

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning
the Ropes

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The Rookie Ringers (p7) laughing and learning together

New Year – new ringer? Starting out as a new bellringer can feel like stepping into a world full of tradition and a little bit of mystery.

Becoming part of a bellringing team is a journey – one of both individual learning and contribution. Finding ways to contribute to the team will not only enhance your own experience but also strengthen the bond and success of the entire group. For you as an individual, setting small manageable goals, mastering the basics no matter how long that takes, and attending different practices where you will meet different people will all help you to progress. The 50 Ringing Things scheme is a great way of adding to your knowledge and experience.

But it's important to embrace the team spirit as well, to ensure success is collective as well as individual. Take every opportunity to get involved!

Diary of a Tower Captain

Lucy Chandhial



I am the Tower Captain at St Augustine's, Kilburn, in north west London and, as I ring at a few towers, I see some other Tower Captains and Ringing Masters locally on a regular basis.

I'm also a member of the CCCBR Leadership Education workgroup, and I am very interested in how this role varies and why people enjoy the satisfaction of building successful bands, often across many years, in different towers up and down the country (and beyond).

Sue and Derek Dancey at St Chad's in Shrewsbury told me that Gill Glover has recruited them, trained them, inspired them and continued to develop them as part of a growing band, so I asked Gill to tell me more about her success and her experience as a Ringing Master for the tower.

The St Chad's story

After making an active decision to focus on recruitment and development at their AGM two years ago, Gill is lucky to have experienced band members who are happy to help with teaching basic handling and developing learners within the band.

Everyone has a role, so while Gill runs the weekly practice someone else ensures there are enough ringers for Sunday morning and for Evensong quarter peals. In addition, each month one practice is run by someone else, on rotation, which gives everyone some valuable experience of this responsibility.

Gill is therefore able to support another tower (outside Shrewsbury) for Sunday morning ringing as they too are gradually building a band of ringers.

The St Chad's band are already an experienced band who regularly ring surprise major on practice nights and hold a ten bell focused advanced practice monthly at St Mary's in Shrewsbury. This helps to ensure that experienced ringers get some challenging ringing regularly.

Bringing in learners was therefore a big decision because it would naturally take time away from the more advanced ringing. However the 'learning together' approach made the perceived gap in experience less daunting as they progressed with mutual support.

An Open Tower in 2023 brought in six new ringers, with special sessions on Sunday afternoons before joining the regular band practices to ring rounds with the the experienced band. A clear requirement to commit to two sessions a week, including the Sunday afternoon, helped to ensure that the learners had the time to make the most of the investment in their learning.

The ringers from this recruitment are now ringing Plain Hunt and Plain Bob Doubles,. Two rang their first quarter peal by November, and are extending their ringing repertoire as time progresses.

Gill enjoys running a friendly and active practice with people making progress, gradually, within a supportive environment. Adapting to each individual's learning style is interesting for Gill as a retired teacher and experienced ringers can often help by explaining from how they learn. Sometimes things can just 'click' unexpectedly!

Act before its too late

Gill led the St Chad's band to recognise the risk of a gently shrinking band post-pandemic and agreed that together they would recruit a new phase of ringers for the band now, rather than in five years time when the existing band may have reached a critical point.

I wonder how many towers need this forward thinking (and how many may have gone past the point and will need to start from scratch) as we look at the demographic of our experienced ringers.

Share the load

Currently at each AGM Gill is re-elected as Ringing Master but as others in the band are now running a practice occasionally and supporting the teaching there is an increasing likelihood that someone will be ready to step in.

The role of a Tower Captain is a busy and responsible one but there are many ways in which band members can help share the load.



Could you support your tower by organising ringing for evensong, organising an outing or occasionally running the practice? Think about discussing how you could help the Tower Captain or Ringing Master at your tower... maybe talking about how everyone could chip in is a good topic for the post ringing pub session?!



There's more than one way of learning Bob Minor

The Unmissable LtR Masterclass

Anne Tansley Thomas, Norwich



Prologue

In the quiet dawn of possibility, a journey begins, woven from the threads of hope and destiny.

Imagine a day filled with unrivalled tuition, comfort-zone busting ringing, and the company of the country's finest ringers. That's what the Learning the Ropes Masterclass promises. Having signed up for the Masterclass some time ago, my nerves were starting to get the better of me. Was I ready to step out of my comfort zone? How intimidating would it be to ring alongside the country's best?

With some trepidation, I left my hotel on Saturday morning, heading to the station to be picked up for our first tower of the day. Stephanie Warboys' peerless organisational skills had split us into groups. I was in 'Group Jerome' heading to Winford and Barrow Gurney, while 'Group Newman' went to Coalpit Heath and Mangotsfield.

It was a glorious sunny autumn day, and Anna Sherwood and Matt Jerome arrived promptly to whisk me and fellow participant Em away to the quaint village of Winford with its easy-going ring of eight. Their warm and friendly welcome soon calmed any nerves.

Act One

As the first light of day breaks, our heroine steps into the unknown, her heart filled with anticipation and resolve.

At Winford, we started with a live performance exercise where the ace ringers made deliberate striking mistakes and we had to guess what these were. Apologies to the ringer of the 4 who I mistakenly suggested was too fast at handstroke!

One of the major strengths, of the Masterclass is that each participant gets their own tutor and I was matched with the amazing Matt Frost. We discussed my goals and hatched a plan. I was keen to get more experience ringing on eight, and before long, I was happily treble bobbing along to various surprise methods. After each ring, Matt provided honest feedback and practical suggestions.



Full concentration at a Masterclass session

Act Two

In the shadowed depths of her journey, unforeseen challenges arise, testing her spirit and determination.

After lunch we moved on to our next tower, Barrow Gurney. This stunning church, like something out of a film set, was in a secluded location, allowing us to make as much noise as we wanted.

It was during the afternoon that I began to wobble. A handling issue soon became apparent, hindering my progress and shaking my confidence. Although I had my heart set on ringing some Surprise Major, Matt took me back to basics, focusing on getting more length on my handstrokes.

What can I say? Yes, this was dispiriting. However, while it wasn't what I wanted, it was clearly what I needed! The success of the Masterclass relies on the benefits of individual attention and a person-centred approach, so I knew deep down I just had to trust the process.

Act Three

With unwavering courage and newfound strength, our heroine faces her final trial, her eyes set on victory.

Everyone then began to drift off for the short trip back to Bristol, eagerly anticipating the chance to ring on one of the finest sets of twelve bells in the country. Meanwhile, Matt and I were last in the tower, still working hard to perfect my technique. I couldn't help but wonder, would I even make it to St Mary, Redcliffe?

The loos at St Mary Redcliffe are under the church, and while taking a quick comfort break, the tenor began to ring. Even underground, the sound and resonance of the bell hinted at something incredibly special. I took a deep breath and headed up the tower.

Epilogue

In the serene aftermath of triumph, her story becomes a beacon of hope, illuminating the path for others to follow.

I'm always amazed at how many people can cram into a ringing room, and this was no different. Both groups had now come together for the highlight of the day with all the participants getting the opportunity to ring on twelve and show off their learning from the day.

Just being in the chamber and listening to the talented ringers bring out the best on these glorious bells was a treat, so actually getting to ring them too was an immense privilege.

And when I say all participants, yes, that does include me. With Matt still reassuringly by my side, and with the advice and support he had given me, I knew I could do it. And I did. I rang at St Mary, Redcliffe. And I have a certificate to prove it.

I arrived back at my home tower with equal trepidation. Could I put anything that I learnt into practice? Well, quite a lot actually! My newly efficient strokes kept shooting the bell up so high I didn't have to pull as hard. I also breezed through some Bob Major with relaxed confidence. Result!

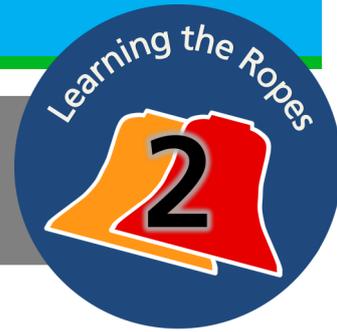
So, is the Masterclass unmissable? Absolutely yes! Will you be pushed out of your comfort zone? Not pushed, just gently stretched. And what's it like being in the company of the country's finest ringers? Inspiring, fun, safe, warm, encouraging, supportive and a little bit mind blowing.

When you get your invite, don't hesitate – I did it, you can do it!



The ringing at Redcliffe left one participant suitably relaxed!

What's New in Learning the Ropes?



Level 2: Complete safeguarding training appropriate for your local church

Why?

Safeguarding training has been on the agenda of the Church of England for quite a while now and was discussed in a quite animated fashion at the ART Conference held at Worcester. A show of hands was firmly in support of it being included in the Learning the Ropes scheme. This recommendation was later endorsed by the ART Management Committee.

All well and good, but ART has teachers and LtR ringers all across the world, who ring in secular buildings and churches of many denominations. Finding a way to phrase an activity which covers all these different situations was quite a challenge and is why the wording can seem a bit unspecific. That's deliberate... it's a principle rather than a set of instructions.

ART advice for C of E settings

Unfortunately ART cannot give specific advice on this as the requirements vary between different Church authorities and even between dioceses within the Church of England.

If you are not sure about training requirements the first person to speak to is your Church Safeguarding Officer who can advise you on what is required. You can also contact your Diocese Safeguarding Officer/Adviser as they are a good source of help if there is an issue.

The Central Council also have information on safeguarding training in Church of England settings:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/safeguarding/resources/safeguarding-in-church-of-england-settings/>

Under the Church of England's Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework, effective from January 2022, the expectation is that all ringers take "Basic Awareness" online training.

And everyone else?

If you are not in a Church of England setting, you should refer to the guidance of the equivalent governing authority for your church or location. However, the safeguarding policies of all denominations in the UK are ultimately driven by government regulation and all church policies are therefore broadly similar. For ringers based outside the UK please follow the regulations in your jurisdiction and the requirements of the equivalent governing authority in your location.

Churches do not generally require under-18s to complete their safeguarding training, however you may wish to explain to any under-18s the policies you have in place to keep young people safe (e.g. that they should never be alone with just one adult) and what they should do if they do have any concerns in the future.

Please use your discretion to mark this item as complete in a ringer's Learning the Ropes Personal Progress Logbook.

Rookie Ringers Rule

The ART Team

We were intrigued to hear about a group of learners in Moseley, the so-called Rookie Ringers, who have an average age of 57! Whilst this might not be an ideal intake for any Tower Captain, they seem to be doing rather well so we spoke to their Tower Captain to find out how the group was set up and how they are learning. He told us:

"As it happens, I didn't create the group. It just happened. There were a lot of similar people wanting to learn at the same time. There was some benefit from the 'Ring for The King' initiative. But basically, it was half a dozen middle-aged learners wanting to learn at the same time which created a critical mass.

Once I had got our newcomers up to speed, it became clear that there was a desire to ring as much as possible, so I arranged a weekly daytime practice. We held a tied practice for a while, but this seemed to be limiting progress to some extent, so I took the plunge and bought a simulator. This has really paid dividends and the group has flourished.

There is always a fine balance of how much to push people, how much to challenge them without breaking them! I experimented with sacrificing a monthly Evensong quarter peal slot so that the learners could do some formal service ringing on their own as a band – the opportunity for public performance. After their first attempt, I did wonder what on earth the Moseley residents thought of the performance! It wasn't pretty! But it did get a lot better.



The Rookie Ringers

Learning and ringing together has been a very positive influence, and really helped the group to form as a social unit. They encourage and help each other enormously. Once they had all achieved their first quarter peals, they voted to shake off the label of 'learners' and adopted the title of the Rookie Ringers.

Learning the Ropes has provided a fantastic focus in weekly sessions and our Rookies love getting their certificates. I have also been fortunate enough to have support throughout from other expert ringers who I have been able to call on and this has provided an excellent framework for learning. We wouldn't have achieved success in method ringing without their help.

What would I say to other Tower Captains? Don't forget handbells! I wish I had done a bit more of that... Also, a daytime practice for adult learners is a definite possibility. Just go for it! You will be rewarded by ringers who are there for service ringing every week. I'm now on the lookout for my next batch of mature learners...

The Rookies agree that the set-up they have is rather special. One of them told us:

It is the highlight of my ringing week. We really have so much fun! The sessions have helped to create a safe space for us all to make mistakes. We learn with each other and from each other. Learning as a group, ringing as a group and supporting each other is the key to our success. The confidence I have gained from this learning environment has spurred me on and given me the drive to get out there and take chances, going to other towers, knowing that if I do my best, then that's fine."

Rookie Ringers are certainly bringing a lot of energy and positivity to their practices which in turn motivates and encourages their teachers. Learning and teaching are two sides of the same coin and each one has an effect on the other. It's hard to teach someone who feels negative or unwilling, just as it is hard to learn with an unsympathetic teacher. It's an important relationship which has to be nurtured to get the best out of it for both teacher and student.

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"Learning as a group and supporting each other is the key to our successes."

"I feel inspired and motivated and am always seeking the next challenge."

"It has helped to build my confidence, as it is a safe space to make mistakes. I absolutely love our learning sessions; without them I might not have carried on."

"It has encouraged me to learn so much more about bellringing other than what happens in the ringing."

"It is absolutely brilliant fun."

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Sorry, Len

Ruth Suggett, Tower Talk Editor



The last edition of Tower Talk (30) contained an article 'A Warm Welcome for All' which was written by Len Roberts. Mistakenly the wrong surname was used, which we apologise for.

Len Roberts is a great supporter of ART and we thank him not only for his contribution to Tower Talk but also more widely to the Association of Ringing Teachers.

Get Social with Like-Minded Ringers

Lesley Belcher



Join the new ART Learning the Ropes Facebook group

Do you like chatting about ringing? If so, you might enjoy the company of other ringers worldwide, in a NEW group set up specially for you. Yes, you!

This is the *ART Learning the Ropes Facebook group* which is only for new ringers learning to ring and being taught by teachers who have been trained to use the Learning the Ropes scheme. It's there for you to chat, share, ask questions, advise, sympathise and generally get to know other learners who might be struggling with the same problems as you or might have already overcome them and can offer other ways. Feel free to share your successes, but also do share any frustrations you have about things that aren't going so well or you are finding difficult. There will be lots of people in the group who can empathise and offer tips because they are a little further along the learning journey.

If you're new to ringing or have already got a few LtR certificates under your belt, then why not get social and give it a go? You'll find us at www.facebook.com/groups/artlearningtheropes. It's the one with the Learning the Ropes logo.

And remember, it's your space, there's no such thing as a silly question so if you have one it's guaranteed others will be asking it too.

Learning the Ropes Achievements

Between September and December 2024 the following certificates were awarded:



Level 1
132



Level 2
89



Level 3
38



Level 4
15



Level 5
5

Congratulations to everyone!

Don't forget that when you achieve Level 5 you will be able to attend the Learning the Ropes Masterclass. Turn to page 4 to read about what happens when you take part in this amazing event.

All Change at the ART Awards

Katie Town

The final nomination for the 2025 ART Awards arrived at 00.51 on January 1, after a botched save and send, followed by a rush to ring in the new year. This joined 56 other nominations, which the ART Award judges will have to read and compare so as to identify winners for each category. A heavy responsibility for the new judging team coordinated by its new leader, Katie Town.

The judging panel will be chaired by *Stuart Hutchieson*, who will be joined by *Haley Barnett*, *Liz Hutchieson* and *Ed Walker*.

Stuart and Liz currently ring at Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire – where Stuart is tower captain and where both are very active in teaching, making good use of the recent addition of a separate training bell. They have also been jointly running the Three Spires young ringers' practices, entering a team in the 2024 RWNKYC for the first time in 5 years. Both have taken leadership roles in their local association and served on the Central Council.

Ed learnt to ring in 2010 at Radley, Oxfordshire. He moved to Nottingham in 2017 for university and has not left yet! During his time at Nottingham, he has held numerous roles within the Nottingham University Society from Ringing Master to Steeple Keeper. Ed is now Deputy Ringing Master at St Mary's in the Lace Market, Nottingham.

Haley brings an international perspective to the ART Awards judging team for the first time. She resides in the USA and rings at the two 10s in Washington, D.C. She is well-known to many in the UK from stints living in and around London and Liverpool, during which time she excelled as 12 Bell Competition Secretary. She is currently serving as Secretary of the Washington Ringing Society.



Stepping into the shoes of Stephanie Warboys (who has been the ART Awards Leader for the past eight years) could be thought of as quite daunting. But thanks to Stephanie, Katie has inherited a well-oiled machine, which she is keen to develop further, starting with a change to the ART Awards ceremony, which will this year take place online, at a time and date still to be announced.

We'd like to say a big thank you to Stephanie who has worked tirelessly to promote and organise the awards, and has been (and remains) a great ambassador for ART.



Katie Town is the new ART Awards Leader. She learnt to ring aged just 5 years old, and has been an active bell ringer ever since. Katie says it is a great honour to have been asked to become ART Awards Leader and is looking forward to seeing all the wonderful nominations celebrating so many committed and talented individuals who are achieving so much in the ringing community.

The Saga of the Simulator

Laura E. Goodin, Melbourne and Ballarat, Australia

Ever wondered what happens after someone wins an ART Award? Laura won the 2021 Award for Excellence in Recruitment and Retention and here she tells her story of what happened next.

I'll start with the moral of the story. Well, actually, the morals. First, you never know where something's going to lead, and second, just because something is taking a long time is not a reason to give up.

Back during Melbourne's ferociously draconian lockdowns, I was in agony because ringing was not permitted. I hadn't been ringing long, and I had the obsessive enthusiasm of any neurodivergent person with a new special interest. I remember posting on the Bellringers Facebook group, "Wouldn't it be cool if there were some way to do online ringing with other people?" It soon emerged that the brilliant and generous Bryn and Leland Reimer, who live and ring in Massachusetts, had already done it, and just in time to provide a crucial antidote to locked-down ringers worldwide: Ringing Room.

An online real-time course. Really!

I immediately thought, "I wonder if I could develop an online, Ringing Room-based, real-time course." I thought of one of my geekiest friends, who lives in America, and asked her if she'd like to get a group together as a pilot group for such a course. Because everyone in the whole world had cabin fever by that point, she had plenty of friends who were willing to give it a go. So I threw myself into developing learning outcomes, structuring the course, and gathering and developing learning materials.

The course was a wild success, and I began delivering it to groups in the US, Australia, and the UK. I uploaded the lesson plans and learning materials to the Facebook group I'd started for Ringing Room enthusiasts (search on Ringing Room Take-Hold Lounge), and pretty soon I was hearing back that others were adapting them for their own learners' needs. Success!

I won an ART Award!

Here's the first moral of the story. My efforts in recruitment and retention, based on my developing the virtual courses and making the materials available to all, had won me an Award from the Association of Ringing Teachers. Astonishingly, there was prize money involved: £400! Yes, pounds! However, it needed to be earmarked for something ringing-related, rather than a quick junket to a tropical vacation spot.

The simulator project...

I asked the ringers in my tower (St. James Old Cathedral in Melbourne) to meet with me so we could discuss a good use for the money. As we were often walking on eggshells to avoid upsetting the church's neighbours (particularly because the neighbourhood had become abruptly and alarmingly overdeveloped, with many, many new friends living in the high-rises that loomed over the church), I suggested getting a simulator, so that we could practise at our leisure. There were no objections, so that was the decision.



Laura (bottom left) at Honolulu Cathedral

The fantastic ringing community

And here's where the second moral of the story comes in. Between work commitments, a lot of personal stuff, and my own profound ignorance of absolutely everything involved with buying, installing, and using a simulator, weeks turned into months, and months turned into years. Each time I conquered one step of the process, two or five or ten more would, hydra-like, spring up in its place. Decide to buy a simulator. Figure out which simulator. Figure out what we'd need to install it. Figure out how to actually do the installation. What about a computer? What about the software? What's the best way to muffle or tie the bells? How do we get the supplies to do that? Where's a safe place to put the computer while we're ringing? Do we need an extension cord? How do we calibrate the sensors so that the simulated bells ring at the same time the real bells would? And on and on (and on).

Luckily for me, I was not alone. Deryn Griffiths, Andrew Cole, and English ringer Brian Rostant, who was spending the southern summer in Melbourne and had been joining us for practices, graciously contributed their expertise for the hardware and software installation and calibration. Brian, in particular, devoted many hours to meticulously installing the wiring for the transmitters before he headed back to England. Audrey Falconer and Leon Altoff donated a computer that, while not new, had plenty of grunt to run the software. Bill Cook helped me create a presentation on the project for the parish committee, which resulted in their covering the gap between the ART Award amount and the full cost of buying and installing the simulator. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a band to make cool projects happen in a tower.

I'd like to take a moment here to explicitly thank the Association of Ringing Teachers not only for making this project possible, but for all the other good work they do to help ringing thrive and prosper.

We're still on an asymptotic approach to completion: the one remaining step is fashioning the muffles, and we've already made some progress on that. Once everything is fully installed and tested, we look forward to seeing how we can use the simulator for teaching and learning, practise, public relations, recruitment, and retention!



Did you know that comparing scores using a simulator is Blue 7 in 50 Ringing Things for Teams?

50/50 Club Draw News

Gill Hughes, Belper

The 50/50 Club supports the Association of Ringing Teachers in delivering training for teachers and ringers. It is a simple way of supporting the work of ART as well as having the chance to win a cash prize. All you have to do is join, pay the subscription of £12 per year (can also be £3 per quarter or £1 monthly) and your membership number will be entered into a quarterly draw. Over the year, half the money received goes to ART... and half is shared out in prizes by a draw of member numbers.

Full details on how to join are here: <https://bellringing.org/donate-to-art/>

December prize winners

- Jacky Savage
- Christine Purnell
- Gordon Gray
- Phil de Cordova

Becoming a Ringing Teacher

Lesley Clarke, Hutton

When I started to learn bell ringing at All Saints Hutton many years ago, there wasn't a specific learning program. To begin with I would have 15 minutes of tuition before the start of the practice night, and that was it for the week. There were many helpful comments from other ringers, and generally lots of encouragement but it meant very little to start with. In fact, it was quite a while before I realised that what the Tower Captain was actually saying when he suggested they ring Plain Hunt - thought they were saying go play hunt!



Ruth with Laura and Jackie

But I stuck at it as the band were a lovely friendly bunch and very slowly, I improved. Today things are very different and not only do we have the structured Learning the Ropes scheme, but there is also a training scheme run by The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) which teaches how to teach. Through this scheme it is possible to become an accredited teacher, which means your teaching is assessed by another experienced teacher and then you are able to submit the ringers you are teaching for their LtR certificates.

Our little band in Hutton, and that at St Nicholas, Ingrave nearby, were in need of new ringers. Beth, our Tower Captain, organised an open day and several eager beginners signed up... but new recruits need teachers and this is something both towers were short of. We had been attending each other's practices once a month for some time to help keep both our bands going and now we needed some extra hands to teach our recruits. Beth suggested that Jackie from St Nicholas and I could help by learning to teach.

This was very much out of my comfort zone but I thought I should give it a go. So, one freezing cold January day myself and Jackie, who was equally reticent, attended an ART Module 1 day course. The training scheme consists of an intensive one-day course, followed by an online theory test, a period of teaching ultimately followed by an assessed lesson by an ART Assessor. The day course was an eye opener for us and some of the other prospective new teachers, but very enjoyable and it was great to chat things over during lunch in the pub. We returned to our towers eager to put into practice our new skills and knowledge.

New teachers are supported by a mentor so there is always an experienced teacher working alongside to help you develop as a teacher. Along with access to online material and your course tutor you are never short of additional help. Several months of teaching later, Beth arranged for an ART Assessor, Ruth, to come to observe us in action so we could become accredited teachers. We were both quite nervous but Ruth put us at ease, and our two new ringers were excellent. We were delighted to pass, with some useful suggestions to overcome small handling points or build confidence in ourselves and our students. The weather was wonderful so Beth arranged a lovely picnic lunch at the church with Ruth and our learners. This was followed by a trip to the nearby tower at Downham for some fun ringing.



If anyone is thinking of becoming a teacher I would definitely recommend going on the course. Yes, it is scary when you first start but the delight when your learner achieves each stage, from backstroke to handstroke and when they stand their bell effortlessly is both mutual and magical.

Focus on Teacher Training Courses

Gill Gladman, Lincoln

It's often stated that the future survival of bell ringing lies in the recruitment and retention of new ringers. Very true. But what about the present?

Our tower relies on various mercenaries joining us each week so that we have enough (6) to ring. Without them we would be struggling. This was the premise for me along with our Tower Captain from Navenby and Wellingore to enrol on the ART Module 1 Day Course, held at All Saints Church, Ruskington.

- The course was broken down into practical bite-size segments that each of the 'learner teachers' completed.
- We covered everything that someone walking in off the street would need to know (and do) to safely start their bell ringing journey.
- The course was enlightening and many of the experienced ringers there said they had learned a lot.

Many thanks to our ART Tutor, Rebecca, for her guidance and to All Saints Church for the use of their wonderful facilities. Now we just need to sort out a recruitment campaign and put our new knowledge to good use!



ART Tutor, Rebecca Odames, hails from Leicestershire.

"I learned to ring at the age 42, after my sister started ringing a few years earlier at her local tower in the Cotswolds.

"Someone mentioned ART to me a few years later and I went on a Module 1 course in 2018. It provided me with all the tools to start teaching and I was keen to get started straight away.

"I taught my first learner in 2019 and soon after Covid stuck. Not to be deterred, I started again in 2022 with two new ringers and when more people wanted to learn, I encouraged other experienced ringers at my tower to attend a Module 1 course. Ringers from surrounding towers have also attended the course and we now have an active group of teachers and new ringers within a few miles of each other.

"Having come to ringing later in life, I find it easy to relate to new ringers struggles. Seeing them succeed has been a great achievement."

What is Project 2030?

ChatGPT

We thought it would be interesting to see what AI made of Project 2030... so we asked the question: write an editorial paragraph about bell ringing based on Project 2030 by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers... and this is what it said:

Project 2030, initiated by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, is an ambitious and forward-thinking plan aimed at securing the future of bell ringing in the UK.

It focuses on addressing the challenges the art faces, including the aging demographic of ringers, the decline in interest among younger generations, and the need for better training and support structures.

At its core, Project 2030 seeks to make bell ringing more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable by promoting new recruitment strategies, offering modernized teaching resources, and improving the public understanding of the tradition's cultural and historical significance. The project also highlights the importance of maintaining the physical condition of bell towers and ensuring the bells continue to ring for generations to come.

With a strategic vision for the next decade, Project 2030 embodies the commitment to preserving this unique skill while adapting to the changing landscape of community engagement and volunteerism.

What's this got to do with you?

Great words outlining a great ambition. But what do they mean for you? What can you do? The next few articles contain some ideas which you and your tower can use to help forward Project 2030.

Get the youth on board

Think ahead and make plans

Get social online

Makeover the ringing room

Think outside your tower

Are your bells in good order?

Spread the word!

Define your ringing goals and ambitions

A cancelled practice is someone's missed opportunity

Charlie's Tower

Davina Tomlinson, Cotherstone

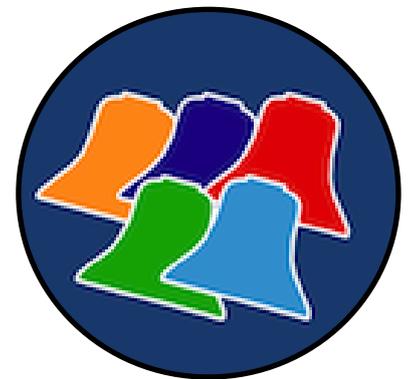
When, along with my husband and dogs, I moved to Cotherstone two years ago the local church bells were silent and had been for over twenty years. I advertised on the church notice sheet, the local village magazine, and word of mouth that I was hoping to start a band with the aim of beginning regular ringing. With the support of some local ringers who rang in the Teesdale area a meeting was planned and interested people welcomed.

One look in the tower was all I had needed to ascertain that before we could actually do any ringing, we needed to do a lot of cleaning both in the ringing chamber, the access stairs, and the belfry. Volunteers turned out and we filled numerous sacks with bits of fallen bird nest, random items abandoned and dumped, and the sweepings of the forever shedding sandstone walls.

The bells were cast in 1881 by John Warner & Sons of London and had been rung regularly for over a hundred years. To begin again after a long hiatus, I needed expert advice and so I made contact with the diocesan bell adviser. He added his expertise to the enthusiasm I had tapped into. After carefully ringing the bells up we discovered that five and six, six being the tenor and weighing in at 7cwt, both needed several thousand pounds worth of repairs including new gudgeons. They were for the present unringable while the other four also needed some work doing on them. Undeterred, we started our practices with just four bells alongside joining the practice sessions in St. Mary's Barnard Castle.

We have a good mix of ages from people in their thirties through to those in their seventies and currently have a waiting list for new ringers. One of the challenges has been the ratio of learners to teachers, while the compact nature of our tower is made more so by the clock being in the middle of the ringing room.

Repairs on the two unringable bells were finally completed in March 2024 and we are so grateful to Andreas of O&P bells for all his hard work. The new ringers all joined in enthusiastically helping with the repairs, hanging new ropes etc, so helping them to learn more about the bells and building a sense of teamwork. With a ring of six now usable, our band has grown in skill both in bell handling and of course fundraising.



Today, over two years on, we have eight learners, three have completed Learning the Ropes, Level 1 while two have completed Level 2.



Our fundraising is now close to complete for the repairs on the remaining four bells with work due to start soon, and the band have even invested in matching tops with a logo that features Charlie, the tower cat.

Locally we have lots of positive comments from villagers, some of whom open their doors on a Tuesday evening to listen to the bells. Indeed, one of our most successful fundraisers has been tower tours run alongside other village events – we had queues!

In August a quarter peal was rung which included some of the Cotherstone ringers, again, something which hasn't happened for over twenty-five years.

Reviving Ringing in Maldon

Caroline Watts, Essex Association



We've had an ambition within our district for a while to revive ringing in Maldon – and recently, under the leadership of our District Master, Mike Worboys, that ambition is well underway to becoming a reality.

Mike had made a call for volunteers for a Task and Finish Group to plan for and deliver various projects, one of which was to revive ringing in Maldon. Three of us jumped at the chance to be involved – Sarah Scannell, our District Training Officer, Tracey Southgate (a former EACR Comms Officer), and me, current EACR Comms Officer.

There are two churches in Maldon with rings of bells – All Saints, in the High Street, and St Mary's by the Quay. Neither tower currently has a regular band but ringers Dennis Johnson from All Saints, and Kim and Gerry Gibbs from St Mary's are keen to see that change.

To kick off, a Tower Open Day was held on 19 October at All Saints on the Maldon High Street as the ground floor ringing room was easily accessible for interested visitors to both see ringers in action and to be able to offer assisted backstrokes under the guidance of experienced teachers. A poster and information about the open day were circulated across different communication channels through the church communities and directly to local youth and adult groups, and the Maldon Facebook page. Careful plans with attention to detail were made.



The Essex Association learn to ring banner

The open day

The day dawned – not the sunny autumnal day we had envisaged, but we were undaunted by the heavy rain showers! The EACR 'learn to ring' banner had been outside the church for two weeks, and we added our own pull-up banners – these all looked very striking and helped to catch the attention of passers-by, helped by the regular short periods of ringing.

A huge number of ringers from our district took part in the day, from talking to people on the High Street, welcoming visitors into the church, telling them about ringing and using a small model bell for illustration, responding to questions prompted by watching our volunteers ring, and providing an opportunity for many individuals to hold the end of a bell rope and ring assisted backstrokes. In total, we had over 30 volunteers from 14 towers, and had nearly 60 individuals sign up for more information on ringing including a few lapsed ringers, which was way beyond even our most optimistic expectations!



Celebrity visitors at the Open Day

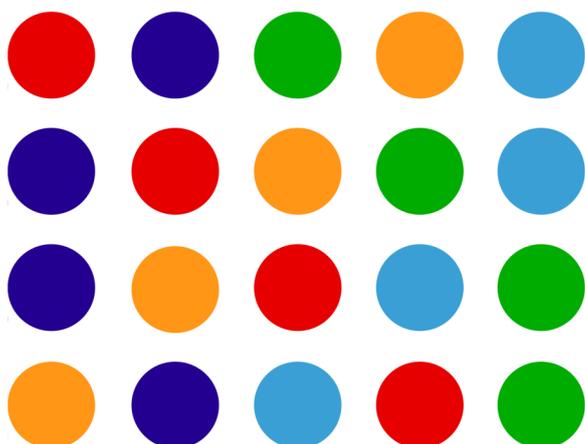
What's next?

Part of our offer was to visit St Mary's for a more extended introductory session to ringing which included a visit to the belfry to see a bell rung up and down, and some more hands-on experience – testing to see if a bell was up or down, the hand-ring exercise and chiming, plus a demonstration of rounds and call changes. 21 joined us for these visits, split over two days. Dates for initial lessons have been sent out to these individuals and teaching is now underway with nineteen learners; we are very grateful to those from our district who are providing their time and expertise to teach them.

We were keen to introduce our learners to the social side of ringing and as most had not yet had the opportunity to meet each other, we arranged a ringing session for all at All Saints with some of the teachers and other ringers from local bands. This was to give each learner the experience of ringing backstrokes in rounds with a band and to properly hear the bells for the first time. We then retired to the local pub to celebrate the progress made in this short time. We're looking forward to seeing what we can achieve in Maldon and using that learning to continue promoting and developing ringing in our district.

Watch this space...

Recruitment and Retention Toolbox



If you're looking to recruit some new ringers, have a look at ART's extensive Recruitment and Retention Toolbox which can be found at: <https://artonline.bellringing.org/>

The toolbox is full of information, ideas and case studies for you to adapt to your own band or cluster.

It is accompanied by a downloadable recruitment toolbox which allows you to plan for success and covers all the important things that need to be considered. It is completely editable so that you can design your own unique recruitment plan.

The Two Towers

Peter Bray, Caldicot and Llanwern

There had been little to no ringing in the area for a long count of years and very little teaching. For the Ring for the King, we were starting from scratch. I was new to teaching ringing (though I did have professional experience in the education system), and relied heavily on association support. The ART Module 1 course for teaching bell handling was invaluable, and the Learning the Ropes scheme is a great resource.

In July, open days at the neighbouring towers of Caldicot and Llanwern in Monmouthshire were held on consecutive weekends, in conjunction with local community events. Caldicot was celebrating 50 years of being made a town with a summer fayre in the grounds of Caldicot Castle, showcasing local groups, from choirs and music ensembles to arts and crafts, local history and more, including ringing. Given the proximity of the castle to the church, we decided to not only have a mini-ring at the fayre, but also to open the church tower.

Throughout the day, there was a steady stream of people trying out the mini-ring, as well as up in the tower. It generated quite a bit of interest and was a very successful day with lots of happy smiling faces. The day was rounded off with a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples, conducted by Nigel Williams.

Sixteen volunteers, from the local area and across the Llandaff and Monmouth Diocesan Association were on hand to help. In addition to providing support ringers, they supported the installation of CCTV in the tower so visitors could watch the bells being rung from the nave, banners for the lychgate, and we thank them all enormously.

A week later, it was the turn of Llanwern to be in the limelight, with its annual village fete. I had been asked to organise some ringing, and so it seemed like a good idea to make it an Open Tower day, similar in format to the one held at Caldicot. Despite the church being half a mile from the village hall (where the fete was being held), and the weather being very 'typical for Wales', it was very well attended and once again we would like to thank everyone who supported this event.

So now we have six new beginners between the two towers, all of whom are progressing nicely. Most of them are under the age of forty which helps us look to the future with confidence. In addition, a ringer who rang Cambridge Surprise Major in the 1980s has come out of the woodwork, and his son is also learning to ring.

We have now been averaging eleven at a practice with a high of fourteen, made up of local ringers and beginners alike from across the ministry area. We can manage a touch of Grandsire Doubles at Llanwern on a practice night, and if everyone turns up at Caldicot, we even have enough for some Plain Hunt Triples.



Ready to go!

Puzzle Corner

Rose Nightingale

How many of these hidden foundation skills have you rung in the tower?

L L I L K X I D G T A I G X O
E N N O G R A J I L C A A S D
I P P R G N I K A M E C A L P
D P N T M G H G C L G S N P L
S E G N A H C L L A C O P L E
I G D O D G I N G A I C N A A
G K O C A G N R X D O P E C D
D E P K G J K D D T M R L E I
T D E V A W N A C I X E M G N
C N G P S D N U O R L M A A G
G G N K A L E I D O S C O P E
R E J C D A S T A I K N I A E
G N L G N I K I R T S I A G O
U P L I S T E N I N G L C E C
S A L I C O E K E R G E T C O

CONTROL
DODGING
STRIKING

KALEIDOSCOPE
CALL CHANGES
JARGON

LEADING
PLACEMAKING
LISTENING

ROUNDS
MEXICAN WAVE
PLACE

Mind the Gap

Rose Nightingale and Sheila Scofield

Once you've learned to handle and control a bell well enough to ring rounds steadily with others, one of the next skills that you will need to learn is how to lead. When a bell is leading it is ringing first in the row of bells:

1 2 3 4 5 6

In rounds it's the treble which leads, but once you're ringing call changes, any bell, including you, could be called into the lead. Initially, as you're learning about call changes, the conductor will deliberately keep your bell in the middle of the change or at the back, however, at some time you're going to have to ring in first place. So best get prepared.

What are the challenges of ringing first in the row?

There are two major challenges – ropesight and rhythm

Let's start with ropesight. When ringing in the middle or back of the row, you will be following the bell in front of you, watching their action and rope and adjusting your striking by listening for gaps or clips. They will be ringing on the same stroke as you. When leading, there is no bell in front of you, at least ringing on the same stroke as you. In fact, the bell that is sounding in front of you, is the last bell in the previous row. You will have to learn the ropesight associated with following a bell ringing on the opposite stroke.

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6

handstroke row backstroke row

That is, you will need to learn how to follow the last bell's rope coming down on the opposite stroke. Initially, you might well do this by ringing the treble in rounds, with the tenor (6) ringing last in the row. What does the ropesight look like? As a rough guide, the tenor ringer's hands will be at the bottom of the backstroke just as you are about to ring your handstroke. This is a very handy visual aid, but additional listening skills are especially helpful in getting the timing just right. Note that as you improve and progress, the bell ringing last in the row might not be the tenor bell. In fact any bell could be ringing last, and you will have to work out which bell it is at every change.

Now let's look at rhythm. In most parts of the UK, rounds and changes are rung with an open handstroke lead, with a one beat gap before the handstroke, but not at backstroke. Getting the gap correct really helps to establish a good rhythm.

1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6 . 1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6

handstroke row backstroke row GAP handstroke row backstroke row

To understand what the gap feels and sounds like, try standing behind an experienced treble ringer as rounds are rung and listen out for a small gap before their handstroke, but not at their backstroke. This brief pause has to be just right – if it's too quick, it can become blurred, if it's too late, it can disrupt the rhythm of the change as the other bells try to adjust and hold up or conversely keep to the rhythm and the bell ringing in seconds place rings at the same time as you.

Find out more...

ART Online (<https://artonline.bellringing.org>) contains a chapter on ringing rounds and leading that you might find useful. You can listen to audio files of rounds rung with open and closed handstroke leads and there's also a video which shows in slow motion the ropesight of leading. You'll find this near the end of the video.

The Devon call change tradition

Although the open handstroke gap is very widespread in most of the UK. Ringers in the Southwest have another tradition, ringing with the gap closed, also known as cartwheeling. Sheila Scofield from Devon tells us:

I have always rung call changes with closed handstrokes. This is a very even, rhythmical style of ringing, sometimes called cartwheeling. The bells are often rung just below the balance, though not always, with the handstrokes pulled in and backstrokes kept up, meaning that once into a steady rhythm the length of the rope doesn't need changing. One local instructor describes it as 'leaning into the sally'.

Timing the lead looks a little different to leading with an open handstroke, but as with all ringing, the main thing to focus on is listening. I always think of the ringing circle as a cake which has to be divided into 6 or 8 equal sound-parts. The whole band needs to ring to the same style, so if the tenor isn't checking in the handstroke and holding up the backstrokes then the treble can't lead correctly.

The bells being rung for Devon call changes takes advantage of the natural swing of the bell. The rounds at the start need to be even and physically remembered throughout the piece of ringing. You only learn to lead by ringing an inside bell first and then understanding and feeling the physical motion and listening all the time.

As someone who rings both Devon Call changes and methods I see and feel them as two different physical actions. At a local meeting this week I was asked which I prefer. My answer was that I like both for their own characteristics. I love the music of the Call Changes with the steady rhythm and easy to listen to, when rung well, and I love the method ringing for its challenges. I find it easy to swap from one style to the other having grown up with both, though I know many new ringers find open handstrokes are more difficult to cope with once they have rung with closed handstrokes.

If you're interested in listening to some Devon call change ringing, then there are lots of examples on YouTube including this one: https://youtu.be/WeEEt_sJzfo?si=NZzDS2S_0SGXkwsZ

They do things differently in Devon



They do things differently in Devon, so Cathy Booth discovers in this interview with Devon call change ringer Ryan Trout. Not only do they have a distinctive cream tea, Devon also has its very own unique style of bell ringing.

With a great sense of regional pride, Ryan fills Cathy in about this fast and furious ringing style which has its own terms and traditions. Listen in to discover more about cartwheeling, Sixties on Thirds, which is also known as the Queen's Peal, and when to employ a strapper.

Although Ryan's been ringing since about the age of nine this podcast is evidence that he still gets a huge buzz from ringing, visiting other towers, going up into the bell chamber and, of course, visiting the pub afterwards. And keen to encourage others, he generously shares some great tips on places to ring both in Devon and further afield.



Listen to Ryan's interview at: <https://funwithbells.com/episode/ringing-differently-in-devon>

The Drayton Parslow Bell Foundry

Richard Booth, Marsworth

Visiting a Bell Foundry is number 32 in in the Out and About section of 50 Ringing Things. How many have you done?

To find out more visit: <https://bellringing.org/50-ringing-things/>



By the second half of the 18th Century, the large bell foundries, mainly in London, had achieved a virtual monopoly of bell founding. However, prior to this, there were dozens of small foundries all over the country manufacturing church bells. One such foundry was run by the Chandler family in the then tiny village of Drayton Parslow in Buckinghamshire, not far from modern-day Milton Keynes.

The Chandler family were blacksmiths, operating from a smithy next door to the pub in Drayton Parslow. Behind the smithy was a small paddock, and here Richard Chandler started founding bells in about 1635. The exact date is not known; the earliest known bell bearing Richard's name is dated 1636, but another bell dated 1635 bearing no founder's name is believed to be his. Where Richard learnt bell founding skills is also not known.



The Chandler bells at Marsworth

However, Drayton Parslow is only 12 miles from Buckingham where the bell foundry, latterly operated by Robert Atton, ceased production just 2 years earlier in 1633. So it seems quite possible he may have previously had some involvement in the Buckingham foundry – or perhaps was just fulfilling a need created by its recent demise.

Richard Chandler (known as Richard Chandler I to distinguish him from subsequent Richards) died in 1638, by which time he is known to have cast 5 bells, of which 4 still survive, plus probably the 1635 bell as already mentioned (which also survives). There was then a gap of 12 years before Richard's eldest son, Anthony, started casting bells in 1650. He continued until 1679, by which time he is known to have cast some 70 bells, of which 52 still survive.

Anthony was later joined by his brother, Richard, now known as Richard Chandler II, and by his son, also Richard, known as Richard III. It is difficult to determine exactly which bells these Richards may have cast, since none bear the name Richard, just Chandler. The issue is further complicated by the fact that there are three marriages of a Richard Chandler recorded, and three burials all described as bellfounders – one in Drayton Parslow, one in Wing and another in Bedfordshire. Although no sources have designated a Richard IV, Alfred Cocks in his book "The Church Bells of Buckinghamshire" published in 1894 also surmises that there may have been another Richard Chandler. It is also interesting to note that there are three distinct styles of lettering on Chandler bells which it has not been possible to relate to a specific founder, but are generally attributed to one or other of the Richards (II or III).

Next to join the bell founding business was George Chandler, the second son of Anthony (and therefore brother of Richard III), in 1681. George cast at least 8 bells in the period 1681 to 1683 (of which 6 still exist), but there is then a gap until 1702, following which at least 11 bells (of which 7 survive) were cast by him over the period until 1725. It is possible George pursued some other interest for these 20 gap years. However, there were at least 28 bells (but very likely more) cast during the period 1686 to 1726 which simply bear the inscription "Chandler made me" but in a style not known to have been used by specific founders, Dove's Guide lists them as "generic" Chandler. So it is also possible George was involved with "the firm" during this period.

The final member of the Chandler family to join the bell founding business was Richard III's and George's younger brother, Thomas. Only one bell is known to carry his initials (rather than his full name) dated 1723, so it seems likely he was generally involved in "the firm".

The last bell bearing the Chandler name is dated 1726, the year Richard III died. It seems that George and Thomas decided not to continue the business after Richard's death.

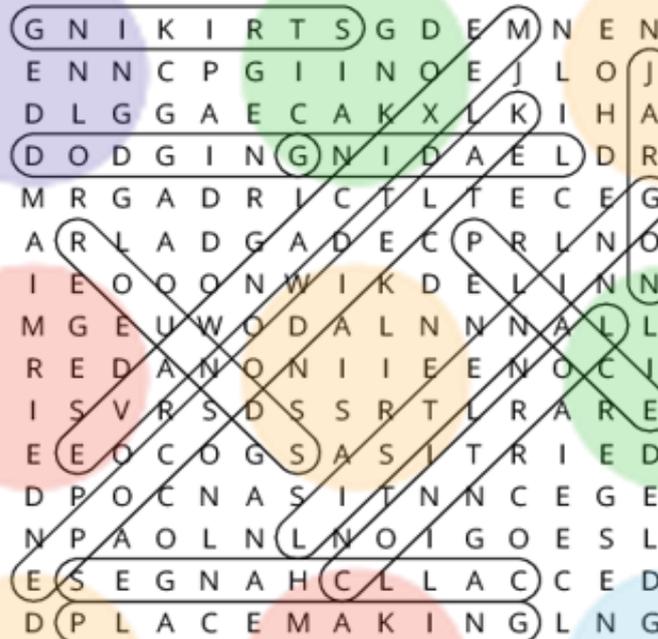
There are now no visible remains of the foundry, but it is remembered in the naming of Bell Close, which has been built on the site.



A Chandler bell from Slapton

Does your tower or one nearby have locally made bells? Perhaps there are street names nearby which hint at a past connection with bell founding – such as Bell Lane or Foundry Close. If you've got an interesting bell in your tower, or there is an intriguing inscription, or perhaps there was a foundry in your area, do write in to tell us about it!

Puzzle Corner Solution



CONTROL
DODGING
STRIKING

KALEIDOSCOPE
CALL CHANGES
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LEADING
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PLACE