

Morse bells

Initially our Guild secretary had an email from the Bishop of Truro, backing the initiative by Edward Gildea , who is an adventurer, environmental activist, poet, schools consultant and bell ringer), that Church of England bells ring out for climate change at 6pm on the 30th Oct. There is precedent for bells being used to warn of danger.

We brainstormed ideas for sending a message around the world to call on world leaders to take Climate Change seriously and take action as well as talking! Time is getting short.

As we have the world's original telecommunication station in Cornwall at Porthcurno, opened in 1870 to send messages by cable as far as Mumbai in India, we wondered if we could use Morse Code to send our message. Bells cannot do a dot and a dash, but different pitches, a higher pitch for a dot and a lower one for a dash, can be used to send Morse as was recently mentioned in the TV drama Vigil.

A suitable short message was needed, and ' Save R Clim8 ' was suggested as both shorter than the full words (church bells do not ring very fast so it would be quite long) and using text speak to appeal to younger generations.

Bells are numbered from 1 to 6 in a 6 bell tower, where 1 is the highest pitched, the treble, and 6 is the lowest pitched, the tenor. Using only 2 bells to play the message became monotonous so it was decided to start each letter with a higher pitched pair of bells eg 1 & 3 and use a lower pitched pair of bells for each subsequent letter. For the following word we restart with the highest pitched pair (1&3 again). Hence we came up with the lines of Morse Code translated to bell numbers.

We can chime the bells (just swing them until the clapper hit the bell's rim), or strike them with an Ellacombe apparatus – (where a bell is struck by a hammer), or ring them traditionally to send the message.

S	A	V	E		R		C	L	I	M	8
...	.-	...--.	--
111	24	3335	4		131		1313	2422	33	55	66644

This will sound quite unlike normal ringing so we hope will attract enough attention for people to ask 'What's this all about?' We hope to galvanise interest in COP26, attract the attention of world leaders, and spark interest in bell ringing as a hobby.

Martin Spittle
TDGR Webmaster