



DERBYSHIRE SCOUTS COUNTY BELLRINGING BADGE

‘How To Guide’ to Setting Up Your Scouts County Bellringing
Badge. Play Book with 10-Step Plan.

Brought to you in partnership

by

Derbyshire Scouts and

Derby Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers

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DERBYSHIRE SCOUTS BELLRINGING ACTIVITY TEAM

Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team
Guide to setting up your own County Bellringing Badge.
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Setting Up

Partnership and Governance

The NEW Derbyshire Scouts County Bellringing Badge is run by Derbyshire Scouts in partnership with the Derby Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers (DDA).

The new Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team oversees delivery of the badge requirements and award of badges.

Badge Requirements and Badges

The new Derbyshire bellringing badges encourage and facilitate learning to ring and are staged badges. Badge requirements and badges are available here and in use.

Outcomes

To introduce Scouts to bellringing as a team activity they can enjoy, a new skill for life and gain a badge. Provide a pathway for further development through the staged badge requirements.

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Dear Scouter or Bellringer,

Thank you for your interest in the Derbyshire Scouts County Bellringing Badge! As we write over 250 youngsters from Beavers to Explorers, Young Leaders (and Scouts Leaders) have been introduced to bellringing through the Derbyshire County badge scheme and earned their Know About Bellringing badge. We're delighted to hear you might like to set up your own County Bellringing Badge. A number of requests have been received and we're happy to support!

Play Book and 10-Step Plan

Rolling out across Scouts by county could be an effective way to encourage bellringing nationally and gain a badge. We've put together this Play Book and 10-point plan based on our experiences and learnings to help get you started.

What became clear early on was that support from the Scouts County Activity Lead and willingness to take the idea to the Scouts County Lead Volunteer and Executive Committee was critical. It was then important to demonstrate feasibility from towers and Scouters willing to get involved. We brought together current bellringing and Scouting experience and got going!

This document summarises a recommended route to hopefully a smooth navigation to getting your Scouts County Bellringing Badge up and running.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to timely generous financial donations from the Central Council of Church Bellringers and John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough towards initial purchase of badges, to Sue Hall for design of the badges and to DDA for a grant to purchase a set of desk-tuned hand bells. The scheme has continued to attract interest and grow. Thanks to participating towers, bellringers, Scouters and churches for hosting enjoyable visits for the Scouts groups. And thanks to all involved for the interest, encouragement, enthusiastic support and guidance, and for all your contributions to the new Derbyshire Scouts County Bellringing Badge.

Carole Hallam and Andy Austen

On behalf of the Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team

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Getting Started

Starting in May 2025, the new Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Badge continues to build bellringing links with Scouts and gives a new framework to support local, regional and national programmes and gain a badge. It helps give visibility of bellringing to young people, sustain the art and science of bellringing for the future, and supports CCCBR Ringing 2030.

This is a Scouts initiative, and the County Lead Volunteer (CLV) and County Executive Committee (Trustees) have to approve the badge, wherever it is planned. Once approved, in Derbyshire it is led by setting up a new Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team with Team Lead from Scouting, an active leader in the Scouts Association, and someone the activity team are confident in. The badge is a staged badge, with activities for all abilities carried out within best practice frameworks for Scouts, Church and Bellringing organisations.

An accessible and engaging carousel format enables Scouts groups to visit towers to learn about bellringing together, and gain a badge. Its early days, however in Derbyshire we're starting to see a steady trickle of youngsters learning bellringing. Good news!

Visits Format

A carousel format assists groups covering the bellringing badge requirements in typically 2 visits, a tower visit and follow-on visit at Scouts HQ venue. They can be the other way round.

Briefly, prior to visits Scouts Leaders and Tower Captains prepare risk assessments and activity plans and advise any accessibility. On the day, bellringers wear prepared name badges and Scout leaders accompany their group in the usual way. After an introduction to bellringing and safety briefing the Scout leaders divide the youngsters into smaller groups of typically 5 or 6 youngsters. They then rotate around typically 3 activities set up for the evening. At the tower visit, one activity is in the ringing room to have a go at chiming a bell and ring backstrokes (usually chiming only for Beavers). Have plenty of boxes available! If access to view the bells can safely be done, they love to do this as a second activity. Otherwise, videos or CCTV monitor viewing of a bell ringing works well. After allotted time, usually 10 or 15 mins per activity, the groups move round in an agreed ordered way to start their next activity. A Scouts leader accompanies each group.

The follow-on visit typically contains a recap of what they saw and did on the tower visit, a group session perhaps an introduction to methods such as writing our Plain Hunt, a group game and carousel of typically another 3 activities to aim to cover all the elements of badge.

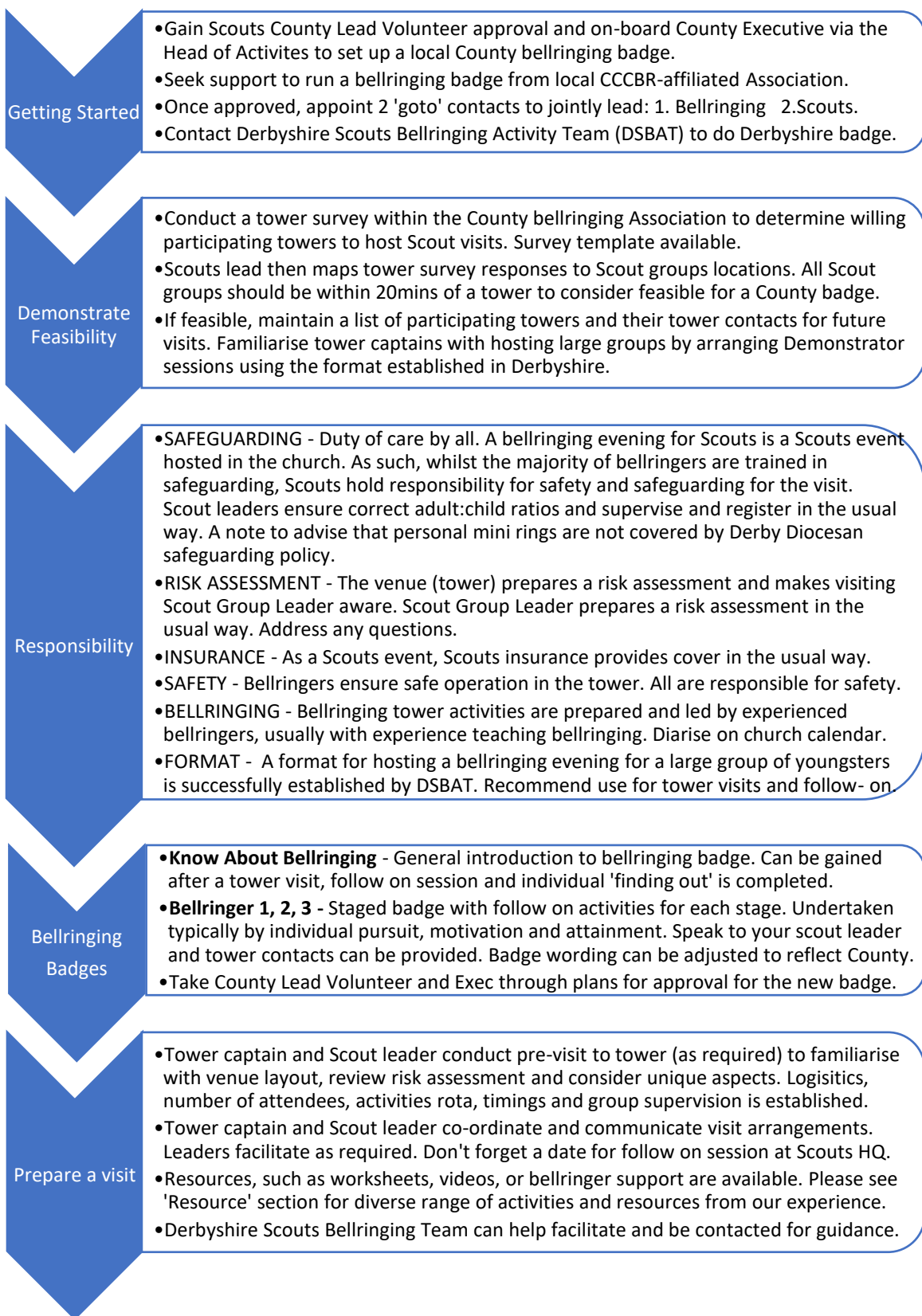
Framework for Operation

There was significant work satisfying complexity of requirements between Diocesan church environments, Bellringing associations and Scouts organisation. Framework summary is next.

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10 – Step Plan

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10-Step Plan for Your Scouts County Bellringing Badge

Here's our 10-step plan to getting started:

1. The approach taken was via the team responsible to the CLV for activities, and video was helpful to explain bellringing to non-bellringing Scouters and assist putting a proposal together. Gain approval to progress the badge from the County Lead Volunteer and Executive Committee (Trustees). We've done some of the heavy lifting for you: use the available Derbyshire Scouts County Bellringing Badge requirements and tried and tested resources from the Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team to get going. They've been demonstrated over 12 months, and there for you to use.
2. Identify a nucleus of bellringing experience and senior Scouting experience in your County to take forward, probably 2 or 3 people with enthusiasm and commitment to roll out the Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Badge scheme where you are. Allow 12 - 18 months. To cover all the elements of the badge syllabus, the commitment from Scouts groups to enable completion of the badge requirements is typically 2 evenings in the programme, one in the tower and one at the Scouts HQ. In our experience it's unlikely all elements covered in tower visit alone;
3. Determine feasibility of running the badge in your County, to demonstrate support. It may not suit all regions. Experience across towers hosting a large group of youngsters varies. For example, to some it can be quite daunting, others may have long-established local connections and regularly host large groups. Other towers may not have teaching capacity, a regular band or may have bell maintenance or structural fabric issues. We recommend conducting a survey of your CCCBR affiliated Association or Guild towers to find out which towers are willing to participate in a badge scheme. Once the responses are in, map alongside locations of Scouts groups. If the majority of groups are within 20 mins by car of a tower willing to host visits, it looks feasible! Maintain a list of participating towers to call upon for visit requests;
4. Using resources, format and framework established by the Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team, demonstrate to participating towers how they can host large groups, by setting up probably 2 Demonstrator Sessions across the county geography, showing how Scouts bellringing evenings can work in practice with opportunity for questions. Invite tower captains from all participating towers. Tower visits typically comprise the Scouts Leaders dividing youngsters into smaller groups and rotating around a carousel of usually 3 or 4 activities, including chiming and ringing backstrokes in the ringing room. Chiming only recommended for Beavers;

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5. The staged Derbyshire County Bellringing Badge syllabus was developed in collaboration with DDA Education Committee. It's flexible to accommodate all ages and abilities, in keeping with demands of other badges and shows progression. The badge designs are available for you to use and text can be adjusted to reflect your County. Suppliers can be recommended or find a local supplier. On uniform, the County Bellringing Badge is displayed as an "occasional" badge on top left front breast, or camp blanket;
6. Having established feasibility along with local enthusiasm from Scouts volunteers and the bellringing Association to progress, raise awareness with the County Lead Volunteer and take them through the plans. Seek County approval to adopt the Derbyshire Scouts County Bellringing Badge scheme in your County;
7. Link in to your Scouts systems and processes to run the scheme. For example, a dedicated contact and Scouts bellringing activity organisational email address; web page; finance links for administering accounts, potential charges for visits, purchase of badges, donations; training; publicity;
8. Publicise to raise awareness of the new County bellringing badge with Scouts and the Bellringing Association;
9. Start your tower visits and follow on visits using the carousel format. Consider expanding your team to help enable and organise upcoming visit requests and manage team diary. The main role is liaising to link Scouts groups to local participating towers; liaising between tower captains and Scouts leaders around arrangements; advising activity plans; advising on risk assessments; co-ordinating and leading visits; establishing and growing local Scouting and bellringing networks; managing badge supply and finances; determining local suppliers for bellringing badges; manage badge awards; oversee consistency; bellringing progression. See next section for examples of how we plan and run the sessions in Derbyshire.
10. As part of the Derbyshire scheme, we've worked hard to find ways to continue to sustain and strengthen local links between towers and Scouts groups and continue to encourage uptake in progression in bellringing. We recommend involving local tower captains in bellringing badge presentations; at presentations encourage youngsters to speak to their Scouts leader if they wish to continue to take up bellringing; give out invitation cards for another go at bellringing. Moving forwards, we're looking to encourage Scouting bellringing through further events.

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Running Sessions

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Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team Lead, Andy Austen, Takes You Through:

When a Scout section contacts us, we send them a request for information that will enable us to start to set things up. This includes, their meeting days and times, likely numbers of youngsters, location, contact details, and either some dates or an idea of when they would like to do it - it has to fit into their overall programme.

We have 25 towers in Derbyshire who have offered their services and we have located them on a map along with Scout groups.

Once we know roughly when the Scout section wants the tower visit, we can identify suitable towers and check with the section which will work for them in terms of transport, access and facilities. This does require some investigation with the towers about staircases, space available, arrangements at the church...

This enables us to start to work with the tower on planning a visit.

Every tower is different and so the plan for each is largely unique. Once they have hosted a first visit – usually with our help – subsequent visits are easy. Just tweaking the arrangements for time available, and number and age of participants ...

We often have an initial meeting or two with the Tower Captain to sort out the programme.

We offer the Scout section support with a risk assessment for the event as they have no knowledge of bellringing. We share this with the tower – who will have their own.

The visit is a Scout event and the Scouts Association hold their leaders responsible for the visit in terms of safety and safeguarding. Of course, the tower has a duty of care and needs to ensure safety and safeguarding from their end.

For larger sections we usually split them into 2 groups with one having the tower visit and the other the introduction. Then another week we swap them over.

The tower programme varies considerably based on the arrangements at the tower but essentially starts with a welcome and explanation of the format, an explanation and demonstration of bellringing, a visit to see the bells (if possible) or CCTV or photographs.... a go at chiming a bell and for Cubs and older, a go at backstrokes. One tower has had them ringing the hand stroke and clapping on the sally, but not all towers are happy with that. We usually split them into 3 or 4 small groups and have a carousel of short activities – maybe hand bells, a church trail, a game, a naming the parts work sheet... Sometimes the explanation and demonstration is to the whole group, sometimes it is one item in the carousel and chiming/backstrokes is another. Examples follow later.

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There are logistics issues – leader or adult to accompany each small group, a time keeper, enough experienced ringers to do backstrokes etc. (we can help out a little here), access to toilet, somewhere to put coats and the inevitable water bottles. Conventional handbells are quite difficult for youngsters to ring but it's worth giving them a go. We have tuned desktop bells which do the job.

On a couple of occasions, we were asked to involve the clergy to run an activity that contributes to the My Faith part of some badges. To emphasis scale, if access to the bells is not possible, we do chalk a circle on the floor the diameter of the tenor and see how many kids can stand in it. 18 Beavers at Bakewell!

The badge requirements do require the youngsters to do a little bit of finding out on their own. There are lists of options. This is best done at the tower.

Sample Visit Plan – Know About Bellringing Badge

The Introductory Sessions (can be done as a follow-on session instead). Timings are indicative. Scouts usually have 2 hours, Cubs 1½ hours and Beavers an hour. However, some cub packs only have an hour. This programme will just fit into 1½ hours.

This varies depending on time available and the number of youngsters.

- The way we do this at the moment is to allow 10 minutes for the leaders to open the session with Flag break, Grand Howl...
- Then for the next 10 minutes or so we use a 2D model bell to explain what happens and how it works – full circle, raising and lowering, treble/tenor, rounds, ringing high and low, stay, slider, hand stroke, backstroke and why...
3 safety rules – do what told instantly, don't touch a rope unless invited, feet on ground always.
Then some video of the bells at Hartshorne and the 3rd ringing (4 cwt), a slide of Ian at Alvaston sitting astride his tenor, spanner in hand (17cwt) to show comparative scale.
- Then a game for 5 minutes – True/false statements which gets them running around
- Then for about 10 minutes, a session on Methods. Using flip chart paper, start with rounds on 5. Explain about call changes and then about changing places without instructions. Give them the rules for plain hunt and get them to work out each line with a different child writing the line on the flip chart. Even Beavers can do this although sometimes the 3 is the wrong way round! Have it written out on a chart to show them. Explain how the bells zig-zag front to back. Then explain about extents – and factorials. Help them to work them out from 5 up to about 7! – one of them will probably do that for you in their head. Then point out that 7 factorial is enough for a

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Peal. Point out that Plain Hunt comes back to rounds after 10 changes. Show them how Plain Bob Doubles (written out on a flipchart) extends that and explain that a bell stays in second's place ...

- Split into small groups of about 6 each. Cub pack maximum size is 36 so we usually split a large pack into two with only half visiting the tower at a time. This gives us not more than 3 groups of 6 at a time. Most packs are nearer 18 or 20.
Using the leaders as well, provide a carousel of 3 or 4 activities of about 10 or 12 minutes each – maybe some of:
 - Tuned desktop hand bells, - call changes to Queens and then let them try calling. Let them take turns to start the ringing saying “Look to, treble’s going, she’s gone”; Tunes too perhaps. Try plain hunt (written out). Ringer really needs to run this activity.
 - Time line – history of bells and ringing – 500AD onwards. Someone (Scout, Explorer, Leader...) reads statements and youngsters put cards in chronological order.
 - Worksheet naming parts of a bell mechanism – more challenging is one naming the parts of a wheel.
 - Top Trumps on Towers,
 - Beetle drive to build a church with bells,
 - Hangman using ringing terms.
 - And more as they are developed – action story, bell nursery rhymes...
- 5 minutes or so as a group discussing what needs repairing and maintenance. Lead conversation to ropes and splices. We have a bell rope with a splice right in the centre. Discuss how they could test the splice.
- They will quickly come up with a tug o’ war. This makes a good finale which takes another 5 minutes or so.
- 5 minutes for the leaders to close the meeting.

A good deal of flexibility and careful planning is needed to fit things in. We have found that in a follow-on session, the introductory session is worth doing as a recap. It may be some time since their tower visit, some youngsters may have moved up/joined since the visit, and reinforcement isn’t a bad idea anyway. In most towers, a visit to see the bells is not possible, so the video is good.

If you have an hour and a half this will work. For two-hour sessions, it is better and there are longer versions of some activities and you can include more in the carousel. With Scouts and Explorers, we have introduced an activity on splicing.

We’ve found this format effective for a range of ages, group sizes and Scouts programmes.

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Examples at Towers

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Tower Examples

Non-Scouting adults usually wear a badge with their Christian name.

At Hartshorne: 6 bells with a fairly small ringing room but access to the bells and a walkway which enables a group of about 6 youngsters, a ringer and a leader to see a muffled bell being rung.

After a welcome and explanation, we split them into three or four small groups.

- One up the tower via the clock room for an explanation/demo,
- one in the ringing room for an explanation using a 2d model and, on a ready signal from the bell chamber, a demo of getting a bell up, set, ringing high and slow, lower and faster, and getting it down.
- Meanwhile another group on hand bells for call changes and maybe tunes. They like calling changes themselves and trying to get back to rounds.

We use tuned desktop bells – we find proper hand bells difficult for them to ring.

- If 4 groups then another activity

Then each group has a go in the ringing room chiming and ringing backstrokes while the others do a church trail game.

Beavers upwards can chime, but we wouldn't do back strokes with them.

At Bakewell: it is simpler because the entire section has been able to get into the ringing room at once – sitting around the edge.

So, we covered safety, did an introduction using a 2d model, got a bell up – then slow and quick ringing, standing the bell and getting it down – usually allowing it to lift the ringer off the floor at the end. They have CCTV so you can see the bells ringing. Counted how many Cubs or Beavers we could get in the tenor diameter.

Then split into 3 groups. One stayed to chime a bell and (Cubs) ring backstrokes, another group downstairs to use the hand bells, and a third group to play Top Towers or the Beetle Drive tower game, or name the parts worksheet.... Then they moved round.

At Alvaston, Derby: the bells were ringing as they arrived and small groups were taken to see the ringers. In the church in small groups, they then had a go with the hand bells and a talk and slide show, a visit to the ringing room for an explanation and demo and go at chiming. They went home with a goody bag.

All towers ought to be able to manage chiming. We sometimes have to arrange for additional ringers to help with backstrokes. At one tower with Scouts and possibly Cubs, as well as backstrokes, they got them ringing partially up and also clapping on the sally – but

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they had a number of experienced tutors. However, meeting some of the youngsters later, I got mixed tales! With Scouts and experienced tutors, I think it is good.

The key thing is that they have enjoyed themselves and had an interesting time in a church with bells, have seen how they are rung, have handled a rope and done some interesting and informative activities. Every tower is different.

At Whitfield St James, Glossop: This is complicated by having Ellacombe Chimes as well as full circle bells and so there are actually two carousels of three activities – one carousel involving ringing demo, chiming and backstrokes, and the other the chimes to enable the youngsters to experience both Ellacombe Chimes and full circle ringing.

A range of activities have worked for us in hosting bellringing visits with Derbyshire Scouts. It's appreciated that Scouts leaders have often taken the time to write complimenting all involved on how much the youngsters have enjoyed the bellringing evening. Thank you!

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Resources

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Resources

Please find below tried and tested resources to help get your visits underway! These are brought to you freely and collaboratively, some new, some refined to suit the format for the bellringing evenings and the age of the group. The activities may support gaining other badges. For example, Scouts have talked to groups about their enjoyment of bellringing and gained their Speaker badge!

Carousel and Group Activities

Chiming a bell (movement)
Ringing backstrokes (movement)
Top Bell; (table)
True / False game; (movement)
Name parts of a bell; (table)
Name parts of a bell wheel; (table, older kids)
Bell frame jigsaw; (table)
Bellringing timeline; (table)
Bell Beetle Drive; (table - carousel or large group. Non-competitive or competitive)
Handbell tunes for 6- and 8-bells in addition to Rounds and Call Changes; (table)
Maintenance; (conversation)
Methods; (conversation)
Rope splicing; (movement)
Cubs in a Bell; (movement).
Hang man; (table)
Tug O' War with spliced bell rope; (movement)

Capital Items

Desk tuned handbells (online, approx. £48)
Good quality bell model for group explanations of bellringing (available from CCCBR)
Purchase of supply of bellringing badges: Know About Bellringing, Bellringer 1, 2, 3.

Planning

Scouts visit booking form;
Tower survey template;
Sample visit plans – see above.

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Badge Requirements

Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Badge Requirements are published and available here:

<https://www.derbyshirescouts.org/activity/bellringing>

The Derbyshire DDA website (Scout Badges page): <https://derbyda.org.uk/scout-badges/>

Bellringing Derbyshire portal (Young People page): <https://bellringingderbyshire.org.uk/young-people/>

Badges

Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Badges and badge text customisation is available through Derbyshire Bellringing Activity Team Lead, Andy Austen;

More Information and Queries

‘Peak Bells’ Newsletter 25, April 2026 ‘Scouts’ bellringing at St Peter’s Church, Hope’

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CW7FFWGNmjz_v9OkmPJzLoV1T6LN8Dxh/view?pli=1

‘The Ringing World’ Issue no. 5989 6th February 2026 ‘Scouting for Bells’ by Carole Hallam

For queries, please contact the Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team Lead, Andy Austen at: andy.austen@derbyshirescouts.org

Finance

Income is received from purchase of badges by Scouts sections with a mark-up that means we can replace badges when needed or put a surplus to future events. Over the next year it is likely to be necessary to consider introducing a charge for our services, refundable against purchase of a badge, in order to sustain future Scouts bellringing badge activity, and activities to continue bellringing progression. This is in line with other Scouts Active Service Units or Activity Teams and potentially to be introduced Autumn 2026.

We’re enthusiastic towards promoting a regional network of Scouting bellringers and arranging future Scouting bellringing events. Bellringing was included in 2026 Derbyshire Activation; the Activity Team has organised an afternoon ringing event bringing together Scouting bellringers across Derbyshire to celebrate 3 Scouting anniversaries with open ringing, light refreshments and a quarter peal. There is talk of a Scouts bellringing outing, quarter peal ringing opportunities and a bellringing presence at larger Scouts meetings (Jamborees).

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Looking Ahead

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Looking Ahead

The efforts over the last 12-18 months have continued to build on previous bellringing interactions with Scouts nationally, with foundations for what seems to be a new sustainable model for a NEW Derbyshire Scouts County Bellringing Badge providing a worthwhile activity of interest. It seems there are 3 possible approaches to rolling out access more widely:

- Lobby Scout HQ to re-introduce a bellringing badge (but not just reinstate the old one). This may be a longer-term option;
- CCCBR offer a badge, syllabus, guidance in delivery, assistance with resources that any organisation can use – Scouting, Guiding, youth clubs, schools. The Duke of Edinburgh stuff is an excellent example;
- Promote the idea of a Bellringing Badge like the Derbyshire one with Scout counties. Members of local ringing associations with county Scouting connections have approached us about this.

Progression

Bellringing Badges and Bellringing Badge Requirements are available and show progression to additionally support other awards. The scheme continues to build on previous Scouts bellringing activity and experience. This 'How To' Guide explains steps from the Derbyshire experience, to enable getting a bellringing badge scheme underway in other Scouts counties. From running the scheme over the last year, there are positive indications for potential funding, growing interest from Scouts leaders and new youngsters learning bellringing.

Moving forwards, the Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Badge offers a framework enabling all ages to start by gaining the Know About Bellringing badge and there's no reason why it should not also be available to adults. Indeed, Scouts Leaders now know more about bellringing, in addition to the 250 youngsters who have earned their Know About Bellringing badges! The scheme can support other awards such as Duke of Edinburgh amongst others.

Some have expressed interest in trying it for themselves and taking it further to gain Bellringer 1,2,3 badges. The first Stage 3 and Stage 1 badges have been awarded. The Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Badge scheme format is becoming established in line with existing Scouts Active Service Units or Activity Teams. Fresh links between towers and local Scouts are introduced and strengthened continuing to facilitate grass roots bellringing. Encouragingly we're seeing youngsters interested in learning bellringing. The ultimate ambition is for Scout sections to do the badge using published guidance, ideas and resources supported by participating towers. So actually, anyone anywhere could do it.

Carole Hallam and Andy Austen

Derbyshire Scouts Bellringing Activity Team, July 2026