

HEADLINES FROM THE 12 BELL COMMITTEE MEETING

DRAW FOR 2024 ELIMINATORS

The draw for the eliminators on Saturday 23rd March 2024 is:

At Reading: ASCY, Birmingham, Chester, Guildford, Norwich, Sheffield, Reading, Towcester

At Bristol: Bristol, Cambridge, Exeter, Leeds, Southwark, St Paul's, Stockton, Worcester

At Portsmouth: Cheltenham, Hursley, Ipswich, Melbourne, Oxford, Portsmouth, SRCY, Wimborne, York

The draw is not completely random, but is conducted as per [Rule 5](#); the process aims to spread out the strongest teams while reducing the distance teams need to travel. This year, the three top-seeded teams were Birmingham, SRCY and Bristol. Bristol were allocated to their home eliminator, and the other two were randomly drawn to the remaining venues.

The other seeded teams (ASCY, Exeter and Melbourne) were then each allocated to a different pool. Unseeded teams were randomly drawn into each pool. Finally, each pool was matched to a venue, using an algorithm that minimises the overall travelling time.

PRE-ELIMINATOR PRACTICES

In most years, teams have the opportunity to visit the eliminator venue before the contest for a 90 minute practice. However, the committee agreed to remove pre-eliminator practices for the 2024 contest. Qualifying teams will still have the opportunity to practise at Chilcompton before the final.

There was a lot of debate before the decision was reached, and a survey had also been sent out to teams not represented on the committee. The arguments put forward included:

- Practising at the venue in advance improves the quality of ringing on the day of the contest.
- Practices can help less experienced teams and ringers to feel settled and confident on the day.
- Teams can choose not to practice if it is not convenient, without removing the opportunity for others.
- Arranging suitable practice slots is a burden for host towers, who may also have to think about potential noise complaints or fitting around church services.
- Organising a time when the whole band can practice can be logistically difficult, especially when long travel times are involved. It adds a big time-commitment to participation in the contest, which may put off ringers or bands who would otherwise be involved.
- The cost and environmental impact of travelling to the venue for a practice can be considerable.
- The practice slots on offer at eliminator towers this year are fewer and less convenient than in previous years. In particular, there are fewer Sunday afternoon slots available, which are typically the most popular.

It was decided that practices would not take place before the 2024 eliminators, and that the larger question of whether practices should be offered in future years would be discussed at a strategy meeting in March.

2024 FINAL AT CHILCOMPTON

Arrangements at Chilcompton are progressing well, and they will soon be publishing details of a system to allow bookings for travel from major railway stations, and local camping pitches. Watch this space!