

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

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Image courtesy of Katie Wright, ringer at Loddon, Norfolk

Football fans among you will recognise the Norwich City colours on these beautifully painted nails by Norfolk ringer Katie Wright. But this edition has got nothing to do with football - it's just a nod to the very first Learning the Ropes Festival of Ringing held in Norwich in August. Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre Manager Nikki Thomas and Tower Talk Editor Ruth Suggett (that's me!) got together to plan a day of ringing and learning in the city centre, showcasing not just the brand new Ringing Centre but also the historic towers in and around this 'home of the peal'. A full day's programme of master-classes and workshops aimed at ringers at the Foundation Skills level was offered and students came from far and wide. Beverley McAlister from Birmingham describes the day on page 9. The feedback from the day was immensely positive and we hope this will be the first of many!

Be Inspired!

By the Editorial Team

Ross Havenhand from Donacster recently achieved his Gold Plus award in 50 Ringing Things. He has captured some of the highlights in a great little video you can watch on YouTube. Just search YouTube for 50 Ringing Things, or go directly to youtube.com/watch?v=EydzS2WYRn8 - and it might just inspire you to start ticking off some of the 'things' yourself!

For more information on 50 Ringing Things visit learningtheropes.org/50-things.



Recent Successes

By The Editorial Team

In the third quarter of 2019, 290 certificates were awarded to ringers at the various stages of Learning the Ropes (LtR) as shown below (last year's numbers given for comparison):

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Level 1 - Bell Handling | 141 (167) |
| Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills | 103 (83) |
| Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing | 27 (21) |
| Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer | 15 (13) |
| Level 5 - Change Ringer | 4 (10) |



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

| | | |
|----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Sep 2019 | Ben Curtis | Silver |
| Sep 2019 | Miranda Jones | Silver |
| Sep 2019 | Harry Helyer | Silver |
| Sep 2019 | Benjy Bass | Bronze |
| Sep 2019 | Ellis Hollows | Gold Plus |
| Aug 2019 | Melissa Hunt | Gold Plus |
| Aug 2019 | Rosemary Pegrum | Gold Plus |
| Aug 2019 | Sally Watters | Bronze |

| | | |
|----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Aug 2019 | Mandie Bell | Silver |
| Aug 2019 | Toby Hughes | Bronze |
| Jul 2019 | Ben Van Alstede | Bronze |
| Jul 2019 | Sarah Pike | Silver |
| Jul 2019 | Lex Earthquake | Bronze |
| Jul 2019 | Max Earthquake | Silver |
| Jul 2019 | Sonia Field | Gold Plus |
| | | |

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.

Island Life

By Helen McGregor

The most southerly ART Ringing Centre in the UK is on the delightful island of Alderney. With a population varying between only 1300 and 1500, depending on the season, front doors are not locked, cars are parked with keys in, bank tellers have no glass screens, passengers on the flights/ferry to Guernsey/UK embark by first name, parking is free island-wide, milk is sold from a machine dispensing it into the customer's own receptacle, cars stop to talk to drivers coming the other way, items lost are found and handed in, drivers routinely offer lifts to pedestrians, pedestrians routinely accept lifts from drivers, volunteers man the very successful cinema, library, museum, ambulance and fire service - and the lifeboat of course.



This photo was taken at Wells Bells, the ART Ringing Centre on Alderney. L-R: Chris Lamb, Helen McGregor, Philip Geary, Aileen Wilson, Lynne Sydes, Niels Benatar and Ziggy Jenkins.

St Anne's, Alderney, is home to the 13cwt 12-bell ring made famous by the 25056 changes of Bristol Surprise Maximus rung in October 2017 - the longest peal yet rung on twelve. Considerably less well known is the Channel Islands' Ringing Centre - home to Wells Bells, a 3cwt 8-bell ring, a Higby simulator and a set of handbells. Five novice ringers recently spent a week here on Alderney 'improving' their ringing. We had sessions on handling, and changes were called at handstroke, at backstroke, and by place. They were called by students initially outside the circle and eventually while ringing too. We had fun with kaleidoscope ringing and Mexican wave, flipping from rounds to reverse rounds. Leading was perfected by hunting on five from 6th's place down to 2nd's and back so that the turnaround at the front was lying over a bell permanently leading. We walked Plain Hunt, we moved playing cards around the table top to emulate Plain Hunt, we 'fired' the bells in the rhythm of Plain Hunt. We rang Cloisters with students on the hunting bells & tenor cover - with both a Grandsire start and a Plain Bob start. By the end of the week the students were very happy plain hunting on five even when the bells had been swapped out of Rounds for the start.



This photo was taken in St Anne's belfry, Alderney, which we visited during the week. L-R: June Banister, Philippa Arditti, Lynne Sydes, Niels Benatar, Helen McGregor, Ziggy Jenkins, Aileen Wilson, Philip Geary and Chris Lamb. The peal board for the record length is visible at top centre.

Having all day access to a really easy peal of bells, a simulator and a set of handbells, a friendly group of helpers and willing class of students, we just went from strength to strength. A donation of £90 for ART was collected from the students at the end of the course.

Readers may be interested to know that there are no residency restrictions on Alderney and that anyone entitled to reside in the UK can buy a house here. Even if you don't move here you should spend at least one holiday here! St Anne's practise on Saturdays from 10am to 12 Noon and Monday evenings 5-7pm, followed by curry. Wells Bells practise on Wednesdays from 4-5:30pm, with handbells on Tuesdays.

Helen McGregor and husband Peter Bevis own and operate both the Tulloch Ringing Centre near Fort William and the Channel Islands' Ringing Centre on Alderney. They see access to easy-to-ring, fully available peals of bells and simulators as key to the resurgence of ringing. Both are proud to be members of the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths, but see the provision of first class teaching facilities and a fun, stress-free learning environment as their greatest contribution to ringing. Both Helen and Peter are keen handbell ringers too - though their enthusiasm outweighs their abilities :-)

Future courses will be advertised in Tower Talk and on tullochbells.com and alderneybells.com - no dates yet set for 2020.

Helen explaining Plain Hunt to Alderney improvers.



Dodge Matching Game

By Beth Johnson of Brentwood, Essex

In order to get your circle of work knowledge really slick, so you always know which dodge to do next, we have invented a game. There are three sets of cards:

Set 1, blue - has each dodge for Bob Doubles on a card.

Set 2, dark green - has the same dodges, one on a card.

Set 3, pale green - has the bob calls, one on a card.

Here is a set of cards for Plain Bob Doubles:



Place the blue cards face up, spread out so you can see them.

Choose either set 2 or set 3, depending on whether you are ringing plain courses or touches. Place these cards in a stack, with the writing face down.

Set a timer to one minute.

Turn one card over from the face down deck then, as quick as you can, choose the face up card which has the next piece of work on it. Place these two cards to one side and turn up another card. The idea is to see how quickly you can make the match, how many dodges can you match in a minute. Our record at Shenfield is 20!

We use the game when anyone is just starting learning work inside or starting touches, so they can practise recalling instantly which piece of work to do next time after a dodge (in a plain course) or a bob in a touch.

The cards were simply produced on a computer. If they are printed on card they can be cut out to make the play pieces.

They can be adapted to any method.

[If you like the idea but are not sufficiently computer-literate to produce a suitable file for printing yourself, take a look on SmART Ringer. You can download PDFs of instructions and game cards for printing as supporting resources for Plain Bob Doubles. They're available at smartringer.org/resource/14499.]

Sorry, I Drifted Off ...

By Tim Farnham of Scarning, Norfolk

I have rung a few quarter peals. That's not false modesty because I do mean a few. Five to be precise. All the slips in these were lapses of concentration, getting distracted, drifting off, call it what you will. If none of us ever lost the thread like that there would be a lot more successful quarters.

I have thought a lot about the factors that affect our concentration and ringing performance more generally. In the course of this I spoke to some very experienced ringers, one of whom conducts peals of spliced Maximus. That's a different world from ours but maybe the same factors are at work.

Uncertainty with handling and ropesight

We only have a finite amount of brainpower to expend on ringing. If we are fighting with the rope, or flustered because we don't know which bell to follow, we limit our ability to concentrate on the job in hand. All novice method ringers have looked at the circle of work for Plain Bob Doubles, memorised it, had a go and been completely unable to recall what work comes next. Frustrating but perfectly normal. So confident bell control and where appropriate, ropesight, is essential for full concentration.

You *must* be relaxed

It's common for your ropesight to suddenly desert you. It suggests that you are nervous and on edge. When your mind and body are in the classic 'fight or flight' mode, your vision tries to home in on a perceived threat. If you are about to be gobbled up by a sabre tooth tiger you no longer see anything except the tiger. Peripheral vision is crucial for ropesight and that's the first thing that disappears when you get stressed.



Visual distraction

I can't hold a conversation if there is a television on in the room. My son can watch TV, listen to something else with his ear-buds and hold an intelligent conversation all at the same time. Maybe I could too when I was his age but I sure as hell can't now. And of course one thing you can guarantee when ringing is lots of potential visual distraction, in the form of ropes and people. Those who can ring methods by ear and rhythm, just using ropesight as a backup if there is a slip or hesitation somewhere, have a big advantage in my opinion as there is less information for the brain to process and so it's easier to concentrate. You can start to do this with Rounds and Called Changes, by just using your peripheral vision and practise making the changes without moving your head. Ultimately it's much less work and you will ring more accurately to boot, particularly when others are having a bit of an epic. A simulator is brilliant for working on this.



Maintaining concentration

Recently when ringing Called Changes, I increased the frequency of the calls until they were coming thick and fast. Everyone enjoyed it and two people said something that surprised me, which was that it was easier having rapid calls! Where there are long breaks between calls, you tend to drift off and think about other things so the next call catches you out. Shouldn't happen? Maybe not, but it does. I like ringing Grandsire Doubles precisely because there is always something going on and you don't have time to drift off. At the elite level, more than one person has said to me that they prefer ringing complex things [provided of course that they have done their homework thoroughly] because they tend not to go into autopilot.



Train your mind!

Two very experienced peal ringers told me separately that they often fix on something they can look at while ringing, such as a crack in the wall or some other insignificant thing. If they feel their concentration starting to slip they come back to fix their gaze on that object. Of course this presupposes the ability to ring without constantly looking around, but I feel that is something we should aspire to anyway. That brings me to my final point, which is to consider whether we can train ourselves to concentrate better. I think the answer to that is a definite 'Yes', though it isn't a quick fix. The technique usually known as mindfulness involves remaining 'in the moment' all or as much as possible of the time. In other words stopping yourself from thinking about what's for supper or the cross words you had with your other half earlier in the day. And that's precisely what we need to be able to do to focus on ringing for significant periods of time. The starting point for mindfulness and all meditation techniques is to train yourself to concentrate on something, sometimes a candle or some other physical object, but more commonly your breath. Every time your attention wanders, which will be constantly, you gently bring it back to your breath. As I say, this isn't a quick fix and learning to meditate well is likely to take years, decades even. But nevertheless it makes a difference right from the start, and whether they knew it or not I think the ringers who said they like to have something to focus their gaze on were using a basic meditation technique. And if you're wondering, yes, I do meditate, though not very well. Work in progress ...

The 'Fleshy Bells' - Learning as a Family

By Gail Bell, Lincoln

It all started after having a go on a mini-ring at an open day at Lincoln Cathedral, when my daughter and I were invited to try a 'real' bell. I started to back-pedal - busy lives, teenage kids, working shifts - however, Sandra Underwood, who became our teacher, was not to be deterred. (With a name like Bell, it seemed like our destiny!) I asked my son Alex if he wanted to come too and, despite not being keen, I persuaded him by saying that he had nothing to lose. If he did not like it then he never had to go again, but there was a chance of gaining a new and unusual hobby that might make the difference between his CV getting put on the interview pile rather than in the bin. As it happens, Alex is the one that has made the most progress! He was invited to join the Cathedral Company of ringers in January this year and ringing has helped increase his confidence socially.

So we started with teachers Colin and Sandra who even changed the learners' practice nights to accommodate my shifts, allowing a weekly practice. We had not been ringing long before we were given a challenge - to be able to handle a bell well enough to ring Rounds at Lincoln Cathedral (a mile from our house) for New Year 2017/18 and we went for our first practice up there in November. Well ... come New Year the kids managed well and my Rounds were more 'star-shaped'! Being able to go outside onto the roof and trade waves with the crowds was brilliant. All three of us continued to go to the Cathedral and other practices, although I found the Cathedral brought on an anxiety I had not felt before. However, I kept at it, otherwise the children may have stopped going.

Alex and Mandie learned more quickly than I did but they waited for me to get good enough to ring our first quarter peal together, nine bells ringing in a 6-bell tower (see photo). Alex then advanced with speed but Mandie felt under pressure to keep up with him, so she decided to wait for me and we will advance together at a more sedate pace after consolidating skills at Learning the Ropes Level 3, as educational commitments have had to take precedence. Alex worked his way around the bells at the Cathedral earning the chance to ring the tenor, which he did whilst still 14. He has had a busy year and has completed Level 5, Gold Plus on 50 Ringing Things and two peals. He is soon to be assessed as an ART teacher. Both of them have had the experience of competing in the Ringing World National Youth Competition in London and Liverpool.

Alex will be taking GCSEs next year so it will be his turn to put educational commitments first for a while. We all have different qualities and ways of learning and remembering. Mandie is naturally more sociable and has organised a ringers' bowling evening for local towers. Ringing has brought new friends, experiences and given us a common theme to help keep the family together. We are well supported in our ringing ventures by husband/Dad Steve, who is unfortunately unable to ring or climb most towers but he will help with logistics and join us at accessible towers for branch practices and social events.



Our first QP at Wragby, Lincs: Back Row: Gill Gladman, Sandra Underwood, Alex Bell, Colin Ward. Front Row: Gail Bell and Mandie Bell. Six bells in the belfry, and three more in the ringing room!

Festival Fun - A day out in Norwich

By Beverley McAlister, student at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing

In July I noticed a post on a Facebook page calling all new ringers to a 'Learning the Ropes' festival in Norwich, aimed at SmART Ringers up to Learning the Ropes Level 3. As keen students at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, this was of particular interest to me and my husband Tony as we felt it would be really focused on our current skill levels. The programme included three different workshop sessions in the morning and three in the afternoon. We chose 'Raising and Lowering' for our morning workshop and 'Say It Out Loud' for the afternoon.

As we live in Birmingham, with our home tower at Coleshill, Tony and I were a bit concerned that the long distance travel and, on top of that, ringing all day would make us feel so tired. Therefore we decided to stay for the whole weekend and we ended up staying nearby in Great Yarmouth. Midlanders love the seaside!

A few weeks after booking this event I was called into hospital for hand surgery and therefore had to cancel my booking. However this didn't stop us from coming as we were both looking forward to a lovely and unusual weekend away. So I just cancelled my workshop event so at least someone else could fill my place. I then planned to sit and watch Tony working hard at both the workshops, taking it all in and taking some photos.

On arrival we were greeted with such a warm welcome by the event organisers. We registered and were given our badges, so off we went with the map we were given and walked to our first tower and workshop.

The Raising and Lowering workshop had quite a large range of student skills but was extremely well organised. The teacher, Catherine Sturgess, had taken the time to contact all the students prior to the event and establish everyone's skill levels. This meant she could put a prepared programme together. On the day, Catherine covered all the elementary basics of how to hold a rope, make the coils, feeding up and down the rope, without any of the students actually raising or lowering bells. The group was split up into skill levels and allocated teachers and helpers, and the raising and lowering began. As an onlooker, this was such a great workshop with some really excellent teaching from both the teacher and helpers. Everyone left with smiles on their faces. Tony was very pleased with himself.

Lunch had been organised by the St Peter Mancroft ringers in The Octagon attached to St Peter Mancroft Church. We pre-ordered our jacket potato, followed by tea and a whopping big piece of delicious home-made cake.



Tony at the raising and lowering workshop.

After lunch it was a short walk to the Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre, passing by the Carter Mini-Ring on the way. I just had to have a little go at one handed ringing! It was the only ringing I was capable of doing so I loved every minute of it.

Moving on to the Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre, Tony had the opportunity to practise his plain hunting while I had a look around and took some videos and photos. One of the teachers stayed with Tony and everyone was encouraged to join in. The support and guidance of the teachers was of excellent quality and again, knowing that all the students were around the same level, really allowed the teachers to focus in on this. For the students it helped develop more confidence and not feel intimidated by much higher skill levels.

After a ring in the Discovery Centre we went further up to the tower to the ringing chamber. Wow, what a privilege to stand and see such a magnificent ringing chamber with a wall made of glass looking down into the church. Tony was then asked if he would like to ring. I sat down but was fascinated by the tenor (37 cwt) and would have loved the opportunity to ring this bell if my hands had allowed it. All the students were allocated a bell and a few attempts of simple Rounds were made. Not all perfect but a wholehearted attempt was made.

Next stop was a walk through the city centre to our next workshop 'Say It Out Loud'.

Led by Lesley Belcher and aimed at building up confidence to say things whilst ringing it started off by the treble saying "Look to" and then worked its way up to Called Changes. This covered the timing of when things need to be said, the volume of how loud you say it and then watching to see if the command had taken place. It was a very well organised and thought-out workshop. The teacher made sure everyone had an input regardless of skill level. I thoroughly enjoyed watching this as I felt I could still learn from this although I was only watching.

We decided to call it day after this and to retire to our hotel in Great Yarmouth. However the ringing didn't stop there, more opportunities were available to continue to ring at various historic towers around the city centre.

So that was our first Learning the Ropes Festival of Ringing in Norwich.

I would highly recommend attending an event like this and would definitely love to do it again (with me able to ring). I'm wondering though, as everyone learnt so much from this one, we will need a Level 4 Festival next time!

So to finish, a big thank you to organisers Ruth Suggett and Nikki Thomas, all the teachers, helpers, churches and bells for putting on such a well organised event. What's next year's festival date and can we have it over two days next year please?

Since returning to our home tower, Tony's raising and lowering skills have much improved and he is practising calling out loud.



Beverley able to do one-handed ringing!



Wow! The ringing chamber at St Peter Mancroft.

Simulator Savvy

By Anne Robinson, ringer at Farway, Devon

It occurred to me the other day, when I was walking like a gymnast on a wooden beam, clutching a stool on a string, with a face full of cobwebs, that this wasn't what I'd expected when I signed up to learn bell ringing. However, this strange balancing act has become a regular occurrence for me ...

I started learning to ring about three years ago with huge support from both Farway, my home tower, and other local ringers (too many to mention, you know who you are). I progressed through rope handling, ringing Rounds, Called Changes and Plain Hunt, but then I hit a problem. Like many towers, Farway is sometimes short of numbers and it was rare for there to be enough experienced ringers for more advanced methods at our weekly practice. I tried to join other groups, but I'm still gainfully employed during the week and also have a lovely husband who, although hugely supportive of my ringing, does like to spend some time with me. Consequently I found myself struggling to get enough practice to progress further. However, when Northleigh tower, just five minutes from home, installed a simulator, it was suggested to me that this might be a good solution. I chatted to a few other ringers and quickly found that simulators are a bit like Marmite, either loved or hated, so it was with some trepidation that I agreed to find a bell buddy and give it a go.



Initially, several ringers said to me that they wouldn't use a simulator as they couldn't possibly use a computer, it was far too complicated and worrying. However, I soon teamed up with Kathryn who was also keen to give it a go. We've found that you really don't need to be intimidated by the technology. We use Beltower which is an extremely comprehensive and complex program that caters for all levels of ringers. However, the very kind and patient team that installed our system helped us to write out a simple step by step, press that, click this, don't forget to plug it in, list of instructions. They also helped us to label the laptop we use so that we know where to plug in each cable. This got us going and over time we've consulted with them about how to do different things as and when we've needed them. Yes, a couple of times we've got ourselves in a pickle by pressing the wrong button, but we've found that 'switch it all off and start again' works wonders 99% of the time. We haven't broken it yet!

For those of you who haven't yet used a simulator, the system is quite simple. Firstly you plug the cables into your computer, switch on and log into Beltower. Then you climb the tower and put a tie on the bell that's had a sensor installed (usually the one closest to the door.) Then you ring up your bell and you're ready to go. On the screen in front of you there is a picture of five bell ringers (assuming you want to ring Doubles). Our picture shows five people we know so it's like ringing with friends. Your bell buddy presses the 'go' button on the keyboard and a voice says the usual "Look to, treble's going, treble's gone". At this point the ringers on the screen start ringing and you join in as the sixth bell.

There are loads of benefits to this system. You can choose which bell you want to ring, which method, for how long and how loud. You can have a Doubles practice with just two people. You can start again as many times as you want and practise, practise, practise the one method you want to perfect. All this without

upsetting the neighbours as the computer generates the bell notes and there's no sound outside. In addition, each strike is shown on a clever colour-coded list from red (not in the correct position), through orange (in the right place, but probably clipping), to green (good) and white (excellent striking).

We found this all took some getting used to and the first time we rang we were both horrified to see a list of red strikes just when we were ringing in Rounds! However, we persevered and soon had lists of green and white and moved on to the methods we wanted to practise. Reviewing the list of strikes after each method rung is invaluable, as consistent mistakes quickly show up. I discovered that my leading was poor, handstroke consistently early, followed by an even earlier backstroke. Also, working on a touch of Plain Bob Doubles I could see that I often 'got lost' when a bob was whilst dodging up. Using the simulator has given me the opportunity to identify and focus on these problem areas in a way that I couldn't with real life ringers.

Also, the simulator was a real comfort to both Kathryn and me when we were due to ring our first quarter peals. We practised until we could consistently ring accurately for 20 minutes, thinking that if we could manage this, we could probably keep going for 45. This gave us the confidence to give the quarter peal a go without worrying excessively about 'letting down' the other ringers.

In conclusion, I would say that the simulator is an essential tool for improving anyone's ringing. In fact, even the occasional 'expert' (who shall remain nameless) has been surprised to find they're not as good as they think and need a bit of practice. Without the simulator, progressing through Learning the Ropes would be practically impossible for me until I have the luxury of more time during retirement - and I love it far too much to wait that long!

“ Without the simulator, progressing through Learning the Ropes would be practically impossible for me until I have the luxury of more time during retirement - and I love it far too much to wait that long!”

And if you're wondering about the balancing act or the stool on a string We couldn't install our sensor on the bell within easy reach of the tower door, so each time we practise I have to climb across the bell frame to put on the bell tie. I lower the stool onto the floor to create an easy step down - it can't all be as simple as the simulator!

It's All About Paying Back

By Lynne Sydes

I was recently asked to be a 'helper' on a ringing course and I felt it was a great honour to be asked and to be able to pay back in some small way the countless hours experienced ringers ('helpers') have given me in my first year of ringing under the 'Ringing Remembers' scheme. I may only be making the tea but it got me thinking HOW to pay back - and I decided to make a bequest to ART because I really believe the drive to teach teachers and offer a structured approach to learning gives everyone something extra. For me it has ensured quicker progression, I have rung two quarter peals, found a wonderful new community of friends and a new sense of purpose in my life. Without ART I may well have dropped out.

I also enjoyed chatting bells to the rather bemused solicitor - spread the word!

Many Hands Make Light Work

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

You may well feel that as a novice ringer it's not your place to 'interfere' with the running of your home tower, but we should all think about the many different jobs which need to be done to keep things moving smoothly and happily. The Tower Captain may seem supremely confident and on top of everything, but that may not be the case and what they're waiting for is someone to say "I can do that"!

There is no 'right' way to run a tower, and there is no 'right' number of job positions. What can happen, though, is that every single job that needs to be done falls on the shoulders of just one person, and it really *does* make sense to distribute the work amongst others (if volunteers can be found!) to spread the load and to provide backup when people aren't available.

Some jobs are band oriented, some are tower oriented. Even if you don't have meetings you still need someone to who is the point of contact for the church, for visitors, for the local association – and it doesn't need to be the Tower Captain. With e-mail and all the different ways we have of communicating this could be an easy job for a well organised person, someone to take charge of the tower diary and handle e-mails.

Bell installations need to be inspected from time to time. Bell chambers need cleaning and checking for bird ingress. Some installations need oiling regularly. Again – could you help with this job? A Steeple Keeper is often appointed to be responsible for those things. You might add maintenance of the ringing room and health and safety liaison with the church to their job description, too. You might even share the steeple-keeping with other towers nearby, because not everyone is keen on clambering over bells clutching spanners, or has learned the skills needed to maintain an installation in tip-top form!



Now we come to money. Here again, different towers do things differently. You could very easily appoint a Treasurer to look after the money and to produce accounts for the tower's Annual General Meeting (if you have one) and for reconciliation with the church when it comes to funding for bell maintenance. There's a whole article waiting to be written on the different ways things might be run but, for now, think about what you do with money from special occasion ringing (weddings and such-like), any fees you charge visiting bands, and whether or not you collect a tower subscription on practice night. These things all need keeping track of, and may not all go into the same 'pot'. Does it go towards bell maintenance, or does it go towards social activities?



How is the social side of ringing in your tower? Who organises outings? What about going to the pub after practice? Do you need a Social Secretary to encourage the members of your band, or to maintain interaction between all the bands in your benefice? Ringing is fun, but it's not all about having your head in a book – human beings need to interact with each other, too.

And what about recruitment? Do you advertise for new ringers, or send articles to the local press? Again, this might be separated out from other roles within your group. An enthusiastic new ringer can often do more to gain new recruits than a jaded ringer of 40 year's service.

So talk about this with the Tower Captain and your band – try to become familiar with all the jobs that need doing to keep the bells ringing and your band working well, and think about your own skills and what you have got to offer. Don't put all the work onto the shoulders of just one or two people; share it out. And think about all the little things – there's a good chance that you can suggest a role that you could take on to improve things without upsetting any of the existing officers of your organisation. And good luck!

Heritage Open Day at Taylor's of Loughborough

By Janet Bond of Maids Moreton, Buckinghamshire

What an experience to see the place where many of our bells were originally cast! I'm not going into the detail of the foundry's history, or the technicalities of how a bell is made. That's all searchable, and Wikipedia has lots of what you need to know with plenty of links to in-depth information.

The atmosphere of the place, which essentially hasn't changed since it was, erm, founded, in 1839, is so evocative of the bygone age of 'doing stuff properly'. It's also heartening to know that the way they made bells hundreds of years ago is pretty much exactly how they still do it today.

We arrived early and were sixth in the queue and secured the valuable ticket for the 12 noon casting. I'm not sure what percentage of the visitors were bell ringers but I don't think it was particularly high. I recognised one other ringer and heard two or three others speaking 'Bellish'. However, non-ringers, including my husband, were equally enthusiastic and astounded by everything they saw!

I had to keep close to our guide so I could hear what he was telling us! Noise and sounds were all around at various times, such as a demonstration of a large bell in a frame being – almost – rung up, and the noise of the furnace, and the sound of a machine turning another large bell which was in the long process of being tuned by the Master Tuner. It was an assault on the senses!

We saw complete sets of bells from all over the world in various stages of refurbishment or completion – including a couple of large ornate bells awaiting transport to Sri Lanka. The recent installations in France, at Vernet-les-Bains, and in St Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore (about which we've all recently read with great interest) *[and about which there is more to read on page 16]* were carried out by Taylor's. And sadly, the fire-damaged bells from Royston, Hertfordshire, were a sorry sight awaiting repair.

At 12 noon we were guided up to a viewing platform over the casting shed (a vast area!) so that we could observe a casting. I had no idea how big a bell this was to be as they bury the mould in the ground and only a couple of feet or so protrudes. (In Ye Olden Days, bellfounders were 'mobile' and would go to the village or town where the bells were required and set up bell pits in a nearby field, hence the names of many fields and local areas around churches such as Bell Field, Bell Lane, etc.)

The smell and noise during the process was immense. The metal was red hot; there was a fierce glow and flames and sparks everywhere – the word inferno sums it up! The three people working on the casting went about things in a calm and efficient manner. First they tilted the heating vessel and the molten metal was poured into a second vessel. This was attached to a ceiling-mounted gantry which they could control and they guided it over to the bell mould in the ground. Some powdery stuff was thrown into the mix before this which I have subsequently found out was tin. This is to do with the proportion of tin in the bell metal altering during the cooling process. They also stirred it with a branch which emerged charred and on fire. Again, I've since learnt that this is a willow branch and the salicylates in the bark do something magical to the flux. They positioned the vessel correctly and poured the metal into the mould, stopping now and again to put a big stick down into the mould and stir and prod.

We were all left with a sense of having witnessed an ancient manufacturing process which has no truck with modern technology. (Although I'm sure progress has helped the foundry in some ways!)



The foundry roof has been recently replaced, preventing the rain from simply pouring into all areas below. The Loughborough Bellfoundry (yes all one word) Trust has recently been set up to hold the John Taylor Bellfoundry site in perpetuity, and are currently fund-raising and hoping for funds from the National Lottery. We are very lucky to have this foundry still in good working order and now in a healthy business position for the foreseeable future. Long may it continue.

Do look up Taylor's, and all aspects of bellfounding – and I would certainly recommend a visit if and when you can.

Plus – it's number 32 in your '50 Ringing Things' book!

Keep On Learning - LtR Plus

By Clare McArdle, Birmingham School of Bell Ringing

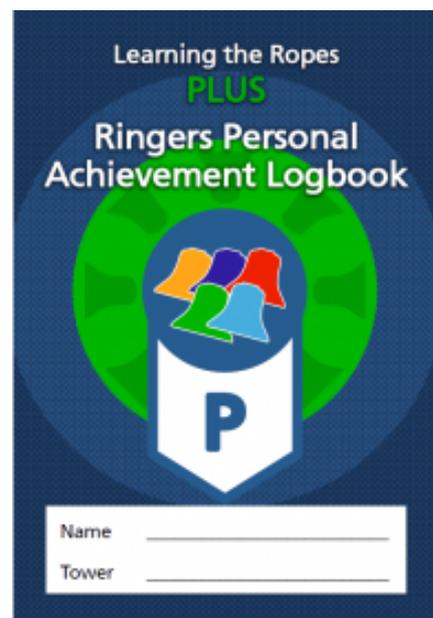


You've completed the Learning the Ropes scheme – Level 5 done and dusted and your invitation to the Learning the Ropes Masterclass is on its way. Where do you go now? Have you heard of Learning the Ropes Plus?

Learning the Ropes Plus is the follow-on scheme to Learning the Ropes.

The scheme is open to ANY ringer, at any stage of learning. If you're not registered on SmART Ringer you can now register yourself and then you're on your way. Personal achievement logbooks can be ordered through the ART shop [ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop]. It is a flexible scheme that can be dipped in to. Unlike LtR, it is not progressive, so if your tower rings Minor, for example, there's no need to complete the Doubles section (unless you wanted to), but it is structured, so that you might want to complete each section before moving on to the next.

The ten modules range from ringing Doubles to ringing on higher numbers. Some modules are aimed at broadening experience in ringing and encouraging people to take leadership roles – for instance, conducting and tower management [*and see our article on page 13 about that*]. Each section gives learning outcomes, then sets tasks to achieve them, and provides a place to record ringing achievements. The method ringing sections all include quarter peals. Some sections are about wider participation in ringing, for example, learning to teach and leadership roles – some of which are also included in '50 Ringing Things'.



Here's a thought – if some of the pathways LtR Plus suggests were adopted by towers before their learners get to the end of the five LtR levels, their ringers will be ready to support them in their further progression

For further information, visit ringingteachers.org or www.learningtheropes.org.

‘Full of Eastern Promise’

By John Loveless, ART Member and Teacher at Campton, Bedfordshire

We knew going to Singapore to teach ringing would be no holiday, but 11 days of hard work. Our brief was to introduce bell-ringing to Singapore Cathedral, with its fine new 25cwt ring of 12, training members of the Cathedral community to handle a bell using the Learning the Ropes scheme. Starting on 7 August, our two principal objectives were to get them to handle a bell before our final practice on 17 August, and to involve them in the dedication service ringing on Sunday 11 August. Nothing too stretching then!

There were up to three training sessions each day, usually of about two hours' duration, taking place in temperatures of 35°C with 80% humidity. We had multiple fans and two very large open windows but (as yet) no air conditioning! The heat was absolutely draining but the trainees took it in their stride.

Training was almost always on tied bells, using the front eight, and there is also a dumb bell. We taught nine people, but others will follow. Most were professional people aged between 35 to early 60's and they were incredibly well motivated to succeed. Each prospective ringer had applied to join the group and had been interviewed!



Singapore ringers, with their Learning the Ropes Level 1 certificates, and tutors.

Back L-R: Kay Thwe Myint; Mae Ellis, Andrew Ang, Priscilla Chua, Lucille Dhing, Benjamin Tai, John Loveless.

Front L-R: Mia Jing Goh, Kae Chee Wong, Seok Lin Lim, Linda Garton, Jeff Chua, Alan Ellis.

Image courtesy of Linda Garton.

The intensive schedule within the LtR framework gave real momentum to the process and we could sign off new skills as they were acquired. There was always lots to celebrate! At the Dedication, the initial group were able to ring backstrokes in rounds assisted by some of the tutors. During our final training session on Saturday 17 August we presented certificates to all nine of the group. They had worked incredibly hard to achieve Level One - Bell Handling. Ringing for the Dedication of your bells and receiving your certificate of merit along with your peers - it doesn't get much better than that!



Photos, clockwise from top left: (1) A training session in full swing. (2) Recording progress. (3) Mia Jing Goh and Emily Crowder. (4) Sales of micropore in Singapore rocketed! (5) Learners turned trainers!

All images courtesy of Linda Garton.



Thanks must go to a number of experienced teachers who came for the Dedication and assisted us along the way, giving up much of their time to help, often on an unscheduled basis. The tower's training need is acute and outside support will be necessary for many months, if not years. The cathedral authorities understand that need, and plans are already in place for other experienced tutors to go out at intervals over the coming months to help establish the local band. Already we've seen videos showing the progress made under subsequent tutors Alan and Marj Winter. A Singapore Cathedral band can now ring Rounds!

We found this an immensely rewarding experience and hope to go back soon!

[A version of this article was published in the Ringing World on 13 September 2019.]

Learning Tips 13: Staying Right

By Jonathan Williamson, ART Member and teacher from Ipswich

In the last edition of Tower Talk, Mary Jones gave some tips for improving concentration. We all do our best to stay on our line and keep our bell in the right place, but what are we to do when our concentration lets us down? How can we both minimise mistakes and get back on our line quickly when they happen? Better still, can we actually put ourselves right before anyone notices?

The skills to put yourself (and others) right come from a detailed knowledge of what you're ringing. This means looking beyond what you actually need to ring it. Just knowing 'the line' isn't enough, you also need knowledge of how a method 'fits' together, or a grasp of where everyone is in Called Changes and not just you. If you want to make yourself more reliable here are some tips:

- Learn to call – just start with calling “Stand” after some Rounds to begin with. Then call some simple Called Changes and progress to pieces of ringing where you just say “Go...”, “That’s All” and “Stand”. This encourages you to start to look at what others are doing (so you make the calls in the right place) and to develop an appreciation of the ringing as a whole.
- Stand behind as much as you can. Standing behind is not the sole preserve of those supporting ringers who may need some help; much can be learnt from standing behind experienced ringers who are ringing something that you are learning. Your brain will be engaged, but there's no risk of going wrong!
- Do your homework. I cannot emphasise this enough. Once you can ring something and keep yourself right ringing it, don't stop there. Try to look further to see what other bells are doing when you are ringing to see how it all fits together.
- Equip yourself with more than one way of staying right. If you've learnt Plain Bob Doubles by the order of the work, but then forget where you are, you'll go wrong unless you've something to use as a backup. So, try to learn where you pass the treble before each piece of work so you still have a signpost if you forget the line. Even if there's a learner on the treble who may not always be in the right place you'll still have your knowledge of the line to fall back on, and the more you ring things the more signposts you'll be able to spot and use to your advantage.
- Look for new things all the time; don't rest on your laurels. Get to know a method so well that you can say “I'm doing abc so I reckon they must be doing xyz”. Look at the line afterwards to see if you were right.
- Learn to look for the nods and winks from others that confirm you're right and acknowledge them in return. Sometimes these are the most important signposts because not only can you confirm that you are right, but you may also be confirming that the other person is right too!
- Maintain eye contact. This might sound obvious, but all that nodding and winking is pointless if nobody is looking.
- Take your time. It's better to be able to do something simple well than something complex poorly.
- Smile. I'm serious. Smile. We do this for enjoyment right? So let's enjoy it. Don't be too self-critical if you make a mistake, just analyse it to find out why you went wrong so you can eliminate (or at least minimise) the risk of repeating the error.

There is nothing better than a 'steady' ringer. Someone who may be relied upon to ring well and not go wrong. Better still, someone who can stay right when others make mistakes, and even better still than that are those with enough knowledge to assist conductors with any 'putting right' that's needed, even if it's done silently with a nod or a wink. These people are not superhuman, they've just done their homework, and been willing to look beyond the blue line.

Fun Crossword Puzzle Answer Grid

By The Editorial Team

We didn't offer any prizes for completing this ringing-related puzzle in the previous edition, but we hope you enjoyed having a go at it. Here's the answer grid:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|----------------|---|-----------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ¹ B | E | ² H | I | N | ³ D | | ⁴ M | I | N | I | ⁵ M | U | S |
| A | | E | | | O | | U | | | | I | | |
| ⁶ L | E | A | D | | D | | F | | | | N | | |
| A | | D | | | G | | ⁷ F | O | L | L | O | W | |
| N | | S | | ⁸ P | E | A | L | | | | R | | |
| ⁹ C | A | T | E | R | S | | E | | | ¹⁰ B | | | |
| E | | O | | I | | | | | | E | | | |
| | | ¹¹ C | A | N | O | N | ¹² S | | | L | | ¹³ R | |
| | | K | | C | | | A | | ¹⁴ F | R | O | N | ¹⁵ T |
| | | | | I | | | L | | R | | U | | E |
| | ¹⁶ B | | | ¹⁷ P | U | L | L | E | Y | | N | | N |
| | O | | | L | | | Y | | | | D | | O |
| ¹⁸ A | B | O | V | E | | | | | | | S | | R |

50/50 Club Draw News

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

The third quarter draw for the 50-50 Club was made by Don Jones, President of Derby DA, on Sunday 15 September.

1st Prize £72 Number 17 - Christine Purnell;

2nd Prizes £36 Number 30 - Tim Forsey AND Number 54 - Robert Nichols.

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 learningtheropes.org/5050club.