

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning
the Ropes™

Association of Ringing Teachers / Learning the Ropes - www.learningtheropes.org

Number 26 - June 2023

Editor

Ruth Suggett

towertalk@bellringing.org

In this issue:

A Perth Festival	2
The Bells of St Clement's, Cambridge.	3
Thank You, 'Ring for the King'	4
It's only been forty-two years!	4
Summoned by Bells (puzzle).	5
The Diary of a Bellringer.	6,7
Ask ART.	8
The World's First Level 5 Call Change Conductor.	8
The Call Change Route to Success	9
The First National Call Change Competition	10
Stepping Stones	11
Rediscovering Ringing.	12
A 'tail' from a novice ringer.	13
Ringling at Hatton, Rowington & Honiley.	14,15
Preparing to Ring for the King.	16,17
Happy Tenth Birthday, Naremburn!.	18
First in February	19
All for One and One for All	20,21
Good News from Uffculme	22
Answers to Puzzles	22



The buzz from all the Coronation ringing has now become a low hum, but the energy and enthusiasm is still there. This email from new ringer Emma Elkington of Coningsby in Lincolnshire sums it up:

'Ringling is something I have always wanted to do, as I love the sound of bells ringling - but with three children and a husband in the RAF I've never really had the time. I saw a post on Facebook about *Ring for the King*, so I went to the open morning that it advertised. Everyone was so welcoming and my teacher Colin has been so patient, tailoring his teaching style to what I need and how I learn.

'I made the crown that you can see in the picture last year for the Platinum Jubilee, as I also run a Rainbows group for 4 to 7 year olds in the local village. When I showed them pictures of my children in the crocheted crown, the other ringers said I absolutely had to wear it for the coronation ringling.'

A Perth Festival

David Smith, Australia

Each year ANZAB (the Australian and New Zealand Association of Bellringers) holds a festival, which includes its AGM, a striking competition, a formal dinner and a lot of ringing. Typically about 20% to 25% of our membership attend. This year it was held in Perth, from 8th to 12th June.



The ANZAC bell

Perth is home to one of the three existing 16-bell rings (the others being in Birmingham and Dublin). It must be one of the most spectacular bell-towers in the world! Actually it has eighteen bells hung for full-circle ringing (this includes two semi-tones). More recently the ANZAC bell has been hung above the other full-circle bells. This 127 cwt Bourdon bell rings each day, activated by a motor that swings it so that it chimes. You can appreciate its size when you realise that the bell directly below it in the picture is the 29-cwt tenor.

The festival aims to cater for ringing at all levels. So while, in the Bell Tower, there were two quarter peals of maximus, it also saw a lot of Plain Bob Doubles and rounds on 16 (the first experience of ringing on 16 for many).

We rang at all the Perth towers. The cathedral has a delightful eight that are usually rung at a fast pace (otherwise the tower sways enough to make good striking tricky). Matthew Higby, on his first

visit to Australia, had tinkered (I'm sure that's not quite the right word!) with this ring just before the festival, and everyone commented on how much better-struck the bells were as a result. Other Perth towers are at Claremont (a 6-cwt 6) and St Hilda's College Chapel in Mossman Park. School students have regular lessons on these bells, and during the festival we rang a quarter of the eponymous Mossman Park Surprise Major, created by ANZAB's peal secretary, Adam Beer.

There were day outings to the other Western Australian towers, at York, Mandurah, Rockingham and the delightful eight at the Catholic Cathedral in Bunbury. The original cathedral was largely destroyed by a cyclone in 2005, so the whole building, not just the bell tower, is comparatively new.

We all take home excellent memories from these festivals. For newer ringers, it may be their first experience away from their home tower, with ringing on 16 perhaps a particularly memorable event. For everyone, it is a chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones. There's



The conference dinner

a strong social element to the festival. The City of Perth was kind enough to host an official reception, notable for the excellent quantity and quality of the food and drinks provided, and also for the brevity of the speeches (which were entertaining and pertinent). The formal dinner was another good opportunity to mingle. As it happens the most prominent face in the picture is John Cater, one of the many visitors from UK - he's a regular attendee, and has helped many of our members get off to a good start with handbell ringing.

This is a good pretext to end by saying "Do consider coming to one of our festivals at some stage - everyone is welcome, wherever and whatever you ring!"



The Perth Bell Tower

The Bells of St Clement's, Cambridge

Lynne Hughes, Centre Manager

I started as the Manager of the St Clement's Ringing Centre in the city of Cambridge in late March, and what a great start it's been.

This 6-cwt six were brand new last year, a project conceived and executed by Barry Johnson. All the bells can be rung with tied clappers and simulated sound, allowing us to teach almost any time.

We've already built up over twenty regulars, coming for individual handling lessons, or in twos and threes; and there's barely a morning or afternoon with nothing on. Some are starting to ring rounds with the simulator 'ringing' the other bells.



Lynne teaching at St Clement's Cambridge

The next step is to introduce regular sessions for rounds and call changes, and beyond, as more of our recruits reach this stage - but we will also need more helpers. In addition, there are plans to start opening to the public for daily demonstrations.

A big difference between the St Clement's approach and other towers is that we make a charge for using the centre and its facilities. It's £10 an hour per teacher present, for an individual or shared lesson. People seem happy to pay, and some travel a considerable distance, and word of mouth brings in new clients.

I asked one of our students, Ann, what she thought of her experiences so far and she immediately told me this:

I came to St Clements thinking I might do a few weeks and I was very unsure about it. Three months later, I am looking forward to every lesson. I am finding the lessons fun and at times hard work. Supported by the regular practice at Great Shelford, which the tower there is kindly giving, I feel I am making real progress. Lynne and Barry are infinitely patient but also keen to keep stretching us and we all enjoy recording elements of progress in the record book.

Learning through good clear teaching, practice and laughter is a great combination.

Get in touch if you'd like to drop in to see the facility or watch a lesson. Before too long, we'll hope to be open every weekday afternoon from 2pm till 5pm, for drop-ins, but check for now.

Email: Bells@stclementscambridge.co.uk

We were recently awarded ART Teaching Hub status, and proudly display the certificate!

For more information, see our website

<https://bells-of-stclements.scy.org.uk/>

Or Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091584605688>

Thank You, 'Ring for the King'

From a returning ringer at Barnes, London

I returned to bell ringing after a gap of about twenty-five years when I spotted a news article online about 'Ring for the King' and a shortage of ringers. I'd enjoyed ringing as a teenager when my local church was a two-minute walk from my house, and I hadn't rung since leaving home. I contacted the 'Ring for the King' helpdesk in February and on their direction on a Saturday mid-March went along to Barnes ringing centre. My partner came along with me to try ringing.

I initially rang solo under supervision. Later that morning I got a buzz from ringing rounds as the eight bells sounded lovely and I liked being part of the rhythm of the ringing. Call changes were harder as they are called differently from how I'd learnt and navigating eight bells was more difficult than my previous five-bell ringing and I needed help to keep right. My basic ringing skills came back immediately, although it was nerve-wracking.

My partner and I began ringing regularly on Saturday mornings. I am now ringing a few times a week when I can as I'm enjoying it. I've rung at five towers and did a quarter peal at Wimbledon in April which I found rewarding to complete, thirty-two years on from my first and only other quarter peal! Though I could ring immediately on returning, better bell control and remembering plain hunt took a few weeks. I'm looking forward to learning more methods on more bells. Work in progress includes improving my covering on the tenor and ringing up and down in peal. I'm also working on my technique and striking.

Ringing in early May for the coronation was fun and memorable. It was sociable, inclusive of recent recruits and it felt like a celebration of bell ringing. I'm now looking forward to some bell ringing trips this summer. It's great to be ringing again. Thank you 'Ring for the King' for getting me back into bell ringing and a shout out to all the ringers who have been helping me.



Returning ringers doing bell maintenance at Barnes

It's only been forty-two years!

Tricia Holman, Layer de la Haye, Essex

It was in February this year that I heard of the request for new ringers and for people to return to ringing. Could I ring again? After nearly 42 years? Was I too old at 74? I had learnt for a year at school when I was 13 at Durweston church in Dorset, then sporadically in my parents' parish of Thrushelton in Devon and, after I was married, in St Osyth in Essex.

Well, I applied and got a most welcoming response from Layer de la Haye, not far from where I live in Colchester. I wouldn't be the oldest and I was told that it was 'like riding a bicycle - one doesn't forget'. That turned out to be more or less true - the not forgetting part anyway - and I've no idea of the ages of the other ringers! I was certainly nervous to begin with and rather rusty, but with a few practices I became more confident. Previously, I had never got further than call changes and usually rang the tenor, but after much encouragement and help on practice nights, when the time came to ring for the Coronation I managed my first Plain Hunt on bell 3 without someone at my side prompting me. I have started to ring for services and hope I don't lower the standard too much. Ringing by ropesight is still a challenge, but I'm sure that will come in time. Perhaps soon I might be able to try a plain course of Plain Bob Doubles, and then, who knows? I'm certainly pleased to be back in a tower again.



Tricia reunited with a bell rope

Summoned by Bells

De Tremain

The title from Sir John Betjeman's book *Summoned by Bells* seems to encompass the two roles I currently have working from home here in Cornwall. One, of course, is being the ART Resources Administrator, and the other Outreach and Ministry Administrator here in the Benefice of LannPydar. So, what is the link here you may be wondering?

Well... one of the churches within the five-parish Benefice of LannPydar is St Ervan. Little-known back in the day, this church in Cornwall lost its tower many years ago and the stump remained a stump until given a roof sometime in the 1950s. For many years a tripod of tree trunks supported a bell in the churchyard, and this was how young John Betjeman found the church whilst on holiday in Cornwall.

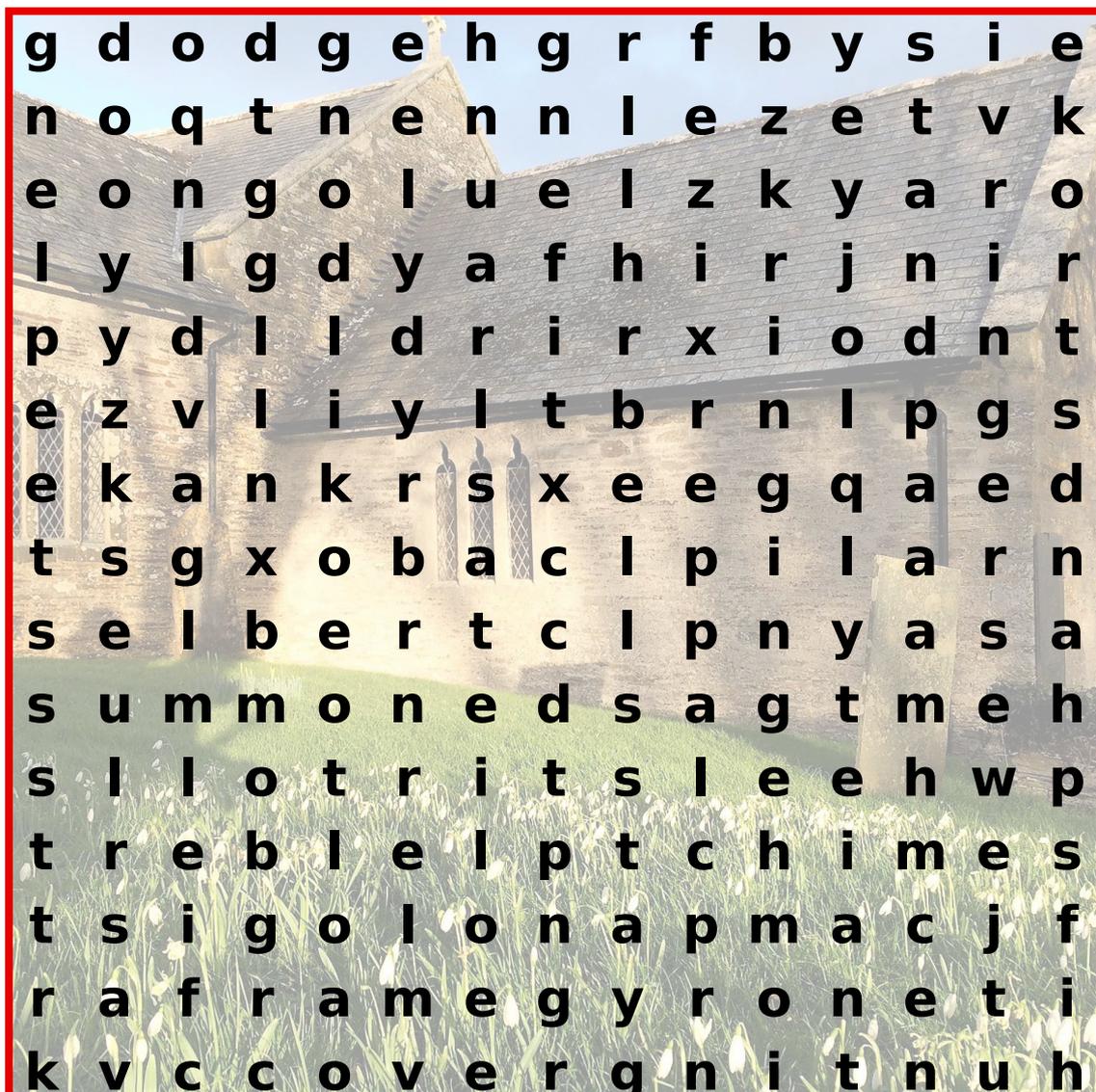
But to Betjeman, St Ervan was something quite exceptional...

It is said that he met the vicar who summoned him by striking the bell and later entertained him to tea in the literary atmosphere of the vicarage. From this, *Summoned by Bells* was how Betjeman described his autobiography.

This inspired me to plan a wordsearch for this Tower Talk issue - *Summoned by Bells*. I hope you enjoy it! The solution is on page 22.

Wordlist

belfry
bells
box
call
campanologist
carillon
chimes
clapper
cover
dodge
dong
frame
gong
handstroke
hunting
leading
method
peal
ringers
ringing
rope
sally
stand
stay
steeple
strikes
summoned
tenor
tolls
treble
wheel



The Diary of a Bellringer

Fiona Smith, Woodbridge, Suffolk

November 2022

I've been wanting to learn to ring for years, ever since watching my grandfather ring in Grundisburgh church when I was a child. I finally took the plunge after hearing a programme on the radio about a shortage of bellringers. I emailed and the next day I heard back from Amanda Richmond inviting me to come and watch at St Mary Le Tower in the middle of Ipswich. I was introduced to Chris who would be my teacher. They all made it look so easy!

December 2022

I really have no idea what is going on. There is a whole new vocabulary to get used to: handstroke, backstroke, stay, sally, tail end (and who on earth is Bob?) Have I got to speak and understand what seems like a foreign language while trying to work out what I am supposed to be doing? They asked me if I could hear my bell, but which one was mine? However, the last session this month ended on a high with me ringing on my own and I had the impression I could feel something up there. I hope it was my bell!

January 2023

We are concentrating on learning to ring up and down. Down feels chaotic - while going up, I think I have the world record for the longest ever raise. Just ringing normally in rounds is going quite well. With Chris' guidance I can get it right some of the time. I'm on different bells too, some heavier, some lighter - just when I thought I was getting somewhere it felt a bit like starting again.

February 2023

We are revisiting the different parts of the bell and this time it all makes much more sense. It all takes so much time to sink in. I've been told numerous times that it's like riding a bike and once you master it you will do it automatically. Although I can, it has been an awful long time since I learnt to ride a bike and at the moment I cannot imagine getting to that point with ringing.

The highlight this month though, was my five minutes of fame. A few of us new learners were videoed and interviewed about *Ring For the King* - to be on Breakfast TV, we were told. Little did we know we would 'go viral'! My phone was buzzing all day with people asking if that was me on the radio/TV - as far and wide as the Netherlands and Canada apparently!

March 2023

Bell ringing is like a roller coaster. I seem to swing from having positive sessions when I leave on a real high and a sense of achievement, to a terrible session when I feel I have taken two steps back and am about ready to give up. Learning something so new at an older age can make you feel quite vulnerable and this has taken me well and truly out of my comfort zone.



Fiona at the ready, with matching blue window



Coronation ringers including the Fledglings, in Ipswich on 6 May

April 2023

A busy month! I was accepted into The Suffolk Guild of Ringers, and got a badge and certificate. I joined a small tour with some fellow 'Fledglings' (the name for a group of newbies learning in Ipswich) to a few towers in the North East of the county; Yoxford, Wilby and Beccles. It was lovely to visit different towers and meet more people. To arrive and ring in front of new people who don't know me or my ability was a whole new level of anxiety, but there I was ringing in Beccles with all those new people! I did it, without a terrible disaster, with the support of Amanda to keep me on track. I have passed my Level 1 Bell Handling and have a certificate to prove it, along with my Suffolk Guild Centenary badge. I'm moving on to leading now, so 'Look To'....

May 2023

The month of the Coronation and one of the milestones! On the morning of the big day, a group of about 30 of us moved between 3 towers in Ipswich - St Lawrence, St Clement's and St Matthew's, in stages as there were too many of us to all get into the towers at once. It was great to be able to reach this milestone. I feel confident to ring different bells in different towers, without feeling that I have to have someone standing beside me 'just in case'. My confidence has increased hugely, I have better bell control and although I still don't always get it right, most of the time I can hear (yes I can hear which is my bell now) when I'm not quite right and correct it.

But this month wasn't all about the Coronation! Just when you feel you have mastered something, there is something new to get your head around! There is no rest it seems, so now I am moving on to call changes - oh my goodness how confusing! On a positive note, I managed to ring Bastow.

The Fledglings were on tour again in May visiting Harkstead, Sutton and Holbrook. We practised some call changes in readiness for the Call Change Striking Competition in June - how did I get roped into that?



Happiness is a warm certificate!

June 2023

Still going - and starting the month on a high as we came fifth out of seven teams in the Call Change Competition! Quite an achievement considering we only practised as a complete band the previous Thursday.

Looking back, I can see how far I have come in such a short time even though it feels there is still an awful long way to go. I am determined to master this and become a good bell ringer - like those I first watched at St Mary Le Tower six months ago who made it look so easy. However, I think we are talking many more years to come. I still don't know who Bob is though.

Thank you to everyone who has encouraged and supported me on the roller coaster ride!

Ask ART

Andrew Slade, newly-elected Chair of the Association of Ringing Teachers

When you are taking your first steps in ringing, the extent of your ringing world is your teacher, your tower and your new ringing friends, but I am sure it doesn't take long to realise there is a lot more out there - much of it highly visible as in other towers, branch meetings and social media. However, there is just as much bubbling away behind the scenes. Examples are the Central Council of Church Bellringers, The Ringing World and of course the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART), which in a relatively short space of time has contributed so much to the teaching of bellringing. Hopefully this is something which you feel you have benefited from?

It has therefore been a great honour to take over as Chair of this incredible organisation which brings you all those logbooks, teaching and learning resources, certificates, YouTube clips, all those patient and skilful teachers and of course Tower Talk - and a lot more besides.

My first public outing was the ART Conference in Birmingham in March, where not only was I elected as Chair, but I got to meet so many enthusiastic and dedicated supporters from around the country. A highlight of this weekend was to be present at the ART Awards which was a breathtaking showcase of what can be achieved by people working together.



Andrew Slade

So my strategy for ART is to keep working to reach out into areas where ART hasn't yet become established. I want to build its growth and influence in the world of bellringing, and of course to increase the opportunity for ringers to access teaching courses. The enthusiasm and positivity I have found in ART in these first few months, I am sure, provides the basis to continue our growth and keep ART in the forefront, so that when someone asks 'How do I learn to teach aspects of bellringing?', the answer is 'Ask ART for help'.

The World's First Level 5 Call Change Conductor

Clare McArdle, Harborne

In May we held a dual celebration party - for the King's coronation and to mark ten years of the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing. Never one to miss an opportunity, it was a pleasure for me to be able to present Learning the Ropes certificates to some of our students who had achieved Levels 1, 2 and 3. But the biggest thrill was to present the first ever Level 5 certificate of the Learning the Ropes Advanced Call Changes Scheme to Max Earthquake.

Max started on the Call Change scheme in 2021 as a member of my band, who along with half a dozen other bands, took part in the pilot testing of how the scheme would work. At the time, she had just achieved her Level 2 on the original LtR scheme and so was in the perfect position to launch her call change conducting career. She took to it like a duck to water and was really keen to progress. Every week she would show me that she had been working on the theory parts and it soon became pretty clear she would become an excellent call change conductor.

At the beginning of the year I got a sense that Max was upping her game and that what she really wanted was to be the first person to get to Level 5. I was very happy to feed her ambition and help her achieve her goal. But it's not just about the certificate on the wall. Max is an extremely competent call change conductor with a really good understanding of how call changes work. She regularly calls Sunday service touches and is a dab hand at calling Devon sequences. Well done, Max!

Well done Max!



Max with her Level 5 certificate

The Call Change Route to Success

Marion Knight Dixon, Bardwell, Suffolk

I've been following the Learning the Ropes for a few years, reaching Level 1 in March 2020.

The band kept up a weekly session with Ringing Room through lockdown which helped me understand how methods were written. I achieved Level 2 in February 2022. The leap between Levels 2 and 3 is a big one and I have struggled with developing rope sight and converting the skills learnt in Ringing Room into a practical application.

One of the main practices I go to has a lot of other Level 1 and 2 ringers and therefore it was going to be difficult to fit in enough practice for me to embark on change ringing. We came up with a plan to start following the Learning the Ropes Advance Call Change scheme to keep my ringing progressing, but without needing a more experienced band to do it with. I also hoped that this would improve my ringing with call changes as well.



Marion collecting the trophy at the Suffolk Guild Striking Competition



I enjoy following the scheme and working out the next goals I want to achieve. Being naturally curious I peeked ahead to see what the ultimate goal would be – one of them is calling the Devon call change sequence 'Sixty on Thirds', which I already knew about as we had been talking about it on practice night, and in fact the Tower Captain had suggested it as a common goal for our band. My ambition was piqued and I set about looking at it and understanding what was involved. I couldn't help it! It sounded like a great challenge, even though I hadn't done the intermediate stepping stones.

I had started calling some changes on practice night and had been complimented for my loud and confident style (although it didn't feel like that to me!) and when we began to plan our local 'Coronation' ringing, I was pleased to be asked if I would call and ring the tenor for Sixty on Thirds as our recorded tribute. I was able to have a few practices and when the day came, it was a great team effort with everyone supporting me and keeping me right!

A few weeks after the Coronation, our band entered the Guild six bell striking competition and I was honoured to be asked to be the conductor! I am pleased to say we won (although we only had to beat one other team!) However, the trophy now sits proudly in our ringing room and I am confidently working my way through Levels 4 and 5 of the Call Change scheme and have nearly completed Level 3 of the change ringing route. I have thoroughly enjoyed the whole journey, but I could not have achieved any of it without the support of everyone in the various towers I ring at who have helped, encouraged and guided me along the way.

The First National Call Change Competition

On Saturday 3rd June, the first ever National Call Change Competition was held at Moseley in Birmingham. Call Change competitions are part and parcel of ringing in the West Country but not so much in the rest of the country, where they can often be a bit of an adjunct to Guild and Association competitions. Top teams in Devon are universally acclaimed as skilful and inspiring exponents of this art. To widen the appreciation of and participation in competition call change ringing in the style practised in Devon and the south west of England, this inaugural National Call Change competition was held and teams from all over the country were invited to take part. Taking up the invitation was the home team, Moseley, and here is what one of the team members, Trish Everett has to say about the experience:

When I learned to ring, call changes were very much seen as a stepping stone to method ringing. Entering a Moseley band in the National Call Change Competition changed our minds about this – we discovered how rewarding call change ringing is. To ring sixty on thirds with closed handstroke leads, with a rise and fall included, challenged us but it really helped to develop and improve our skills. To ring call changes well required a high level of focus, commitment and consistent accurate striking. It is fantastic that there is now a national competition which offers opportunities for everyone, and we're already looking forward to the next one – aiming to improve our score next time!

One of the Strategic Priorities of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers is that method ringing should not be the only measure of success, and that good call change ringing can be a target for many bands. Ringers in the south west have demonstrated this with their culture of focus on competition call change ringing.

This inaugural national competition mixed some really good exponents of competition call change ringing from Devon and the South West, with bands more used to method ringing. If you are interested in finding out more about the competition, visit the website

<https://nccc.cccbr.org.uk/>

You can also check out Simon Linford's online book which is a highly readable guide, packed full of interesting and useful information

<https://callchanges.cccbr.org.uk/>

And don't forget as a Learning the Ropes ringer, you can follow the Advanced Call Change scheme.



*Winning band (left to right):
James Grant, Will Carew, Suzanne Driscoll,
Elaine Grant, Eva Lee, Graham Sharland*

Results

Place	Band	Score
1st	Kingsteignton 1	91%
2nd	Birmingham	87%
3rd	Bow	84%
4th	Broadhempston	80%
5th	Tiverton	79%
6th	Cheltenham 1	75%
7th	Kingsteignton 2	73%
8th	Abbots Bromley	68%
9th	Bisley / Stroud	62%
10th	East Anstey	54%
11th	Moseley	53%
12th	Alton	52%
13th	Cheltenham 2	48%

Stepping Stones

Helen McGregor, Tulloch and Alderney



Among my immediate friends there are a group of ringers who are very competent at Plain Bob Minor and have dabbled in surprise minor and some odds and ends in between. What we fancied was a week padding out our repertoire – but which methods should we choose? Has anyone got the blue line? Is there a way to build on this method to ring something similar which will improve understanding and widen our horizons?

A chance remark took us to the ART online learning portal, and then our group was ready to get started! We meet up fortnightly on Zoom/RingingRoom. We nominate a leader for our next session so the responsibility for leading the group rotates. Our respective tower captains and branch ringing masters have been supportive and so we have additionally rung some of the methods in the tower, on a simulator or on handbells. We have even managed an occasional quarter peal.

The week we had planned for January 2024 is now going to be a ‘finishing school’ – a chance to showcase our achievements. Rather than just a week to cram some new methods we are enjoying a year of regular meetings ringing methods of steadily increasing complexity being taken at a very leisurely and enjoyable pace

Stepping Stones is a progressive scheme which allows self-certification of methods learned. The route from Plain Bob Minor to spliced surprise minor is clearly marked – all you have to do is follow the path. It was devised by Judith Frye and put together the blue lines and provides a description of the structure which facilitates ringing the method.

We are proceeding as a group but you can travel this journey alone, or recruit some like minded individuals and form your own group. You will find that the online learning portal at:

<https://onlinelearning.bellringing.org/>

It offers something for everyone. As well as the ‘Stepping Stones’ you’ll find:

- Understanding Call Changes
- First Steps in Calling Bobs
- 50 Virtual Ringing Things
- Composing Practice Night Touches
- Basic belfry Checks
- Ropework, Knots and Splices



MINOR
**Stepping
Stones**

Rediscovering Ringing

The teacher's story - Michael Cornwell

About 18 months ago, we were about to lose our excellent Tower Captain and ART teacher, Richard Heath, who was moving along the road to Calne. Realising that we needed to be able to teach any new recruits who came along, I attended an ART Module 1 course to gain the skills for teaching bell handling, followed by a further course in October to teach Foundation Skills. I was just beginning to fret that I might miss out on training any learners when, after a Sunday service shortly before Easter 2023, Sue Cannings mentioned that she would be interested in returning to bellringing after a gap of 40 years.



What a heaven-sent opportunity for both of us! Sue came to our Friday night practice and, although apprehensive, she coped remarkably well - while the rest of the tower team were trying to make themselves invisible so as not to distract her. Having got the first taster session out of the way, Sue's next two sessions were private tuitions taken by our Steeple Keeper, David Browne, as I was out of the country. A fortnight later I was delighted to find that Sue was ringing with full control of the bell and was able to ring the bell up and down.

Having a returning ringer as my first student was a great benefit. It has reinforced the lessons I learned on the Module 1 course and given me more confidence to teach a complete novice.

Sue is modest about her progress; she is ringing rounds competently and is now moving on to Plain Hunt, but she is thoroughly enjoying her return to ringing. So - to those who are considering a return, I can tell you that the whole tower team is mightily pleased Sue made that choice too.

The student's story - Sue Cannings

I returned to bell ringing in April of this year having not rung for over forty years. This was something I had been thinking of doing for a while - having recently retired, I felt I could make the commitment to attend practices on a regular basis and also ring for services on Sundays.

I was somewhat apprehensive and nervous at first (*what if I drop the rope, or worse, break the stay?*) but I needn't have worried. Everyone has been friendly and supportive and made me feel very welcome. My teacher, Mike, wonderfully calm and patient, has enrolled me with SmART ringer which gives me access to the Learning the Ropes network where there are lots of useful resources. He has also encouraged me to visit other towers, where again I was welcomed and encouraged to join in.

I was surprised and pleased at how quickly the basics of bell ringing have come back to me and delighted to be invited to take part in ringing to celebrate the coronation of King Charles after only four weeks! As someone said, it's just like riding a bike - you never forget!

Things have changed a lot since I first learned to ring in my mid-teens. There is much more emphasis on safety now, which is a good thing. The learning pathway offered by Learning the Ropes together with the support of a trained teacher recognised by the Association of Ringing Teachers supports learning in a structured and logical way. This enables and encourages ringers of all levels to improve and progress. I have also found some interesting clips and videos on YouTube which have been helpful. Of course, none of these resources were available when I learnt to ring initially - then, we learned by watching and ringing with more experienced ringers.

I would encourage anyone who is thinking of returning to bellringing to go ahead and do it. I am thoroughly enjoying myself, making new friends and looking forward to the challenges ahead.



A 'tail' from a novice ringer

Caroline Weald, Basildon, Essex

Listening on the radio early February I heard about the need for more bell ringers to be trained to help with the forthcoming coronation of King Charles. This appealed to me, and my journey began.

I contacted the organisation and was delighted to receive an invitation to pop along and meet an experienced bell ringer, who would show me the ropes (no pun intended). I told only my husband, as my plan was, in less than two months, to have a skill set that would allow me to surprise the family - to invite them along to hear me ring a bell (wherever that may be, perhaps St Paul's?) in complete rhythm with others, with polish and aplomb.

My pomposity was soon to be crushed ...

I learnt the theory, I knew the difference between Sally and her tail, what the bell looked like pointing at the sky, or glancing down to earth. I could scamper up the ladder and gaze wondrously at the great metal beasts that could sound so lovely but equally could injure, if you got too close at an inappropriate time.

I pored over information about rounds, hunts, triples and Plain Bob, I marvelled that anyone could understand the zig-zag lines on the method diagrams. Oh, and the practical stuff, goodness me that would be a chapter on its own! I was told "it's not about strength just technique" but I can reliably tell you my knees and other places on my anatomy have perspired in my endeavour to pull the rope straight down, and to get the bell to sit at the balance.

As the weeks progressed, I moved through backstroke to handstroke and then all these instructions: climb up the tail, catch the sally, the sally is bouncing, no fishing, look ahead not down, don't look up, the bell's coming down... They would resound again and again in my brain, and I can't describe the apprehension when trying to make coils!

All this said, I am smitten! My ART teacher has the patience of any saint and despite the fact that, from the corner of my eye, I see him visibly wince when I pull the rope too hard, he soldiers on. I have met new people, both at my bell tower and one that I visit on a Friday.

Seeing young and older people ring with such skill spurs me on. No one has been judgemental, but all have been encouraging and tried to allay my fears that even if I did bash the stay, probably nothing would happen.

I have only one regret, and that is that I didn't indulge in this charming pastime earlier on, because younger grey matter surely would have helped!



Caroline and her bell in the funky glass tower at Basildon



Thank you one and all for letting me into this harmonious world of loveliness!



Ringling at Hatton, Rowington and Honiley

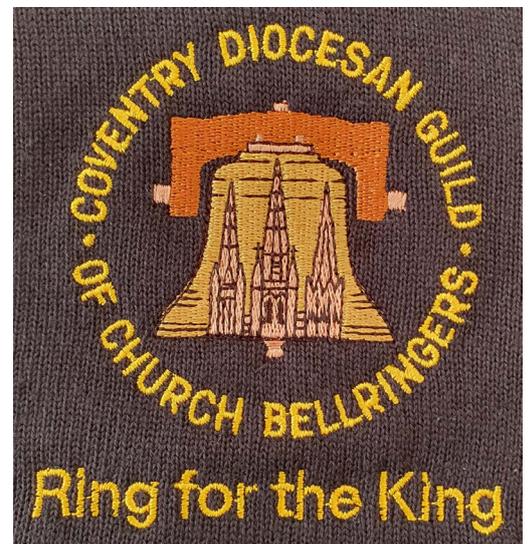
Annie Hall, Warwickshire

The Ferncumbe Benefice lies to the north of Warwick. It incorporates a number of parishes and three churches with rings of six bells. Alas, in the last few years, the bells have only been rung occasionally and usually with support from people from out of the benefice. One of the tales which has gone down in Coventry Guild history was the ringing for a wedding at Rowington in the summer of 2021. They are a lovely ring of bells, rung from the chancel. Following the wedding, five of the six ringers went down with Covid, as did the vicar!!

The lack of ringers at the three churches was a challenge for Helen Greenly, Tower Captain, as she embraced the idea of Ring for the King. Through her extensive network in the eight villages of the benefice, Helen persuaded, bribed and cajoled a group of her friends to learn to ring. Helen approached me to see if the Guild could help teach the new band. With Rowington being a chancel ring and Hatton posing many issues, this presented many challenges to the novice ringers so we had to formulate a plan of how we could teach the band and where.

In the Coventry Guild, we have a number of ART teachers who readily offered to help train the new band. Steve Tibbetts, Nigel Dick and Mark Sayers all offered their time and use of their bells. Angela Roskelly also offered to help and sorted us out with Ring for the King shirts. This has proved so popular, the Guild has submitted its two largest orders ever for Guild Garments (to use its correct name).

We arranged a visit to Stratford upon Avon, where they have installed a training bell as a taster session. Everyone had the opportunity to see the bells and try some backstrokes. It was all very positive, so over the following few weeks we had one-to-one sessions at Lighthorne, Stratford and Honiley to teach the band. Nick Brett and Graham Nabb had run two teacher training Module 1 courses for the Guild in 2022, and the Ferncumbe band readily joined in to help the new teachers pass their assessment.



The popular logo!



Richard Price and Lou Simpson receiving their certificates with Annie (centre)

One of our new recruits, Richard Price, was a 'lapsed ringer'. He had been taught to ring while in the Scouts at Brigg in North Lincolnshire during the mid 1970s. It was amazing how quickly he remembered 'the ropes'.

His wife Julie, was also taught to ring. Helen had also persuaded her own husband Chris to learn, so there was a lot of marital competition, (mainly encouraged by me!)

By mid-March, with the majority of the band now ringing rounds, weekly practices were started at Honiley. These are a lovely peal of six in a Wren church, which celebrates its 300th anniversary this year.

More experienced ringers joined us so we could put two learners in at a time to teach them rounds and call changes, specifically Kings. Thanks to Charles Hayward, Roger Howes and Richard Turner. We have encouraged other ringers, who are part way through their teachers' journey to come and join us and it has benefited us all.

With Coronation Day approaching quickly, practices were held at both Rowington and Hatton. This proved a little challenging, but the band were up to it!

The press got to hear of our endeavours, and we had a visit from Central ITV. They took videos of us ringing and interviewed Julie and Richard.

It was great to watch them on the lunchtime news, before going off to meet them in the tower. Filming took place the week of the local elections.

We were told if anyone was standing as a candidate, they could not be interviewed. One of the learners, Dominic Harrison, was standing and duly elected for the Green party.

Congratulations to Dominic!

Over the Coronation weekend, all three peals of bells were rung by the local band. They rang the bells at Hatton on the morning of 7 May, before going on to ring after the service at Rowington.

All the congregation stayed in their seats and listened to the bells being rung. There was loud applause and cheers, before we were all handed a drink to join in the Royal Toast. Lou is not in the picture as she was helping pour the drinks for the toast.

All of the band are heavily involved and committed to activities within the benefice.



Richard and Julie looking relaxed doing their TV interview



The band at Honiley



Just before heading out to the beer festival

Later that day, there was a concert at Honiley and the band rang the bells in celebration at the end.

Since the coronation, the band still ring together at the weekly practice and also for all the church services. We had an outing to Coventry Cathedral and future events are planned.

One of the great things they do is they socialise together after ringing. This is often a trip to the local pub, and this weekend it is a beer festival, so guess where we are all going?

Preparing to Ring for the King

Monica Hollows, St Anne's, Lancashire

I'm a member of the band at St Anne's Parish Church in St Anne's on the Sea. At our Church's Christmas Tree Festival in December 2022 we advertised the opportunity to learn to "Ring for the King" and were delighted when one of the parents from our Church school, Shaun, came forward wanting to learn.

At almost the same time we had a referral from the national "Ring for the King" campaign from Carole. So just before Christmas 2022 they had their first lesson.

This was a great opportunity for me too, as I had completed the ART M1 course earlier in 2022 and now I had some new learners to teach! Shaun and Carole made fantastic progress, achieving their Learning the Ropes Level 1 in February 2023 and in the process enabling me to achieve my M1 accreditation.

In February 2023 we had two more referrals from the national campaign and Fay and Jane started their lessons together too. It's been great to see all our learners encouraging and supporting each other as they progressed with their bell handling. Fay and Jane have also made great progress and were just starting to learn how to put both strokes together before the Coronation weekend.

The progress of all the learners has been even more impressive given that our bells were taken out for long planned refurbishment just before Easter, so we had four keen "Ring for the King" learners and no bells for them to ring! Our Tower Captain Stuart arranged for us all to visit other local towers and also continued teaching Jane and Fay on "Edwin", our Saxilby Simulator.

On the Big Day all four of our eager new learners did indeed "Ring for the King", with Jane and Carole ringing at Bispham All Hallows and Shaun and Fay at St Cuthbert's in Lytham. They all did brilliantly and as you can see from their beaming smiles in the photographs they really enjoyed it too and had a great sense of achievement.

They are a wonderful addition to our band and we look forward to their continued progress over the coming months.

Here is what they have thought about their ringing experiences so far:

Shaun Elsender says:

In December last year my son and daughter's Carol Service was at our local church.

While I was there a lady on a stall just happened to mention to me that she thinks I'd be good at bell ringing (random I thought) but then I looked into it and saw there was a national shortage for ringing for the king, so I signed up with Stuart and Monica who have both been amazing at St Anne's Parish Church.

I enjoy it lots and find it very therapeutic with all the stretching and the sounds of the bells too. I'm currently completing my Learning the Ropes Level 2 and looking forward to learning to plain hunt and Mexican wave next.



Jane and Carole

Jane Dickinson says:

Bellringing is a skill I've always wanted to learn so when a call for "Ring for The King" went out on BBC's Breakfast, I thought, wow, here's my chance! It was meant to be, as I could have quite easily missed the piece, whilst rushing around getting ready for work that Wednesday morning, February 22nd! After some very swift email replies before I knew it, two days later, I was climbing up the stone spiral steps to St. Anne's Parish Church's bell tower! I met with our lovely instructors, Monica and Stuart, and fellow newbie Fay plus most of the Tower's ringers and was instantly made to feel so welcome. I'm thoroughly enjoying honing my new-found skill, improving week by week, thanks to my patient, kind coaches Monica and Stuart - I was so, so proud to "Ring for The King". To be honest I wish I'd taken up bellringing years ago as the sense of belonging to such a lovely group of people, a team, is really rather wonderful.



Fay and Shaun

Fay Thompson says:

I was first attracted to bell ringing by watching ringers in action on TV. Then came the Ring for the King campaign which offered a way to learn bell ringing. All you had to do was fill in a form on the RFTK website and in response you received an email giving the nearest church where you could learn. For me, that was St Anne's Parish Church in St. Annes.

I started learning with Jane, a fellow recruit, in February, with Stuart and Monica as teachers. We have been so lucky to have them as instructors. Stuart took us through the basic techniques step by step. Both showed unlimited patience. For many weeks, I kept going wrong but finally things fell into place and I managed to do the hand stroke and tail stroke unaided! On Coronation Day I rang for a few minutes with Stuart doing the hand stroke and me the tail stroke. It was a great feeling.

As I left the church, a woman walking by commented how lovely the bells had sounded. I agreed that they had indeed sounded magnificent. Now that there is no great event to prepare for, I feel free to focus on improving my technique and moving on to learn how to ring changes. I have discovered bell ringing is a fascinating art and I love the fact that it is an ancient practice that gives me a connection with bell ringers down the centuries.

Carole Smith says:

I've always been interested in old churches mainly for their architecture, location and local history connected with their communities through the ages.

When the opportunity came up for "Ring for the King" it was an absolute joy to start learning to ring church bells. Like most beginners, I suppose, I didn't realise how complicated it was but, once I'd actually learnt basic bell control, it became less scary and I'm really looking forward to learning more of this fascinating skill.

I am so grateful to my patient and encouraging tutors Monica and Stuart and also encouraging advice from my fellow ringers who vary in age from teenagers to octogenarians; a very friendly community. I love hearing the sound of different bells and methods in various local churches; I hope one day to be competent enough to ring regularly for my local church services... Look to!

Happy Tenth Birthday, Naremburn!

Geoffrey Gemmell, Naremburn, Australia

The article below celebrates the tenth birthday of the ring at St Leonard's, Naremburn (a suburb of Sydney). But first some background information for Tower Talk's UK readership...

There are over seventy towers in the territory covered by ANZAB (the Australian and New Zealand Association of Bellringers). But what is great about this number is that it keeps on growing – we typically create one or two new rings each year. Well, perhaps the overseas tower-grabbers who like to have rung in every tower may find this a bit frustrating as they have to keep revisiting to maintain their tally, but for everyone else this represents a great achievement and generates new interest in ringing, though at the cost of a lot of time and effort for all those involved.

The newest tower to start ringing is in Darwin – a 5 cwt six in the Catholic Cathedral of St Mary. The first ever full-circle ringing in the Northern Territory was on these bells on 20th August 2022, and the first quarter peal was 1260 Grandsire Doubles on 14th May this year. This tower is a very long way from... well, from everywhere! It's over 2000 miles to the nearest tower. But ANZAB has arranged a full program of training with visiting teachers, and a second tower in the Northern Territory should open later this year in Palmerston.

Meanwhile one of our older newer towers, if that makes sense, has just celebrated its tenth birthday. Naremburn is a 10 cwt six, installed in 2013. Geoffrey and Patricia Gemmell were not only new recruits to ringing when this tower was first proposed, but were also very heavily involved in all the work required to get the relevant permissions, raise the funds, plan the installation and then recruit a band. Many congratulations to all involved in getting this tower and band to its present very high level of achievement in just ten years.

Since Geoffrey wrote the article below, a peal has been rung to further celebrate the tenth birthday but also as a ruby wedding anniversary compliment to Geoffrey and Patricia.

On Sunday 23 April 2023 the tower of St Leonard's Naremburn celebrated its tenth anniversary since the dedication of the bells (7 April 2013) and ten years since the ring of bells were first rung, on 25 April 2013.

It was a wonderful celebration with over thirty people attending including those involved with the bells' installation, the initial teachers including Enid Roberts, the "originals" Patricia Gemmell, Kanae Micallef, Jane Monks and Joann Morand and present and past tower members and visitors, together with those who have done so much to help our tower in various practical ways since – James Sillence and Paul Swinhoe (producer of our hand crafted wooden seats and coat rack) and of course Thomas Perrins (ANZAB's president) and his wife Anna.



A birthday gathering

The ringers' debt to Thomas was acknowledged in the short speeches delivered on the day by Patricia and Geoffrey.

The bells' dedication was also celebrated with a quarter peal of Bob Doubles rung 16 April 2023, the first QP conducted by Patricia. The QP was also dedicated to the late Richard Thomas who worked generously and unassumingly on the installation of our bells and was one of our initial teachers.

First in February

Penelope Bellis, Clifton and Campton, Bedfordshire

In 2022 the Bedfordshire Association initiated *First in February* – an opportunity for members to achieve a goal they had set themselves – something they had not done before and which was commensurate with their ability. Returning to the initiative this year, Luke Merryweather of Campton rang his first rounds for service, and Mia from Clifton rang her first plain hunt doubles. At the other end of the scale more experienced members chose to ring quarter peals in Ipswich Surprise Minor or Lessness Surprise Major for the first time.

This year, the focus was on quarter peals. We consulted with our tower captains, mentors and the Ringing Master, Chris Williams, to decide our individual targets. The BACBR Centre in Biggleswade offered to facilitate these plans throughout the County by providing a suitable tower, conductor and band where necessary. I had rung my first quarter peal in 'First in February' 2022 so this year I was working to Level 4 of the 'Learning the Ropes' scheme and was required to either ring the treble to a minor method, or inside to Plain Bob Doubles. My Plain Bob Doubles has been a difficult journey so the minor treble option was the easier. However, in consultation with Association President Linda Garton I chose to bite the bullet and do the Plain Bob Doubles inside. The event took place at my home tower, Clifton and Linda was the conductor.

All the band were really experienced stalwart ringers who never make errors, so there were no excuses to be had. We were ringing on the back six, and I chose to ring bell two, (number four of the eight bells in Clifton) because it was the right weight, not too flighty nor too likely to wear me out or be too slow to pull into place.

Go Plain Bob Doubles! I managed to get through the plain course and the first bob, and then a few more and eventually started to relax a bit. I got further than I thought I could without making a mistake. There came a point where I thought that whatever happened, I knew I could keep my brain in and that ringing a method was going to be achievable for me. Even if I didn't succeed this time I could another time. There were a few times where I was momentarily lost but I found the treble and off I went again with no visible interruption. I became more confident and started to enjoy the quarter peal. I suppose we were about three quarters of the way through when my mind wandered and I thought, "I'm lost!" I should have said so, but I didn't. Then I must have missed a dodge and we all crashed like a motorway pile up. My hero Anthony Smith, who had rung at St Olave's for Churchill's funeral said, "Hunt down to the front, Penny" so I did. Then he said, "Now you're doing seconds" and (Lo and behold!) there was the treble and we were all back on course again. We rang without further incident until *That's all!* and we all grinned and rang down. I want to do another Plain Bob Doubles now to prove that it wasn't a fluke. In fact I want to be one of those people who are a safe steady pair of hands ready to support other learners' quarters.

First in February was a great opportunity for ringers in Bedfordshire of all abilities to reflect on their progress, nurture some ambitions and make them happen using available organisational assistance. I think those who embraced the venture are more aspirational about their ringing; and there have been a lot of smiley faces in Bedfordshire. This ringer at least is a great deal more confident.



First for February ringers, Penny Bellis (centre) and Marguerite Smith with Tower Captain John Loveless at All Saints Church Campton in Bedfordshire

The Bedfordshire Association website reports the following triumphs:
First Quarter Peals by Sue Chandler, Jane Edis, Neil Goodwin, Angela Newberry, Simon Smith (also first inside), Peter Williams and Peter Wright.

All for One and One for All

Jane Mellor and friends, Sonning, Oxfordshire

The Story of the Sonning Deanery Elementary Band

Four months before the pandemic hit, Nigel Mellor (Sonning Deanery Branch Ringing Master) created a band of elementary ringers to work on Learning the Ropes Level 2 Foundation Skills – exercises and mini methods to improve bell control and learn how to begin change ringing. By early 2022, the band had reconvened pretty much with the same enthusiasm as before with more than fifteen people just turning up to learn how to extend their ringing skills.

Much fun was had along the way as the group gelled, being roughly at the same level of ability and collectively working towards the Level 3 stage. Through 2022 the group continued to improve and joined a day's outing, ringing at new towers for the first time.

This enthusiasm sparked Jane Mellor, Training Officer to Sonning Deanery, to organise an ART Module 2 Foundation Skills teaching course with nine members of our branch attending. It was an inspiring day with Tutor Clare McArdle from Birmingham and meant we then had more people able and willing to support the elementary band.

Practices have been increased to twice a month with some of the teachers stepping in to run the practices. The learners just kept coming along to learn more. So, March 2023 saw the culmination of a lot of dedicated team work, when we held a 'First Quarters' morning, enabling three of the band – Jan, Julie and Jennifer – to ring their first quarter peal.

Despite evident nerves, everyone did really well. Here's how Jan and Julie described the experience:

Jan

I felt nervous at the start, as I didn't want to let the rest of the band down by going wrong, especially as I was ringing with another first timer. However, our experienced ringers created a calm, supportive atmosphere and I managed to relax as the ringing progressed.

Halfway through seemed like a very long time, but then suddenly it was the end and we had achieved it. Phew! Such great relief and sense of achievement.

What I noticed, when ringing for such a long time (compared to usual), is that I somehow manage to creep a bit to the left and need to readjust to get back in front of the rope!

Julie

I have to admit I was rather nervous turning up for my first quarter peal on the tenor bell. I didn't want to make a mistake with my timing or even worse, miss the sally!

And obviously I was very conscious that I wasn't the only one in the band doing their first quarter peal. However once we all started and I got into rhythm the time flew by and my earlier concerns diminished.

I really enjoyed the challenge!

Jennifer takes up the story...

In the run up to my first quarter, my emotions ranged between excited and terrified.

On one hand, here was the chance to prove that I could do it, to cement all the knowledge and handling practice I'd put in since a broken stay almost led me to give up ringing just after lockdown. It would be a chance to truly move on and put the nervous ringer behind me.

On the other hand, what if I mucked up? What if I, in my arrogance assuming I could call myself a ringer, destroyed someone else's chance to ring a quarter peal?

This is where Jane and the Elementary Quarter came in.

Our regular Elementary Practices had built up a real sense of camaraderie amongst us adult learners. We had a 'one for all, all for one' attitude and had already agreed, at our first attempt at a striking competition, that if one of us went wrong, it was all of us. Nevertheless, I was very relieved to realise that I was the only one in my band to be in a first quarter. Having a really strong band around me and knowing that I wouldn't ruin anyone else's first attempt meant that I could relax.

On the day, we were about five minutes in when I think I fluffed a dodge and got muddled, someone else got muddled too and the conductor called a halt and just gently said 'Let's have another go' which actually really helped to settle my nerves. I felt like I'd had an extra practice.

We started again, and for the first few bobs, I was unaffected which allowed me to settle further. As time went on, my confidence grew each time a bob was called, I could see the wheel of work in my head (I see it like a clock, down dodges past the hour, up dodges to the hour, 2nds at o'clock and long fifths at half past). I really enjoyed every time I had to make the bob as that meant I could avoid the 3-4 up dodge for another two leads (always the tricky one for me to strike cleanly). I got better at shortening the rope to come into the lead quickly as well.

Time moved strangely. I was convinced we must be near the end when I actually think we were only half way through. Then I thought we MUST be half way now, then a few leads later, the conductor called 'that's all!'



Plain Bob Doubles band with Jan second left and Julie far right

I was so relieved, triumphant and elated (and hot and sweaty) – I had actually done it!



The other Bob Doubles band with Jennifer second on the left

My hands weren't too sore because as time went on, I'd learned to relax my death grip of terror on the rope. I had a few tears of relief. For me, it was so special because not only had I done it, I'd done it with a special band: my son was ringing with me, Nicola (who first introduced me to ringing) was there, as were Jane (who'd sorted out my dodgy handling and given me the confidence to try the quarter inside), Nigel (who kept me calm all the way through), and Rob and Katie (who'd both been so calm and encouraging at Elementary Practices).

The Elementary First Quarter day had enabled me to ring with a really experienced band – all the clashes were mine and the rest of the band were so steady that it enabled me to

find my place even when I missed a dodge. Not having the added pressure of it being a special occasion for someone else also really helped. Since the quarter, my confidence has definitely grown as a ringer. I have more confidence to ring in other places, to move away from my happy place on a mid-weight bell and to try new methods. I've been having a go at Middlesex Triples, St Simon's Doubles, Bob Minor and Major, Treble Bobbing and I'm even starting to try and get Stedman in my head.

I'm enjoying my ringing a lot more as well. At a recent ringing outing I really enjoyed the day rather than thinking at each tower, am I going to miss the sally? Am I going to break the stay again?

I can't wait to have a go at another quarter – perhaps I'll treble this time. Who knows?

Good News from Uffculme

John Martin, Uffculme, Devon

After moving to Uffculme in March 2022, we were invited to restart ringing which had not got going again after the pandemic.

We've been teaching new learners since autumn last year using the ART programme and were delighted to be able to award a Level 1 certificate to Isabelle.

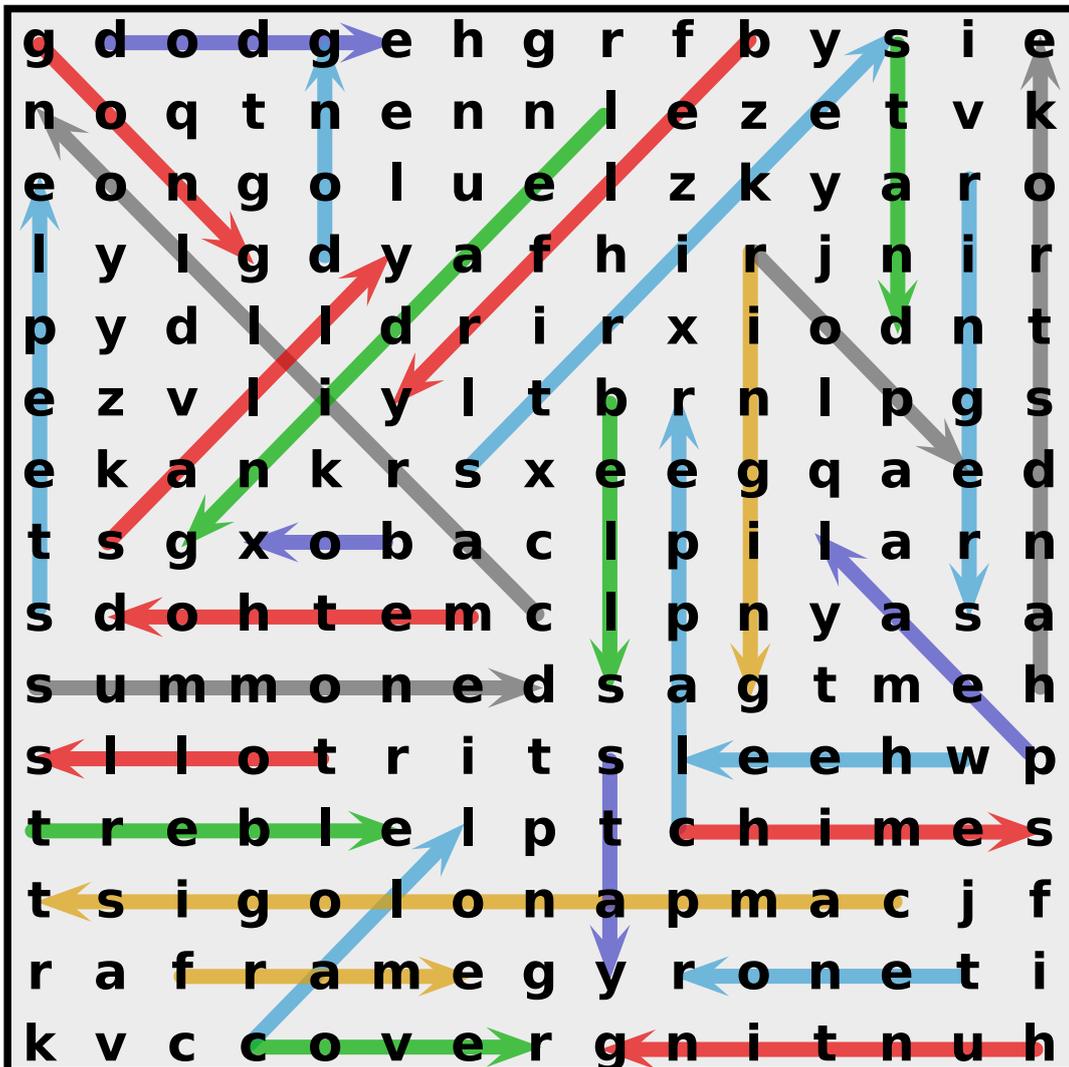
She rang rounds on eight with some assistance for the first time on Coronation Day, and the Level 1 award followed a couple of weeks later, after some further training and a very determined effort on Isabelle's part to master the elements of bell handling to pass the assessment.

She is already making good progress towards Level 2.



Isabelle with her Level One certificate

Answers to Puzzles



Here is the solution to the wordsearch puzzle on page 5.

Wordlist

- belfry
- bells
- box
- call
- campanologist
- carillon
- chimes
- clapper
- cover
- dodge
- dong
- frame
- gong
- handstroke
- hunting
- leading
- method
- peal
- rings
- ringing
- rope
- sally
- stand
- stay
- steeple
- strikes
- summoned
- tenor
- tolls
- treble
- wheel