

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

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

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Editor

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[Sometimes we need a little help ...](#)



Summer is the time of year traditionally associated with outings and striking competitions and generally an upsurge in socialising among ringers. For many new ringers, the idea of a Striking Competition may be completely alien and quite possibly terrifying - but often it turns out to be the opposite. It's a great way to meet other ringers (who may not be any more advanced than you), enjoy ringing at a different tower and usually indulge in a feast of home made cake, and all on a beautiful summers' day (well, maybe). In this edition, Jane Robinson describes exactly that experience from apprehension to elation after her first striking competition, and we have several reports of outings as well as our regular stories of success and achievement. All these experiences add to the friendship and camaraderie of ringing, so grab every opportunity you can to take part. You won't regret it!

Correction: Very early downloads of Edition 11 gave the wrong answer for question 5 of the Shenfield Young Ringers' Quiz. The first all-ladies peal was rung in 1912, not 1922. We apologise for the error.

Harry's Level 5 Success

By Jennie Town, Tower captain at Northallerton

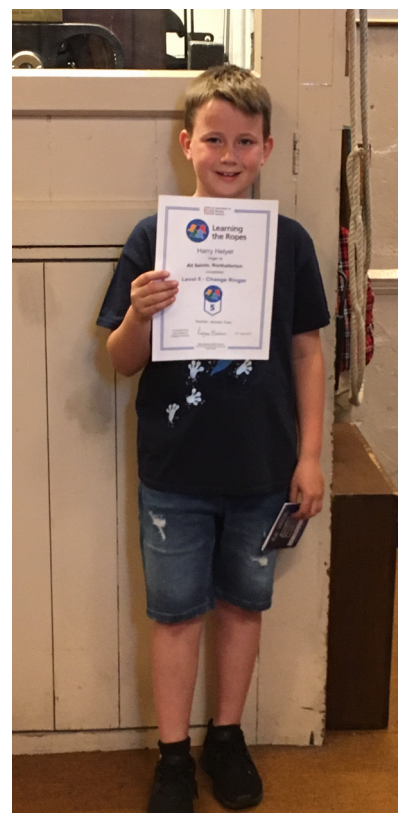
On 27 April Harry Helyer rang the treble to a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor and so completed all the activities for his Level 5 in Learning the Ropes. This was achieved 16 months after his first lesson and three weeks after his 11th birthday. He rather over-achieved, in that he also rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles in the same evening, thereby qualifying for Level 5 in both routes.

It was a good day for Harry, since earlier in the day he had led a team to victory in the local branch striking competition (Called Changes section) where he put in the calls in an expert fashion. He is mad keen on anything to do with bells and his parents have had to adjust to the constant sound of bells in the house, as he practises whenever he gets the chance - on the piano or simulator.

Harry has already ticked off a first peal and quarters of Plain Bob Royal and Grandsire Triples for his LtR Plus.

When asked what he likes about ringing, Harry simply replied: "Everything"! He just loves to ring bells and doesn't mind whether it is Rounds to help somebody less experienced, or the challenge of the next new method.

I also asked about his ambitions and he said he wants to get his own handbells and mini-ring and be Tower Captain at Northallerton. These may all be plans for the future, but his other ambition "to ring a quarter peal of Surprise Major" may not be so far off.



Harry with certificate and the completed LtR log book.

50/50 Club Draw News

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

The 2nd quarter draw for the 50-50 Club was made by Jane Boden, Derby DA Secretary at Ticknall Church on Monday 17 June.

First out of the hat was number 56 held by Les Boyce, who receives £70, followed by number 20 held by Suzanne Knight and number 118 held by Neil Donovan, who both receive £35.

You need to be "in it to win it", so why not consider joining and at the same time donating to ART? Information about how to join can be found at www.learningtheropes.org/5050club.

Recent Successes

By The Editorial Team

In the second quarter of 2019, 258 certificates were awarded to ringers at the various stages of Learning the Ropes (LtR) as shown below (last year's numbers given for comparison):

Level 1 - Bell Handling	132 (144)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	79 (63)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	19 (23)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	17 (15)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	11 (3)



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

Jun 2019	Stephen Curtis	Bronze
Jun 2019	Ben Curtis	Bronze
Jun 2019	Alex Bell	Gold Plus
Jun 2019	Jo Belsten	Bronze
Jun 2019	Harry Helyer	Bronze
May 2019	Nikki Greenall	Bronze
May 2019	Jane Grellier	Bronze
May 2019	Sonia Field	Silver

May 2019	Miranda Jones	Bronze
Apr 2019	Rosemary Pegrum	Silver
Apr 2019	Joanna Harris	Bronze
Apr 2019	Max Earthquake	Bronze
Apr 2019	Neil Hickman	Bronze
Apr 2019	Sarah Pike	Bronze
Apr 2019	Monica Hollows	Gold Plus

If you'd like to see more of these and other similar statistics, they can all be found on the SmART Ringer website at smartringer.org/public/records/ and smartringer.org/fiftythingscert.

Our very own Podcast - have you listened?

By Nic Boyd

Podcasts! Are you a listener to these? A bit like a radio show, you download them to your phone, tablet or computer, and listen when you want. I find them on the BBC Sounds app, but you can download them from websites or a podcast app. Now we have one about bell ringing, called *Fun With Bells*!

In each episode Cathy Booth interviews someone who reveals more about the world of ringing and, at the end of each episode, Pip Penney answers listeners' questions. This season's topics include:

- The Ringing Remembers campaign
- Prolific peal and tower grabbing
- Ringing in other parts of the world
- The different ringing types in Southwest England
- How to record your bells
- Striking competitions
- Hand bell ringing's links to tower bell ringing
- What it's like to be a young ringer

Season one is complete. Cathy is currently considering a season two in the Autumn. To feedback on this season or influence development of the next season, drop her a line at funwithbellsodcast@gmail.com.

Future Events

By The Editorial Team

There are two really exciting events coming up for ringers, both of which will give you a day or days to remember!

Learning the Ropes Festival

Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre, Norwich

Saturday 3 August



A whole day event with bookable sessions covering a range of topics particularly relevant for ringers at Learning the Ropes Levels 2 and 3, including a foundation skills master-class, simulator ringing and raising and lowering. There are also opportunities for learning how to splice ropes, ringing on a mini-ring, and learning all about the social history of ringing, all taking place in the historic city of Norwich and showcasing the brand new and popular Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre. *[Read more about the centre in Nikki Thomas's article on page 8.]*

Details are on the new booking site at events.bellringing.org/events-m/festival/learning-the-ropes-festival. You will need to sign up and login to be able to register for this event but you can then book online for this and any future ART events as well. It is also possible to make a group booking for this event.

Central Council Weekend 2019

Goldsmiths College, London

Friday-Sunday 6-8 September



Three days of all things bell ringing, organised by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers. There's a packed programme of ringing events open to all ringers of all ages and abilities, including guided tours of the ringing room and belfry at St Paul's Cathedral, the chance to ring at some iconic London churches, and a mini road-show. There is no charge for the road-show for ringers aged under 18.

To find out more and to book tickets please visit cccbr.org.uk/about/annual-meetings/2019-meeting/.

Why not ask around at your tower and get a group together?

Lancashire Lads and Lasses

By Ellis Hollows

The Lancashire Lads and Lasses are the home team who are competing for the first time in the Ringing World National Youth Contest (RWNYC) in Liverpool in July this year. Let's meet the team!

Ellis Hollows:

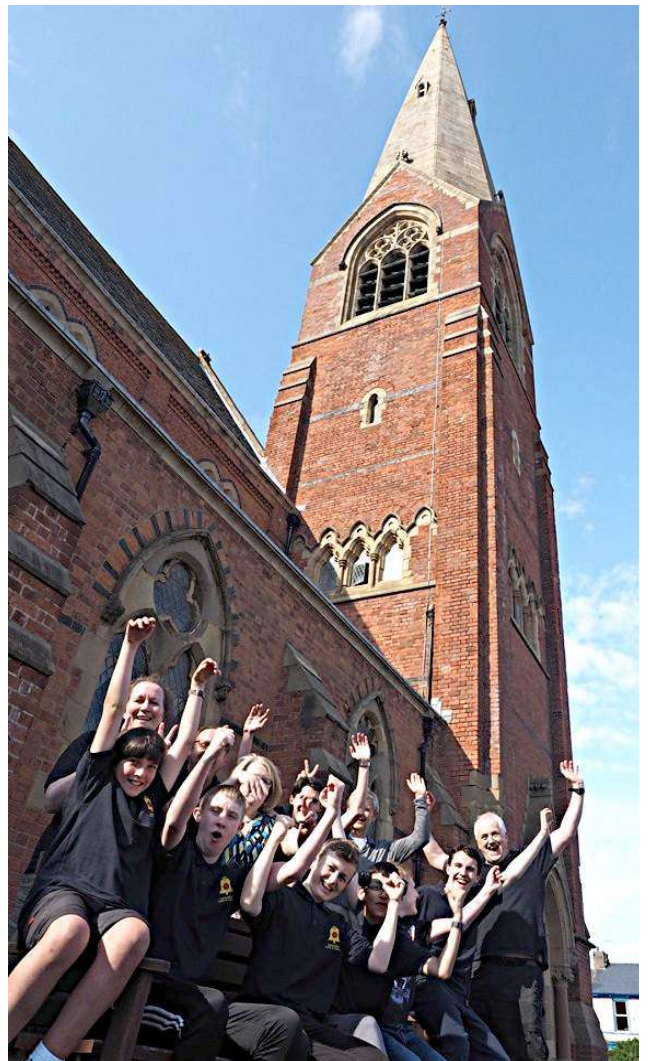
I'm 11 years old and I've been learning to ring at St Anne's Parish Church since November 2017. I really enjoy Young Ringers because everyone is very friendly and it is fun to ring with lots of people my age. I think it is a great opportunity and every young ringer should give it a go. The young people in the group are between 10 and 17 years old. We try and focus on methods that some of the ringers are trying to learn and also listening and striking skills. The meetings are mainly held at Bilsborrow but it was great to have our April meeting on the Fylde coast, at St Cuthbert's, St Joseph's and my home tower, St Anne's. In May we had our meeting in Barrow-in-Furness. We went to ring at St James the Great Church as it was the 150th anniversary of the church. We also went on a trip to Liverpool and attended a joint meeting with the Yorkshire Tykes. I am also completing "50 Ringing Things" and writing this article about ringing counts as one of my Things, so thank-you for reading this!

Cameron Pollock:

The RWNYC has been a fantastic opportunity for every person on this team to be involved in something new and refreshing. From my experience of ringing in the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers (LACR), there has never been an influx of youngsters who have been keen to take on the hobby of bell ringing. This is perhaps a surprise, given the large area that the Association covers. However, we have managed to pull together an extremely competent band, allowing us to form the first ever Lancashire Association team for this competition. I have thoroughly enjoyed spending time at the practices that we have had. I am one of the four Barrow-In-Furness ringers participating. At first, I was reluctant to step outside of that group. But after a few practices, I was happily making conversation with the other ringers. Not only has this been an amazing chance to meet new people but we have set up a team that we hope can compete in this striking competition for years to come.

Daniel Kirkwood:

Learning to ring since September 2018 has been great fun. I've progressed from individual lessons to ringing for Sunday services at our church of Brindle St James in the Diocese of Blackburn and practising with the young ringers' team. My Plain Hunt is improving and I am starting to ring it on more than six bells. I feel very confident now with my Rounds and Called Changes. It's nice to know there are many other people my age enjoying the ringing as well. I'm looking forward to improving in my new skill in the future.



James Turner:

The 3 L's (Lancashire Lads and Lasses) is a new group of young ringers. Most of our practices are held at Bilsborrow St Hilda's which is a ring of eight just north of Preston. We have ringers from all over the Lancashire Association from Barrow-in-Furness down to Kirkby Lonsdale to the Fylde to Preston and then Manchester. Unfortunately, all three ringers from Manchester have had to drop out due to other commitments. So now there are only about ten of us which is still a good number for a newly formed team but in the future we hope we can have more from the whole of Lancashire. We have already had four outings, to Liverpool and the LACR AGM day in the Fylde Branch, and the latest outing was up to Barrow to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St James the Great, which is the home tower of four of our ringers. And then we met up with the Yorkshire Tykes for a good day out.

In July we are ringing in the RWNYC (Ringing World National Youth Contest) which is a yearly 8-bell striking competition, to be held in Liverpool. But that is not why we formed this team. It is to realise that there are other young ringers in Lancashire and to meet up with each other and ring together.

Will James:

I am a proud member the Lancashire Lads and Lasses, who will be representing Team Lancashire in this year's Ringing World National Youth Contest. In May, my fellow team-mates and best friends James and Liam ventured up to the Lake District to stay in James's caravan, which seemed like a good idea as the following day we would be going to Barrow to practise our competition piece. It was a very useful and successful visit and was a very exciting experience. We were able to use the simulator but also, at St James the Great, you are able to see the bells ringing overhead which is exhilarating. It was a steady ring of eight. The following day we returned to Preston after a fantastic weekend.



Good luck to The Lancashire Lads and Lasses and indeed to all the teams entering this national competition!

Don't Look Up!

By Sonia Field

Back in March I decided to set up a group to support new or fairly new ringers from several local towers who need more rope time or access to training exercises than they currently receive from their home towers. Regular evening practices cater for ringers of varying abilities, so additional targeted training and practice sessions to work on specific skills can be invaluable. Our first session covered basic bell handling and exercises to support the stages from bell control through to thinking about Plain Hunt. But there is never enough rope time to refine these skills in one session; so I organised another as a follow-on. I selected a tower that most of the participants had not been to before, with a longer draught than they are accustomed to. Caspar Kennedy writes about his experience of the day:

Following a practice at All Saints, Harrow Weald, a group of six ringers needing to practise their Foundation Skills visited St Martin's, Ruislip, a beautiful church and a former abbey, dating back around a thousand years. Sonia Field led the practice with several helpers.

There were no steps to climb as the ringing chamber is on the ground floor, located at the right hand corner next to the main entrance of the church. Ringers come in with the congregation and can both see and be seen through the dividing glass screen.

There were eight bells and we used six. The afternoon went well. We started out with some ringing in rounds on some very springy ropes with quite a long draught - a new and strange experience at first, but the springiness meant the bells set themselves when you got used to it and encouraged some very straight up and down ringing - what we sometimes call 'drainpipe ringing'!

There was a wire frame suspended from the ceiling to guide the ropes between the floor and the ceiling so the draught was only about two-thirds as long as it appeared. The rope guides are there to help keep the rope straight as it travels down from the bells high above.

The ringers and ropes were well spaced in a circle. After a short while everyone got used to the elastic ropes so when the call came to 'stand', the bells were silent with no solo performances.

I found a use beyond mere vanity of seeing my reflection in the glass in that I could see my hands coming to the rope ready for the rise of the backstroke. This meant I was able to correct a handling error that I have been told about but could now see for myself.

We covered bell handling and control, speed changes, position changes, call changes, dodging and plain hunt exercises. We had a go at some Kaleidoscope exercises and Cornish (a kind of Plain Hunt from Simon Head, one of our helpers). It was an enjoyable session from which I think we all learnt a lot.

There was plenty of positive feedback from the afternoon which I was happy about. And to round off the day some of us enjoyed a meal together at a local establishment, as it is important to focus on the social side of ringing too!



Brightly painted funeral hatchments in the ringing room at St Martin's, Ruislip. The rope guides can be seen at the top.

Image: Bob Speel.

There's a Lot to Discover in Norwich!

By Nikki Thomas, Manager of The Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre



The wonderful new training centre at St Peter Mancroft in the heart of Norwich has now been up and running for over six months. We've had over 1300 visitors and have run many different sessions to give ringers from East Anglia and beyond the chance to practise on specially designed training bells. The diary is looking rather busy and people are benefiting from the extra rope time that is available.

We are open each Monday morning 10am till noon for anyone who wishes to drop in. At this session you can either focus on bell handling or use one of the laptops to practise whatever it is you are learning - whether it's leading, covering, plain hunt or a method. On a Friday we are open from 12pm till 2pm for anyone who wants to practise with a laptop or can ring unaided and just needs time on the rope.



As well as the open sessions, you can book to use the Centre yourself, either as a tower practice or for an Association practice, a workshop or a quarter peal. It really is up to you. You can check availability on our website and then e-mail manager@mrdc.org.uk to make your booking.



We are working hard to develop a Youth Band, and so we have started Junior Ringing events in the school holidays. These have been very popular and we have been delighted to welcome young ringers and their families from other parts of the country who want to take advantage of the excellent facilities at the centre.

A laptop for each rope, with wireless headphones, means everyone gets just what they need.

Matt Stevens, a young ringer from Northamptonshire who attended the Easter holiday session said:

I like the Mancroft young ringers' days because I enjoy ringing with other young people my age. I like that because it can get a bit boring when you ring with adults, but with other young people you can have a laugh and you can talk about things you understand that older people may not understand. I also find that that the bells are enjoyable to ring. You could be ringing with anyone and you will still enjoy them. They are easy to ring with little effort.

“ I like the Mancroft young ringers' days because I enjoy ringing with other young people my age”

There is always a buzz about the young ringers' days with fearless youngsters of all ages having a go and really enjoying the relaxed and jovial atmosphere. Morwenna Johns aged 12 from Norfolk said:

During the Easter holidays I enjoyed visiting the Mancroft Discovery Ringing Centre in Norwich for the young ringers' practice. It was great to see so many young ringers come from all over the place. When I was there Nikki, the manager there, kept me busy by keeping me ringing and helping the less experienced ringers out, wherever I was helpful. I was also allowed to call some Called Changes. This was not my first time coming there but I was warmly welcomed like always and had as much fun as the times before with meeting new young ringers.

“ It was great to see so many young ringers come from all over the place.”

To find out what is going on, please check the web site www.mrdc.org.uk along with our social media posts on Facebook (Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre) or Twitter @MRDC1715.

Anyone is welcome, from near or far!

Waking up a Silent Tower

By Brian Giles of Weekley, Northants

In Tower Talk number 10, Brian Giles described how a new band got off the ground at Weekley, Northants. Here he gives us an update - not without its dramas!

Having found Elaine Greatrex, our ART teacher, four new ringers at Weekley were making progress with their ringing. However, eventually the inevitable happened: we broke our first stay. It seemed like a simple problem to solve since I had managed to get hold of ten lengths of American Ash in anticipation of just such an event. Nick Churchman, Peterborough Diocesan Guild Steward and DAC Bells Adviser, came to our rescue to show me how a stay is replaced.

Disaster

Once in the belfry, he found that the frame to number 5 bell had broken. This was a new break, as the frame had recently been inspected when the bell bearings were being oiled and ropes adjusted. It appeared that rust had forced the frame up, causing stress and ultimately the break. Sadly, we had to stop ringing while further investigations were carried out.



The break in the frame can be seen just behind the cable-tie

Image credit: Nick Churchman

Ringers without a tower

With four enthusiastic novices champing at the bit to ring for the Easter services, we needed somewhere to continue our training. Fortunately, Helen Churchman, Kettering Branch Ringing Master, who has been teaching us, invited us to Rothwell church. Wow! They are such lovely bells! Progress was rapid and we were joining in with Rounds of up to six bells. A very grateful band of four.

Meanwhile, the inspection of the damage confirmed that 20 years without maintenance and the consequential rust had caused the problem. So, from a raw novice, I suddenly became Tower Captain and had to delve into the intricacies of frame mountings and bell safety.

We were advised that numbers 5 and 6 bells were not to be rung but the other four could be if the rust was removed from the RSJ and treatment applied. In the meantime, a quote for the necessary repairs would be forthcoming.

OUCH!

The quote arrived – for over £14,000. I started to realise how much work will be involved in seeking grant aid, but it's nice to know that there are institutions that want our church bells to be kept ringing for future generations. And, being retired, it fell to me to arrange for the rust removal and treatment to be done. With hammer drill, chisels and protective clothing I spent two days clearing the rust from under the frame feet and chipping off flaking rust from the RSJ. It was dirty but satisfying work, especially when we were given the OK to continue ringing four bells.

Back home we realised our bells were not the easiest to ring and, comparing them with Rothwell's, we really understood this!



L-R: Lyla Vonhof-Small,
Reverend Gillian Gamble,
Natasha Vonhof

Image credit: Brian Giles

So, what have I learnt?

First, that towers that have not been rung or maintained for many years are going to need a great deal of TLC.

Secondly, that there are lots of very helpful ringers who are willing to come to your aid when things go wrong. We cannot thank them all enough.

Thirdly, that learning to ring is definitely not confined to turning up on practice night and pulling on ropes. Whether Tower Captain or one of the team, there are jobs to be done, money to be raised and support to be given.

And finally, that ringing is an addictive pastime that is interesting and enjoyable with new challenges coming up after each step you take towards being a competent ringer.

First Time at a Striking Competition

By Jane Robinson, Ringing Remembers recruit from Northamptonshire

I started learning to ring in March 2018, in Nassington, Northamptonshire. I'll always be grateful that they took me under their wings to help me learn to competently handle a bell. We have two ART teachers at our tower and both have been extremely supportive and encouraging. They've never let us stand still with our learning, always pushing us when they thought we were ready. Hours of practice and patience are offered and there are always kind words when we have a 'two steps back' practice. There's a group of us at Nassington that are at a similar stage of learning and all are Ringing Remembers recruits. We've become friends as well as ringers.

The Peterborough Guild 6-bell striking competition was held at the end of April. Our teachers decided that we could enter a band to ring Plain Hunt and Called Changes as we would for Sunday service. The main aim for entering a novice band was to improve our striking. Our band consisted of our two teachers and four Ringing Remembers recruits. The competition was at a relatively local church so we were able to get a practice session there and work out which bells we were comfortable on. We didn't expect to win but we were all anxious and none of us wanted to let our teachers down. We all felt we could have done with more practice but we had already achieved our goal of improving our striking before the tenor rang twice to tell the judges we were ready. The first few blows were full of tension and anxiety but as the blows went past we started to settle in to it and shoulders were relaxing!



Left to right: back row: Hilary Hardie, Terry Wright (our ever patient teachers); front row: Jane Robinson, Caroline Mould, Alex Heaton, Jane Webb (Ringing Remembers recruits)

Without exception we were the least experienced band to have entered but other ringers were giving us tips and generally wanting to help us. We didn't ring as well as we had done when practising on the bells we know well, but we didn't do too badly! Of course we came last but got two rounds of applause when it was made known we were mostly ringers with little experience.

Ringing in the competition gave us an excellent opportunity to listen to some very good bands, experience something new, and has had benefits to us as a band with our improved striking and consequential listening skills. I'd really recommend you consider entering a competition or at least attending to listen. We're already planning our entry for next year. Maybe even three plain courses of Plain Bob Doubles! And in the meantime our striking skills are improving as well as our listening skills.

A Grand Day Out

By Elaine Cheeseman

I'm a student at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing - BSoBR for short. Recently a fantastic Away Day was organised to Warwick, and with the sun shining, I set off, feeling much like one of my favourite Enid Blyton characters starting an adventure. I just hoped that Warwick was ready for us!

Our first destination was the very picturesque church at Butler's Marston - a ground floor ring of 6 (much appreciated!) Here under the tutelage of Steve Horton, ably supported by Eileen and Mike Keeble, Sue and John Rogers and James Horton, we navigated Rounds and Called Changes. Our session even allowed us the pride of being able to show off our skills to George, a visiting 8 year old who, along with his father, stood mesmerised in a corner of the ringing chamber listening and watching as we rang for a short burst. Oh, how I love bell ringing - especially when there are doughnuts involved (courtesy of the Butler's Marston church members).



Our group outside the church of St Peter and St Paul, Butler's Marston



“ Oh, how I love bell ringing - especially when there are doughnuts involved”

Next up wasn't a church, but a pub for lunch - The New Bowling Green in Warwick. Here we met up with the other groups and helpers from the School, almost completely monopolising the place. Over a bacon bap, chunky chips and a shandy, I had the opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones, all in the spirit of bell ringing.

Fun in the pub! Ringing sisterhood - the author with Annette Seeley and Jane Morris



After lunch we made our way to Warwick, St Nicholas with eager anticipation. Once there, in an overflowing ringing chamber, every one of us – from almost complete beginner to those preparing for their first Quarter Peal and beyond – was able to experience the thrill of ringing at the tower thanks to Simon Linford, Clare McArdle, Phil Ramsbottom and Andy Hardy. All nerves forgotten, I glowed with pride as I rang, buoyed up with the positive, supportive atmosphere. Everyone had a huge smile on their face as we all eagerly signed our names in the Tower Visitors' Book.

Phil's in charge! Ringing at Warwick, St Nicholas

Our last visit of the day was the one that had filled me with trepidation all week – Warwick, St Mary. Here the ringing chamber was much higher up due to the tower being on stilts – and apparently it moves! Despite my protests that I would never make it, I was strong-armed up, firmly sandwiched between ringing buddies Alex and Annette, and was able to experience ringing in my largest ringing room yet. In this impressive setting, we shared the successes of our fellow ringers who were presented with achievement certificates – several LtR Level 1s and a very impressive Level 5. Thanks to Jane and her rendition of “You Can Ring My Bell” in front of me, I made it back to *terra firma* and it was time to leave Warwick.

As I drove home I reflected on how far I had come since taking up bell ringing last September. I never cease to be amazed by the support, patience, kindness and camaraderie that has been shown to me by all concerned in this magical art. Who'd have thought it – I am loving becoming a bell ringer and seriously can't wait for the next Away Day!



Liz Oakes, Jane Morris, Lex Earthquake and Sarah King receiving their LtR Level 1 awards at Warwick, St Mary

“ I never cease to be amazed by the support, patience, kindness and camaraderie that has been shown to me by all concerned in this magical art”

Young Ringers' Fest!

A Big Day Out for all young ringers in the Oxford Diocesan Guild

By Susan Read, winner of the ART Sarah Beacham Award 2016 for work with young ringers

The city of Oxford was an ideal choice for our Big Day Out as it not only offers a variety of historic and memorable towers but is relatively easy for 19 young ringers and their parents to get around.

Our first two towers were the light tens at St Thomas and St Mary Magdalen. Ringing was good, ranging from Rounds to Plain Hunt on nine to Surprise Major. St Giles, just up the road, had a steep stairway ending with a ladder into a very crowded ringing room. We rang Plain Bob and Grandsire Triples there, as well as Rounds and Called Changes.

At lunchtime we had a treat! We provided our own packed lunches, but the Parish Room had lots to entertain us - a wonderful selection of cakes and scones and drinks, as well as an excellent book stall with ART books that many of us hadn't seen before. Also there was the chance to ring Plain Hunt on handbells with some experts. But perhaps best of all, Alan Griffin had brought along his dumb bell with a competition to ring it as the tenor behind to Grandsire Doubles and to get the best score for our striking! Ten of the young ringers had a go. (Some had two goes!)



The day just got better and better when we arrived at Magdalen College - the best bells of the day! First impressions of a gloomy ringing chamber, furnished with ancient leather covered sofas and some even older wooden pews, made us slightly nervous that the worthy members of the Oxford Society who had arranged all the towers for us would not be impressed with our ringing. They reassured us this would not be the case and gave us positive and helpful comments.

Next there was the light eight at Lincoln College, and the six at St Aldate's where the prizes were announced. Josh and Jamie won the handsome big Easter eggs for their top scores on Alan's dumbbell. All those who completed the quiz sheet received a smaller Easter egg, and these seemed to disappear really quickly!

The last tower was Carfax at the central crossroads of Oxford - a fine, but challenging six.





Some of the comments on the day from our young ringers:

“I would like to thank you for the experience of ringing at new towers with new people. I thoroughly enjoyed the day.”

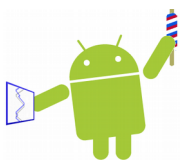
“It improved my ringing and confidence about it.”

“Thank you very much for arranging the whole trip, and I will be sure to come along to anything else planned in the future.”

[The photos accompanying this article were all taken by Paul Lucas.]

Apps for Ringing Practice - Methodology

By Tony Croft & Peter Tilley

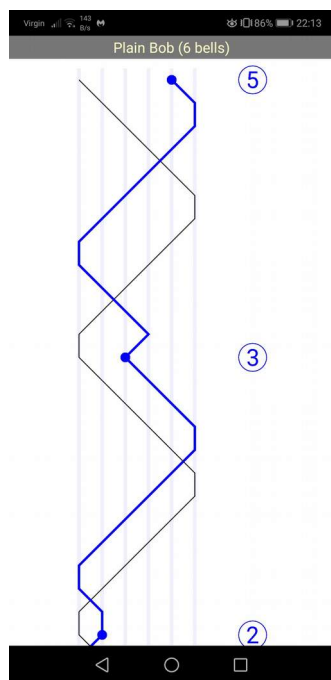


Methodology is an ‘app’ for Android smart-phones and tablets that is intended to serve the purpose of method reference and as a learning aid. (Sorry no Apple version available.)

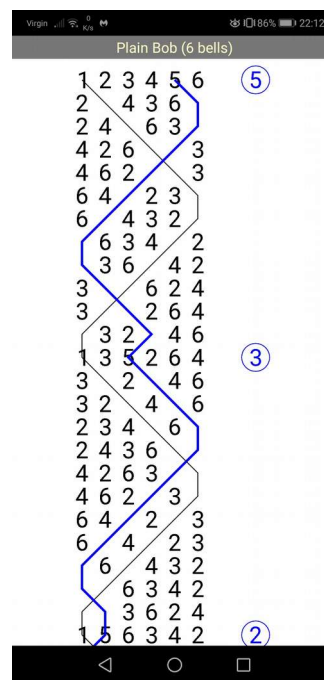
One of the fascinating things about ringing is that everybody seems to have their own way of learning a method – there is no standard way of doing so. Some people think visually, so they can piece work together in terms of patterns strung together, such as: “four blows at the back”, “make seconds to the Treble next lead” etc. The actual place numbers do not overly concern some people; of course, it would be silly to suggest that they might ring without any notion of place amongst the other bells. For some people position emerges on a just-in-time basis while the pattern scrolls through their mind.

Methodology is a great aid for anyone trying to learn a method.

Methodology allows you to customise your view of the line to create the greatest chance of success. If you turn off the display of numbers it allows you to show more of the line on the screen. However, other ringers cannot process the line without the numbers present, and that is fine. You can turn them back on. Numbers are very useful if you are a 'stander behind' for someone as you can tell them which bell they are dodging with or making places over!

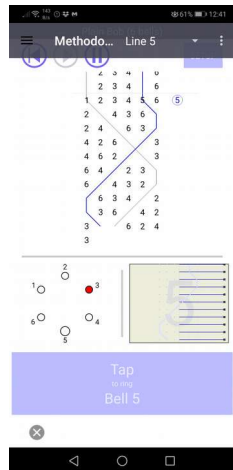


No numbers



Numbers!

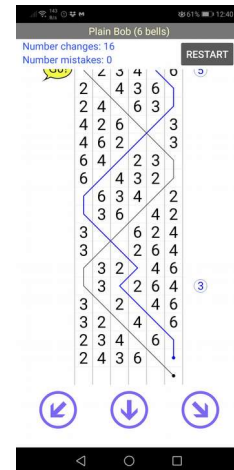
Methodology provides two modes in which you can practise a method:



one [shown at left] that relies on listening and timing through tapping the screen when it's your place to ring in the sequence,

and another [shown at right] that uses three buttons to move up, make places, or move down in the method.

If you go to the Google Play Store and search for "Methodology" it should appear at the top of the list of results. You may already be wondering why it is called Methodology? The author was looking for a name that did not explicitly mention blue or line due to the prevalence of existing apps that included these, and so opted instead to hijack a perfectly innocent word that had little to do with the subject, but with a little twisted logic applied to it, and through squinted eyes, could almost infer the purpose of the app. Corny, perhaps, but he likes it.



Methodology has now been available for download for over seven years, during which time it has matured, taken on a few more features, and is generally a little less rough around the edges. It has been installed well over 10,000 times, and has been installed in many countries around the world, a small proportion of which do not even have a tradition of change ringing!

If you want to 'learn' how to learn a method then take a look at *How to Learn to Ring* by Michael Foulds, available from www.whittingsociety.org.uk/publications/how-to-learn-methods.html and/or *The Bell Ringer's Early Companion* and/or *The Method Ringer's Companion*, both by Steve Coleman, available from www.ringingbooks.co.uk.

Bells & Whistles - A Special Day

By Grace Wilson, pupil of Graham Nabb and ringer at Cropredy, Oxfordshire

A special day out was arranged in the Cotswolds for ringers Graham Nabb (who loves steam railways) and his wife Sue Marshall (who loves to walk), with bell ringing friends and family being invited along to ring with them and enjoy the day together.

We met on a beautiful April day at the gorgeous gate to the beautiful Stanway House. The church was right next to this ancient pile which has the tallest gravity-fed fountain in the world at over 300ft (91m). We couldn't see this, but we have it on good authority it was worth seeing.

The ringing room was cosy and looked fairly recently refurbished. The five bells were enjoyable to ring. As time went on, more of us appeared and we totalled 13 ringers in all. We had an additional member who did the sterling job of ticket buyer and driver, more of that to follow.

It was a very short drive to the next church at Didbrook. Sue and her daughter, Rebecca, decided to walk to this church, but took a wrong turning. They still turned up in time to do some ringing, so all was well. This church had an unusual ringing area with advice on how to get the spider down and what to do once the spider was no longer needed. The spider served as a handbag- and coat-holder as the weight and the mechanism for lowering it wasn't easy. An umbrella was hanging on the spider when we arrived and we wondered why. We soon found out as, when we tried to lower it, it wouldn't budge and we needed the assistance of a tall ringer to grab the end of the umbrella to bring it down. A convenient coat-hook was used. The five bells in the church were at the entrance of the church and were anti-clockwise, with the treble, 2, 3 and 4 all in a straight row. The tenor was on the other side of the door, which gave the person ringing the tenor a great view of the other bells.

On to the highlight of the day. Mike McCarthy, who was our additional helper and husband of Kathy, went to the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway centre, which was less than a mile away, and purchased train tickets for all of us for the steam train journey to Cheltenham racecourse and back to Broadway. Some of us took pride in the fact that they had blue tickets for the under 60's where the rest of us had green tickets (OAP). We boarded our train with much excitement and started our slow journey to the racecourse station. Much chatter was heard and some even had a celebratory tippie of Pimms or pink fizz. We disembarked at Winchcombe where we had to wait for the next train. Sue, Rebecca, Lucy and John took this opportunity to fit in another walk in the interlude, arriving back only just in time for the departure. I'm sure those in the know will tell me what type of steam train we were on and also what type of diesel train we were on, but for the most, we just enjoyed the company.



Swindon's heavy metal

We were on our way again and stopped at Broadway which was the last stop on the line. Most disembarked and took the opportunity to walk to the next church which was about a mile from the station. The rest of us stayed on the train to return to Toddington to collect cars and then meet up with the rest of the band. We arrived at St Eadburgha to a locked church. While we waited around, we took the opportunity for a group photo [below].



Pink fizz time for Graham, Rebecca and Sue



The church was lovely with a hammer beam roof. The pews had to be rearranged before ringing could take place. The six bells were heavy and had a very long draught. The ringing was excellent, rung by a very good band, so fun was had by all.

Before we left for home after a long and most enjoyable day, Graham thanked Gill Hosking and Kathy and Mike McCarthy for arranging such a successful day.

I thoroughly enjoyed the company of so many like minded and talented people. I look forward to the next outing but that will be hard to beat as the level of organisation was excellent. Thank you to all who included me on this special day out.

[All images in this article are by John Gwynne.]

Learning Tips 12: FOCUS!

By Mary Jones, author of [The Accidental Ringer blog](#) and [ringer at Reedham, Norfolk](#)

From years of experience as a primary school teacher, I know that children are wired differently to adults – if a task is not fun, they get bored and shift their attention to something more interesting, unlike most adults who have learnt to complete a task, whether they like it or not. (Although I have observed that very intelligent people sometimes act more like children when disinterested.)

Ringling bells takes a lot of concentration. The average adult is unable to concentrate continuously for more than 42 minutes – just about time for a quarter peal, but nowhere near long enough for a peal. So how do we learners improve our concentration and lengthen our ability to remain absolutely focused?

If I was helping kids to lengthen their concentration spans, this is what I would do:

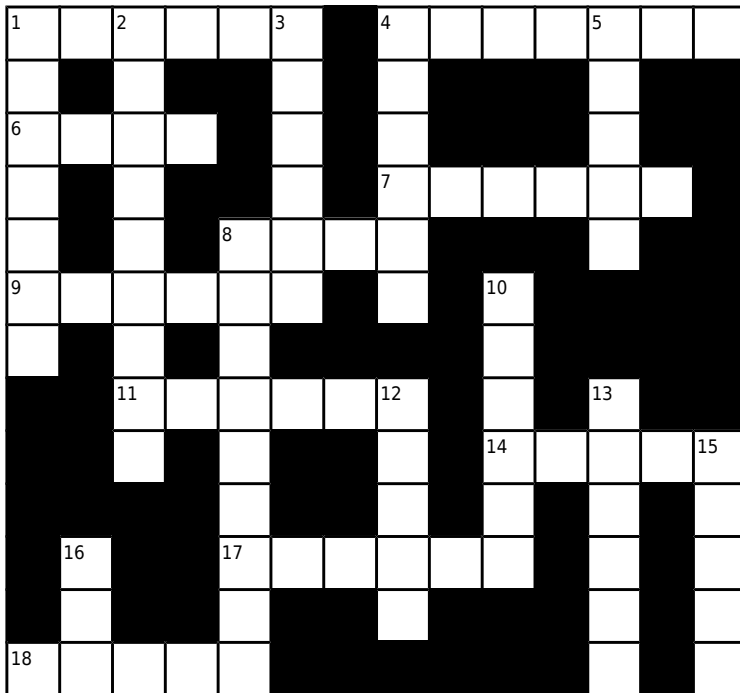
- Play focus games to build attention. In an adult context this might be a daily crossword, or learning a poem by heart.
- Prepare a distraction-free environment – soft music (ha!), soft lighting, a comfortable temperature (ha! ha!) and remove all gadgets (do any of your gadgets actually work in an isolated rural tower?)
- Fix a routine. If you know what is likely to happen next, you can focus more easily on the Now.
- Recommend that they eat beans on toast for breakfast. (The idea of 12 or more adults gathered together in a confined space who have all consumed baked beans recently does not bear thinking about.)
- Divide bigger tasks into smaller tasks. Manageable chunks make learning less overwhelming. (This is more sensible advice than the bean-eating one.)
- Naps and breaks boost concentration. Perhaps not practical in a tower situation, but frequent opportunities to rest are possible. Probably best not to nod off, though.
- Recognise preferred learning methods (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic). This helps the learner to understand information better.
- Prepare individuals for the next task. If you warn someone of what is coming up next, they can be better mentally prepared.
- Set short time goals for better concentration. It is more effective to concentrate fully for 10 minutes, than vaguely for 20 minutes.
- Set up a reward system (for many adults it is called The Pub.)
- Allow time for distractions. Kids are naturally energetic and exuberant and need to vent their energy. It may actually help them to focus better on the next task. How about adult laps around the churchyard? Loser buys the first round.
- Use energy effectively. Some people function better at different times of the day. If you are a morning person, an 8pm practice session might not be a wise choice. Can you fit your ringling around your circadian rhythms? Simulators can help vary practice times and this might also tick the ‘distraction’ box.
- Deep breathing and imagery. Combine simple relaxation techniques such as deep breathing (or in some cases, remembering to breathe at all) with positive visual imagery.

So there you have it – my top tips for improving concentration. Please don’t try the baked beans one.

Fun Crossword Puzzle

By The Editorial Team

There are no prizes for completing this ringing-related puzzle, but we hope you'll enjoy having a go at it. We'll publish the answer grid in the next edition.



Clues Across

1. When you ring in last place you can be said to be ringing here (6).
4. The stage name for methods involving four bells (7).
6. What you do when you're in first place (4).
7. To ring after someone is to do this (6).
8. An extent of ringing containing at least 5000 changes (4).
9. This stage name is a corruption of the French word for 'four' (6).
11. Many bells have had these removed when re-hung (6).
14. You are doing the work here if your place is below the middle (5).
17. The rope goes over at least one of these below the wheel (6).
18. To ring in a higher place than another bell (5).

Clues Down

1. The point where the bell seems weightless (7).
2. The top of a bell is fastened to this (9).
3. There are two of these in Plain Bob Doubles, one up and one down (6).
4. Fit one to the clapper to quieten a bell (6).
5. The stage name for methods involving six bells (5).
8. It's not a 'method' because the treble is working too (9).
10. Often thought to be full of bats - as well as bells (6).
12. A girls name; part of a rope (5).
13. Name of the row that we usually pull off in (6).
15. The musical name given to the bell with the lowest note (5).
16. The boy's name called to change the order of the bells (3).