

## **Is bell-ringing difficult?**

There is an old adage that it's not easy to do anything well: this applies to bell ringing as much as to any other skill.

The initial period of learning to handle a bell is about as hard as learning to drive a car: some will find that it comes naturally, whilst others will take longer, but almost anyone of moderate fitness can learn.

After that, it is up to you. If you want to become a real expert, then there are hundreds of 'methods' that you can learn for change-ringing. You can learn to become a conductor, or even a composer, who can invent new 'methods' – you will never run out of new things to learn if that is what you like to do.

But there are lots of other interesting side-lines to ringing – for example, ringers are responsible for maintaining their bells, and this is something they take very seriously. Some ringers devote a lot of time to repairing bell-ropes, cleaning the bell-chamber, greasing the bearings of the bells and the clappers and even doing major restoration work.

Other ancillary jobs may include winding the church clock, putting up the church flag when required, putting mufflers on the bells for Remembrance Day, ringing out the old year, and for special memorial services.

And there is a great deal of interesting history: bells can last hundreds of years when looked after properly. Belfries are full of amazing history – you could easily find yourself ringing a bell that is over 500 years old.

So in ringing there really is something for everyone: physical and mental exercise, being part of a team effort, getting out and about, meeting interesting people.



**Learning to tie a bell-ringer's knot**

## **What sort of people make good bell ringers?**

Without a doubt, those who learn as youngsters will progress the most quickly, but there is no upper age limit, and there are plenty of ringers in their eighties, and some in their nineties!

Ringers come from all walks of life – doctors, nurses, milkmen, teachers, computer scientists, gardeners, secretaries, musicians. You don't have to be specially brainy, but mental agility helps, so if you like doing puzzles, playing card games, knitting, repairing cars or bikes and making things you will find ringing right up your street.