

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  **Learning the Ropes™**

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

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In this issue:

| | |
|---|-------|
| These are just some of my 50 Things . . . | 2,3,4 |
| Some Great Statistics from ART | 4 |
| 50 Ringing Things, with help from Bob | 5 |
| Look To! Treble's Going! Treble's Gone! . . . | 6 |
| Puzzle Corner | 7 |
| Why go on a Ringing Course? | 8 |
| First Steps in Teaching | 9 |
| Ringing Courses: Fast Track to Excellence? . | 10 |
| A Brand New Residential Ringing Course . | 11 |
| Birthday Ringing | 12 |
| Meet the Team | 12 |
| Happy Tenth Birthday, ART | 13 |
| Junior Jubilee Ringers | 14 |
| Preparing for your First Peal | 15 |
| Progressing through Learning the Ropes. . | 16 |
| Spreading the Word in Newton St Loe. . . . | 17 |
| Working Together | 18 |
| Individual Progress | 19 |
| Answers to Puzzles | 19 |
| Learning the Ropes Festival | 20 |

I don't think it's just me who has got the impression that life has recently revved up a bit and become extremely busy. Perhaps we had got used to not doing so much, or we feel there is a lot of lost time to be made up. Whatever the reason, there is certainly a lot going on in the world of ringing. Not only does the summer bring striking competitions, outings and weddings, but there are lots of other things to pick up again, like the ART *50 Ringing Things* Challenge. In the following pages we get a flavour of how the challenge has inspired ringers around the country. Meanwhile regular ringing courses have started up again with no reduction in demand, and a second *Learning the Ropes Festival* is planned for a summer Saturday in Norwich.

So in this edition we take a closer look at the benefits of ringing courses and get some first-hand experience from a few of the participants. Success and achievements are also high up on the agenda with ringers of all levels continuing to progress. The *Platinum Jubilee* celebrations gave us all plenty of opportunities to ring and enjoy the friendship and sense of belonging that ringing gives us and this may have been the first of many public events new ringers have taken part in. Certainly it was a historic occasion to which we can all feel proud to have contributed.



The editor's band (suitably attired, and with a mystery visitor) after ringing in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1522266>

🎵 These are just some of my 50 Things 🎵

My First Thing

Sonia Field, Harrow Weald, writes: My very first Thing, in February 2019, was 'Give a talk about ringing'. It was to a group of about twenty people with no prior ringing knowledge, in the over-50 age bracket. Starting with a historical overview, I covered the basic mechanics of tower bell ringing, what we ring and why we ring, with a focus on the recent Ringing Remembers campaign.

We finished with Have-A-Go at call changes on handbells. The evening was really successful. I have subsequently been invited back, and I now also include a quiz about my home tower that gets people chatting over refreshments!



The hills are alive...

with the sound of ringing?

Making this happen is in fact not one of the 50 Things. A pity, as it would have got Julie Andrews off to a great start!



Ringing Things

- 1) How many bells do we have?
- 2) How many bells were originally installed?
- 3) How heavy is the lightest bell?
- 4) How heavy is the largest bell?
- 5) Where were the bells cast?
- 6) How many unique changes are possible on 7 bells?
- 7) What animal looks after the bell ropes when they aren't in use?
- 8) Who was the monarch when the existing first bell was cast?
- 9) What inscription appears on the back six bells?
- 10) How is George Hart, a ringer who died in 1976, commemorated?
- 11) What is the smallest and largest bell called?
- 12) What is the fluffy coloured bit on the rope called?
- 13) When was the first peal rung on 8 bells at Harrow Weald?



Make a ringing quiz

Here (at the right) is part of the tower quiz about All Saints, Harrow Weald.

This quiz is mentioned in 'My First Thing', above.

Have you made up a quiz about your tower?

🎵 These are just some of my 50 Things 🎵

Ring for a Special Occasion



Jo Belsten of Hickling, Norfolk writes: My favourite ringing thing has definitely been ringing for a special occasion.

The event was the 'Battle's Over' commemorations back in 2018, and it was the reason I started ringing. There were four Ringing Remembers recruits, with four experienced helpers, and we rang rounds and call changes at our village church. The bells had been out of action for almost 20 years, and are a heavy going (20cwt) ring of 5, so we had learnt elsewhere and only had a few practices at our tower. We were all incredibly proud to have taken part, and the village really appreciated hearing the bells (regardless of the quality of the ringing!)

My 50th tower

Steve Johnson (Docklands Ringers) writes: On 28 April 2022, exactly 1,368 days after first touching a rope at a Guild open day in 2018, I found myself with a group of fellow ringers at Whaddon, Buckinghamshire. I was visiting my 50th tower, home to a 1927 Gillett and Johnston 14cwt ring of six.

Ringing outings are fun days out, if I can get over the nerves about ringing unfamiliar bells! It's taken a while to get to 50, slowed by no ringing during Covid. I'm grateful to the tower captains who open their doors to visiting ringers, and for the friends who invite me on their outings.

Visit a bell foundry



Emma Hughes from Dorset writes...
...in her article on page 5 about many of her Things, including a trip to Taylor's Foundry in Loughborough. Have you been there?

Ring at a Cathedral

Wendy Crampton of Harrow Weald writes: Easter Monday began early. Destination Guildford, full of enthusiasm with the prospect of 27 towers to grab. Jo Harris and I arrived at Banstead, purchased day tickets, and grabbed this first tower.

A kindly gentleman in a trilby hat informed us "if you see a rope, grab it. Don't hesitate or you will miss out". Armed with this advice we jumped back into the car. Ten towers later, our grand finale was Guildford Cathedral which didn't disappoint.

As always with ringing we met wonderful, lovely folk who laughed, joked and supported us in each tower. Thanks Guildford - until next year.



These are just some of my 50 Things

Place Notation

Debbie Phipps of Lytchet Maltravers writes: Having completed my 50 Ringing Things when I was quite a novice and had not really grasped the idea of doing a method let alone bobs or Quarter Peals, I think the thing that fascinated me most was "Green Thing number twenty": *Write out a Method using Place Notation.*

With the help of an experienced ringer I was shown how place notation works and I was blown over that something as simple as "x16x16x16x16x16x12" could explain how to write out all sixty rows of Plain Bob Minor.

| | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| X | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| X | 2 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| 16 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| X | 4 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| 16 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| X | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| X | 5 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 16 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| X | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| 12 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| X | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| 16 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 |
| X | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| X | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| 16 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 5 |

X means all pairs swap.
 16 means the first and sixth bells don't move.
 12 is what happens at the lead-end, and means that the first and second bells don't move.

Ring for a Wedding

Jo Harris of Harrow Weald writes:

Weddings and bells go together. One only has to look at movies or read a book and practically every wedding will involve bells ringing, and many wedding cards have a bell theme too.

I was thrilled to see it was one of the 50 Ringing Things, and did my first wedding ring on 5th May 2019, but my most memorable wedding ringing was on the 31st of July last year, my birthday, when I had a wonderful surprise of a birthday cake from my ringing friends.



Some Great Statistics from ART

Thanks as always to Rose Nightingale and Denise Tremain for providing these figures, and for all the work they do as ART Administrators.

An encouragingly large number of *Learning the Ropes* certificates have been issued in recent months. Congratulations to all who have reached the required standard – great work! Congratulations also to all their teachers.

Here are the figures for February to June:

| | |
|----------|-----|
| Level 1 | 162 |
| Level 2 | 75 |
| Level 3 | 30 |
| Level 4 | 16 |
| Level 5 | 12 |
| LtR Plus | 3 |

Meanwhile it's also good to note the large number of ART modules that have been run this year. This key ART activity of necessity ceased all around the world during Covid, and while the restrictions eased and the modules re-started at different times in different countries, it is only now that things are returning to normal. Many thanks to all the ART Tutors.

Modules run this year:

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Module 1 | 28 |
| Module 2F | 3 |
| Module 2C | 0 |

with a further 16 modules planned for the coming months.

50 Ringing Things, with help from Bob

Emma Hughes, Dorset

I first heard of 50 Ringing Things in 2018, when I had been ringing for about five months. I decided this was for me, so I ordered the booklet but held off registering until July 2019 when I could tick off my first 'thing' - *Ring for a wedding*.

There had been a wedding earlier that month, but because it was a bell ringer's wedding, it was a free-for-all in the tower as most of the guests were ringers. I didn't think, as a learner, I'd get a chance. However, I did get to ring as the bride approached the church with the celebrity who was to be walking her down the aisle. I didn't get my call to Hollywood to be a bell ringer in his latest film, though!

Many 'things' were completed in my own tower or nearby, but not all. I arranged to *Ring on Christmas Day* at church near Melton Mowbray whilst staying at my brother's house, and while staying at Saffron Walden I dragged my family up to Taylor's at Loughborough for a day out and a tick for *Visit a bell foundry*. I also managed to tick off *Ringing on 10 or 12 bells* as I accidentally stumbled upon a practice night in a twelve-bell tower.

My furthest 'thing' was completed 678 kilometres (as the belfry bat flies) away from home while I was on the Salisbury Diocese Pilgrimage to Iona - so a bit of theory was done on the journey and I was able to tick off *Show coursing order on a work sheet*. Sadly Iona Abbey only has a chiming bell, so no ringing for me there.



Visiting a bell foundry



Maintenance work

We had our fifth and tenor bells rehung with new headstocks during the 2020 lockdown. Taylor's visited in July and September, meaning I could *Help with maintenance or restoration work*. I'm not sure how many messages came through on my phone from my boss asking when I was coming into work while I was up in the tower, but I managed to do both eventually. I decided I was buying my place on the team who did the test ring, because I had to visit four different Toolstation stores across Dorset to buy new hole-saw bits as they kept burning out.

I was invited to *Help organise a ringing outing* and I had to book the pub for lunch and make up the little booklets with information on the four towers we were visiting.

Help clean the ringing chamber has been a frequent task, and many times poor Henry the vacuum-cleaner was dropped down the tower steps. I recently sprayed his top black, and took the opportunity to rename him Bob.

I ticked off *Ring at an Abbey, Cathedral or Minster* very recently on a trip to Milton Abbey nearby, where we tested the noise levels after the soundproofing was removed. It's difficult to hear calls when wearing ear defenders, but it was 116 decibels in the ringing chamber!

I finally completed my 50 Ringing Things in April this year, after asking my tower if we could *Ring a themed method* - April Day Doubles of course!

I didn't think I'd achieve my Gold Plus Certificate due to lockdown. Then once I started to get towards the end, I couldn't ring for a couple of months thanks to an eye operation, followed by Covid - but, with the extra time allocation given, I completed within the time limit (140 weeks). I'm now making up a scrapbook of all my 50 Ringing Things, adding in photos for each topic.



Henry - renamed Bob!

Look To! Treble's Going! Treble's Gone!

Maggie Fenton, Swaffham Bulbeck, Cambridgeshire

After two years of ringing, I was just getting used to visiting other churches, towers and bells in our lovely area and beyond. We are so lucky to have so many ringable bells, with all the variety and interest they bring, and it's fabulous that 'collecting' towers is one of the 'things' you can do in the *50 Ringing Things Challenge*, which I have signed up for.

I have rung at a tower with only four bells and also at a tower with twelve bells. I have rung at churches with ground floor ringing, and anti-clockwise rings. There have been many narrow steep, cold stone staircases to climb and on two occasions I had to squeeze through a trap-door to get to the ropes. One day a couple of years ago, our band of ringers travelled to London and rang at five amazing towers there, each one with their own unique history.



Maggie (far left) with some of her ringing friends at her 50th tower - Buxhall in Suffolk

It gets a bit compulsive. While walking on a beach on holiday in Sussex, I heard bells ringing – so with family in tow, I hot-footed it to the church and rang three different bells on their practice night! On holiday in Belgium I was very lucky to visit St. George's Church in Ypres and was invited to join their practice night. While driving through Norfolk, I spotted a round tower and made my husband stop so that I could take a look and see if there were ringable bells. Once inside, I discovered there was only one lonely sally hanging down!

I started to list the different bell towers I visited and realised that the numbers were creeping up. They are mostly around Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. I needed to get to 50 to tick off that item in *50 Ringing Things*.

In March 2020 everything I had been learning for two years stopped abruptly due to Covid, but with the support and encouragement of our experienced ringers we persevered with Ringing Room. Our 'towers' did not have the variety of real ones and all the computer bells went well, with no quirks or peculiarities! But now...

Real ringing is back on!
Practices are back again!
Service ringing has resumed!

And best of all, outings are taking place again, so we can get back to visiting all those wonderful towers out there. In April, my local association (Ely District Association) arranged a lovely day out ringing at five towers in Suffolk and we had a happy day with old friends. On that outing, I visited my 50th tower and I achieved my goal.

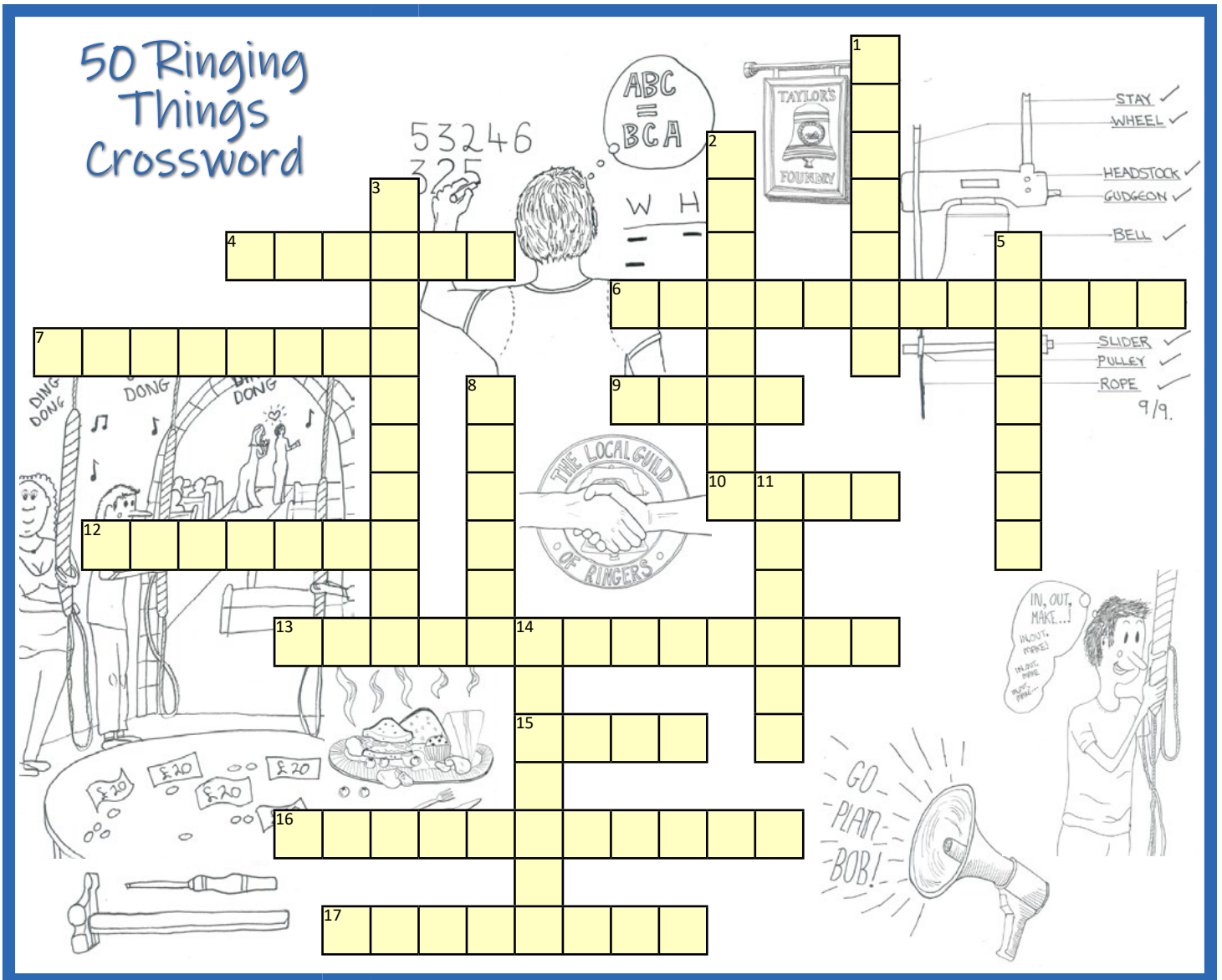
Fifty towers isn't nearly enough though, so now I hope to keep adding to my list of towers visited. I only wish I had taken up this exciting and lovely challenge many, many years ago!



Puzzle Corner



Rose Nightingale and Denise Tremain, ART Administrators



ACROSS

4. Join two pieces of rope
6. Weekly magazine for ringers
7. Common tower activity during Holy Week
9. Useful piece of ash in the belfry
10. A little bird told me where all the towers are
12. Find some new ringers for your team
13. Short-hand way of writing a method
15. Neatly tie off the end of a rope
16. 1260 changes
17. Tiny bells, often portable

DOWN

1. A happy occasion to ring for
2. Command to lower the bells
3. Eating your own weight in cake
5. Bells are cast here
8. Softens the sound
11. A fun day out ringing, often with lunch
14. When we ring out the old

Solution on page 19

Why go on a Ringing Course?

Alison Everett, Bosham, Sussex

Learning to ring is the start of an exciting new journey; it's an opening into a new world you didn't know existed. You might be lucky enough to live in an area where there are training opportunities - your local Guild/Association/Branch might have some lovely folk who run courses for their local ringers, so keep an eye out for these. Ask around at your local tower or at district ringing meetings, check newsletters, websites and social media. Pop the dates in your diary so nothing else barges in.

The beauty of ringing courses is that you get to meet folk like you, who've delved into the world of bellringing and just want to get better at it so they can do it some more, and be of use to towers they visit. On ringing courses you find there is no such thing as the wrong question, everyone is in the same boat and everyone is there for the same reason, to help you with your ringing, to keep ringing going, and to have a good time. You're in a safe and supportive environment.



Alison (right) enjoying a ringing course

Once you've been on a ringing course you might want to go back as a helper - in fact some courses will insist you do, so that there are enough places for more learners coming up behind you. Ringing courses,

like the rest of bellringing, could not exist without an army of volunteers, and that's not just the steady ringers ringing around someone learning something new. There's catering (cakes and sandwiches or organising pubs and getting orders in to minimise time out of the tower), schedules, signage, publicity, merchandise, risk assessments, stacking chairs, party games - the list goes on and we all work together to help make it happen.

Just like festivals and AGMs, ringing courses tend to have regular dates - you'll meet some of the same people each year, and get to know them a bit better. You might follow their social media feeds and learn about their towers and communities. You'll develop a network of new friends who ring in different places so you can plan to visit their home towers in different parts of the country, or overseas!

If there are no ringing courses near you, you might find other Associations run courses you can apply to go on - you might just need to find a place to stay (like for the Essex Course which is over three days). You might get a place on a residential course - these are loads of fun and a staple of many a ringer's year but tend to be over-subscribed. As well as Bradfield and Hereford residential courses, this year there is a new North West Ringing Course, in August in Lancashire:

<https://nwringingcourse.uk/>

And of course there's Tulloch in the Scottish highlands, where occasional courses are run:

<https://tullochbells.com/>

If you don't have the bug yet, you may well soon and we'd all love to hear about it. Hope to see you on a ringing course somewhere soon!

First Steps in Teaching

Theo Johnson, Essex

When I first started to ring four years ago, I had always admired the amount of skill, knowledge and patience the teachers had while they were teaching me. Fast forward a few years and I heard about the chance to learn how to teach bell handling (ART M1 module) at the Essex Ringing Course through a local ringer who had taken part the year before. I had never thought up until that point that I could/would want to become a bell handling teacher but after what it entailed was explained to me, I made sure to apply for the course the next day!

I was quite nervous as to what to expect from the course, seeing as I had never done anything like it before and because I haven't been ringing for a very long time. The first day of the course quickly came



Both theory and practice on the course

around and it meant putting into practice what we had learnt from our tutor Lesley Boyle, using each other as guinea pigs. The second day was a fairly scary one, mainly due to the fact that we had two people come up the tower who had never rung before and we had to use our newly acquired skills to teach them how to ring! This actually went very well and both learners had progressed far into the handling of a bell in the hour and a half we had. On the final day, we joined up with another group on the course who had been practising basic skills and we contributed some guidance and teaching to the learners where we could. This challenged our skills and knowledge as the people we were teaching had already learnt how to ring but not for very long, meaning that we had to keep a watchful eye on them at all times whilst making sure we were giving constructive feedback. I felt this helped us to develop our teaching skills, as it exposed us to a variety of learners all at different stages of handling skills. I would encourage anyone thinking about doing this course to go ahead and take part, as teaching bell handling is a great skill to have and it's the best way to keep the tradition of bellringing alive for the future!



Lesley Boyle with some of the attendees at the Essex Ringing Course

Ringling Courses: Fast Track to Excellence?

Richard Steele, Frittenden, Kent

My wife and I began to learn to ring in the village of Frittenden three years ago. Find out more about ringing at Frittenden at either of these sites:

<https://www.facebook.com/FrittendenBellRingers/>

<https://www.instagram.com/FrittendenBellRingers/>

As a struggling learner, I was fascinated to hear of the existence of ringing courses that are available in parts of the UK.

However, I have wrestled mentally and physically with the challenges of ringing; struggling to make progress where my three teenage children seem to have achieved success with ease. Elderly ringers, many years my senior, demonstrate a delicate mastery over giants of the belfry and put my laboured exertions to shame. The idea that I could sign up for three or four days of tuition, and, having done so, progress with ease onto the next level of learning, was too tempting to resist.

I was told by others, with more experience of these things, that my wife and I may be lucky to get places as the courses are very popular and always oversubscribed. This news, rather than putting us off, made the ringing courses seem even more appealing.

A cursory search of the internet resulted in the discovery of three courses across the south of England: Bradfield, Essex and Hereford.



The websites for these courses are:



<http://www.bradfield-ringing-course.org.uk/>

<https://eacr.org.uk/education/course.html>

<http://www.herefordringingcourse.org.uk/>



Unfortunately, the dates of the 2022 Bradfield Ringing Course clash with A-Level results day. Our daughter is sitting her A-Levels this year and we decided that it may tempt fate to be away on what could be a stressful day!

This left the Hereford and Essex courses, and, given the stories of over-subscription, we applied to both, hoping to get a place on at least one of them.

Amazingly, two months later, we heard that we had places on both!

Deciding not to overstretch ourselves, we requested Plain Hunt groups on both courses. This was definitely the right decision as we were able to make the most of the tuition without struggling with the basics. Our tutors for both courses contacted us in advance and we had group Zoom meetings in order to get to know fellow students, and for the tutors to gauge what we wanted to achieve. These were excellent and meant that tutors could plan a bespoke programme in advance, without wasting time working out our ringing levels in the first session.

Both courses involved training sessions of an hour and a half in the morning and the same again in the afternoon, with a break for lunch and a good chat at a local pub. This meant that we came away with a good deal of experience of ringing in different towers on different bells. Impossible to be “mono-cambellic”!

At the towers, each student was given the chance to ring, supported by a strong band of helpers, the group tutor nearby, providing guidance and advice. To begin with there was just one student ringing at a time, giving a better chance of achieving positive results. As the course progressed, tutors moved students onto different exercises and challenges, tailored for the students’ specific difficulties and aims.

Our tutors and helpers on both courses were fantastic. Andrew Kelso was our tutor on the Essex Course and Neil Donovan on the Hereford Course. Both are hugely experienced ringers and patient teachers and spent time getting to know each student’s skill level and requirements. The helpers on both courses were also very supportive, quietly giving advice while other students were ringing.

In addition to the practical sessions, there was also a programme of talks that we could choose to attend, ranging from rope splicing, method design and theories, how to call changes, how to improve listening and striking and even a talk on “Beasts in the Belfry”. Bell-handling workshops were available for students to work on the basics of bell control, and also simulator sessions on silenced bells.

While not a magic-wand, enabling learners to leap ahead and become an expert overnight, we found that the courses were a great way to progress along the ringing pathway and overcome some individual hurdles. For ringers without a strong local band, the course is an opportunity for some intensive tuition that they may not be able to find locally. Most importantly the courses are great fun, a fantastic way to visit and ring at some beautiful churches in a different part of the country and to meet other friendly people from all over the UK and abroad (some even travelling from as far away as Honolulu!)

We will definitely be heading back and next year may even be able to fit in the Bradfield Course as well! Go on, book yourself on a course, you definitely won’t regret it. You will make lots of great friends and it may even become one of your annual holidays.....

A Brand New Residential Ringing Course

Andy Ingham, Lancashire

Most of the residential ringing courses are held annually, and have been running for quite a few years (though of course with a recent gap because of Covid). Quite a few of them are mentioned in other articles in this issue of Tower Talk.

This year a brand new residential course is starting, so you have the opportunity to be a pioneer! Come along as a student or a helper, and be a part of the very first occasion that this course is run.

The dates are Thursday 11th August to Sunday 14th, and the location is Myerscough College, near Preston in Lancashire, with ringing in nearby towers.

At the time of writing, there are just one or two student places left on a couple of the topics. There is, however, a good chance of being accepted on the weekend if you apply as a helper. The course is aimed at those who can ring one or two methods, but want to broaden their experience, so essentially Learning the Ropes Level 4 and upwards. For more details or to apply as a student or a helper, please visit our website:

<https://nwringingcourse.uk/>





Birthday Ringing

The ART team



In March 2020, the Association of Ringing Teachers celebrated its tenth birthday. That's ten years of developing resources for teachers, supporting new ringers and new bands, and encouraging more ringers to get involved in teaching, whether bell handling or the foundation skills of change ringing. And ten years of achievements - hundreds of Learning the Ropes certificates and many new teachers.



So what better way to mark this milestone than an outbreak of celebratory ringing? Across the country, bands incorporated their new skills into a variety of celebratory ringing from a peal of Minor at Walworth in London featuring two ringers, Bogumila Myers and Julius Olu-Jones who have reached LtR Level 5, to full circle ringing of 'Happy Birthday' at Harborne in the West Midlands, arranged by 10 year old Elliot Daniels. And in between there was much more.



All ringing was recorded on BellBoard and you can see the full list here

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/event.php?id=14287>



Well done everyone who took part and here's to the next ten, even more successful years!



Meet the Team

Tower Talk is brought to you by...

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Morag Todd

Proof-reader
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Sonia Field

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(and general dogsbody)
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**Rose Nightingale
and
Denise Tremain**

ART Administrators,
who supply crosswords,
fact-checking, statistics
and just about anything
else on demand

David Smith

layout and design
(and techo stuff)
Brisbane, Australia



...and with huge thanks to the many contributors and of course to you, the readers.



Happy Tenth Birthday, ART

Em Mayo, Highgate, London



Shortly after placing my hands on a bell-rope for the first time in January 2019, I was handed an intriguing and pristine little booklet called *Learning the Ropes*. It was full of blank pages with spaces for filling in, skills to learn, goals to achieve and signatures to be gathered from my tutors as I achieved each milestone. It was an enticing and unexpected challenge and I was hooked. Exactly one year later, on the very same day in January 2020, after visiting more than 70 bell-towers, attending numerous courses, being assisted by some of the best teachers in the world, and with the generous encouragement of my home band at Highgate, I achieved my first quarter peal on the treble and became the 500th bell-ringing student to be awarded my Level 3 Certificate. I don't think I have ever felt prouder.

Then disaster struck - Covid and lockdown - and my little booklet got put away in a cupboard for nearly 18 months. But that didn't stop me ringing. Due to the amazing ingenuity and persistence of dedicated bell-ringers and online Ringing Room, we were able to continue 'ringing' (by finger-dinging) with bands anywhere in this or any other country, and I eagerly pursued this weird new hobby until I had committed to memory a formidable collection of blue lines, including triples and majors - none of which would be of any use to me once we emerged from lockdown and got ourselves back up the towers to the real bells; I could barely manage plain hunt on six. So it was back to basic bell-handling and confidence rebuilding. But it wasn't long before I blew the dust off my little booklet, searched out the still-active teachers and tower practices, and got back on the sally.



Happy Birthday!



The quarter-peal band at Highgate

By some kind of serendipity, I found myself one night ringing at Bermondsey with Louise Booth, my ART mentor, and her band, most of whom were also working their way through the certificated levels awarded following the *Learning the Ropes* development route. The practice was posted on BellBoard, dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the ART, and we had a great evening ringing a number of 'firsts'.

My little booklet is now tattered and dog-eared, with turned down corners, hand-written methods stuffed inside, and a disintegrating cover held together with sticky-tape, but it is still much-loved and I am still chasing those new skills and confirmatory signatures with enthusiasm.

I was 71 when I first climbed up the narrow, winding stairs to ring a bell and, because I always have to complete a challenge once begun, it is my determined ambition to get my Level 5 certificate, (the final one to becoming a fully-fledged change ringer) by the age of 75 (Covid notwithstanding), while I can still take advantage of all those methods I've had in brain-storage since lockdown. Now that *will* make me proud - watch this space.

And good luck to all the others like me out there. Thank you, ART.

Junior Jubilee Ringers

Terry Wright, Nassington, Northamptonshire

We had a fantastic morning's ringing at Nassington, which was especially for our junior learners to be able to say "I rang rounds on the day of our Queen's Platinum Jubilee". Some required a bit of assistance and Lottie and Halden (pictured receiving their Level One certificates) were ringing independently, with nice striking. Everyone had beaming smiles on their faces - including the faces of proud mums, dads and even some grandparents.

To me, this is what teaching is all about. It makes me so proud to think we are encouraging and nurturing the ringers of the future which we so desperately need.

We shared this proud moment with some of our regular band who came along to help and take part in this historic moment. They are all at different stages of learning from Plain Hunt Doubles and Minor, to touches of Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire, St Simon's, Reverse Canterbury and Plain Bob Minor.

The three pictures at the right were all taken that morning, and they are as follows:

Top

Presentation of level 1 certificates to Lottie Jenkinson (11) and Halden Peterson (8) with teachers, Hilary Hardie & Terry Wright (who would rather not say their ages!)

Centre

Halden Peterson (8) & Lottie Jenkinson (11). Proud and very happy ringers.

Bottom

Group photo of our helpers and children.

Back row, L to R: Steve Fuller, Geoff Bridges, Terry Wright.

Middle row L to R: Chris Barrett, Bob Payne, Jane Robinson, Alex Heaton, Sally Hudson, Hilary Hardie, Susan Little, Caroline Mould.

Front Row, (Children) L to R: Lottie Jenkinson, Winnie Peterson, Lucy Jenkinson, Lyra Mould, Halden Peterson.

Bell Board entry:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1519452>

Group age range: 8 to 80's!

(Editor's note: full names are included both here and on BellBoard at the specific request of the author and with the permission of those mentioned and the children's parents.)



Preparing for your First Peal

Alison Lee, Worcestershire

BellBoard

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Four Shires Guild of Bell Ringers
Evesham, Worcestershire

The Bell Tower

Saturday, 26 February 2022 in 2h 51

(7-2-22 in C#)

5040 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Nicholas K Allsopp
- 2 Alison M Lee
- 3 Richard Lewis-Skeath
- 4 Roger H Hunt
- 5 Steve Bowley
- 6 Michael Chester (C)

First peal: 2.

My first peal! If I was still a teenager I probably wouldn't need to prepare, but I'm not - so I felt I had to think about this event carefully, as I had one month to get ready. I had already completed a number of quarter peals in the past and was fairly confident in the method chosen for my peal (Plain Bob Minor), although most of that was two years ago, pre-Covid.

My main concern was blisters on my hands, as so far all infrequent quarters cause me blisters. An experienced bellringing teacher scrutinised my technique and suggested I was slightly over-pulling and snatching, rather than being relaxed and smooth, so I set to try and put this right.

Changing my technique would not be easy, but not impossible, either. I had sessions on the simulator and during practice with people watching me specifically and giving me feedback that helped greatly. Now for my hands, there were a few ideas on the bell ringing forums on how to toughen them up, such as alcohol gel, coal, rice or even urine! I decided to use hand cream.

Concentration was another thing to work on, so I planned to increase my practice each week over the next month with longer lengths of ringing. Week one was all about my technique, and improvements continued with a vengeance. In extended simulator practice, I concentrated on relaxed rhythm, no over-pulling or snatching and I used the Mobil app at home.

On week two, I was lucky enough to attempt two quarters. Even though neither of them came round, I got a huge amount of practice. I continued on Mobil for longer lengths to know my method inside out. So far, the change of technique had kept the blisters away and I felt more confident both in the capability of my hands and my concentration. The peal speed for my method was predicted to be 2:40 so I upped the simulator practice speed to this.

At the beginning of the final week, I did one last push on the simulator of three hours! (I did have to stop and adjust the computer a few times). My arms no longer ached during this time; I appeared to be able to concentrate with just minor slips in the method and still no blisters; I was quietly confident; I hoped I had not overlooked anything; I just told myself it was just an extended practice.

The morning of the peal arrived and I did start to feel nervous. I had sorted out trousers that weren't going to fall down during ringing! I had had adequate food and fluid during the morning and arranged a lift there so I could celebrate in the pub once completed! My mouth was really dry even before I started - nerves, I guess.



The successful peal band

It was all very relaxed - we tried the ropes for size and started on time. There were a few slips and trips along the way but the conductor put me right almost before I went wrong, which is just awe inspiring! Time passed so quickly, until about two hours in when I first glanced at the clock. I had one more look at the clock at two and a half hours, then it was all done in two hours and 51 minutes!

I wasn't prepared for the inability to walk immediately after standing the bell - both legs seized to the spot and would not walk properly when I asked them to, but that was short lived and just funny! I had prepared well, no aching, and I wasn't too tired. My hands were a bit sore, certainly better than after some previous quarters I have rung but no bleeding on the ropes which no doubt pleased the tower captain of Evesham bell tower.

This is a must-do for anyone half considering a peal. It's nowhere near as difficult as I had first imagined. I am grateful for the opportunity and thank you to the band members who helped get me through.

Progressing though Learning the Ropes

Edward Gormley, Lewisham, South East London

I went to my first bell-ringing session at St Mary's Church Lewisham on the evening of Monday 9 September 2013. It was a very exciting experience, and it was great to learn a new skill and start a new hobby.

I started work on the Learning the Ropes Progressive Learning Scheme in 2015, exactly eighteen months after I went to my first bell-ringing practice session at the church. At that time I had recently told a number of my friends that I have a feeling I'll be an experienced ringer before you can say...

"Gay go up and gay go down,
To ring the bells of London Town"
This is an alternative version of 'Oranges and Lemons', shown in full below.

Working on the Learning the Ropes Progressive Learning Scheme has helped me develop the experience I need to go to different churches to ring the bells for services and events, and ring quarter peals.

It took me almost exactly seven years to complete the scheme, during which time I have rung over 60 quarter peals, either on the treble or tenor and including my first on eight bells. On 27 February 2022, I went to St Mary's Church in Rotherhithe to ring a quarter peal of 1260 Plain Bob Minor in 43 minutes. I rang the second bell. It was my first quarter peal in which I rang inside to Plain Bob Minor, completing Level 5 of the Learning the Ropes Scheme. It was a great feeling to have achieved this, and I felt it was very special that I completed it only five days before the 10th anniversary of the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) on 4th March 2022.

On 12 March 2022, I went to a bell-ringing practice session at St James' Church in Bermondsey, followed by the Docklands Ringing Centre (DRC) Annual General Meeting (AGM). At the start of the AGM, Louise Booth, my ringing teacher, presented to me the certificate I have been awarded for completing Level 5 of the Learning the Ropes Progressive Learning Scheme.



*Edward with his Level 5 certificate
Photo by Colin Friend*



Oranges and Lemons



Gay go up, and gay go down,
To ring the bells of London town.

Bull's eyes and targets,
Say the bells of St. Margret's.

Brickbats and tiles,
Say the bells of St. Giles'.

Halfpence and farthings,
Say the bells of St. Martin's.

Oranges and lemons,
Say the bells of St. Clement's.

Pancakes and fritters,
Say the bells of St. Peter's.

Two sticks and an apple,
Say the bells at Whitechapel.

Pokers and tongs,
Say the bells at St. John's.

Kettles and pans,
Say the bells at St. Ann's.

Old Father Baldpate,
Say the slow bells at Aldgate.

Maids in white Aprons
Say the bells of St Catherine's.

You owe me ten shillings,
Say the bells of St. Helen's.

When will you pay me?
Say the bells at Old Bailey.

When I grow rich,
Say the bells at Shoreditch.

Pray when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney.

I'm sure I don't know,
Says the great bell at Bow.

Spreading the Word in Newton St Loe

Nicki Lang, Bath



Nicki teaching Madeleine

We have probably been no different to other towers coming out of lockdown. Some ringers didn't return, and many struggled to regain their enthusiasm and pick up the pieces after such a long time. It seemed very hard to get back into the old routine.

At Newton St Loe in Bath, we have been lucky. A lapsed ringer, Sophie Sikorsky, got in touch with me to ask about teaching her young son to ring. Having not taught anyone for a long time, I jumped at the chance, so it was a good time to start, especially because they live close to the tower. Young Miles turned up with his mum after school one day in November, and from then on, we were able to have frequent lessons. Miles has been a really good student. He has grasped things very quickly and is enthusiastic to progress. When the Christmas holidays came around, we had even more opportunities for lessons, and by February, Miles had gained both his Level 1 and Level 2 certificates.

In the meantime, his mum Sophie has been busy relearning things that she hadn't rung for years. She had previously been a prolific quarter peal and peal ringer, but had not done very much since 1999.

In January, Sophie helped put a band together to ring at the funeral of a gentleman who had been a former Tower Captain in Larkhall, Bath. His name was Eric Leach and after the funeral, Sophie got chatting to Eric's son and daughter-in-law, Tim and Debbie. Both had been regular ringers and had rung with Sophie in the past but they hadn't done very much ringing for about 25 years, either. Sophie persuaded them to come to Newton St Loe one evening and they have been bitten by the ringing bug for a second time! Both have joined the band, and Tim has rung his first quarter peal for 25 years!

Meanwhile, one of the PCC members thought that her son might like to learn to ring, so enter young Josh Evans, another very keen recruit. At the same time, Josh's mum introduced Eve Hester to us, a student at the Bath Spa University nearby.



Eve, Josh and Madeleine



The Newton St Loe ringers, new and not so new

Eve was keen to learn to ring as her best friend from her home town in Devon is a ringer. She has started to have lessons with us and has picked things up exceptionally quickly. (Josh's mum doesn't get let off the hook either, as when she brings Josh along, she has been persuaded to catch hold for a few tries at the first stages of bell handling too!)

The latest recruit is local artist Madeleine Town, who I met at the Church craft fair where she was running a stall. One thing led to another after we started a conversation about the church bells, and she too is having lessons with us now.

Our band is very fortunate to have so many new faces appearing in the tower – some learning from scratch and others getting a lot of pleasure from finding that they can still ring things that they thought were long forgotten! We are hoping that our young recruits will tell their friends, as it is by word of mouth that we have gained such fantastic additions to our band.

Working Together

Anne Bailey, Sidmouth

BellBoard

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Guild of Devonshire Ringers
Sidmouth, Devon

St Giles and St Nicholas
Tuesday, 8 March 2022

40 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Janet Reynolds
- 2 Lesley Houghton
- 3 Derek Ballard
- 4 Anne E Bailey
- 5 Susan A King (C)
- 6 Chreyl Fellows Bennett

Rung to celebrate the 10th Birthday of ART, with students on the 2, 5 and 6 and ART teachers on 3 and 4.

I took the first steps towards becoming an ART teacher by attending a Module 1 course in November 2014, and a few months later I had a phone call from Sue King asking if she could learn to ring. I had been helping with teaching, but Sue was my first 'proper' local student.

I'm not sure if I confessed to being a new teacher at that stage as I was a little nervous, but Sue is so keen and enthusiastic that she was a very easy student, and being a teacher herself she often gave me ideas (in the nicest possible way) on how I could improve...

Sue liked the *Learning the Ropes* scheme as it enabled her to see what she needed to achieve for each level – and she made sure I ticked each box as she achieved it. I also found the scheme helpful in planning lessons.

Sue had only been learning a few months when I had to be assessed by my Mentor and ART Assessor. I asked Sue to be my pupil for this assessment – of the two of us, I don't know who was the more nervous!

It was extremely pleasing for me when Sue's enjoyment of ringing led her to seek out towers to ring at when she was away from home. I often received photos of a tower practice night that Sue had attended with an account of what she'd been able to ring. Sue's always keen to broaden her knowledge and experience and has attended several residential courses – Hereford, Bradfield, Essex – even Tulloch in Scotland which she managed to combine with a visit to family. Ringing at different towers with different people can be a real confidence booster and her feedback on what did or didn't go well for her helped me enormously when thinking about my approach to teaching.

In February 2020 Sue achieved Level 4 of Learning the Ropes and we were in the throes of organising a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles towards her Level 5 when Covid struck which interrupted tower ringing for almost 18 months. We continued on Ringing Room and Sue scored two quarters virtually. We were able to organise another quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles in November 2021 but Sue was struck down with Covid again. However, with great determination over the next few months Sue rang three quarter peals on tower bells to complete Level 5 in May 2022.

I found it both emotional and joyful to see the look on Sue's face at the end of the final quarter peal. I realised we had both been on a journey and had helped each other to reach this point. Thank you Sue for your help to me, and I am so pleased you have completed Level 5 of Learning the Ropes – not to mention completing the Blue Pathway virtually and starting the Red Pathway. Since Sue started learning to ring we have gained another three recruits who are following the Learning the Ropes scheme – I am enjoying the challenge of helping ringers at different levels and hope it won't be too long before we see another Level 5 certificate awarded.

Both Anne and Sue took part in the tenth birthday ringing for ART, with 40 changes of Plain Bob Doubles, conducted by Sue and with a band of teachers and students. Shown above and at:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1501012>



Success! The band, including Sue (black T-shirt) and Anne (front)



Individual Progress



Julius Olu-Jones of Docklands, London, writes: I first started learning to ring in London 2018 and was able to ring Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles on inside bells by the end of 2020. I then went to university for a year during the peak of the COVID pandemic, when no ringing was allowed. After coming back from university in 2021, I have made a significant amount of progress within the space of just over half a year. I achieved both Level 4 and Level of 5 of ART's Learning the Ropes scheme. I was able to go from ringing quarter peals of Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles, to ringing quarter peals of minor methods as well as ringing variations of a few doubles methods. My most recent quarter peal was Cambridge Surprise Minor. I was very pleased to complete this as it was my first time ringing surprise minor and it was also my first touch of the method.

However, I'd say that the achievement I was most pleased with was my first peal, which was recently rung to celebrate ten years of ART. I rang inside for a peal of spliced minor - Double Oxford Bob, St Clement's College Bob and Plain Bob.

Of course I wouldn't have been able to progress so far and so quickly without the help and advice from other ringers I have rung with along the way. It's always nice whenever starting something new when someone with a lot of experience supports you and congratulates you on your achievements. I must thank my ART teachers Kevin Mitchell and Louise Booth for introducing me to ringing back in 2018, teaching me new methods, giving me tips to make learning them easier, and encouraging me to visit many other towers. It is always a pleasure to ring with them, and I look forward to continuing to advance and develop my ringing skills with them, and now I shall start the 'Learning the Ropes Plus' scheme.

Level 2 success: The picture shows a very proud Jervis Brown receiving his Level 2 certificate at Christ Church Macclesfield. 11-year-old Jervis has made fantastic progress as he only achieved his Level 1 certificate in January this year. He started his bell handling journey at St Michael's Macclesfield where he was taught on a tied bell by tower captains Mel Curwen and Kevin Rogers. Joining the regular practice at Christ Church has seen huge leaps in his confidence and achievement. We've discovered that Jervis loves ringing up - and often volunteers to help pull the tenor up! It's great to see him ringing alongside mum Ellen and dad Mike - hopefully it won't be too long before they appear together in a quarter peal! Well done, Jervis!



Answers to Puzzles

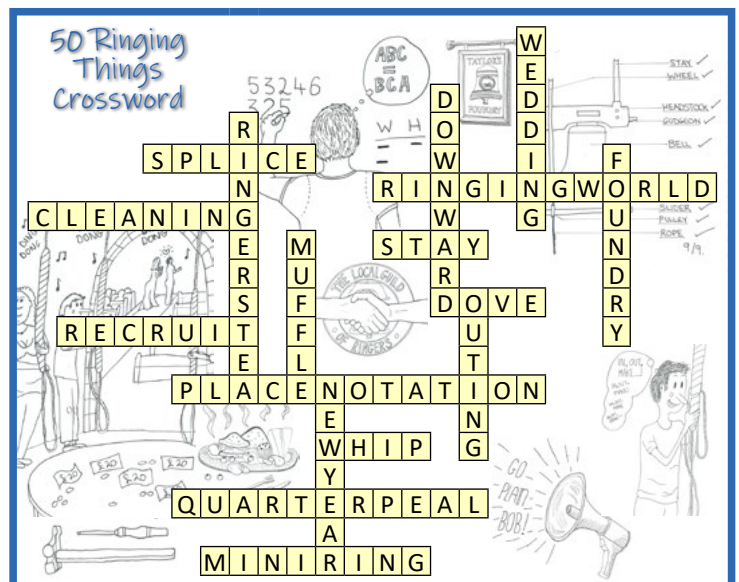
Here's the solution to the puzzle on page 7.

Across

- 4 Splice
- 6 Ringing World
- 7 Cleaning
- 9 Stay
- 10 Dove
- 12 Recruit
- 13 Place notation
- 15 Whip
- 16 Quarter peal
- 17 Mini-ring

Down

- 1 Wedding
- 2 Downward
- 3 Ringers' Tea
- 5 Foundry
- 8 Muffle
- 11 Outing
- 14 New Year



Learning the Ropes Festival

THE SECOND LEARNING THE ROPES FESTIVAL IN NORWICH

SATURDAY 20th AUGUST 2022

The Association of Ringing Teachers and the Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre have developed an exciting programme of events and Master Classes for the day aimed at new ringers who have achieved at least Level 2 and are working towards Level 3 or have already achieved it. Come and experience the bells of Norwich with dedicated tutors. Here is a summary of the programme;

Call Change Master Class

Run by Clare McArdle

from the Birmingham School of Bellringing and an ART Tutor

2 sessions, 6 places available at each



Ringing Up and Down in Peal

Run by Graham Nabb

of the Kineton Ringing centre and former Chairman of ART

2 sessions, 6 places available at each

Listen to Your Striking for that Special Occasion

Run by Nikki Thomas of the Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre and Ruth Suggett, with a Special Occasion to ring for in the afternoon!

6 places available



Ring Something Heavy

With ART Tutor Lesley Boyle

on the historic bells of St Peter Mancroft

6 places available



How To Practise Solo

Discover what technology has to offer at the purpose-built Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre, with Simon Rudd

8 places available

In addition there is the opportunity to go on a photographer's walking tour of the City, try out handbells, ring on a mini ring and learn to splice ropes.

And at lunchtime, Will Bosworth, Editor of the Ringing World, will be launching their new Blue Book, perfect for new ringers starting out in method ringing.

If you have any questions or would like to enquire about booking a place, please email:

mrdc@stpetermancroft.org.uk

Cost is £25 for the whole day or £15 for half day,

though we do encourage everyone to come for the whole day!

Guests, friends, family all welcome too and we suggest a donation to the MRDC if they wish to take part in any of the non-bookable events.