

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

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In this Issue:

Celebrating Two Gold Plus Achievements for 50 Ringing Things.....	2
Recent Successes.....	3
50/50 Club Draw News.....	3
Disaster Brings Benefits for Barnes.....	4
The Shenfield Young Ringers' Quiz.....	7
This Girl Can.....	8
From Rounds to five-spliced Surprise Major.....	10
A year of ringing: the secret diary of a lifelong learner, aged 54.....	12
Lytchett Allsorts or 'The Plain Bob Doubles Challenge'.	13
Grab Hold!.....	14
Answers to the Short Quiz.....	16
Stand!.....	17
Learning Tips 11: Lessons from Mindfulness.....	18

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Rolling dice to decide how many pulls before standing ...

There's so much to think about in ringing! A topic which comes up time and time again, though, is how do you concentrate? When you are starting out in ringing all your brain space is taken up with just maintaining control of your rope and remembering all those tips you get from your teachers and fellow ringers - 'Pull all the way through!', 'hands straight down off the sally!', 'stretch right up!'. As soon as you begin to feel comfortable with all that, there's more stuff to cram into your brain - 'What place am I in?', 'Which bell is leading?', 'Is that my bell clashing?'. All this can get very stressful and as soon as we feel anxious everything goes wrong! It is really important to be aware of how anxiety can affect our learning. Even if you don't feel anxious there may be subtle thoughts going through your mind like, 'I should be able to do this by now' or even something totally unrelated like 'I've got an early start tomorrow morning' which can undermine your equilibrium. So, try to prepare for your ringing before you get to the tower - clear your mind, remember why you are there, visualise what you might ring, plan your day if you can so you're not stressed or rushing. Easier said than done, of course, but just taking that first step to de-clutter your mind might be the start of more confident and rewarding ringing!

Celebrating Two Gold Plus Achievements for 50 Ringing Things

By Gillian Hosking, ringer at Kineton, Warwickshire

[We printed a lovely photo of Gill and Kathy celebrating together on the front of the previous edition. Now you can read more about the day in this article by Gill. You may also remember that Gill wrote about the Ladies Who Lunch visit to Oxford in edition seven.]

I needed only one more 'Thing' to earn Gold Plus and, as I had already grabbed 47 towers and needed just three more to obtain a 'Green Thing', I organized a ringers' mini-tour of Hatton, Lapworth and Honiley, celebrating finishing my 50th Tower and 50 Things Gold Plus at Honiley with fizz and cakes – yey!

I have had a fabulous time collecting 'Things', and was a relatively new ringer of just 19 months experience at the time of completing Gold Plus.

I have learned and done so many ringing things that I would not normally have thought of doing as a new ringer if it hadn't been for the '50 Things' challenge. I have fitted muffles, spliced rope, whipped an end of rope, learned about transposition, organized a ringing tour, given a radio interview about recruiting bell ringers for the centenary of Armistice, organised a bell ringing recruitment open day, and many more.

Some of the 'Things' that have stood out for me and that I have enjoyed the most are: visiting Taylor's bell foundry, experiencing a ringers' service and ringers' tea, ringing on a mobile mini-ring (the Maplestead 8, which has a 3.916kg tenor), ringing at Coventry Cathedral, helping with judging a striking competition, and organising a *Ladies Who Lunch* day out in Oxford to hear a bell over 5 tons (Great Tom). Fabulous.

I joined forces with another ringer who was also collecting '50 Things', Kathryn McCarthy, and we have attended many of the 'Things' together which has made this so much more fun; like the day we made our model bells – what a laugh! So thank you, Kathy, for your company.

I should also like to say a big thank you to Sue Marshall and Graham Nabb for all their encouragement and support. They have both been wonderful in my learning to ring experience and '50 Things'! I couldn't have done it without them.



Celebrating together at Honiley were, from left to right: Graham Nabb, Kathryn McCarthy, Gillian Hosking and Sue Marshall.

[Image credit: John Tite]

I would highly recommend '50 Things'. It has been a challenge, but great fun!

[To start your own 50 Ringing Things challenge, go to the ART shop at ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop to purchase your own copy of the book.]

Recent Successes

By The Editorial Team

In the first quarter of 2019, 356 certificates were awarded to ringers at the various stages of Learning the Ropes (LtR) as below (last year's numbers shown for comparison):

Level 1 - Bell Handling	207 (155)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	99 (59)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	35 (29)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	10 (19)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	5 (4)



And here are the details of the 50 Ringing Things certificate achievers since we last published the names. Congratulations to all of them!

Mar 2019	Rosemary Pegrum	Bronze
Mar 2019	Sonia Field	Bronze
Feb 2019	Adam Turner	Gold
Feb 2019	Noah John McDermott	Gold Plus
Feb 2019	Trevor Haynes	Silver

Jan 2019	Jay Downes	Silver
Jan 2019	Katie Havenhand	Gold Plus
Jan 2019	Graham K Hunt	Gold Plus
Jan 2019	Melissa Hunt	Silver
Jan 2019	Katie Havenhand	Silver

If you'd like to see more of these and other similar statistics, they can all be found on the SmART Ringer website at smartringer.org/public/records/ and smartringer.org/fiftythingscert.

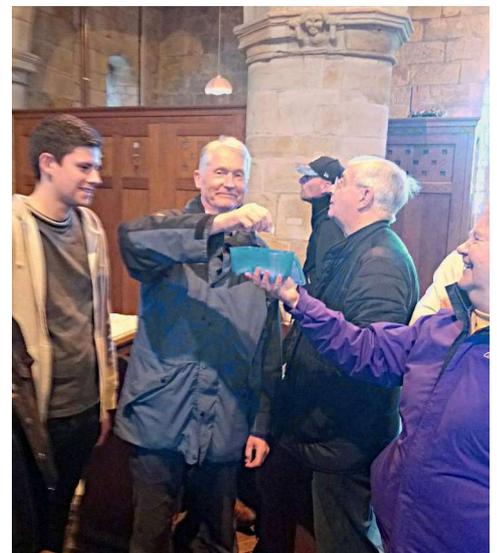
50/50 Club Draw News

By Gill Hughes, 50/50 Club Administrator and ringer from Belper, Derbyshire.

The first quarter draw for the 50-50 Club took place at Church Broughton during the heats for the Derby DA Striking Competition on Saturday 9 March.

The winning number was 88 held by Mandy Burnet from Devon; Mandy has won £72. The 2 other prizes of £36 were won by Alan Taylor from London with number 91 and Sue Turner from Tulloch with number 123.

You need to be "in it to win it", so why not consider joining and at the same time donating to ART? Information about how to join can be found at www.learningtheropes.org/5050club.



Disaster Brings Benefits for Barnes

By Trisha Hawkins, Barnes Tower Captain

It is devastating to see your local church being ravaged by flames, as I did in 1978 when St Mary's Barnes was burned to a shell. It was never established whether this was from an arson attack or an electrical fault, but St Mary's Putney had suffered a similar fate a few years earlier, from which the fire brigade had learned to let the fire burn itself out in the tower rather than douse with water, and as a result our bells were saved from cracking. By 1984, the church had been rebuilt incorporating what could be saved of the original structure (including the south wall and the tower) and we are now blessed with a wonderfully versatile space which can be used for any number of activities, both for the church and community, which would never have been possible in the old building. God works in mysterious ways!

It is in this lovely bright open area that we meet for bell ringing. Our ground floor ringing chamber is not large but during a practice when not ringing we can spread out in the large area between the font and the Congregational chairs, or even further down the nave, for different activities - on a Saturday this means sitting round a table enjoying the delicious home-made products from the church 'Coffee Shop', handbell ringing, perhaps learning to plain hunt on a laptop or phone/tablet, without being too far away to hear the call for the next ring! The only downside is that we have nowhere we can easily leave or store our additional equipment and have not yet found a satisfactory place to mount a large 'moving ringers' simulator screen.



For a number of years now we have made use of simulation on all eight bells when needed, sometimes with up to four laptops, for concurrent individual practice. We have a camera showing the bells on a television screen at the entrance to the ringing chamber and frequently have an audience prior to services or when we ring before a baptism. There are gates which prove essential to keep wandering children and dogs safe from the bell ropes! A ground floor ringing chamber certainly makes recruitment very easy. Anyone not ringing is encouraged to chat to those hovering close by and eventually, of course, to make the inevitable suggestion if they seem suitably interested!

Our teaching for new and improving ringers takes place almost every Saturday; in Barnes if possible, but at another tower if the music festival or some other activity prevents it. We start at 9.15am with all eight bells silenced (using motor bike tyre sections, which has proved to be such an easy system). From mid-morning until 12 noon we ring on open bells. Frequently we offer extra daytime training during the week, particularly when one-to-one teaching is required or when new ringers reach the stage of just needing time on the end of the rope to gain confidence.



A good turnout of new ringers bringing the average age down one Sunday morning!

Along with so many other towers, we have benefited from the 'Ringing Remembers' campaign. Wendy writes of her early learning experience:

'Don't look at your sally'; 'hands together on the tail'; 'more flick, Wendy'; 'you're pulling too hard'; 'your hands aren't heavy enough'; 'closer at backstroke'. I had no idea back in July 2018 that, just a few weeks later, instructions such as these would come hurtling at me across a busy tower room on Saturday mornings. I am a teacher, and, whilst on summer holiday last July listening to Radio 4, I heard mention of the 'Ringing Remembers' initiative. The rest, as they say, is history, and here I am six months later, having passed my LtR Level 1, getting to grips with Called Changes and still trying to find out who the devil Bob is! I had, of course, simply no idea what I was letting myself in for; but I am absolutely loving it, and finding it rather strangely compulsive. As a music teacher, it has been very sobering to put myself in the position of novice, of finding things hard, of making a bit of progress one day only to find I've taken two steps back the next! We recently had 'resilience week' at my school, and, boy, have I had to implement the principles of resilience that we have been extolling at school in my approach to bell ringing! As I told our pupils in our resilience assembly, when you are trying hard to do something, the support of others can make all the difference. Fortunately, support is in abundance at my home tower, St Mary's Barnes, adeptly lead by Tower Captain, Trisha Hawkins. Trisha is patience personified and with her band of willing helpers, all of whom give up their time voluntarily and willingly (another aspect to bell ringing I had not anticipated), all of us learners are enabled to make progress.



Jo and Wendy celebrating their ring on Remembrance Sunday.

There have been several highlights during my first six months as a novice bell ringer; kindly assisted by Trisha, I was able to take part in the ringing at the wedding of a good friend's daughter in October (also my first visit to another tower); it goes without saying that the Remembrance Sunday ringing was a privilege to be part of; it was so lovely to have my eldest daughter and my husband come to watch as I took part in the ringing on Christmas Day, very special. As I write this piece it is half-term break from school and I have taken the opportunity that the extra time has afforded me to visit other towers; Saturday saw me ringing at a Surrey Association event at Mortlake, then during the week I attended practices at Battersea, Richmond and Kingston (as you can see, I really am

hooked!). At all these towers I was given a very warm welcome; encouraged to take part; to visit again, and from all of them I learnt something, if only that there is a lot to learn! Life is full of chance moments that change things, sometimes for the better, sometimes less so. The chance moment of listening to the radio last summer has certainly changed things for the better for me as I look forward to a host of challenges that I had not even dreamt of just six months ago. And, yes Eddie, I will try to keep my hands together on the tail!

Naomi was in her second year of university when she enquired about learning to ring just over two years ago. She was available for 'fast track' learning which our ART training had encouraged us to offer and it certainly proved successful in her case, making the learning process so much easier. Only lack of opportunity had delayed her first quarter peal attempt until earlier this year:

For a few months prior to my first quarter peal, the instructors at St Mary's, Barnes had been gearing me up for it - making sure that I was as prepared as possible.

The regular Saturday morning sessions were incredibly helpful in the run up, and I was fortunate enough to have access to a simulator for a lot of these. Having such a tool allowed me to practise covering to various methods, and really gave me an idea of what it would be like to do so physically (even if all the bells wouldn't ever be quite so perfect in reality!). Ringing for weddings was good practice, too, as I began to get used to ringing for longer periods of time - often whilst waiting for a tardy bride of course! - and staying in the correct rhythm during these periods.

Having such a supportive group of not only instructors but fellow learners in Barnes has been instrumental to success for all ringers. Experienced individuals never tire of going over the same fairly simple exercises and are often on hand to give helpful advice afterwards. In such a friendly environment, I had no trouble approaching fellow ringers and asking for their comments - having an awareness of my mistakes as well as a range of potential solutions definitely made me feel as though I was fully geared up for any issues!

Some 'mistakes', however, I couldn't quite solve until the day. One such mistake was my tendency to pull too hard, which I had been warned would tire me out minutes into a quarter peal, and which I'd tried endlessly to remedy before the day with little success. I found that the best way to prevent this, however, was simply...to do a quarter peal! After about twenty minutes of full, over-exerting strokes, I began to ease off, and found not only that my arms thanked me, but my striking too!

I think that when it comes to a daunting 'first' like a quarter peal, a supportive and friendly group of not only instructors but also fellow ringers is crucial. I am very grateful for all of the wonderful people who are so dedicated to making our ringing, as learners, the best that it possibly can be.



Naomi (with her sally-matching jumper!) during the Listening Skills course in October.



Naomi and young Dom after their first quarter peal (as part of 7,6,8 covering).

It is always good to read the observations from our learners and be reminded how it feels to be at that early stage of ringing. It sounded as if Wendy could have done with fewer instructions 'hurtling' at her from across the tower (although she has certainly taken them on board and made huge progress)! But it was good to hear from Naomi that a quarter peal proved a good way of improving her over-pulling. I hope it is sorted for good or it will be a full peal for you next time, Naomi!

The Shenfield Young Ringers' Quiz

By Emily and Suzanna Brooks

In the previous edition of Tower Talk, there was an article about the Shenfield ringers written by Beth Johnson. In it, Sarah Robbins, one of the young ringers, told us about a quiz that had been devised especially for the young ringers. We said we would print it in this edition – and here it is:

Question 1. How many ringers are there roughly nationwide?

- A. 400 B. 4,000 C. 40,000

Question 2. How long is a peal?

- A. 45 minutes B. 3 hours C. 1 hour 37 minutes

Question 3. How many different combinations are there on 6 bells?

- A. 64 B. 548 C. 720

Question 4. How heavy is the heaviest bell in the world which is still in use?

- A. 92 tonnes B. 116 tonnes C. 187 tonnes

Question 5. When was the first all ladies peal rung?

- A. 1912 B. 1922 C. 1932

Question 6. What is another name to refer to ringing on 12 bells?

- A. Maximus B. Cinques C. Cladius

Question 7. What is a fire out?

- A. What to shout if a fire starts in a ringing chamber B. To ring haphazardly C. A method

Question 8. What is the term used in hand bell ringing when the ringers swap the bells around when ringing as a team?

- A. Lipping B. Lapping C. Chopping

Question 9. How many active bell towers are there in New Zealand?

- A. 4 B. 40 C. 400

Question 10. Who first brought handbells to the United States of America?

- A. Beth Johnson B. Margaret Shurcliff C. Linda Wright

The answers are: 1 C, 2 B, 3 C, 4 A, 5 A, 6 A, 7 B, 8 B, 9 A, 10 B.

This Girl Can

By Sue D Thomas, ringer at Carlisle Cathedral

It was Christmas Eve 2017 and I was walking through the Cathedral grounds in Carlisle. The bells were sounding out joyfully. It reminded me of my childhood and my two older brothers ringing at Christmas services. I was 'the little girl' and not allowed to learn to ring. I could join the choir. I related this charming memory to my strapping son, who replied "You've told me this before Mum. I don't know why you don't learn to ring now!". At that very moment we passed a sign inviting people to Learn to Ring at the Cathedral. Carpe diem, or maybe it was just time to seize the rope.

My first visit to the ringing room began by climbing up a narrow spiral staircase - goodness that was a long way. And only got me to the Clerestory. Now this was really breathtaking - you could almost touch the immaculate ceiling; and the view of the aisle and organ below left you giddy. The next staircase up was even narrower. How tall is this building?

“ I'm enjoying my student bell ringing immensely. The whole team are really kind, supportive and always there to offer their advice and wealth of experience.

“My tutors Barry Garrett and Ruth Gilbert respectively have been fantastic and it is acknowledgement to them that I have earned my certificate.”

Karen Scrivener
Level One ringer at Carlisle Cathedral

I was greeted in the ringing room by a sea of smiling faces, which was a relief as I was quite apprehensive about what 'Cathedral Ringers' would be like. I watched as the practice progressed and it all looked quite straightforward. Actually it looked easy. So I was quite surprised to be introduced to my one-to-one mentor who would initially train me. Really? How difficult could it be - it's only pulling a rope?

Many, many hours of patience on the part of John Proudfoot saw me start to get to grips with handling a rope and exercising some control over my wayward bell. Sometimes progress would be made and the pleasure was immense; but often

times this would be followed by silly rookie mistakes. The different bells were taking on personalities - some I liked and some were to be avoided.

The first time I rang with others was an eye-opener. They couldn't keep time with me!

There is no doubt that bell ringing is much easier if you ring on your own. Yes it's boring for the ringer and the listener; but you don't have to count, keep your place, watch the ropes, listen for the called change or remember the method. Oh, actually they are also all the things that make it fun.

Armistice Day arrived and 24 ringers gathered at the Cathedral to play our part in paying tribute to those who served in the First World War. As I started to ring, my legs began to shake; I so wanted to do this properly as it was such an important occasion. I concentrated hard and simultaneously tried to relax - arghhh; "make the most of being part of this" and keep counting! What an amazing feeling to be part of this incredible group of people, who have helped me get to this point.

So a year has passed now. I feel privileged to be part of the group who regularly ring at Sunday morning services on 12 bells; and enjoy the camaraderie of coffee afterwards in a local café. I feel confident with Called Changes and I am starting to get to grips with Plain Hunting.

“ I joined the bell ringers after an open day. I remember on the day we filled a form in asking if I would like to learn how to ring. So when I got the call I was so excited. Learning to ring, especially at the Cathedral. First with John then Ruth; I am so grateful for the time and effort they have put in just for me. After many, many hours I am getting there.

“I have come a long way. I appreciate everything everyone has done for me. Being able to ring for Sunday service. I just love it.”

Sheila Ferguson
Level One ringer at Carlisle Cathedral

Bell ringing has infiltrated into my life and taken over a large chunk of it; practices, training days, service ringing, going through methods in my mind as I drive. Whatever did I do with my time before?

As with all learners, I could not have achieved all this without innumerable hours of effort from my Mentor and other Cathedral teachers, who share their time, knowledge and passion. Thank you - you've got me hooked.

My son is coming home this weekend. Guess what I am going to make him do on Sunday morning?



Taken on 1 February at our weekly practice night on presentation of ART Learning the Ropes certificates to Carlisle Cathedral ringers by tower captain Ron East. Left to Right: Level 4 to Barry Garrett, Level 2 to Sue D Thomas, Ron East, Level 1 to Karen Scrivener and Sheila Ferguson.

Image credit: John Proudfoot

The ART Shop

As well as logbooks and badges, the ART shop also supplies DVDs and books on ringing, including some from the Whiting Society. Take a look to see what might be of use to you by going to the web page at ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop.

From Rounds to five-spliced Surprise Major (a dash of good fortune and a heap of hard work!)

By Cara Tatterton, ringer at Hathern, Leicestershire

I started my ringing journey in March 2015 and within 3 months I was well and truly hooked. In January of this year I rang inside to five-spliced Surprise Major. I would describe my ringing journey so far as being peppered with good fortune coupled with a lot of hard work. Here are my top tips for giving yourself the optimum chance of achieving your ringing dreams:

Get out more!

When I first started ringing everybody advised me to get experience ringing at as many different towers as I could. It was a daunting prospect to say the least! I'm not a naturally confident person, so walking into an unfamiliar tower, to ring rounds, just three months in, was very very scary. But you know what, everyone was so friendly and encouraging. It made a huge difference to my ringing progress in the early days; and I soon felt like a member of the ringing team. I now ring twice a week (practice nights) at a selection of four towers (my home tower plus three others).

Attend training events

Leicestershire has an active ringing guild. The district organises monthly ringing mornings and specific training events, including a full weekend ringing course. Attending these events, whenever I can, has been invaluable both for progressing in my ringing journey and getting to meet and socialise with like-minded learners. If you have an active guild or ringing society in your area or have the chance to attend other training events, I really would recommend them.

Do your homework outside of the tower (plus learn your place bells)

At each stage of my learning: Called Changes, Plain Hunting, through to Surprise Major methods, I have spent hours at home reading around the theory (I thoroughly recommend all of the books by Steve Coleman and the Whiting Society) and learning key aspects of methods like the work of each place bell, the order of work and where you pass the treble.

Step outside of your comfort zone and take every opportunity to ring with advanced ringers

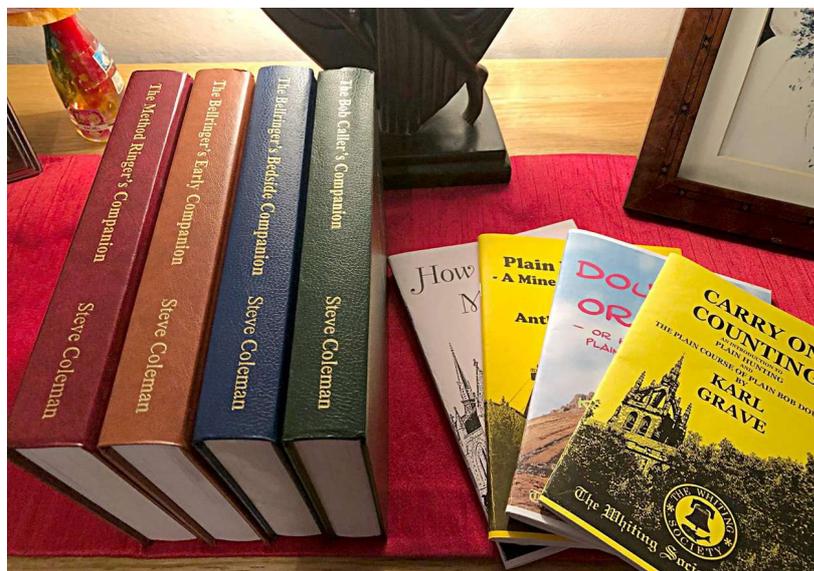
I thought it would take me decades to ring Surprise Major, if at all. Then, I was given the opportunity to attend a monthly meeting for Surprise Major ringers in order to ring the treble on 8-bell methods. This is a fairly prestigious meeting for advanced ringers to get together and practice the Crème de la Crème methods (look up the blue line to Glasgow and Belfast - eeeeeekkkkk). Well, let me tell you, I had to put my big brave pants on to get through that first practice, ringing in front of such talented ringers!!! However, taking advantage of this opportunity has allowed me to fulfil my dream ... first I rang the treble, then took the opportunity offered to learn to ring inside to Surprise Major methods, one at a time, and then in January of ringing five-spliced.

If nothing else, I have learned that ringing with others who are more experienced than you will always up your game and make you ring better!

Learning to ring is such an amazing journey filled with delight and despair! My journey is far from over – my current goal is to learn how to call touches in all the methods that I ring; and I hope one day I might even be able to conduct. So for now I'll continue to seek opportunities to learn and call touches when I can, and marvel at how conductors can ring their own bell whilst watching what everyone else is doing and knowing where the treble is when they need to make the call!

Good luck!

Right: Cara's books on bell ringing.



Bell Ringing Apps to Help You Learn



What can you use on your phone these days to help you progress? Here are a few of our suggestions. If you have some favourites of your own, let us know about them by contacting the editor.

Steve Scanlon's web site (www.ringbell.co.uk) has lots of software goodies. His Change Ringer's Toolkit includes a useful web page for learning how Called Changes work. Try it for yourself at www.ringbell.co.uk/toolkit/callchg.htm.

tadhill.com/ringing is a simple web app to display and learn change ringing methods.

Mobel is part of the AbelSim Change Ringing Simulator range. Find out more about the whole range at www.abelsim.co.uk.

The photo shows Jimmy and Jo from Barnes learning how to use Mobel to practice covering, plain hunt and just to listen to steady ringing while travelling to work.

A year of ringing: the secret diary of a lifelong learner, aged 54

By Pauline Fox, Northallerton

Pauline Fox is a learner at All Saints Church, Northallerton, North Yorkshire. She briefly rang as a teenager at her village church and began working towards her ART Learning the Ropes certificates in October 2017, when she moved from Northumberland back to North Yorkshire and re-engaged with bell ringing. Her teacher is Jennie Town.



Right: Ringers from All Saints Church, Northallerton at The Church of the Ascension, Whixley, after ringing a quarter peal, 1 December 2018.

L to R: Pauline Fox, Gordon Di Domenico, Jennie Town (C), Heidi Bradley, Hayley Bradley, David Town (Tower Captain).

- 5 February 2018 Achieved my ART LtR Level 1.
- 15 April 2018 Rang for Sunday evening service, Rounds & Called Changes on ten.
Terrifying! If I don't pull hard enough the bell doesn't go up and then crashes down too early ...
- 26 April 2018 Achieved my ART LtR Level 2.
- 9 July 2018 Back at practice after a month away in France. I've missed loads, including a tower outing which was clearly lots of fun.
- 11 August 2018 Rang the Tenor to a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles.
- 27 August 2018 First attempt to ring the Treble to plain hunt. The first time it all seemed to work but then it was as difficult as I feared it would be!
- 4 September 2018 Rang for a wedding, lots of people away! Rounds and Called Changes on eight. The conductor was great at keeping us relaxed so we could ring to the best of our ability. I was really proud!
- 1 October 2018 Back at evening practice after three weeks away. Delighted to hear that two of my contemporaries have passed their ART LtR Level 3, but very jealous too as it will be a long time before I'm there.
- 11 November 2018 Armistice Day. Important, with lots of ringers in the tower and everybody concentrating hard. Very poignant to ring half muffled bells in the morning and then open bells in the evening.
- 1 December 2018 Rang the Tenor to a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles at Whixley Church, to celebrate my parents' 60th wedding anniversary. Found my name in the tower signing-in book, dated 28 June 1976 – no wonder I don't remember it!
- 9 December 2018 Tower outing to Richmond and Bedale, to celebrate our Tower Captain's 70th birthday. Got the chance to ring at both towers.
- 24/25 December 2018 Rang for midnight mass and then for Christmas morning service, Rounds and Called Changes on ten. Great atmosphere.
- 1 January 2019 New Year's Day tower outing to Masham. Rang twice.
- 26 January 2019 Rang the Treble to a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles.
- 31 January 2019 Achieved my ART LtR Level 3.

Lytchett Allsorts or 'The Plain Bob Doubles Challenge'

By Debbie Phipps

When it was decided to launch a bell restoration project at St Mary's Lytchett Matravers in Dorset, Tower Captain Debbie Phipps came up with a clever fund-raising idea which will benefit the band once they are ringing on their newly restored bells as well.

Debbie writes;

I have challenged ringers from Lytchett Matravers and Lytchett Minster to ring and organise trips to more than 30 of the ringable peals of bells in the local area, to be completed by the summer of 2019. With the support of many experienced ringers, we will be focusing on Plain Bob Doubles so that by the time the bells have been restored we will be able to ring the method on our own.

Each month, a Lytchett ringer takes their turn to organise what has become an eagerly anticipated sociable day out, with lots of ringing and new experiences on different bells, and of course a nice pub and the opportunity to spend social time with each other. As well as all these benefits, the band have found this to be a fantastic bonding experience and have named themselves the Lytchett Allsorts - and are always accompanied by a box of the liquorice variety to have with coffee and biscuits.

Although Plain Bob is the main method, the band have also had the benefit of being introduced to several other Doubles methods, including Grandsire, Reverse Canterbury, St Simon's and Stedman. Some have been able to try these methods and all have admired them being rung by the much-appreciated helpers and supporters. A real highlight for the band though, was when we all rang Plain Bob Doubles together - the first time a complete Lytchett band had done this (and on the anti-clockwise ring at Gussage St Michael, too!). Over the course of just a few months we have seen and heard gradual improvements, and this is further motivating us to keep this challenge going, which won't be difficult as the weather warms up! So far we have raised over £100 and we thank everyone who has contributed. And to motivate us further, we have also made a valuable investment in our ringing future.



Image credit: Debbie Phipps

Other band members (several of whom have only been ringing for one or two years) made the following comments:

"It may seem simple to the experienced but for the first time I experienced some rope sight! I will keep working on my technique!"

"I really enjoyed Saturday (and I think I made some progress). Thanks to all the organisers, coffee makers and supporters for giving up their time to help us".

Grab Hold!

By Len Hand, ringer at Canon Pyon, Herefordshire

“Grab Hold!”

That’s what they say at the start of ringing, but I had no idea that church bell ringing was going to grab hold of me the way it has. Just over a year ago, here’s how it started for me.

A leaflet in the village shop explained that the “Ringing Remembers” campaign wanted to recruit 1400 new bell ringers to remember those ringers who lost their lives in the First World War. I called the number on the leaflet and Nicky offered me a chance to have lessons at our local church, St Lawrence in Canon Pyon. “Why don’t you come along to Hereford Cathedral on Sunday morning and see what we get up to first” she said. Great idea!, I thought, so I climbed the 138 steps to the ringing chamber and was taken up to the belfry to see the bells before watching the band ring the 10 bells for service. Already I was starting to think about the men and women who had stood in that very chamber for hundreds of years ringing the bells, and those that “Ringing Remembers” would commemorate.

My first lesson was great fun, and at the end they all said; “Come along to the pub now, it’s pie and pint night.” Now it was getting interesting; there’s a social side to it as well, I’m getting to like this, I thought. After a few more lessons and some steady progress there was mention that the bells should be rung for the coming Easter service. When I doubted that I could be anywhere near ready for that, Nicky said; “You’ll be fine but if you want more practice come along to St Peter’s at Lyde on Monday evenings.” Easter came along and we rang Rounds and Called Changes for service. It felt like the first milestone, actually being able to ring for real. By this time, I had also been invited along to a monthly practice evening at Hereford Cathedral. I had no idea when I first visited the ringing chamber that I would get the chance to ring on those historic bells so early on in my training. The sixth at Hereford Cathedral was cast around 1350 and yes, I had the chance to ring it. It’s hard to describe the feeling I had at being allowed to ring such an historic bell.

More steady progress came; visits to practice nights at a few other towers and a fabulous district outing to Wales where we rang at seven different towers in a day with, of course, pub lunch in the middle. I was starting to see how addictive this bell ringing lark could be!

The Hereford district striking competition came along in July, hosted by our band at Canon Pyon and we entered the Rounds and Called Changes competition. There was a barbecue, cold drinks and the most informal district summer meeting imaginable as eight bands enjoyed friendly competition with no one really caring who came first or last. But we didn’t come last! One band were just as interested in relaxing in a hammock in the early summer sunshine!

Confidence was starting to grow, but the mention of quarter peals in conversation in the pub after the striking competition suddenly made it all seem very scary. “We should ring a quarter peal” said Nicky. There was I wondering if there was any chance I could learn enough to be able to ring

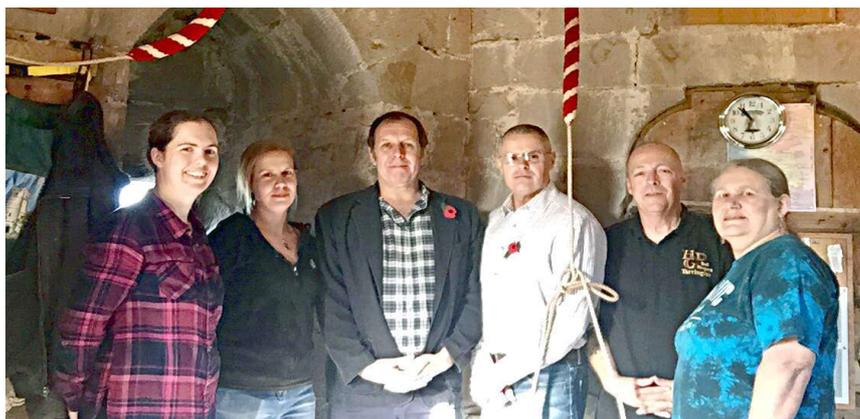


In the pub after Len's first quarter. Left to right: Fran, Kris, Andrew, Jason, Len, Nicky.

Image credit: Nicky Aubrey.

a quarter by Armistice Day. This was July and it didn't seem like there was much time to practice and improve. "No, not for Armistice, it's district quarter peal festival, what are you doing next Wednesday?" Nicky asked. I was absolutely terrified at the thought but, Nicky was again saying, "You'll be fine." If I had a pound for every time I've heard that over the last year! Anyway, after ten minutes on her phone Nicky had gathered a band to ring "Len's first quarter" followed by dinner in the pub. Now there was no way out. No time in fact to be terrified! I'd been chucked right in at the deep end. We got the quarter and it was a great honour to ring the tenor behind with five of the best ringers in the district.

Nicky seems to enjoy chucking me in at the deep end. It seems to work too. Before I had a chance to think about it, I was attempting Plain Hunt. The great thing about bell ringers is they will all help and support you through the first few dreadful attempts at ringing any method provided you show enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.



Ringling for service at Canon Pyon on Armistice Day. Left to right: Nicky, Charlie, Len, Chris, Steve, Rachel.

Image credit: Len Hand.

Armistice Day came and again I was told everything would be fine, I would be picked up and taken to where I was to be ringing. I had no idea what was in store for me. We started at Hereford Cathedral then our local church in Canon Pyon. Back at the Cathedral, we removed the muffles and a quarter peal was rung at midday. I didn't ring in the quarter but was able to watch a very good band score a quarter of Grandsire. We rang at four more churches, including Moreton on Lugg which was an incredible experience as the ropes fall only 8 inches from the wall of the ringing chamber and you have to stand sideways, one behind

the other, except for the third which falls in the middle of the room! After a pub break, we finished off at Canon Pyon where we removed the muffles and rang a quarter peal for "Battle's Over" at 7pm. An incredible day's ringing and the very reason I had started just over eight months before.

Now, just over a year into ringing, I've had the opportunity to ring five quarter peals - three on the tenor behind and two on the treble - and at three different towers. I have had the privilege to ring for service at Hereford Cathedral; and I rang in the new year at Burghill where there were so many ringers that six of the eight bells were shared by two ringers, one on handstroke, one on backstroke - that was great fun! I've rung at about 25 towers, mostly in and around Herefordshire (it's far too soon to have lost count!) and made many friends; Jason who patiently stood as I first rang backstroke holding the tail end like a golf club; Nicky who tells me it will be fine and pushes me along when I dare to doubt that I'm ready for my next step; Kris, Fran, Andrew, Ashley - we share the same birthday, Dan, Rick, Liz, Briannie, Martin, Anne, so very many more, all of whom will help if they can.

I can't ever imagine life without bell ringing now; it has definitely grabbed hold of me!

Bell Ringing Fun Stuff



Ringer Susan Hall from Derbyshire has come up with a quirky array of bell ringing related logos and designs for hoodies, T-shirts, scarves, mugs, bags, stickers ... the list goes on. A great present for your Tower Captain, or something to break the ice at a practice?! See what 'SuzySuperlative' has to offer at www.redbubble.com/people/suzysuperlative/portfolio/recent.

Answers to the Short Quiz

By Monica Hollows

In the previous edition we set you four questions devised by Monica Hollows. Here are the answers:

1. Where is the heaviest bell hung for change ringing in the world?

This is the tenor of the ring in Liverpool Cathedral. The thirteen bells, including a sharp second, are named the Bartlett bells after Thomas Bartlett who donated the cost of the ring, and have a total weight of 16½ tons, with the tenor weighing just over 82cwt. The bells were cast in 1939 at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, London.

2. Who or what are the nine tailors?

'Tailors' is a corruption of 'tellers', where bells were tolled to announce the passing (or imminent passing) of a life. The blows are struck in threes, with a pause between each three. The most common convention was thrice one for a child, thrice two for a woman and thrice three for a man, hence 'nine tailors' signalled a man's death. After a longer pause further tolling counted out the years of the passing life. Dorothy L Sayers used the theme in her book called "The Nine Tailors", which is all about a murder and a long peal of Kent Treble Bob Major.

3. What does the Gudgeon pin do?

The Gudgeon pin is a metal shaft attached to the ends of the headstock, forming the axle on which the bell swings.

4. When was the first ever peal believed to have been rung?

The first true peal (an extent of ringing with over 5,000 different variations) is believed to have been rung on 2 May 1715 at St Peter Mancroft, Norwich.

Fun With Bells - A Podcast

Podcasts are audio recordings that are in a digital format. They are intended to be downloaded and listened to on your computer or mobile device. They are free and, after downloading, you don't have to stay connected to the internet to listen to them.

Fun With Bells is a podcast which aims to provide "true and entertaining stories from people who ring bells". If you go to the web site (funwithbells.com) you can also view the additional information and photographs available for each episode, but you'll need to visit the site often to get new updates. Alternatively, you may prefer to use a podcast directory such as iTunes, Google Play, Spreaker or Spotify.



Stand!

By Mike Rigby, ART-Accredited Teacher and Tower Captain at Lighthorne, Warwickshire

My wife isn't a ringer, but a classically trained mezzo-soprano who teaches singing and gives the occasional recital; usually it's just her on stage with a piano accompanist. Bell ringers give performances too, and everything that my wife teaches singers about preparing to perform is analogous to what we ringers need to do – apart from warming up the voice! It seems that the way you stand is very important, and there's a bit more to it than I remember being told when I learned to ring. Indeed, books on singing often have a whole chapter devoted simply to learning to stand correctly. And, while we don't have to worry about maximising breath so that we can fill a concert hall with sound without using a microphone, everything else singers are taught is relevant.

Lengthen your Body

Stand up straight. Imagine a string holding you up. As you stand tall, imagine a string is coming from the ceiling, pulling you upwards. Keep your lower back in line, and don't move to your tiptoes. Visualisation techniques like this one can guide your sense of the proper position you should be in. Practise the proper alignment of your body by standing against a wall. Your head, shoulders and bottom should all touch the wall. Your heels should be 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 cm) away from the wall.



Relax your body. As you lengthen your body, don't forget to relax. It's not uncommon for your body to naturally tense up as you straighten yourself. If you find that you're too tense, try shaking yourself out and then regaining your posture. If you're having a hard time relaxing, you can also try progressive muscle relaxation (PMR). PMR is a systematic technique that enables you to relax each part of your body.

Find a Solid Foundation

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. You'll want to stand with your feet apart but not too far apart. Aim to keep your feet under your shoulders. You can also put one foot slightly in front of the other in order to help your balance. Keep your feet pointed forward, not out to the sides.



Shift your weight slightly forward. With one foot slightly in front of the other, shift your weight so that you are putting more weight on the balls of your feet. Shifting your weight to your heels will naturally cause you to lock your knees. Don't lean too far forward as you will lose your balance.

Avoid locking your knees. Relax your knees and legs. Bend your knees slightly to help remind you not to lock them. Locking your knees increases stress on your joints and can interfere with circulation, causing you to become dizzy or light-headed.

And Ringing?

Ringers move in a very different way to singers – we rhythmically raise and lower our arms for a start. The posture that has been acquired by following the above advice can easily be lost when starting to ring. So also bear in mind not to bend your back while you're ringing. You should be developing core muscles which will keep your trunk upright and your body still, not bobbing backwards and forwards or doing a soft-shoe shuffle all the time. Wearing the right shoes (those designed for walking) can help. And finally, if you're doing something like raising a heavy bell and you can't get enough energy into it by pulling all the way (from when your arms are up high to when they're down low), keep going down even further by bending your knees – not your back!

In Conclusion

Much of the advice in this article assumes that you don't have any inherent physical problems, but most of us aren't that lucky. Having said that, many problems stem from poor habits, not from serious medical conditions. If you do have problems, and you don't know why, you should try to find out. Many problems can be corrected simply by appropriate exercises and life-style changes, some by medical devices (such as shoe insoles) and a few require intervention from the medical profession. But even the more serious ones can often be corrected without surgery. It really is worth finding out.

You might try the NHS web page at www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/common-posture-mistakes-and-fixes or take a look on wikiHow (the source of much of the above) at www.wikihow.com/Stand-Correctly and www.wikihow.com/Improve-Your-Posture.

[The images in this article are ©3.0 wikiHow – see www.wikihow.com/wikiHow:Creative-Commons]

Learning Tips 11: Lessons from Mindfulness

By Pam Ebsworth from Woolpit, Suffolk

Pam Ebsworth has been attending a Mindfulness course, and we asked her to pass on a few tips from that which could be applied to ringing.

Don't forget to breathe. Strange to say, in any form of 'meditation' breathing does seem to be the most important part of learning to relax. In mindfulness we were taught to be more aware of our breathing; breathing out for longer than we breathe in, to make sure that our lungs are empty. Feel the cooler air coming in and the warmer air going out. A deep breath in and a long sigh out seems to work well for me.

Forgive yourself. We were taught to let ourselves just be in the moment and to enjoy it; not to think about what has happened or what might happen. Most important is to forgive yourself, and others, for past mistakes!

Be kind to yourself and to others, to create an atmosphere in which we can all achieve without stress.

Stress? Or excitement? I have read that feelings of stress can be converted into excitement. When I learnt to ring at 16 years old I did find it exciting and the adrenaline was my friend. Nowadays I try very hard to turn my feelings of stress into excitement.