key holder when bells are in the down position. | High likelihood high impact | Ensure all signage is up to date. | AT to check | July 23 | yes |
| Falling from frame during maintenance, bell muffling, inspections etc. | Steeple keeper, other trained persons. Risk of serious injury from moving bells and/or falling. | Keep essential access to the frame only. Use crawl boards and buddy system. No lone working , suitable clothing worn. Ensure mobile phone contact maintained during inspections/works | High likelihood high impact | | | | |

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| Noise from ringing bells | Permanent hearing damage and risk of injury from moving bells | Area only to be accessed when bells are down. Door is kept locked. | High likelihood medium impact | | | | |
| Poor lighting in belfry | Could attribute to falls and injury in this area to anyone working on the bells | Lighting is checked as part of the steeple keeper inspection | High likelihood medium impact | Ensure checklist includes all features including lighting in this area. | AT/AG | Aug 23 | |
| Asbestos | Could affect anyone carrying out maintenance if asbestos is dislodged causing lung issues. | A copy of Church's latest asbestos survey obtained and checked – all in good condition | Medium likelihood medium impact | All sources of asbestos to be marked and locations to be made obvious to anyone involved in maintenance. | AT/AG to check | Aug 23 | |
| Structural defects | Areas of the building which could be defective causing injury or death to ringers and visitors. | Steeple keeper 6 monthly checks. Any church surveys are shared with ringers to be made aware of any defects | Medium likelihood high impact | Ensure these are up to date | AG | ongoing | |
| <u>Fire</u> | | | | | | | |
| Combustible materials in stairwell, ringing room and other areas of the tower. | Anyone present in the tower/church at the time of fire break out, could be trapped, injured or killed | All materials are kept tidy and kept to a minimum. Fire extinguishers present and signed in the ringing room. Alternative escape routes available using the key to open hatches to roof tops in the event of a fire. | Medium likelihood high impact | Check fire extinguishers regularly – part of church testing regime? | AT to check with church | Aug 23 | |

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| <i>Portable electrical equipment</i> | <i>Could be a potential cause of fire, injuring all ringers and visitors</i> | <i>PAT testing equipment as part of the church regime</i> | <i>Medium likelihood high impact</i> | <i>All cables to be checked as part of steeple keepers 6 monthly inspection.</i> | <i>AG</i> | <i>ongoing</i> | |
| <i>Naked flames</i> | <i>Could cause a fire in all areas of the tower, could spread quickly and trap ringers and visitors</i> | <i>No candles or any naked flames in any part of the tower.</i> | <i>Medium likelihood high impact</i> | <i>Ensure all users are aware of the no flame rule. Added to safety sheet.</i> | <i>AT</i> | <i>Aug 23</i> | <i>yes</i> |
| <i>Electrical cables/mains</i> | <i>Could cause an electrical fire when tower is or is not in use</i> | <i>All wiring is checked as part of a regular inspection.</i> | <i>Medium likelihood high impact</i> | <i>Ensure inspection is recorded accurately</i> | <i>At to check with church</i> | <i>Aug 23</i> | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

Signed by:

Assessors: Amy Thomas

Date: 1/8/23

Tower Captain: Andrew Goldthorpe

Date: 1/8/23

Church official:

Date:

Review date: July 2024

Copy to be kept in the ringing room H&S folder and Church office.