

Tower Talk

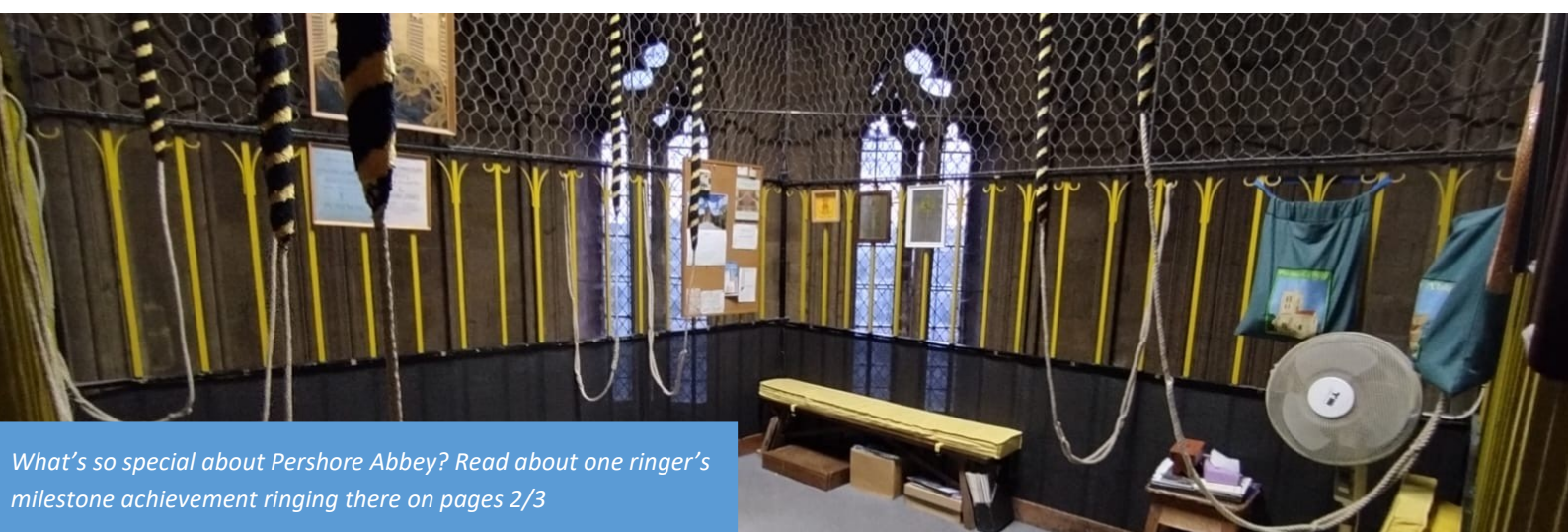
The newsletter for ringers using



Learning
the Ropes

Association of Ringing Teachers / Learning the Ropes – www.bellringing.org

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What's so special about Pershore Abbey? Read about one ringer's milestone achievement ringing there on pages 2/3

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Guest Editors

Rose Nightingale and Claire Penny
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Now that Summer is nearly over, this edition starts with stories from ringers who have made the most of the longer days and their holidays to visit other towers, both near and far. Visiting a different tower not only widens your experience but you might well find that you make a difference to the tower you are visiting!

For those of you progressing through the Learning the Ropes scheme, we cover the first stages of *calling*. It may seem daunting but like everything else, gets easier with practice. Everyone has to do it at LtR Level 2 and there are some useful tips on page 12. If you are working on Level 3 then page 13 is for you.

And finally, as this edition covers Hallowe'en there are some spooky stories about bells with the Bat Conservation Trust providing some information on how to live in harmony with bats in your tower.

50 Ringing Things

The Tower Talk Team

Bellringers are an amazing, welcoming, sociable group of people, and nothing shows this more than the age-old tradition of visiting other towers to ring. Whether you are taking part in an organised tour or just 'grabbing' a tower while you are on holiday you will almost certainly get a warm welcome and directions to the best pub in the area.

50 Ringing Things has many activities that you can do away from your home tower:

- Ring at a tower when on holiday.
- Ring at 50 different towers.
- Ring on a bell heavier than 16cwt.

It's a great way to enjoy your ringing, making friends and improving your own ringing. You can purchase your 50 Ringing Things book on the ART Online Shop at: <https://shop.bellringing.org/>



50 Towers in a Year

A new ringer from Offenham



The detached tower in Evesham

My journey into the ringing world began quite by chance. While my wife and I were walking around Evesham's Riverside Park on a Sunday morning in July 2024, we enjoyed listening to the bells ringing, especially the intriguing sound of them being lowered.

When the ringers came out, I spoke to them and they promptly invited us to come along the following week and see it first hand.

We were surprised and delighted to receive such an invitation, as well as seeing the ringing in action, we would also get the opportunity to see inside Evesham's most famous landmark. And so the following week we made sure we were there in plenty of time to take up this amazing offer.

We received a warm welcome and were allowed to stay for the whole half hour of ringing. They offered to find me a teacher at a nearby tower where I could be taught.

Prior to this, I had absolutely no knowledge of bell ringing, although I do remember as a child seeing bell ropes hanging in an alcove in the village church and I remember being interested in them. This interest was successfully halted by adults telling me that if I dared to touch the ropes, I would be swiftly hoisted to the ceiling and then just as abruptly, returned to the floor.

My first tower – Offenham

A couple of weeks after my initial visit I was invited back to the Bell Tower to meet Claire, who was to become my teacher at the local tower of Offenham.

My second tower – ringing whilst on holiday

The end of October saw me branching out for the first time and ringing while on holiday, at St Michael's in Minehead. During practice I had several turns ringing rounds and then at the end of the practice I was allowed a solo ring on their 22cwt tenor. This was more than twice the size any of any I'd tried before. It required effort and determination to get it off the stay, and it needed some keeping up, but I was delighted to be able to ring and stand it.

Notching up new towers – the Four Shire Guild

During November I added just one more tower, which was Blockley. And then in December, I started attending the weekly Four Shire Guild's Saturday practice. These were invaluable and increased my experience greatly and I am so grateful to those who organise and run these, especially so during the winter when the weather does its best to test our enthusiasm. These provided most of my towers - only nine were as a result of tower tours and just six while ringing on holiday.

Getting close – a tower grab!

It was during the middle of July this year, one year after discovering the world of bellringing, when my tower count had reached forty-two, that I realised that maybe I could achieve fifty within my first year of ringing. This prompted a last-minute tower grab of course! Others were now getting involved with my quest and were very supportive, including the tower captains and bands at Fladbury and Pershore who helped me add to my count, regardless of me confessing that I was tower grabbing on the way to my half century.

Getting closer – an unexpected outing

With just one week to go I was six short of my target, when I was invited on the Badsey tower tour the following day. This was just what I needed, because it would take my count to forty-nine. It was a superb tour around the Malvern hills, finishing at the bell tower in Ledbury.



And finally – Pershore

And so, with just four days to go, I had one more tower to get. At my first visit to Saint Andrews, Pershore the previous Monday, I was told I would be okay to ring at the Abbey. Well, what a fabulous 50th that would be! And so through their contact I obtained an invite to the Abbey practice that evening.

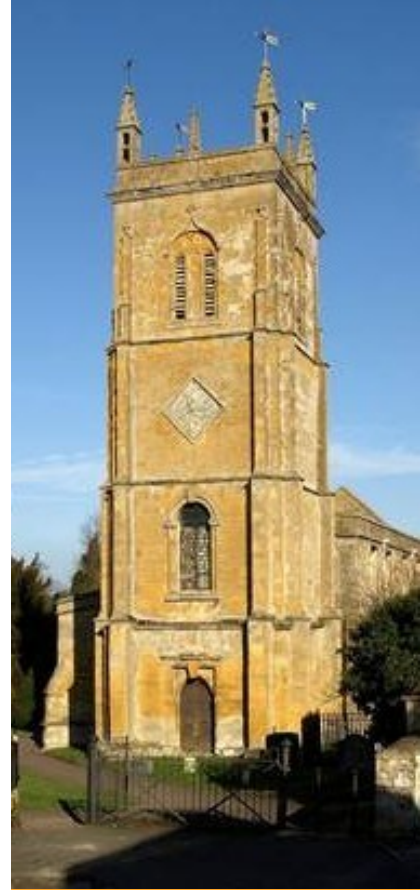
Pershore Abbey must be one of the most unusual and spectacular ringing experiences, with its ringing platform suspended over thirty metres above the Abbey floor and an interesting and varied route to reach it, not to mention the see-through metal stairs up to the walkway entry to the caged ringing area.

Alistair was running the evening and made me very welcome as did the rest of the ringers. I was encouraged to ring different bells around the circle including the tenor.

I am so grateful to him and the band for completing my quest in such grand style, with a truly unforgettable evening.

Meanwhile my wife, who sat in on my early lessons and had "Only come to watch", began taking lessons herself in October and she is also ringing now, taught by Claire and mentored by Martin, and we both regularly attend practice nights and ring for service. So much for those quiet evenings in she was looking forward to...

The final stage of the climb to Pershore Abbey's infamous 'cage'. Many a ringer has made it this far, and no further!



Blockley Church, familiar to fans of Father Brown

Arranging a holiday ring

Richard Booth, Marsworth

If you're new to ringing, you may wonder how this works. Most towers are very welcoming of visiting ringers. It doesn't matter how limited your ringing experience, you can usually expect to be welcomed and given opportunities to ring. Obviously, the more experienced you are, the more invitations to ring may be offered. Many towers will be happy for you to join in with Sunday ringing too.



The Bardwell outing to Wymondham Abbey

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If you are ringing call changes, check first whether the local custom is to call these 'up' or 'down' so that there are no surprises.

“

If you want to find a tower nearby, click on a tower, and then look for 'Latitude and longitude', at the end of the entry you will find a 'List nearest towers' link. Click on this link and you'll find a list of nearby towers.

“

Don't rely on Dove for practice nights. Check the website of the relevant Ringing Guild or Association, or the tower's own website if they have one. Dove usually has a link to the local guild or association under 'Affiliation' or 'URL'.

Finding a tower to ring at

The starting point for locating towers is Dove's Guide for Church Bell Ringers (usually know as Dove) – just type the name in a search engine and you will easily find it (dove.cccbr.org.uk).

The good thing about Dove's Guide is that it includes the vast majority of Churches which have at least one chiming bell, as well as all the full-circle towers. Therefore, if you type in the name of the place where you are staying on holiday into the search box, it is almost certain to come up with something.

If it doesn't find the place you are looking for type in a nearby town. If you are staying in, for example, Llangollen, it will immediately tell you that St Collen's church has a ring of 8 bells. Clicking on the place name will bring up a page displaying details of the tower.

But maybe you are staying in Southsea. Unlucky here, Dove will tell you that there are 5 churches but they all only have a single chiming bell! Using the 'Latitude and longitude' tip to the right, the 'List nearest towers' link will tell you that the 8-bell tower of St Mary's, Portsea, is less than a mile away.

When do they ring

Once you have found the tower you would like to visit you need to find out when their practice night is.

Sometimes Dove will state a practice night, as it does for both Llangollen and Portsea, but it's best not to rely on this. Check the website of the relevant Ringing Guild or Association, or the tower's own website if they have one. Dove usually has a link to the local guild or association under 'Affiliation' or 'URL'.

The Territorial Guilds and Associations all run their own websites, and these differ considerably in layout and content.

Look for a 'Towers' link, which will generally list all the affiliated towers, where you should be able to find out when their practice night is (if they have one) and what time it starts. You may be fortunate and find a tower contact's name, telephone number and/or email address. If you can, it's best to try to get in touch to confirm that it's OK to visit, whether their practice is going ahead that evening and that they don't have something else planned such as a quarter peal.

However, with people reluctant to have their details on a publicly accessible website, this is not always possible. Sometimes tower or guild websites encourage you to make contact before visiting, but don't actually provide any contact details. Email can be a bit hit and miss, so best to telephone or text if you can. Sometimes you may find tower contact details on the church notice board, or you could try telephoning the Parish Office or Incumbent. As a last resort, just turn up at the relevant time, hang around in the porch and hope for the best!

And once you're in the tower...

You will probably establish fairly quickly who is in charge, so introduce yourself. They will probably ask you what you can ring - even if you've just completed your LtR Level 1 and it's only rounds at this stage, tell them you're a beginner - as long as you can handle a bell competently on your own without someone standing with you to help, that's fine. You will hopefully be given several invitations to ring, and probably be invited to socialise at the pub afterwards.

Enjoy yourself!

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Email can be a bit hit and miss, so best to telephone or text if you can.

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It is important to try to get there on time as some towers lock the doors once everyone has arrived and unless you know the local protocol for contacting the ringers, you might not be able to get in if you're late.



LtR Level 2 ringer, David from Worcestershire, visiting a new tower on holiday. This is at Skibbereen, County Cork

Staying close to home

Paul Scobel, Bodmin

During the summer, when the schools are on summer break, at St Petroc's Bodmin we try and visit a few local towers rather than practise at home. This has two benefits:

- We ring at very local towers we would normally find too close for an outing and too far to just pop down the road to.
- Newly trained ringers gain experience on different bells.

At Bodmin in Cornwall we have a very diverse selection of local towers ranging from quite difficult and remote to very good and welcoming; all offer invaluable experiences for novice ringers.

Our recent visit to St Dennis church was a particularly good experience for us all; these bells have been re-hung by Taylor's within the last 12/18 months and are a treat to ring. In addition, the local band welcomed us with open arms,

providing us with tea, coffee and biscuits during our stay.

Another bonus with these visits as experienced on this occasion was we were also able to help some of the local less experienced members with their on going training. A win-win for us all.



The magnificent church of St Petroc, Bodmin

Making ringers welcome in the South West

We make ringers very welcome and get about 6 or 8 holiday visitors every year. We have a small team, so we always benefit from welcoming visitors, they bring other knowledge and experience which can help us a lot. Or if the visitors are beginners, there is enough experience in our team to help them. All are welcome.

If someone is new to ringing, that's fine, but we expect they should be able to ring evenly struck rounds with others, without the need for someone to stand with them.

Normally visitors find us by searching A Church Near You or Dove's guide. Sometimes they find us on Facebook. Occasionally people just hear the bells ringing and turn up spontaneously. It's always good to phone ahead or email though, just to make sure nothing else is going on.

Usually visitors are invited to socialise afterwards if we are going to the pub or cafe.

We have some quite heavy bells in this area and the ropes can be very long, so it's worth looking up the bells in advance. Arriving to discover the bells are really heavy, with a long unguided draught and long ropes can be daunting for those who have only rung on light, easy-going bells.

In this area of the South West, we mainly ring call changes, called up not down. It's worth checking first before starting in case the style of calling is unfamiliar. There are also some towers nearby where some don't particularly like method ringing and in fact disapprove of it (!), so when asked what you'd like to ring, if you're a method ringer, just say you're happy to fit in with the local style and all will be well.

South West teams may begin with the bells down, raising and lowering in peal at the beginning and end of each piece of ringing. Another local tradition is ringing with long ropes and a coil in the hand. This is something experienced ringers do to control the raise and lower, the alternative is to have a long length of rope flapping around.

Unfamiliar ringing jargon can catch visitors out. For example, in our area instead of saying "Look To" before ringing, we say 'Look About'. At the end of lowering, instead of saying "Miss and catch in rounds", the conductor stamps their foot.

Visiting other towers is great fun and a real part of the bell ringing tradition. Researching the tower you're going to in advance and making sure you understand the local jargon and style will make an enjoyable practice night to add to your holiday memories.

Nominate someone for an ART Award

Katie Town, ART Awards Leader

Every year, the ART Awards recognise excellence in teaching, leadership and progress through the Learning the Ropes scheme.

The teaching and leadership awards are awarded in the following categories:

Youth and university groups

Inspiring leadership

Excellence in recruitment and retention

Promotion of ringing

Band or Cluster of the Year

These awards are given to those doing great things; in their own tower, in the local community, in a cluster, hub or branch or even nationally. They are awarded to small village bands and those who ring at the highest level. Every winner shares a passion for ringing and ringers, which they turn into tangible and sustainable results.

There are lots of inspirational people in ringing and it is really important that the great work they do is recognised. Anyone can make a nomination, so why not give some thought to making one yourself?



Start planning for when nominations open in October

Tips for completing a nomination form

Every year the ART Award judges read over 50 nominations. How do you make yours stand out?

The nomination form splits into the criteria that the judges are marking against

Make sure that you answer each question, making at least three different points in each.

Give evidence

For a question like: 'How much have they contributed to this activity?' answering '100%' will score zero as there is no evidence. Instead you should explain what, how, when and why...

Ask for help

If you are an inexperienced ringer or if you don't know how to complete a section, ask others for feedback or input. A more experienced ringer will know what is novel or important. They will also have a better idea about how to measure success.

Use, but don't abuse, the word count

The judges recommend that the full three page limit (which has been increased this year) is used. However, anything after these three pages will be ignored.

Mordor vs Sordor

Katie Town, ART Awards Leader

Ever read Lord of the Rings? Well, Katie has, and she's had great fun compiling some good and bad nomination forms exemplars from towers in Mordor and Sordor, for the 'Len Roberts Award for the Promotion of Ringing'.

Volume and breadth of promotional activities

Mark V Hard (who nominated Mordor) wrote:

Parish magazine and Facebook groups.

Vicky Strong (who nominated Sordor) wrote:

The key factors to success of this initiative have been the extensive range of promotional activities designed to engage a diverse audience and generate a widespread interest in bellringing.

- Mini-ring at main train station to promote and show ringers to those who otherwise would not know what is involved.
- Open Day Event at All Saints.
- Youth Engagement Programme: schools, scouts and other youth groups
- Community Outreach.
- Social Media and Digital Campaigns, such as utilising local community Facebook groups.
- Collaborations with Local Media, print and radio.

Sharing of lessons learned

Mark V Hard (who nominated Mordor) wrote:

I'm just learning so I am not sure what has done here.

Vicky Strong (who nominated Sordor) wrote:

Publication in local newspaper. Vicky wrote an article explaining what has been done for the Ringing World, published with pictures on 1 Oct 2025. Other local villages are adopting this model with Vicky's continued support and guidance.



Katie's advice:

Give enough details for the judges to know what has been done, how often, and the target audience.

Ensure that everything is relevant to the award you are applying for. This award is about the promotion of ringing to the local community.

Always give evidence.

Ask more experienced ringers for help if you are a new ringer yourself.

Say thank you to someone special: <https://bellringing.org/art-awards/>

Living the talk

Lesley Boyle, Nikki Thomas, Beth Johnson & Jane Pridmore

Ruth Suggett had the idea of producing a newsletter for new ringers, by new ringers 10 years ago. Ten years and 33 editions later, Ruth is still committed to this vision, and the principles she includes in every edition are ones she lives by in her own ringing every day. To celebrate her 10 years as Tower Talk Editor, we asked some of her friends to write a few words about her.

I was very pleased to be able to ring in Ruth's first quarter peal of Maximus at the end of August at Bishop's Stortford. I see this as a culmination of many things. Ruth is a very special person and we're all used to her being a driving force in progressing people in her area. Her lucky learners get pushed along a steady path as she organises outings or training sessions according to their needs. I love her ability to analyse what's needed then get on and do it! Sometimes she applies this to herself too.

As teachers we all love the enthusiasm and energy of teaching early-stage ringers but sometimes you miss ringing more challenging things – Surprise Major is flourishing in Ruth's area partly due to her need to ring something other than Plain Bob Doubles and tapping into others who felt the same, organising focussed practices, quarter peals and Surprise Major outings. Ruth also dabbled in the odd bit of 12 bell ringing for her own skills extension, attending practices in her nearer 12 bell towers, raising her confidence in her developing abilities. It takes courage, when you spend so much time teaching others, to decide to become the student yourself.

Many teachers forget their own learning. Thankfully people noticed, culminating in a quarter peal of Maximus being organised specially for Ruth, which we scored with ease. Congratulations to Ruth on your quarter peal. Thank you for what you do as Editor of Tower Talk. What a fantastic job you do!

Lesley Boyle

I first met Ruth when I taught her to ring at St Edwards, Romford; Ruth was in her teens and I was in my early twenties. We had a young, fun band and enjoyed ringing outings in my brother's Land Rover. What a surprise to reconnect with her at an ART Conference in 2018.

She is still that sparky character I remembered and it was no surprise to find she was masterminding ART's newsletter 'for learners by learners'. Ruth's vision of something lively and engaging has resulted in a great read issue by issue, with so



much for our learners (and by extension, our teachers) to relate to. Nothing here about the complexity of methods or the classification of peals but lots about the fun of being part of a band, the delight in progressing and the celebration of achievements. There has always been masses to read and many ideas to try out at home.

Thank you Ruth, for all the editions, and all your hard work.

Beth Johnson



Well done Ruth on all the hard work you've put in over 33 editions to what is a highly valued publication. The fact it comes out online makes it accessible to everyone in the ringing world, whilst providing an opportunity to share it around!

For our learners and novice ringers you have provided a respectful forum where they can discover wonderful suggestions and ideas as well as education on how they can move forward on their ringing journey.

For teachers, ringing leaders and the more experienced, we've been encouraged to listen to the thoughts of others and respond by sharing knowledge and good practice via written contributions that have been managed in a positive, constructive and sensitive editorial manner.

Jane Pridmore

Lucy joins the team

Lucy Chandhial, St Augustine's Kilburn

Lucy Chandhial is joining the Tower Talk team. You might already recognise Lucy's name from her previous contributions to Tower Talk or her lively presentation at the ART Conference.

Lucy says hello

Bellringing is very definitely my main hobby, my friends and family know that ringing fills my calendar (and can create opportunities to meet in new places).

Since returning to ringing in 2014 I've been involved with the Middlesex Association and I cycle each summer with the Roving Ringers. I enjoy meeting people through ringing, traveling to ring and ringing whilst visiting new places, challenging myself with the next method and seeing people develop their skills.

So I'm happy to get involved in Tower Talk as a way to share stories of the many ways bellringing is rewarding for a variety of ringers, spreading ideas for outings, focused practices and personal challenges.



Learning the Ropes

Rose Nightingale

Between April and July 2025 the following certificates were awarded



Level 1
183



Level 2
93



Level 3
37



Level 4
24



Level 5
12

Congratulations to everyone!

Don't forget that when you achieve LtR Level 5 you will be able to attend the **Learning the Ropes Masterclass** and can be nominated for a **Learning the Ropes Achievement Award**. Your invitation to take part in a future masterclass will pop into your inbox well before it takes place.

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.

March prize winners

James Blackburn

Sheila Scofield

Paula Adrich

**Why not get your
whole band to
join?**

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

A New Call Change Simulator

Arthur Reeves, Birmingham School of Bell Ringing

The Call Change Simulator, designed and developed by Steve Marriott, is a powerful learning resource which allows you to put into practise call changes.

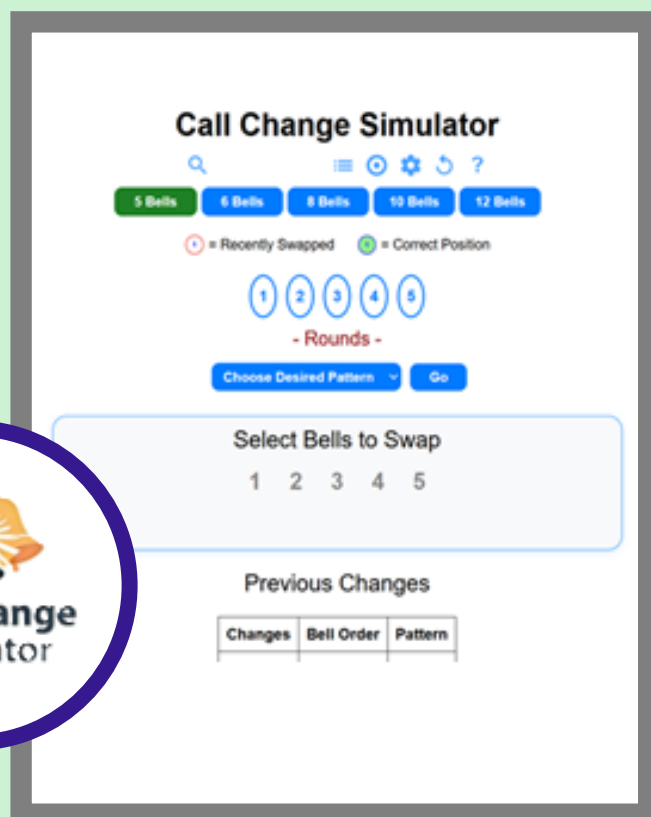
You can use the tool to:

- Build up your basic knowledge of how call changes work.
- Select bells to swap, developing your understanding of the instructions required to call changes.
- Understand the different technical terms used for call changes. E.g. What is Queens?
- Practise calling changes.

The tool is designed both for calling “up” and calling “down” and can be used to practise call changes on 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12 bells.

The link has been added to the Call Change Simulator in our online learning portal in the Call Change Toolbox for ringers and teachers, the Advanced Call Changes Toolbox and also the ‘Understanding Call Changes’ course.

If you haven’t visited our online learning portal yet do have a look, it contains lots of useful resources to help both teachers and learners: <https://artonline.bellringing.org/>



The simulator is free to use and is endorsed by ART as a useful learning resource. It is available here: <https://callchangesim.co.uk/>

Calling up or calling down?

There are several ways of calling changes, the explanation below shows the difference between the two most common methods. Does your tower do something different?



Calling UP

Call the bell in the lower place to the higher place.

1 2 3 4 5 6
‘4 to 5’
1 2 3 5 4 6

The bell that is mentioned first (4) slows down, whilst the other one (5) speeds up. Note that both bells that need to change speed are mentioned

Calling DOWN

Call the bell in the higher place to the lower place.

1 2 3 4 5 6
‘5 to 3’
1 2 3 5 4 6

The 3 is unaffected by the call but the 5 has to speed up. The other bell that needs to change speed (4) is not mentioned and therefore has to know where to go and what to do.

Feel free to use either method, and it is a good idea to be familiar with both, but DO NOT MIX them when calling changes.



Saying Go and That's All

Claire Penny, Offenham

Saying 'Go' and 'Stop' to a method is much easier than calling changes. There are only 3 things you *have* to know:

- * When to say go
- * When to say stop
- * Where you are

As you are counting you places when you plain hunt, the third one of these is now second nature so there are only two new things to learn.

When to say "Go"

No matter what you are calling, you say 'Go' just as the *Treble is pulling the handstroke*. If you are ringing 2 or 3 then you can get away with calling just as you pull your handstroke, but it is a good idea to get into the habit of watching the Treble. The easiest thing to do is to look at the Treble as soon as you have pulled your *backstroke before* you want to say 'Go'. On six bells the Treble will still be on backstroke too so you will be able to watch them catch the sally and time your call to perfection. There is nothing wrong with having a mental dress rehearsal during the initial rounds.

When to say "That's All"

This is more difficult because you can't choose when to make the call, it has to be done when the *Treble pulls the handstroke* before the method comes into rounds at backstroke. To start with the easiest way to do it is to work out where you will be at that point and make the call then. Again it is a good idea if you can get into the habit of *watching the Treble at the backstroke before* you know the call needs to be made.

For example, if you are calling Plain Hunt from the 4:

You start off by running in, so it will come round when you are going in as well. You need to call 'That's All' when you are ringing your second blow in 5ths place (over 5), which is a handstroke. Therefore as you do your first blow (backstroke) in 5ths watch the Treble and when the Treble pulls the handstroke make the call.

It doesn't matter too much if you call 'That's All' slightly early, but you should make the call before the Treble gets to the top of the backstroke in rounds, otherwise the band will think that you are continuing for another course and adjust their backstroke to speed up/slow down the next handstroke as necessary.

The assumption is that if the conductor doesn't call 'That's All' then you continue ringing the method, so don't worry about calling 'Keep going' or similar if you want to go for another course.

When to say "Stand"

Don't forget to call 'Stand' in the relief of having managed 'That's All'! Ring a few good rounds to finish and then call stand when the Treble pulls the handstroke in exactly the same way as you did when you shouted 'Go' and 'That's All'.

A visual representation of the example

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
B	1	2	3	4	5	6	Look at Treble
H	1	2	3	4	5	6	"Go Plain Hunt Doubles"
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
H	2	1	4	3	5	6	
	2	4	1	5	3	6	
	4	2	5	1	3	6	
	4	5	2	3	1	6	
	5	4	3	2	1	6	
	5	3	4	1	2	6	
	3	5	1	4	2	6	
B	3	1	5	2	4	6	Look at Treble
H	1	3	2	5	4	6	"That's All"
B	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
B	1	2	3	4	5	6	Look at Treble
H	1	2	3	4	5	6	"Stand"
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	

Method Wordsearch

Rose Nightingale

U I N I E L O X F O R D T B I
S B T T N E K R R B E B S T O
R C R I U B D A N O B L O R S
O R U R R N G B B B C O E U T
N O O N K R N L O N L B O O N
O N C E L B N B B I A R S C I
B B E R N I E B E A N U S E C
B E L B U L L E S L I S E L H
S C B C B A E I R P G E U G O
L L U U R R O N E E I V O N L
C N O V B O I P V T R R I I A
N D D O B R S E E B O E E S S
C A N T E R B U R Y P L A C E
T R U O C E S R E V E R E T I
G E R L N S E R I S D N A R G

PLAINBOB
CANTERBURYPLACE
GRANDSIRE
OXFORDTB

DOUBLEBOB
STNICHOLAS
KENTTB

SINGLECOURT
DOUBLECOURT
ORIGINAL

REVERSEBOB
ERIN
REVERSECOURT

Solution on page 17

Catch in Bats

Bat Conservation Trust

Some time ago at a local tower the 'catch' at the end of ringing down was disrupted by a bat flying across the ringing room. The resulting cacophony was described as 'catching in bats'. To this day if the ringing down is poor it is quite often described as 'batty'.



Bats have long been associated with churches, and many churches have roosts that have been used by generations of bats. However, the loss of their natural habitat means that more bats are using old buildings. Additionally bats use natural features for navigation and often churches and their environs are a lasting feature in a changing landscape. Churchyards are already a good source of food for bats, and with the current push to make churchyards a green, wildlife-friendly space our churches and churchyards are becoming even more attractive to our bat friends.

A 1995 survey estimated that 60% of pre-16th century churches housed bats, however in most cases the number of bats living in a church is small and most people will be unaware of their presence. Occasionally some species of bat such as soprano pipistrelles can form large enough colonies to cause a problem, or bats which are found in the main part of the church, such as the Natter's bat, can cause damage to fabric, furnishings and fittings.

At least 12 species of bat make use of churches. The complex architecture of an old church and the wear and tear over the centuries mean that there are gaps which allow the bats easy access. There are cracks and crevices that some species such as the pipistrelle and whiskered bat choose for roosting, while other species such as the greater horseshoe bats are free hanging and need space to take off. These make use of roof voids, and sometimes roof timbers and arches in the

church. For most of the year bell towers are too cold for most species of bat, but it is possible you may find hibernating bats in your belfry, as well in places like the crypt and boiler room.

Bats are long-lived and loyal to roost sites so any disruption may have a significant and lasting impact on the population. Both bats and their roosts are protected by law, so if you have bats in your tower you must take care not to disturb them. If possible plan your routine maintenance for a time of year when they are not present or a time of day when they are likely to be on the move (you probably need excellent lighting in your tower to achieve this!).

Make sure you don't inadvertently block their entry points when maintaining things like bird netting on louvres or resetting trap doors in floors.

At Cleeve Prior church there are bats in the tower. Their route to and from the roost is through the rope holes in both floors, down the aisle and out through the vestry keyhole!

If you need to do significant work in your tower the presence of bats shouldn't prevent it. However, a licence will be needed and a full ecological survey will be required to obtain this, and you should include the costs for this in your budget. Make sure you include your Churchwardens in your planning from the outset as they will have access to advice from the Diocesan experts and it will help any faculty application if full details of how disturbance of the colony will be managed are included from the start. It is much easier if you plan your work with your resident bats in mind from the beginning rather than trying to make alterations later.

Bats are part of the wonderful biodiversity of the church building and its environment. You probably won't even know they are there, but if you would like some advice or you find a sick or injured bat you can call the National Bat Helpline on 0345 1300 228 or visit the Bat Conservation Trust website www.bats.org.uk

Drowned Bells

Compiled by Rose Nightingale

For centuries church bells have been surrounded by folklore. There was the belief that their sound would relieve the pains of childbirth (and wealthy women could pay to have them rung within earshot during delivery), to the ringing of the 'passing bell' which announced the death of a parishioner whilst driving away any bad spirits which might be lying in wait for the newly departed soul. All over the country, there are rings of bells which have specific legends and customs associated with them and in this edition of Tower Talk, we're taking a dive to some of the bells which are said to be still ringing underwater.

The Drowned bells of Dunwich in Suffolk

The city of Dunwich was once a thriving port with a shipyard, but years of coastal erosion and three violent storms in 1286 washed much of it away. This included several churches and the Greyfriars Monastery. The last section of All Saints' church Dunwich finally fell off the cliff and into the North Sea in the early 1900s. The coastal village of Dunwich you can visit today was established in the late 13th century, then half a mile from the coast.

In 1859 Master Mariner John Day claimed to have been sailing past Dunwich when he clearly heard the tolling of submerged bells. The legend has continued with reports of the sunken bells mournfully ringing beneath the waves, the most recent of which dates to a stormy night in December 2017.

Is it possible that the motion of the waves causes the bells in their derelict belfries to ring? Or is this an unlikely story, with listeners mistaking the sound of bells ringing on a buoy with a peal beneath the waves?



The bells of Forrabury Church, Cornwall

This legend concerns a ring of bells which never even made it into their tower. The bells had been cast for the tiny parish of Forrabury and, having been blessed, were making their way by ship along the northern coast of Cornwall. The residents of Tintagel, about 5 miles from Forrabury saw the ship and the Tintagel bells rang out in welcome. The ship's Pilot heard the bells, and realising they were nearly home crossed himself, thanking God for their safe passage. On

hearing this, the ship's Captain laughed and proclaimed that they only had themselves and his expert judgement to thank for the good voyage. Moments later legend has it that, in punishment for his arrogance, a huge wave rose up, overwhelming the ship and sinking it close to land. The bells could be heard tolling as it went down, the sound muffled by the water.

To this day as the storms batter the Cornish coast the bells of Forrabury are said to be heard tolling a dull, muffled sound beneath the waves; a timely warning to the wicked.

The Mermaid of Marden, Herefordshire

This is one of the best known local legends, involving a Priest, the Villagers and a Mermaid. The story goes that the Priest once rang the bell rope overenthusiastically (take note: it's never a good idea to over-pull!) causing the bell to tumble out of the tower and fall into the nearby river Lugg where it could still be heard, ringing mournfully underwater.

Numerous attempts were made by the villagers to retrieve the bell with teams of horses, but it would not budge. Eventually, a villager spotted that a Mermaid had wrapped herself around it and was holding it tightly. She was called to the surface, but when asked she complained that the priest had been disturbing her sleep for years and she would not give the bell back.

The local wise men developed a plan to draw out the bell whilst she was sleeping, but it must be done in complete silence. A team of 12 white oxen were employed, attached to the bell using yokes made of sacred yew, and bands of 'wittern' (mountain ash) wood which was known to resist charms.

As the bell was pulled out and had successfully reached the edge of the river, it was seen that the Mermaid was curled up inside it, asleep. In the excitement of the moment, one of the villagers cried out "In spite of all the devils in hell, now we'll land Marden's Great Bell". Waking up, the Mermaid darted back into the river, pulling the bell in after her, with the waters claiming it once again. Legend says that over the years, angered by continued attempts to retrieve the bell and people poking about in the river, the Mermaid took the bell and hid it in a pond nearer to the church.

In 1848, a large, Saxon bell dated to between 600AD and 1100AD and believed to be Welsh, was found when the pond was cleared out. Was this the bell which the Mermaid had hidden?

Method Wordsearch - Solution

Rose Nightingale

