

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST SAVIOUR, OXTON

BELL RINGING : PERMITTED TIMES AND HOURS

SUNDAY SERVICES

8.00 A.M. SERVICE	NO PRIOR BELL RINGING WILL TAKE PLACE
9.30 A.M. SERVICE	PRIOR RINGING - NO LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES
11.15 A.M. SERVICE	PRIOR RINGING - NO LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES
6.30 P.M. SERVICE	PRIOR RINGING - NO LONGER THAN 30 MINUTES

WEDDING SERVICE

BELL RINGING ONLY AFTER THE WEDDING SERVICE
BELL RINGING NO LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

NO MORE THAN 3 SPECIAL SERVICES PER CALENDAR YEAR TO INCLUDE LOCAL AND NATIONAL EVENTS. ALL SUCH EVENTS TO BE CLEARLY NOTIFIED BY NOTICE BOARD AND LETTER, IF APPROPRIATE.

BELLRINGING PRACTICES

TO BE PERFORMED ON THURSDAYS ONLY. GENERALLY 7.30 TO 9.00 P.M. AN EARLIER 30 MINUTES EXTENSION FOR INFORMAL TEACHING CAN TAKE PLACE ON NO MORE THAN ONE OCCASION PER MONTH

CAMPANOLOGISTS

ANY CAMPANOLOGISTS, INCLUDING VISITING CAMPANOLOGISTS, TO BE ACCOMMODATED WITHIN THE ABOVE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS.

7th October 1993

Reverend Poulter
St Saviours Church Vicarage
8 Wexford Road
OXTON
Wirral

EH/NJ/BMB

4936

Mr N Joughin

Dear Reverend Poulter

I write to inform you that I have received a number of complaints by residents living near to your church concerning noise from bells ringing at the church, alleging that the periods of ringing are excessive, amounting to a nuisance.

Noise nuisances created in this manner are subject to the provisions of Part 3 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

In determining whether such noise amounts to a nuisance the courts would consider not only the loudness, but also such factors as when, how often and for how long the noise occurs. Clearly, the loudness of your bell ringing is at a level that is intrusive to nearby properties. It is the reasonableness or otherwise of the other factors that would be crucial in a judgement of nuisance. It may therefore be helpful if I outline the occasions that I understand the bells are rung and the ways in which I would suggest that nuisance could be avoided:-

1. Normal bell ringing prior to Sunday Services. Subject to the ringing being of normal times and duration such ringing is clearly traditional, reasonable and therefore generally acceptable.
2. Practices on Thursday Nights. I understand that, following a direct approach to you by one of the complainants, the practice nights have been limited to 7.40 pm until 9 pm. Under normal circumstances such practices should be restricted to finish at approximately 7 pm, when, for example, ice cream van chimes are legally required to cease and at a time when many young children settle down to sleep. However, in this particular case, the current times have recently been adhered to and no part of the complaints received by this Department relate to the lateness of the practices. If and until complaints about these times are received, I can see no reason why the present arrangements should not continue.
3. Weddings. Like the normal Sunday services, bell ringing at Weddings is a traditional occurrence and normally would have to be accepted as not being a statutory nuisance. But, as in all these situations, reasonableness and commonsense should prevail. At your church the complainants have said that the bell ringing after

weddings is of the widely accepted short duration and quite acceptable; however, they complain that no matter how many weddings take place on a particular day the bells are rung for a full half hour before each one. This means that if, for example, there are 3 weddings on one afternoon, the disturbance from the bells exceeds 1½ hours. It would seem reasonable to suggest that as the number of weddings on any one day increases, the bell ringing for each one should be of an appropriately shorter duration.

4. Other Bell Ringing Events. It is the other bell ringing events that have caused greatest complaint and that I would suggest as being the most unreasonable and therefore, legally the most likely to be regarded as a statutory noise nuisance.

Examples of such events are, I understand, as follows:-

Saturday 3rd April 1993. It is alleged that to "Welcome the Bishop of Birkenhead" the residents were subjected to 3½ hours of bell ringing (3 pm - 6.30 pm).

Sunday 4th July 1993. It is alleged that to "welcome a new curate" the residents were again subjected to 3½ hours of bell ringing (3 pm to 6.30 pm).

I also understand that campanologists from Stockport have been invited to ring the bells for over 4 hours next Saturday, and that campanologists from Wolverhampton took part in a similar event in August. I have reports of a number of other single events this year in which the bells have been rung for prolonged periods. Such events are indicative that the source of the problems are not so much the legitimate activities of the church but the hobby of the campanologists. Such an activity, like all other hobbies, must be carried out in such a way as to avoid creating statutory nuisances. By the nature of the hobby, with the unavoidable high levels of noise, campanology is highly likely to create nuisances unless there is stringent controls on the times, frequency and duration of the ringing. To this end, bell ringing, other than that referred to in 1, 2 and 3 above, should be restricted to very occasional, special events of widely accepted importance, and even these events should be of limited duration (eg. maximum 1 hour). As for visiting campanologists from Churches in other regions, perhaps they could ring the bells on a reciprocal basis in the usual periods before the Sunday Services or on the Thursday night practice periods.

In this letter I have tried, by giving such detailed comment and guidance on avoiding the creation of statutory noise nuisances, to resolve the problems in an informal way and thus avoid possible legal proceedings.

Your co-operation in resolving these problems would be greatly appreciated. Should you wish to discuss the matter, I am usually available on the above telephone number 9.30 am to 10.30 am and 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

Yours sincerely

N JOUGHIN
SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER
(POLLUTION CONTROL)