

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

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

Number 1 - September 2016

Learning the Ropes is a structured, progressive scheme to learn the art of bell ringing which was launched in May 2012. So if you're reading this as a new ringer on the scheme, you're part of a huge family of almost 2,000 new ringers! The Association of Ringing Teachers works hard to support new teachers, but this newsletter is for you - new ringers - to feel part of this amazing community which stretches right around the world.

We would love to hear all about your experiences, share your successes and keep you informed of news, tips and opportunities. We'd also like to hear what you think of the newsletter and if there are other things you'd like to see in it.

The editor is **Ruth Suggett** and she can be contacted by e-mail on towertalk@learningtheropes.org.

Recent Successes

In the third quarter of 2016, 148 certificates were awarded to new ringers at various stages of Learning the Ropes, broken down as follows:

Level 1 - Bell Handling	70
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing skills	42
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	17
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	14
Level 5 - Change Ringer	5



Here's what some of them have to say about their achievements:

Sara Bullock, Level 1, Bardwell, Suffolk, says,

"I feel so much more confident, having completed Level 1. Knowing how to handle correctly, having plenty of encouragement to rectify mistakes, and all in a structured way, has really helped me. I'm really enjoying bell ringing and so keen to get on to the next level."

At Level 2, **Sue Cook of Bardwell, Suffolk** told us,

"It's taken me a while to get to Level 2 but the confidence it has given me is enormous! Well worth all those hours of practising and practising!"

Level 4 – **Helen Disley, ringer at Church Gresley, Derbyshire** says,

“Little could I have imagined when I attended the introduction day at our newly re-opened bell tower (out of curiosity) that, just over one year later, I would be entering the magical world of method ringing. Luckily, we have a strong team at Church Gresley, with several ringers having many years’ experience. It is their dedication, enthusiasm and expert guidance (along with endless patience) that has kept me going and I am thankful to them for my achievement so far.”

Level 5 – **Nigel Dick, ringer at The Edgehill Ringing Centre, Kineton, Warwickshire** reflected,

“Taking up bell ringing at the age of 61 has not been the easiest thing I have done. It has taken me 5 years to achieve Level 5. Could I have done it quicker? Possibly, but I would have needed to ring more frequently with experienced ringers. I view achieving Level 5 akin to passing a professional exam. I now need to go out and learn how to do it properly!”

“Learning to ring has been a great experience. I have met so many people and rung in over 100 different towers in and around Warwickshire particularly with our Monday ringing group, the Wombells. I have also rung in Devon and Cornwall, the Channel Isles and for my son’s wedding. Far more sadly, I have also rung for two of my friends’ funerals.

“It’s a great and very challenging pastime which I intend to continue to do for as long as I can.”

The Two Of Us


Learning and teaching go hand in hand – you can’t have one without the other, so let’s meet some ringers and their teachers and hear what they have to say about what they get from each other.

Jan Tomlinson, Teacher, Bardwell, Suffolk

“Teaching was something that I had always avoided. However, the enthusiasm of my mentor, Ruth, persuaded me that helping people to feel confident and enjoy handling a bell might be a worthwhile endeavour. I could not have been more lucky having Sue as my first pupil. We were both bright-eyed in facing a challenge that neither of us had had any experience of. Sue’s measured approach and attention to detail helped me overcome ‘first time teacher nerves’. Slowly going over everything point by point each time we met helped me to feel confident in building up Sue’s knowledge and skill. A sense of humour is essential to the whole process, and I am delighted to say that we share one. I am very proud of what Sue has achieved.”

Sue Cook, new ringer (Level 2), Bardwell, Suffolk

“Jan is the perfect teacher for me. She has been so encouraging and supportive and her method of teaching has helped me no end, and I am really enjoying learning the ropes!”


 I view achieving Level 5 akin to passing a professional exam.”

And after Level 5?

What’s next?



‘Learning the Ropes +’ is an awards scheme for new and experienced ringers alike. Its aim is to encourage and to make provision for those ringers who have completed the Learning the Ropes scheme and want to progress further ... the sky’s the limit!

 I am really enjoying learning the ropes!”

35 Towers, 13 QPs, 4 Badges & a Cathedral

My first year as a bell ringer

A year ago I had never given bell ringing a second thought, then I got married and moved to Kineton where a friend suggested I visit the Edgehill Ringing Centre at St Peter's Church and learn to ring. So on the 1st of September 2015 I contacted Graham Nabb, the tower captain there, and by the 8th of that month, having been to see a practice and have a go on the end of a rope, I was completely hooked and enrolled in the Learning the Ropes (LtR) scheme to become a change ringer - challenge accepted!

Before I could join the practices I needed to learn how to handle a bell. I had a few one-to-one sessions initially but after a couple of weeks I joined a practise night and rang my first open rounds on the 29th September. From here I was able to progress through the stages of the LtR course - collecting badges for each level completed (still a highlight even at 30!) Not long after ringing my first open rounds I had the opportunity to go on my first ringing tour. This was a wonderful, if exhausting, experience, taking in five new towers and meeting lots of new people. It was also a great way to improve my ringing as all towers are different and this first tour took in a lot of the more challenging towers in the local area. I have been on several tours since and always thoroughly enjoy the experience - especially when there's a brewery involved.

I continued to progress through the LtR stages, ringing my first quarter peal on the 2nd January 2016 (gaining my 3rd badge.) This was a quarter peal (QP) of Bob Doubles where I rang the tenor behind and, although I was pretty nervous, a really nice and incredibly experienced band was organised to ring with me to make it as easy as possible to follow the rhythm of the bells. I have been told several times to look at QPs as an extended practice and not to panic - I think it's starting to sink in. Since January I have rung several more QPs, including some for the Coventry Guilds '90 for 90' rung for the Queen's 90th birthday. Other highlights of the last year as a ringer have included ringing for Remembrance Sunday on the haunting half-muffled bells and ringing on Christmas morning. I have even recently felt confident enough to ring whilst away on holiday, contacting local tower captains. This led to the 'grabbing' of my first Cathedral in July ringing for Sunday service at the beautiful 14-bell Winchester Cathedral tower. It is always worth looking at local towers when away as it provides a wonderfully different way to see an area or a building and the people are always welcoming and friendly.

Moving through Level 4 of LtR introduces you to method learning and opens up a whole new set of challenges - I believe that it is a never ending journey. There is always a new goal whether it is a new method to learn, ringing in a particular tower, county or even country! It's been an extraordinary experience. I can't recommend learning to ring more enthusiastically, but it comes with a warning - it's incredibly addictive!

By Cate Stokes
Ringer at The Edgehill Ringing
Centre, Kineton, Warwickshire

Don't forget!!

When you're ready for an assessment, make sure your teacher submits your pass and gets you your certificate. Why not send us a photo to be included in future newsletters?

You can order badges too!



Cate's badges, proudly displayed on her bag.

“It's incredibly addictive!”

Learning Down Under in Australia

Of course (didn't you know?) there are LtR ringers in Australia and New Zealand (ANZAB), which means to many of you reading this we are in the 'other' hemisphere somewhere. It's no different down here except for the accent, towers, (politics) ... and 'definitely' our towers are slightly further apart than in the UK. We are also known to be a more laid back culture too!

Australia and New Zealand have about 60 towers, and that number is growing. Western Australia, which is where I currently live, has nine towers (including a mini ring) in an area much larger than the UK, so we often have to travel nearly an hour or more for a practice.

A couple of our new ringers, Cathy Waldon and David O'Sullivan (pictured with Corinne receiving their certificates), came to The Bell Tower in the centre of Perth every Sunday for some intensive sessions, followed by additional ringing at St George's Cathedral.

They are now at a level whereby they are welcome at other towers if they wish, know many other ringers, and have achievable goals. We love having fun, a laugh ... and working together and sharing successes. They had no idea when they first started that they were part of only 3 places in the world that have a ring of 16 bells ... who cares where you start? It's down to attitude and being a team player in my opinion that helps makes you a 'good' ringer with whom people want to ring.

Cathy quotes: *"If you like ringing bells, but feel that your progress has slowed or your confidence has waned, persevere. Experienced ringers will say that learning to ring a bell is a slow process ... and it really is, even slower than you'd imagine it to be. Don't be in a hurry to move to the next level. Everyone is unique and the manner of learning varies so much from person to person. Get the basics down pat first. The rest will come in due course."*

David says: *"Apart from learning a new and unique skill, not many can make claim to being a campanologist or even know what it is. I have also made some wonderful new friends, and enjoy the social aspect of ringing equally to the skill involved."*

Two different viewpoints of what this hobby is all about from two fantastic people.

By Corinne Rule
Teacher and Mentor
Perth, Western Australia



Cathy, Corinne and David

Fascinating Fact!

Which is the oldest ring of bells still in regular use?

Answer: The oldest ring of bells still in use are at St Lawrence in Ipswich. These are known as Wolsey's Bells, after Cardinal Wolsey who grew up in the area. Four of them were cast in 1450 and the fifth added in 1480. They still include their original clappers. After a period in the 1980s when the tower was unsafe and the bells couldn't be rung, they were re-hung in a new, modern bell frame and overhauled by Whitechapel. They have been rung regularly since 2009. (In fact, if you're ever in Ipswich on a Wednesday lunchtime, you will hear them and you would be very welcome to join in!)

HAVE YOU JOINED THE LtR 50/50 CLUB YET?



The Club supports the charitable Association of Ringing Teachers in delivering training for Teachers and Ringers for the 21st Century.

Many people already know of and may belong to one or more of these kind of clubs, but for those who don't it is very simple:

- ◆ Your annual subscription of £12 per year (can also be £3 per quarter, or £1 monthly) buys you a number which is entered into a draw.
- ◆ Draws are held every three months, with prizes proportionate to the amount paid into Club - so the more people who join, the bigger the prizes.

PRIZES

There is an annual top prize of 25% of the entire year's subscriptions, to be drawn in December, just in time for Christmas or the sales!!

The prizes in the other three draws comprise one of 10% and two of 5%. At the end of the financial year, the balance of the funds is 50:50 to members and to ART.

All the money raised helps directly with the work of ART which has produced the LtR Scheme and all the teaching materials which we use, as well as invaluable work supporting teachers and learners around the world, and developing lots more resources! So your support is a valuable way of making a real contribution to this work. Please join!

Eligibility

Everyone with a SmART Ringer username/login can join the 50/50 CLUB - that's all! So that's everyone who is on the Learning the Ropes scheme. So please do join, and encourage others involved at any level with ART and Learning the Ropes to join as well!

How Do I Join?

SIMPLE!! Just get in touch with Chris who runs the scheme, by phone or email, or have a look on the LtR website for more details.

Contact Chris de Cordova
35 Thornton Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 6UW
5050club@learningtheropes.org

Returning to Ringing

“Do you want to come and have a go on the tower bells this afternoon?”

An invitation out of the blue, from the person next to me at a handbell practice, who at the time had no idea that I had rung tower bells about 15 years before in St Peter’s, Portishead, and had not touched one since coming up to West Cumbria. “Hmm, why not?”, I thought. I’ve done it before, “Yes, I’ll come.”

Up in the ringing chamber at Cleator Moor I glanced at the ropes and sallies and old fears and anxiety flooded my mind. What were the bells going to be like? Would I miss the sally, let go of the rope, would I remember what to do? The bell we were going to practise on was tied and we were to use the simulator. Taking a deep breath, holding the rope end, I reached for the sally and pulled the bell off balance. Phew! Nothing terrible happened; in fact it all felt surprisingly familiar. With Chris standing close by I got used to ringing and stood the bell. It was immediately obvious that in my previous ringing I had picked up some undesirable habits which needed to be dealt with.

After this initial ring with the simulator I started to attend regular evening practices at Cleator Moor. Warmly welcomed by the other ringers, I worked with Chris using Learning the Ropes to eradicate my bad habits and started to make progress. Realising that in Chris I had found the perfect teacher, I told her I was completely willing to start from scratch and perfect my technique.

I am completely hooked. I’m thrilled to have gained Levels 1, 2 and 3 of Learning the Ropes and excited about Level 4 – plain hunting on the treble to different methods, ringing bells up and down in peal, ringing a quarter peal on the treble, learning how to cover and starting to ring the second bell for Plain Bob Doubles. I see a future stretching out ahead of me full of new and challenging methods to master. Not bad for someone fast approaching their 70th birthday, and I have a set of certificates which give me immense pride and encouragement every time I look at them!

By Jeanne Clements
Cleator Moor and Workington,
Cumbria, Level 3

“ Nothing terrible happened; in fact it all felt surprisingly familiar.”

“ Using Learning the Ropes to eradicate my bad habits, I started to make progress.”

Jeanne (in pink) receiving her Level 3 certificate from her teacher, Chris de Cordova.



Learning Call Changes

Call changes are the building blocks of all change ringing. It's important that you feel really comfortable with these seemingly simple changes, but it takes time. There is a lot to think about, even for one call, so don't underestimate how much time and practice you need.

Here are a few things to remember:

The call is made on a handstroke pull.

Wait! Stay focused on the bell you were following and don't rush to change as soon as you hear the call! The actual change is made on the next handstroke, so keep following the same bell for the next backstroke after the call.

This takes quite a bit of practice, as often you really, really want to move straight away!

This is an important skill in its own right.

At a call, you may have to follow a different bell, but you might not have to ring in a different position.

For example:

1 2 3 4 5 6 Call is '2 to 3'

1 3 2 4 5 6

At this call, the bells which change places are the 2 and the 3. They are the ones which have to change speed.

The 4 rings in the same position, in 4ths place, but the ringer needs to follow a different bell. In this case, it will be the 2, but it doesn't have to change speed.

Understanding the difference between changing places and following different bells is key to ringing smooth and enjoyable call changes.

Here are some ways you can do this:

Stand behind someone ringing call changes and, at each call, tell them whether they are changing position or just following a different bell.

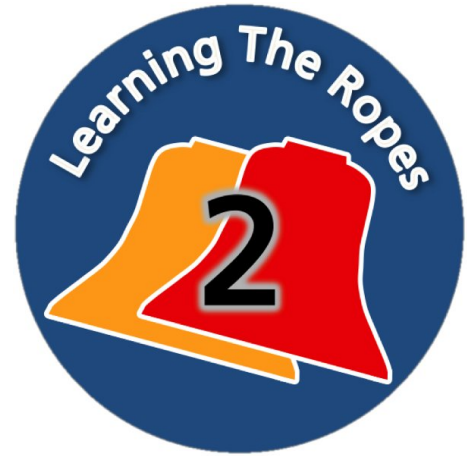
Call some simple changes yourself.

Write out some changes on paper or a whiteboard.

Instead of calling out the bells to change, try calling out the places which change. That's quite a challenge!

There is so much to call changes and they are so rewarding. It's really worth putting in the effort to get them spot on.

Have you got any good tips for practising call changes? Let us know so we can share them!



Learning Tips No.1

By Ruth Suggett of Bardwell Teaching Centre, Suffolk

“Understanding the difference between changing places and following different bells is key to ringing smooth and enjoyable call changes.”

A Grand Day Out

Eight ringers and three non-ringers travelled from (mainly) Church Gresley, Derbyshire, to Liverpool Cathedral to join their Saturday evening practice on 23rd July. Four of these ringers were experienced, but of the others, three have been ringing for only a little over a year. All the ringers bar one are either ART teachers or mentors, or are progressing through LtR levels at Church Gresley or elsewhere.

It might seem a little strange to arrange an outing from an easy 8 cwt six to the heaviest full-circle ring in the world, but everyone rang well with no disasters such as missed sallys or bells being unintentionally rung down.

The highlight of the visit was probably Evie Newton, a young ringer from Duffield, ringing the Tenor (82 cwt); first as strapper, then on her own. But the tail end was just too short to allow her to stand the bell at backstroke, as was required at the end of the practice. Next time, maybe!

We were made extremely welcome by Jeff Simcox and the Liverpool ringers, and after the practice ended we had a tour of the bell-chamber and up onto the roof. Yes, if you could somehow get a bus in there, you really could drive it round the outside of the bell frame!

By John Cater



The bells and frame, from above



Church Gresley ringers in Liverpool Cathedral ringing chamber

Have you recently been on an outing, or have you organised one? We would love to hear all about it, especially if it comes with some photographs!