

Guild Week Questionnaire

Timing

Is a whole week an appropriate length? Would a weekend or a long weekend be easier?

4:4 split between preferring a (long) weekend and preferring a whole week. Several people noted 'the current format makes it easy to join a weekend'. One suggestion: 'I think it might be worth trying a weekend sometime in the year say to see what uptake is. This should not replace Guild week.'

Would you consider going on a longer trip, for example if it were abroad.

Replies not generally in favour: yes ×1; possibly ×2; probably not ×3; no ×3. 'I think that sort of trip requires a smaller scope like the various peal tours one sees to US, Aus, SA.'

What about a week with a specific shorter period recommended for those unable to make the whole thing?

All replies generally positive. One person could 'only see that working as the opening weekend'. 'Would you get enough people for the remainder?'

Is August a good time for it? Is a date in or out of the school holiday period better? Is Easter better than summer? What about a bank holiday weekend?

'August is fine' ×5; 'nice weather is good' ×2; 'bank holidays are travel nightmares' ×2; 'another time would be better' ×2.

Is it good to have it at the same time, and of the same length, each time?

Only one person was in favour of varying when it is held.

Location

Do you think it should usually be in a central location, e.g. the Midlands, the Home Counties, London?

Yes ×3; 'no — variety is good' ×4. 'Cornwall, Lakes, etc. make less sense for less than a week'. 'Not London!'

Would you consider travel further afield for a CUG ringing tour? E.g. Ireland?

North America? Australia?

Yes ×5; no ×5. Of those who would consider it, many said cost was an important factor.

Is it better to be based in the centre of a large city? In a market town? A more rural setting?

No-one favoured a large city; market town 4; rural location 5. 'Oxford next year sounds good — city location but surrounded by countryside.' Several people mentioned access to public transport for travelling there.

Do you prefer organised accommodation in, e.g. a school or university? Or would you prefer to do your own thing in hotels, pubs, B&Bs, youth hostels or campsites? (Which?)

Everyone responded broadly in favour of organised accommodation. 'I like the social side of having breakfast and a meal together.' However some draw backs were noted. 'Organised accommodation is not necessarily family-friendly'. The frequent lack of rooms with double beds was also criticised as 'quite Victorian'.

If camping or staying on a church hall floor were available as an alternative, would you take advantage of it?

Only one of the responses said they personally would consider this, but many thought it was important for encouraging students.

I understand this year's Guild Week costed £38 per person per day (£48 for an en suite room; £30 for students). This included dinner, bed, breakfast and tower fees, and works out at £266 for the whole week. Is this too much? (If so, what would you cut to reduce the price?) Would you be willing to pay more?

This attracted lots of comment. Four people said they were happy with this price, two saying they'd be prepared to pay more if necessary. Several said they'd 'expect it to be cheaper', and one noted 'I would have expected the students to be more subsidised than that, particularly if camping is not available.' One commented that when they had been a student they hadn't gone on Guild Week one year and 'had a lovely holiday to Italy which worked out cheaper than Guild Week'.

The lack of a discount for couples was also criticised. '£50 a night is £100 a night for two. Considering that I'm not bothered about the food in a school and would probably rather get something out anyway, we basically end up paying £100 a night for a room and ringing and you can stay in a nice hotel for that, ring a peal each and still have change for pub grub.'

Is it important to be based within walking distance of a pub? Or are barrels of

beer in some central area sufficient?

Replies equally split between those who thought a pub was necessary, and those who were content with beer on site. Samuel Johnson was quoted: “There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn”.

Is it necessary to be based in a single place throughout the tour?

Respondants only thought this would be acceptable on ‘foreign tours where there aren’t enough towers’.

Should it be in an area with additional non-ringing attractions? If so, what? Mountains? Beaches? Decent nightlife? Steam railways? Museums?

All but one said this would make them more inclined to go. Nightlife ×1; beaches ×2; mountains ×4. Three people single out the Lake District week as especially good in this respect.

Do you object to visiting an area that has been the target of a previous tour?

Two people objected to too much repetition. Most didn’t care. One even said ‘it’s sometimes nice to go back to somewhere you’re familiar with and have fond memories of’.

Ringling

What balance of open ringling, quarter peals and peals would you most like to see? If you prefer quarters or peals, how many would you like to ring over, say, a three day trip?

Peals: none ×3; one ×2; two ×2; three or more ×2. Quarters were less popular than peals, though three said they’d like ‘a couple’. ‘A good mixture’ as a common if not wholly helpful response. ‘My perfect Guild Week day used to be a morning peal and one or two towers in the afternoon if lunch allowed’.

If there is to be significant general ringling, do you have strong opinions on whether bands should be placed as a matter of course?

‘Mostly placed’ ×5; ‘not as a matter of course’ ×2. ‘It has to be managed carefully so there isn’t elitism throughout the week’; ‘it’s important to ensure that those running ringling are sufficiently aware of the abilities and aims of each attendee’.

Would you like to see time devoted to organised hand bell ringling? And again,

open sessions, quarter peals or peals?

Handbell ringing was a popular suggestion. Several pointed out that this need not be formally arranged. Two said 'not every night otherwise there aren't enough people for the pub'.

Would it ever be acceptable to include an invitation-only session that only the more competent ringers were invited to? (For example, for general ringing at somewhere like Worcester Cathedral, York Minster or St Paul's Cathedral?)

Equal 4:4 split between those who felt this could be acceptable, and those who thought it never would be. 'It would be divisive'; 'but it should be dealt with sensitively'.

What about having open ringing at two towers simultaneously to reduce numbers?

Few people thought this was necessary, though no-one objected. 'You'll have nutters (like me) dashing between the two.'

What balance of 6, 8, 10 and 12 bell towers do you prefer? For example, would you prefer more 10s and 12s even if it involved more travelling? Would you include towers with fewer than 6 bells?

Three people independently suggested '3 eights, 1-2 sixes, 1 ten or twelve' as a good mix. Most people said eight should be the default. Few people were in favour of towers with fewer than six; several were not keen on sixes either. Two preferred tens and twelves.

Do you have any preference for heavier or lighter rings? What about mini-rings?

Only one person was particularly keen on mini-rings; many were actively against them. Variety was popular. Two were ringing snobs: 'the more bells, and the heavier, the better!'

Would you be willing to have more travelling to visit particularly good rings of bells? Especially rare rings? Or rings that are unusual in some way?

Only one person was not in favour. 'But not excessively'; 'in moderation'. 'Only if there was less overall ringing in the day.'

Social

Would you be more (or less) inclined to go if it were more welcoming to non-CUG ringing partners? To non-ringing partners? To families?

This provoked lots of comments. Only one person was against including partners, ringing or otherwise. Most were in favour, many vehemently so. 'I have the strongest opinion on this — I think it should be as open as possible.' Several said they couldn't imagine going unless partners were welcomed; several said this was their biggest single reason for not going. The perceived 'very exclusive atmosphere' of current Guild Weeks also drew criticism from two respondents. One raised concern that this might make Guild Weeks too crowded.

A small majority favoured allowing families to come. One said this was 'essential'. 'Small children might be distracting.'

What about allowing non-CUG friends to attend?

Replies slightly more against than in favour. 'If numbers were short then we should open it up to OUS members — make reciprocal membership mean something.'

Would you be more inclined to attend if more of your contemporaries were attending? What about making a particular effort to get a certain age group to attend particular tours? What about a tour aimed exclusively at one age group?

Everyone who expressed an opinion said having more of their contemporaries there would make them more inclined to go. Many were keen on a targetting a particular age group though it 'needs organising in April–May'. A tour aimed exclusively at a single age group was unanimously rejected. 'It wouldn't be Guild Week'.

Are organised communal evening meals a good thing?

Unanimously popular. However four said they wanted 'to have the option to escape occasionally'.

Would you like to see social things organised in the evening? If so, what sort of things? Meals out? A formal dinner? Bowling? Cricket?

Other activities were popular. Softball, rounders and croquet were suggested, but 'could be done on an ad hoc basis' and 'not every night'. Four liked a formal dinner: 'I'm a bit of a sucker for formal dinners'.

What about non-ringing things organised during the day? (What?) Or perhaps time set aside without any specific activities planned?

Mixed responses. 'Maybe a couple of afternoons off'. Several thought this needn't be organised: 'I think people should just feel able to opt out should they want to.' The trip on the Settle–Carlisle line was recalled enthusiastically. Two people wanted more time in the pub.

Travelling

On current Guild Weeks, transport between towers is in cars in pre-arranged groups. Do you find this satisfactory?

The majority (7:4) find it satisfactory. 'I've had some great experiences and got to meet new people'. However many also expressed misgivings. Some cars don't visit the pub; certain drivers were described in less than flattering language; and many thought 'it means you can't choose to slope off to do something else'. A perceived pressure not to opt out of any of the ringing was noted. 'Perhaps opt-in, opt-out would be sensible?'

Would you prefer more walking between towers? Or public transport? Or a coach?

Walking around a city was popular. Two people were in favour of walking in rural areas too 'in fine weather'. A day on trains or trams was suggested. Coaches were criticised as being insufficiently flexible and too expensive, but also commended as being more sociable and beer-friendly. One was 'up for taking my bike next time if anyone else is.'

Would you like transport arrangements to be more accommodating for people who wish to spend half a day doing their own thing?

Most people were in favour of greater flexibility in principle. It should 'certainly not be assumed that all cars will go to all towers'. However 'opting out for half a day would seem logistically problematic.'

If there were a lot of travelling between towers (e.g. if it were in Scotland or Ireland) would this put you off?

Equal numbers (4:4) both ways.

On some tours (particularly the OUS tour), it's not unusual for some people to spend most of the afternoon in pubs near the afternoon towers. If that were easier, would you be more inclined to go? Or would that put you off?

One person thought this would put them off. Four were in favour; two thought it already happened. The potential lack of competent ringers up the tower was noted: 'my ideal solution would be to have fewer towers after lunch with larger gaps between them'.