

# Ring for the King Survey

## Summary

In response to the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, the Central Council for Church Bell Ringers launched the 'Ring for the King' (RFTK) campaign in late 2022. ART supported the initiative by managing all national enquiries related to learning to ring. In all ART handled 2,049 requests from November 2022 to May 2023. A survey sent to individuals who made enquiries received 598 valid responses, which are analysed in this report.

### Key findings:

- **Challenges in contacting local towers:** 41% of respondents who didn't visit a local tower struggled to make contact or were discouraged by local responses. Issues included non-responses, lack of information, and miscommunication about the campaign.
- **Engagement after initial visit:** Of the 349 who visited a local tower, 314 went on to take lessons, with 208 participating in the RFTK event. Approximately 52% of those who started were still ringing a year later.
- **Reasons for dropping out:** 131 of the 314 individuals who started lessons stopped due to factors like health issues, slow progress, lack of personalised practice, and unsatisfactory tower conditions. Some also cited a lack of social engagement and poor organization.
- **Retention factors:** Among those still ringing, positive factors included warm welcomes, good teaching, social interaction, and a sense of progress in their training. ART's Learning the Ropes (LtR) scheme was particularly appreciated.

### Conclusions and recommendations:

- **Improving communication:** A significant number of people struggled with contacting local towers or received unwelcoming responses. Efforts should be made to ensure accurate, up-to-date contact information and a friendly reception.
- **Managing expectations:** A large number of individuals dropped out due to the high commitment required. Future campaigns should clearly communicate the time and effort needed to learn bellringing.
- **Target audience and health considerations:** Given the demographic of older participants, health-related dropouts suggest a need to consider these factors in recruitment efforts.
- **Retention strategies:** Success in retaining new ringers is largely linked to warm hospitality, effective teaching, quick progress, and social connections. Future campaigns should emphasise these elements to enhance long-term engagement.

This report highlights both the successes and challenges of the RFTK campaign and provides valuable insights for future recruitment and retention efforts in bellringing.

## Introduction

Following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022, the Central Council for Church Bell Ringers launched a 'Ring for the King' (RFTK) recruitment campaign in the autumn of 2022. ART

agreed to support the handling of all learn to ring enquiries that were submitted centrally. The ART Helpdesk was set up to capture data on all RFTK enquiries from November 2022 and handled the following enquiries centrally during this period. The survey and this report do not capture the data on the many local recruitment activities which were happening during this period.

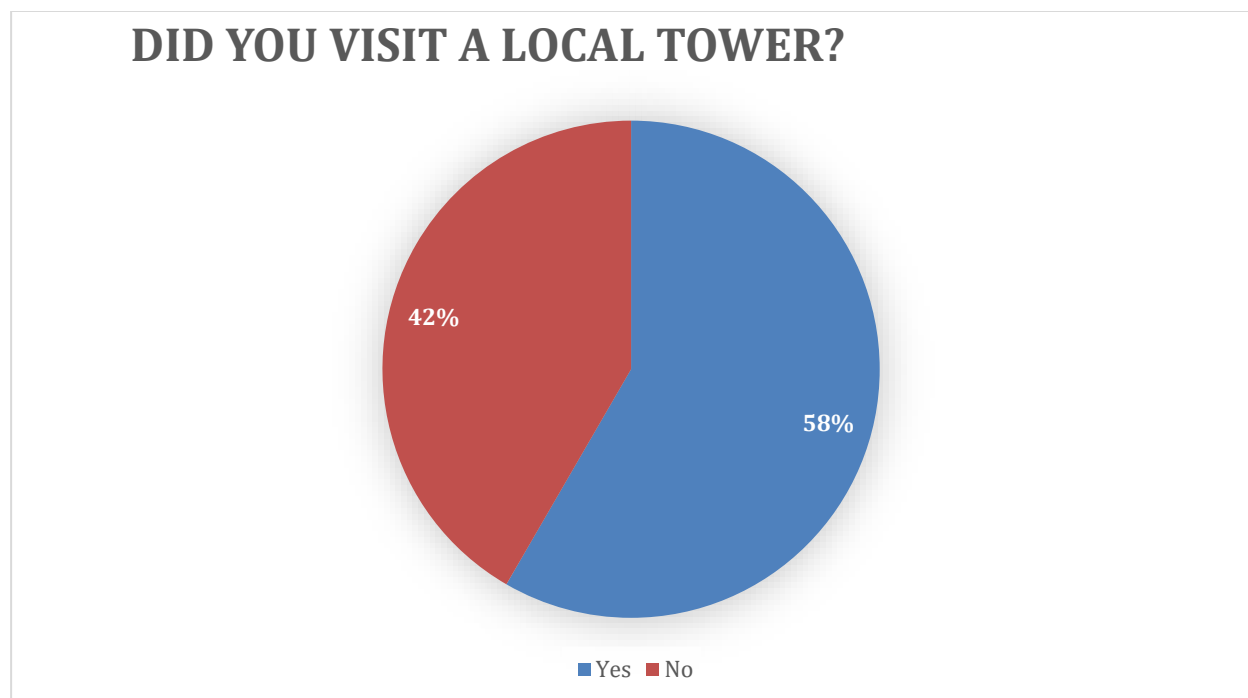
Month	Number of enquiries	Average enquiries per day
Nov-22	83	2.8
Dec-22	65	2.1
Jan-23	102	3.3
Feb-23	1064	38.0
Mar-23	435	14.0
Apr-23	218	7.3
May-23	82	2.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2049</b>	

All enquiries received one of the following responses from ART:

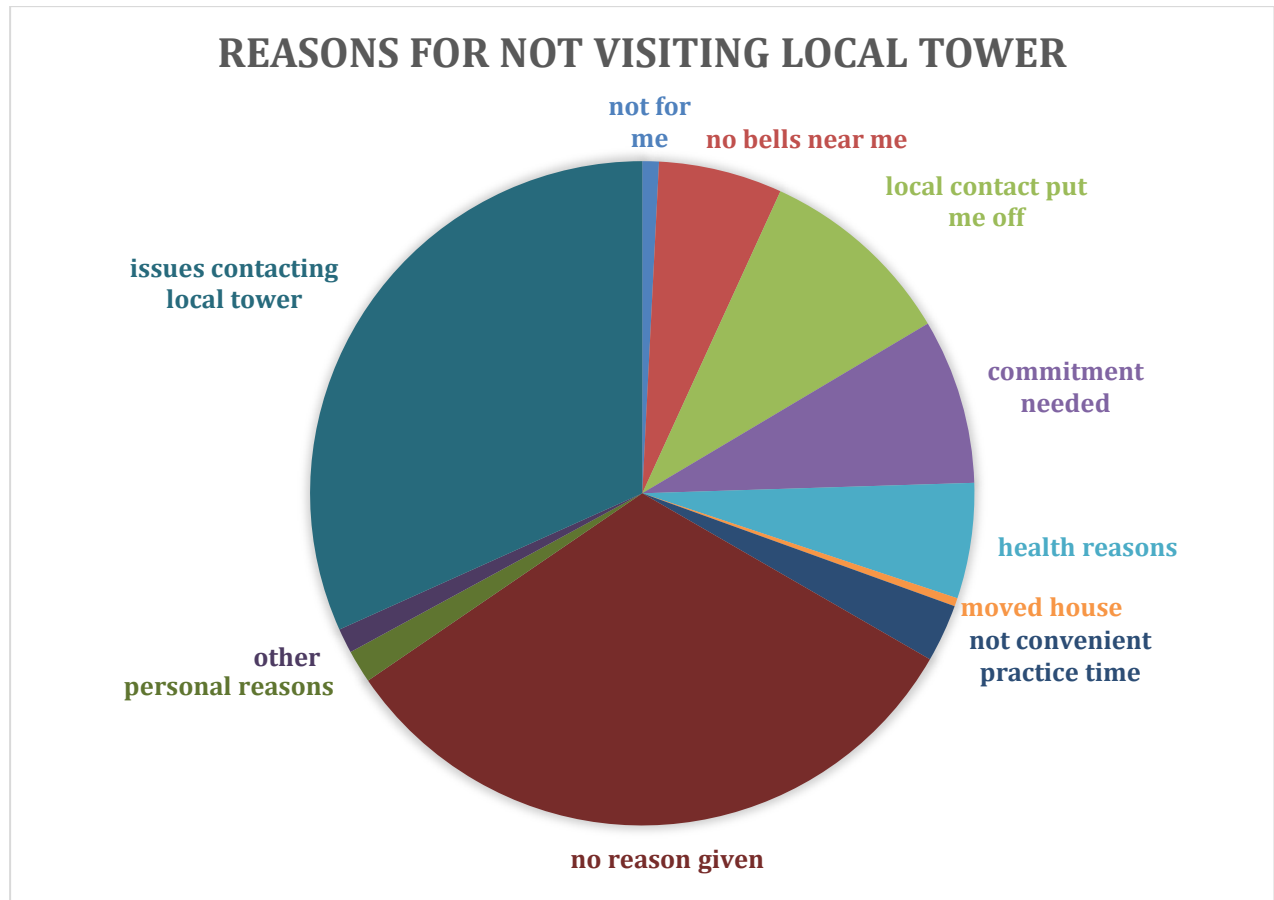
- Where they consented for their details to be shared, confirmation that their details had been passed on to their local teacher or guild/association who would get in touch with them directly.
- Where they had not consented for their data to be shared, they were given contact information for their local teacher, guild association or church with bells.

In March 2024 ART sent out a survey to all the people who had made enquiries centrally about RFTK. 598 valid responses were received (a 29% response rate), which are analysed in this report.

### Did you visit a local tower?



Of the 249 respondents who answered “No”, they had the option to give an explanation, which were categorised into the following reasons:



Of those that didn't visit their local tower 41% either had difficulty making contact with someone local to them or were put off by the local contact. Typical comments:

- “Despite all efforts to contact local bellringers I heard from no one.”
- “I emailed the contact I was given but received no reply.”
- “I contacted my local group but was told it was too late to learn in time for the coronation.”
- “I called local contacts and emailed but no one got back to me.”
- “Was put off when asked to attend Sunday church services. Also told might want to purchase some books.”
- “The person I contacted had no idea about 'ring for the king' and seemed 'put out' by my not being a Christian. I didn't go in the end.”
- “I spoke to two different places. Neither wanted to take on a beginner. A bit disappointing.”
- “They said it was not for new people. Just people who wanted to re-start ringing.”
- “I received an email inviting me to a lesson (though I was too late to learn ringing for the Coronation), to which I replied. Then I never heard back.”

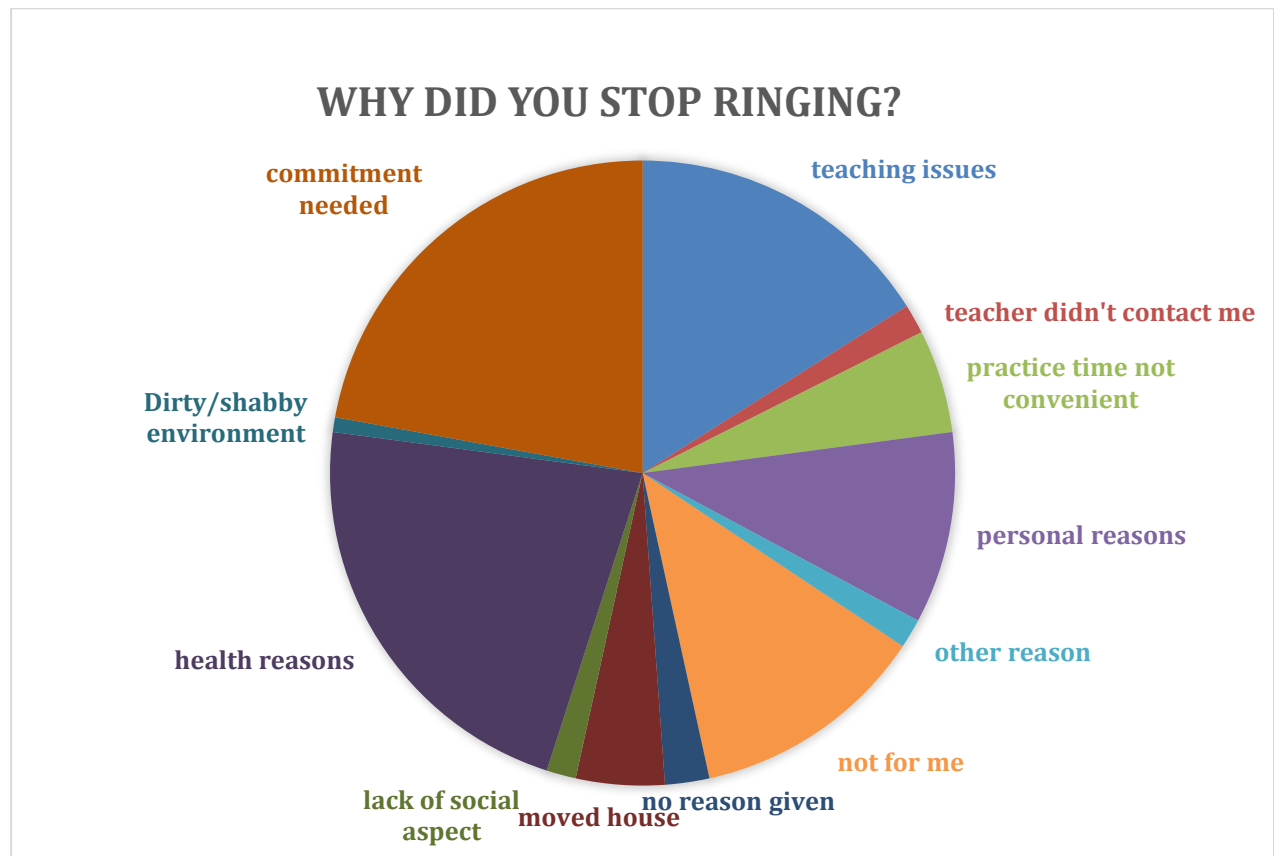
## What happened next?

Of the 349 who did visit a local tower, 314 went on to have some lessons, 208 of those participate in a 'Ring for the King' event and 183 were still ringing at the time of the survey, which was around a year after most had made their initial enquiry. This represents the following drop off rate:

- Made a tower visit but didn't go on to have lessons: 10%
- Still ringing about a year after initial tower visit: 52%

## Reasons for not continuing with ringing

Of the 314 who started handling lessons after their initial visit to a local tower, 131 were no longer ringing at the time of the survey. Reasons for not continuing were categorized as:



We can't do anything to address health or personal issues getting in the way, or for those who decide it's not for them or who are unable to make the commitment needed for whatever reason. However, we can look to address some of the other reasons. Typical survey comments from those with reasons we could look to address included:

- "Would still like to carry on if better organised. Appreciate people are volunteers but if they want people to take up the hobby they need to improve."

- “Lovely people at bell tower but literally just a few minutes handling each week. Didn’t expect to crack it overnight but got fed up with such slow progress.”
- “I would like to continue but there is no one at the tower teaching. I took lessons for 6 months but found it hard to get the hang of it.”
- “I continued for a number of months afterwards, but eventually – despite the incredible support of the tower – I found ringing too difficult and increasingly stressful.”
- “After a year of attending weekly practice night I was still not able to ring on my own. I was sad to leave but think I maybe needed a more prolonged individual practice rather than short bits here and there.”
- “Lack of social aspect to it. Teacher was nice and friendly. But it was drive, turn up, ring, leave.”
- “I would have continued but for the lamentable state of the tower. I did lead a gang of three to clean it... seemingly not having been done in over a decade... which was well received. However, within a couple of months it was looking shabby once more and no one seemed bothered. I dislike being in dirty surroundings. Such a shame as I had a really good time.”
- “Myself and my husband attended twice. The people were friendly but didn’t want to give up their own time ringing and so we only got to try it out for a couple of minutes. The rest of the time we just sat there and watched. It was interesting for a while, but we wanted to be able to learn much quicker than this. It would have taken years to learn at this pace. In fact there were a couple of people that we spoke to whilst there, who had been going for well over a year and were only just being allowed to participate in one session.”

### Those that are still ringing

At the time of the survey, 183 people are still ringing. 82 of those are being taught using ART’s Learning the Ropes scheme (66 are not and 36 provided no answer).

Typical comments:

- “I have become a bit addicted to bellringing and have reached the standard required at call changes on 8 to ring for Sunday mornings in less than a year.”
- “I am really enjoying learning to bell ring and the folks at the tower are so kind, welcoming and friendly.”
- “I think the LtR scheme is excellent and gives a real sense of progress although very slow for my ageing brain. Nearly at Level 1!”
- “I’m receiving brilliant ongoing training and have been welcomed into a lovely group of ringers.”
- “I have been ringing now for one year and it has been an exceptionally positive addition to my life. My teachers are experts, and it is a very sociable hobby.”
- “The ART scheme is great. I learnt very slowly at first but am progressing much faster now I am on the ART scheme.”
- “We have had such fun learning to ring, we have had a fantastic, patient teacher. We had wanted to learn a few years ago and then lockdown got in the way so Ring for the King spurred us on, and we have enjoyed it ever since and will hopefully continue for a long time to come.”

- “Working towards Level 2. Amazing support from my teachers. Lovely welcome from all bellringers I’ve met. So wish I’d taken this up earlier as age is against me to progress much further. Also, why are church websites so lacking in information about bellringing? I’ve met total strangers who are full of information about their church’s history, the tombs, the architecture but know nothing about the bells.”
- “Despite wonderful tuition and patience on the part of my teachers, I’m learning very slowly and my confidence remains low. I wish I’d started 65 years ago!”
- “I’ve completed LtR Level 5 (9 March 2024) in my logbook sign offs – awaiting formal logging of this online. Now looking at LtR Plus and teaching in longer term.”
- “Today is actually my ringing anniversary. One year! I am going to meet with my band soon to ring a quarter peal to celebrate. Just thought would be interesting news given I started for Ring for the King and here I am now!”
- “I have only been loosely following the LtR scheme (i.e. following the order but not actually filling out the accomplishments). Three great things I have found about ringing: it is very social; it is an inexpensive hobby and the only thing you need to bring is yourself; and it is somewhat portable. All-in-all, 10/10. Would recommend to all my friends (and I do!)”

## Thoughts for future recruitment campaigns

Of those who expressed an initial interest, 41% either had difficulty making contact with someone local to them or were put off by the local contact. Ringing as a whole needs to work on communication, having up to date contact information available to make it easy to make contact with local towers and receiving a warm welcome when they do make contact.

Only around half the people who were sufficiently interested to make an initial visit to a tower were still ringing a year later. This suggests that we need to recruit around double the numbers we actually need as around half will drop out within a year. However, this drop off could also be related to other factors, for example the marketing not being clear enough so that people did not appreciate up front the commitment that was involved in learning to ring.

A large number of people also stopped ringing due to health issues, which is probably reflective of the fact that the RTFK campaign marketing appealed more to older than young people. A large number of people also dropped out as they were unable to make the commitment needed. Future recruitment campaigns need to be carefully developed with the target audience in mind and making clear what is involved in learning to ring.

In terms of what keeps people ringing, the key factors seem to be:

- Warm welcome.
- Good teaching and making quick progress.
- Social aspects.
- Enjoying it as a new hobby.

*Report produced by Monica Hollows*