

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

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

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Gold Plus! Read about Gill and Kathy's achievements in the next Tower Talk

After the culmination in November of the Ringing Remembers campaign and all the wonderful commemorative ringing in which so many new ringers took part, I thought I might not find much to put in this edition of Tower Talk, but no - the amazing stories of success and all the ingenious ways ringers find to have a good time together just keep coming! If you're on Facebook you can read many more stories from new ringers on the Ringing Remembers Facebook page.

There have been record numbers of ringers achieving at all levels this year and so the challenge for all of us, no matter how long we have been ringing, is to make sure all our new ringers continue to feel welcome and are given lots of opportunities to learn, and we hope to be reading their stories and achievements in future editions. As ever, if you have a story or a picture you'd like to share, just get in touch!

A Happy New Year!

At Shenfield, S is for Success!

By Beth Johnson

There's lots happening at the Essex tower of Shenfield St Mary's. The band is thriving with a good mix of young and old, and teaching and learning are very much on the agenda, as well as having lots of fun.

In September they enjoyed a great day out in London, described by 13 year old Emily:

On a glorious sunny morning, 24 ringers from Shenfield St Mary's travelled up to the City of London to visit four of London's finest bell towers. Our first stop was St Dunstan-in-the-West in Fleet Street, with ten bells. St Dunstan was a former Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury and is the Patron Saint of bell ringers. The church dates from 1000 AD, although the present building, with an octagonal nave, was constructed in the 1830s by John Shaw.

Then on to St Vedast, which has a heavy ring of six bells - the tenor weighs 16 cwt. The church was established in 1170 and was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire of London. It was completely burnt out during the Blitz and was restored under the direction of its Rector, Canon Mortlock.



After lunch, it was only a short walk to St James', Garlickhythe, nicknamed 'Wren's Lantern' due to its many windows. Garlickhythe refers to the nearby landing place or 'hythe' where garlic was sold in medieval times. St James' was first built in the 12th century but was also destroyed in the great fire of London in 1666 and rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren. St James' is the home of the Royal Jubilee Bells, which were sailed down the Thames for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The eight bells were cast by the Whitechapel Bell foundry. The tenor weighs 9 cwt and is called Elizabeth. The other bells are Philip, Charles, Anne, Andrew, Edward, William and Henry. We were allowed to climb up into the bell tower to see the bells as they were being rung - wearing ear defenders of course. This was the highlight of the day for me. The bells were loud, but it was fantastic to see them in action.

Finally, we set off to St Magnus the Martyr, London Bridge. Prior to the Great Fire, the old tower had a ring of five bells, a small saint's bell, and a clock bell. Wren rebuilt the church in 1671. The ten bells were removed for safe keeping in 1940 and stored in the churchyard. After the war, four bells were found to be cracked and the bells were finally sold for scrap in 1976. The current bells were cast in 2008/9, and are named Michael, Margaret, Thomas of Canterbury, Mary, Cedd, Edward the Confessor, Dunstan, John the Baptist, Erkenwald, Paul, Mellitus and Magnus.



Everyone had a wonderful day. Thank you to Ian Stockwell for organising access to such wonderful churches. On the train home we were in such good spirits that we sang happy birthday to Emily who had turned 13 and had decided to spend her birthday with us, bell ringing and having fun.

Back home, there was more success to celebrate as two teachers received their Module 1 Teaching Certificates, two young ringers were awarded their LtR Level 2 certificates and three more their Level 1 [see photo, right].

In October half term, teachers Beth and Mark organised a special afternoon just for the young ringers. Sarah, one of the young ringers, explains:



In October half term, the junior ringers of St Mary's band had a very fun party including a very strange dance called the place making dance. First off, we all had a ring up and, because there were so many girls, we decided to make a girl band. In the

girl band, we did some Rounds into Called Changes and back into Rounds. After this we went down for some pizza, which was yummy, and delicious cupcakes made by Kathy. Emily and her mum had made a quiz (about ringing) for all of us to do. Amelia won it and received an Amazon gift voucher. Before going home, the young ringers band, including me and Kathy (who is also a ringer), did a strange dance representing the places in Plain Hunt. It was very hard at first, but after some practice we all got there!

So lots going on and the good news is that Shenfield share their success by teaming up with other local towers, Ingrave, Hutton and Brentwood, for teaching and learning practices.

[The "Plain Hunt Quadrille" can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiBgnhKJIRY. The quiz will be featured for all in our next edition of Tower Talk.]

100 Days to Celebrate 100 Years

By Molly (age 12), ringer at Dunblane Cathedral, Scotland

I started bell ringing on 6 August as part of the Armistice centenary and in that time I have:

- Rung for 95 hours, over a 100-day period;
- Rung a bell the same weight as a Mini (1252 kg);
- Rung a bell which is 361 years old;
- Rung with 20 ringers in my band with a total of 600 years' ringing experience;
- Rung in three beautiful bell towers;
- Passed my Learning the Ropes Level 1;
- Been interviewed and filmed by Scottish TV (allowing me to miss a maths test); and
- Rung three times on Armistice Day!

I am loving my new hobby and am very grateful to my patient and dedicated teachers and band members for making me feel so welcome. I can't wait for the next 100 days!

Recent Successes

By The Editorial Team

In the fourth quarter of 2018, 454 certificates were awarded to ringers at the various stages of Learning the Ropes (LtR) as below (last year's numbers shown for comparison):

Level 1 - Bell Handling	274 (82)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	125 (55)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	29 (17)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	17 (20)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	9 (15)



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

Dec 2018	Ellis Hollows	Silver
Dec 2018	Gillian Hosking	Gold Plus
Dec 2018	Kathy McCarthy	Gold Plus
Dec 2018	Kathy McCarthy	Gold
Dec 2018	Ross Havenhand	Silver
Dec 2018	Gillian Hosking	Gold
Dec 2018	Noah John McDermott	Silver
Dec 2018	Graham Hunt	Silver
Dec 2018	Graham Hunt	Bronze
Dec 2018	Katie Havenhand	Bronze
Nov 2018	Ross Havenhand	Bronze
Nov 2018	Hayley Clarke	Silver

Nov 2018	Lucy Gwynne	Gold Plus
Nov 2018	Steve Rigby	Silver
Nov 2018	Emma Marsh	Bronze
Nov 2018	Alex Bell	Silver
Oct 2018	Jill Day	Bronze
Oct 2018	Stephanie Andrews	Bronze
Oct 2018	Monica Hollows	Silver
Oct 2018	Tamzin Gulliver	Bronze
Oct 2018	Alison Foster	Silver
Oct 2018	Steve Rigby	Bronze
Oct 2018	Sharon Gent	Bronze
Oct 2018	Ellis Hollows	Bronze

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.

The Accidental Ringer

By The Editorial Team

If you enjoy surfing the web for all things ringing, check out a great blog by Mary Jones, a new ringer from Norfolk. Not only will you be entertained by her fluent and witty observations but you will realise that you're not alone on your ringing journey. The Accidental Ringer can be found at dingdong887180022.wordpress.com, or just search for "The Accidental Ringer". Mary describes her blog as:

containing the thoughts of a novice ringer who has found that learning to ring bells has unlocked a previously untapped area of the brain, and now cannot stop writing about all things ringing.

50/50 Club Draw News

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

The December Draw for the 50/50 Club took place on Sunday 9 December, following the Derbyshire Young Ringers meeting at Darley Dale. Toby, a Ringing Remembers recruit from Belper, drew the following numbers:

First prize of £78.57 was won by Mike Penney (Number 2);

Three other equal prizes of £42.56 were won by Andrew Else (35), Gordon Gray (64) and Jan Swan (136).



All prize winners have been notified and payments made in time for Christmas.

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.

The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) is a self-financing charity whose mission is to improve the learning experience of all ringers. The 50/50 Club is one way that ART raises the money necessary to do their important work running day courses for new teachers and producing all the resources used by new ringers, such as the blue booklets, ringers’ guides and online resources. Currently the Club contributes £700 per year to ART, but has the potential to raise more.

We are on the look-out for a volunteer 50/50 Club Administrator who can run the scheme, organise the draws and promote the Club. Typically this will take three hours per month, and you can schedule the work to suit you.

If you are interested in helping ART by becoming the Club Administrator then please contact Gill Hughes at gillhughes@ringingteachers.org.

Thank you!

Ringling in the City

By Malcolm Creese of Swaffham Bulbeck, Cambridgeshire

For their annual outing, the ringers at Swaffham Bulbeck and Bottisham in Cambridgeshire traditionally drive around villages in rural areas, but this year was different. We decided to ring in some of the historic churches in the City of London, and I was ‘volunteered’ to do the organising.

To make the day interesting, I wanted to offer the ringers variety in both the size of the bells and the architecture of the churches. A walking tour seemed sensible, and the only feasible day of the week was a Saturday when the City would be quiet.

With help from fellow ringers, I put together a list of target churches and set about searching for contact details. This proved much more difficult and time-consuming than I expected; some people got back to me straight away and were extremely helpful, but others were not so accommodating, so I had to do a great deal of chasing. A lot of the churches I contacted were unavailable because they had already been booked out to other teams.

It wasn't easy to find five churches that were available at exactly the right times and within easy walking distance of each other, but I eventually managed to settle on a schedule which started and ended at Liverpool Street station.

The final list comprised four rings of eight and one of six. I printed up a complete schedule for each of us - with maps, directions and photos as well as historical information about the churches and the bells. Here is the schedule in brief:

10.30 to 11.30 - Christ Church, Spitalfields (8) 17cwt. One of London's most magnificent buildings, built in the early 18th century by Nicholas Hawksmoor.

12.00 to 13.00 - St Katharine Cree, Aldgate/Leadenhall Street (6) 9cwt. Its unique Jacobean architecture dates from the 1630s. It survived the Great Fire and the Blitz. The organ was played by both Purcell and Handel.

13.15 to 14.15 - LUNCH: Windsor Fenchurch, 2 New London Street. Superb lunch and excellent service. Highly recommended.

14.15 to 15.15 - St Olave, Hart Street (8) 11cwt. A genuine medieval church which escaped the Great Fire, although it was severely damaged in the Blitz. Samuel Pepys and his wife are buried there.

15.45 to 16.45 - St James, Garlickhythe, Garlick Hill (8) 'Jubilee Bells' 9cwt. Built by Christopher Wren after the Great Fire. The eight 'Royal Jubilee Bells', cast at the Whitechapel Foundry, were first rung on a barge on the River Thames in 2012 and later installed in the church.

17:00 to 18:00 - St Lawrence Jewry, Guildhall Yard, Gresham Street (8) 24cwt. A grand building by Wren, badly damaged in the war and restored in the 1950s.



Arriving at St Olave's

We ended up with 19 ringers and three guests, which was about right. The youngest was 13 and the eldest was 80-something. Lunch took a lot of organising and reorganising, but when we arrived at the pub our meals were ready, so it paid off.

At some churches we were welcomed by resident tower captains, and at others we had to find our own way in, although we had been briefed in great detail. A couple of us ran around collecting keys from various places and delivering them back again. It was a nice surprise to bump into the Shenfield ringers at Garlickhythe, as well as some familiar faces at one or two other churches.

The timings worked perfectly, the weather was glorious, and the ringing was great fun. We had good variety of bells to ring; those of us who are less experienced benefited greatly from this. The two heaviest rings - Spitalfields and St Lawrence Jewry - were particularly memorable.

It was nice to walk around and enjoy the stunning architecture of the City of London when there weren't many people around. Several of us repaired to a good hostelry before boarding the train home, which gave us a chance to reflect on a fascinating and enjoyable day.

Hilton & Ansty Bell Ringers of the First World War

By Mary Brice

Every year, on Remembrance Day, we gather round the Memorial Cross in front of All Saints Church in Hilton, Dorset, and read the names of the men who left the Hilton & Ansty Parish Community and did not return. As the centenary of the end of the 'war to end all wars' approached, it felt important to remember more than just their names. I wanted to discover a more three-dimensional picture of who we were remembering as well as those who stood next to the memorial when it was new, remembering their sons, husbands, fathers and brothers.

In total 19 men from our quiet farming community are remembered. The men who left were farm and brewery workers from the Hall & Woodhouse Brewery in Ansty. Edward Woodhouse, the grandson of George Edward Woodhouse, a founding partner of Hall & Woodhouse, is among those remembered.

There are three Commonwealth War Graves in the All Saints Churchyard. One is the grave of Frederick Samways who was 19 when he died on 8 January 1919, in a hospital in Chelsea. Frederick was serving with the Wiltshire Regiment in France on 12 April 1918 when he was reported missing. He had been taken prisoner. He was held at Dülmen Prisoner of War Camp until the end of the war, when he returned to England. Next to the burial record in the church is a note: 'Prisoner of War starved by the Germans'. During my research I discovered that Frederick Samways was a bell ringer remembered on the Salisbury Diocesan Guild of Ringers roll of honour, along with another Hilton casualty, William Drake.

William Drake was a garden worker, according to the 1911 census. Born in Hilton, he had eight siblings. He joined the Dorsetshire Regiment at the start of the war and was with them during the disastrous campaign in Gallipoli in 1915. He was reported missing presumed dead on 21 August 1915. He was 24. In a letter from his sister, Minnie, returned unopened, she tells 'Willie' of an open-air service that was held at Milton Abbey where those serving had their names read out. Who knows if there were bell ringers to ring on that day.

It was this research that prompted a group of us to take up bell ringing. Our primary objective at the outset was to make sure that the bells of All Saints rang on 11 November 2018 in honour of Frederick Samways and William Drake. We have six complete beginners ranging from 16 to a little older(!), as well as two experienced ringers who are taking it up again with the help of local ART ringing teachers. Beyond the joy of the sound of the bells ringing regularly, we have discovered the social side, with coffee and cakes at every practice. We have visited other towers and made new friends.

After ringing on 11 November a couple of us were enjoying a pub lunch in a nearby village when someone greeted us: "You're one of us," recognising the Ringing Remembers badge we were proudly wearing.

I guess we are now.



The International Bellfie

By Laura E. Goodin

[Laura E. Goodin has been ringing for just over a year at St. James Old Cathedral in Melbourne, Australia. You can find out more about her writing at www.lauraegoodin.com.]

I travel a lot. It's why I'll never be rich. And now that I'm a bell ringer, travel has taken on a new allure: grabbing towers. It's *fun*. It's fun to see how other towers do things (and silently either wail in despair that I'll never be that good or smugly congratulate myself about how my home tower is clearly the best in the world - which it is, by the way; you should totally come to visit St James Old Cathedral Friday-night practices when you're in Melbourne). It's fun to try new ringing exercises and share a few titbits of knowledge. And it's definitely fun to meet new ringers - not so much because we're different, but because we're alike. As far as I've been able to tell, most ringers are cheerful and encouraging, and every last one is gloriously eccentric in some way or other. We share a common language (no, not English - ringing!), a common body of knowledge, and a common passion. Instant comrades! A balm for the weary, homesick traveller's soul!



In September, I travelled for business to Hawaii. My flight got in a few days before my conference began - well, yes, all right, I looked up in Dove's whether there were any towers in Hawaii and planned my itinerary around the practice times at St Andrew's Cathedral. An email to the tower captain resulted in a warm invitation to their Sunday and Tuesday practices - what luxury! Two practices a week! I landed on Sunday, dropped my stuff off in my room, and - exhausted and jet-lagged - instantly headed out into the sultry Honolulu afternoon to make my way to the tower. I was welcomed like a dear friend of the family and immediately given a rope. We were all at a similar level, and had a great time working through exercises, plain hunt, and call changes. I was able to show them a trick I learned from one of my tower's more experienced ringers: the fact that you can pull the bell-up knot through to make a perfect figure-of-eight knot, should you need one, without risking digits and limbs by poking them through loops of rope attached to an up bell. The band was easygoing and cheerful, even by Australian standards, which gave me a fascinating insight into island culture, and meant that the slower pace necessitated by my jet lag didn't bother anyone. They were also happy to pose for a bellfie (bell-ringers'

selfie [above]) before dispersing into the twilight. I was really looking forward to Tuesday's practice!

Alas, it was not to be, as a hurricane was bearing down on the island. The tower captain, erring on the side of caution, cancelled practice – I’m not sure where else you’d have practice cancelled because of an impending hurricane. (Luckily, the hurricane mostly fizzled out before it got to Honolulu).

In November, I was lucky enough to go overseas again (see “will never be rich”, above). This time, I planned my itinerary to be able to ring at the Washington National Cathedral. I’d lived in DC for 17 years, and had learned to love the bells that formed part of the sound-scape of my life for all that time. I hadn’t been a ringer then (oh, I could just bloody kick myself). But now, 23 years after leaving DC, I was, and – the band’s goodwill permitting – I wanted to ring the bells I loved. An email or two later all the arrangements had been made, and I had been briefed on the detailed Dungeons & Dragons game-play required to reach the bell tower: buzzers and code phrases spoken to unseen guardians (“I’m a ringer”), semi-hidden doorways, dusty passages, twisty stairwells, two different elevators, and (as far as I could tell) a few inter-dimensional time and space warps eventually brought me to the ringing chamber.

I gasped. It was utterly palatial. Literally 20 times the size of the ringing chamber in my home tower (and I know what “literally” means), with comfy chairs, stained glass, artwork, and windows that offered a stunning view of DC at night – it couldn’t have been more splendid. The learners had their own practice on the simulator and let me join in, and were very gracious about my mistakes. Then it was time for the main practice. These ringers were supremely competent, and very conscious of the responsibility they bore to ring these terrific bells from their tower on the hilltop, audible for many miles in every direction. Tonight they had a film crew there, so the pressure was on. Even so, they were still kind enough to give me a couple of goes over the course of the evening, let me see the belfry, *and* gave me a lift back to the Metro. They were all business, though, so there was no time for a bellfie. Their intensity was in marked contrast to the laid-back atmosphere at St Andrew’s, Honolulu, but that one difference only highlighted how much all of us ringers have in common: I’d been welcomed in both towers, and shared the language of ringing with everyone there.

What all this boils down to is this: if you really want to dive deep into our culture as ringers, with all the adventure and camaraderie that it brings, you can do no better than to go visiting. Even if you’ve only just started, you can still watch and learn and enjoy the company of those who, like you, have heard the call of the bells and have answered it gladly. Get hold of the Dove’s app (it’s pretty cheap) so that whenever you travel, you can always check where the towers are and how to contact the tower captain (a courtesy I highly recommend). Chances are very good you’ll get the kind of warm welcome I received at both towers, and perhaps even make some lifelong friends. You’ll also get a unique insider’s perspective on the place and people you’re visiting, and maybe even get the chance to go adventuring among the rafters and corridors high above the city.

Did I say I’d never be rich? Actually, I reckon I’m richer than royalty.

Lilliput Tales

By Simon Edwards, ringer at St Mark’s, Swindon

Being the son of ringers, I have known my home tower of St Mark’s, Swindon all my life. I was taught to ring at the age of ten at St Mark’s, an easy going ring of eight (tenor 11½ cwt), and for the last 14 years I have never looked back.

I’m a driven person, so organising ringing days out and events comes naturally to me. I am out ringing most weekends, mixing the more “serious” part (peals and quarter peals) with the “fun” side – outings, quarter peal days and young ringers’ events. I enjoy both aspects in equal measure and for different reasons, and like to keep a balance of both. Of course, most of these events inevitably end up in a pub (or child-friendly equivalent!) – the social side is just as important as the ringing!

A few years ago, I arranged a week's ringing tour for a group of friends; basically a small group of young ringers going on holiday! We based ourselves at the Lilliput Sea Scout hut in Poole and, after a hugely successful week, subsequent tours have followed. Thus, the Lilliputters were born. This year, 25 of us from across the country attended the tour in Sussex, where highlights included the chance to ring on the twelve bells of Croydon Minster and an afternoon spent on Brighton beach (complete with fish and chips!). The ability of our ringers ranges from Called Changes to Surprise Major and beyond, but everybody is welcomed and accommodated – a good sense of humour is just as important as ringing on tour!



The 2018 Lilliputters Ringing Tour Group Photo, taken at St Nicholas, Brighton

As well as the Summer Tour, we meet up frequently throughout the year for days out or weekends away, visiting each others' parts of the world. Invariably, if the day is in London, we will end up at the theatre somewhere – our interests are wide and varied!

Outside of ringing, I have many other activities – which comes as a shock to many of my fellow ringers! Much as it pains me to say it, I have actually been a Scout longer than a bell ringer! I joined the movement as a Beaver at the age of six, and, eighteen years later, I'm a Cub leader. Like ringing, Scouting is a worldwide family – but can also be a very small world!

I often combine my two hobbies, and get the best of both worlds. My first peal, back in 2007, was for the Centenary of the Scout movement. I vowed never to ring another – but how wrong I was! More recently, in 2016, I organised a peal on Brownsea Island for the centenary of Cub Scouts, where the band was made up of past and present Cubs and Leaders. As a Scout, I reached Stage 5 of the musician's badge despite not being able to play an instrument or sing a note – handy that the leader was also a ringer! Whilst working towards my Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award over the last 18 months, ringing has been my "Skill" – the real challenge for me here has been trying to show improvement, and I've had to push myself more than I would have done otherwise! Over the past couple of years, I have also arranged a number of ringing evenings for local Cub and Scout groups, on both tower and hand bells, sharing the love of bells and ringing with the next generation!



Simon, at home with the bells

If you would like to know more about combining ringing and Scouting, or find out more about the Lilliputters, please do get in touch; I would be delighted to help. The Lilliputters are an active and welcoming group, and we already have numerous outings and events already planned for 2019! If you are interested in joining us, we'd love to hear from you! Please drop an email to lilliputtersguild@gmail.com.

What Ellie Did Next

By Steve Vickars and Ellie Seddon



Ellie receiving her LtR L5 certificate from Steve Vickars, September 2018



Ellie on her first Guild ringing course, April 2017 - St Mary's, Garsington

Ellie Seddon has recently become the 100th ringer to achieve ART Learning the Ropes Level 5. Speaking about what motivated her to take up ringing, Ellie says:

After returning from University I made a conscious effort to take up a new hobby, and after overhearing a conversation about a local village (Kirtlington) recruiting bell ringers, I decided to make the call and give it a go!

Steve and the rest of the team were so welcoming, and incredibly generous with their time when I joined the tower. In spite of a few blisters on my first session, I soon caught the bell ringing bug! Having one-to-one tuition classes separately and prior to each weekly practice was hugely valuable whilst learning and helped to lessen the worries that I was 'disturbing' the weekly practice of the other ringers. I also liked that the teaching was well structured with clear levels of progress and regular, practical targets to aim for.

Steve Vickars, Kirtlington Tower Captain, says:

Ellie joined the Kirtlington team in November 2016 and was my second ringing recruit using the ART LtR scheme. From the outset, it was clear that Ellie was a quick and able learner, ringing Rounds unaided within four weeks, leading and covering tenor in eight weeks. After three months Ellie was able to Plain Hunt and two months later she attended the Oxford Diocesan Guild Radley Course, where she trebled to a touch of Plain Bob Doubles for the first time. Nine months in, Ellie attended the residential course at Bradfield College, which provided excellent training in Plain Bob Doubles; shortly afterwards she rang her first quarter peal inside to Plain Bob Doubles. In less than eighteen months Ellie had mastered Plain Bob Minor, helped by another Guild course, ringing a number of Minor quarter peals. Despite having busy work and personal commitments, Ellie studied and mastered Grandsire Doubles during summer 2018 and rang inside to a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles this September, which completed her ART LtR Level 5 practical targets. To date, Ellie has rung nearly twenty quarter peals, including Plain Bob and Grandsire methods, is a vital member of the band, and is in much demand for her excellent striking.

The Kirtlington team has recently been re-formed after several years and none of this would have been possible without the support of other towers within Bicester and neighbouring Branches. Special mention should be made to Alison Merryweather-Clarke from Witney and Woodstock Branch, not only for being my ART Mentor through Modules 1 to 2C, but also organising and conducting many quarter peal attempts for Ellie and others in the team to achieve their ART LtR and general ringing objectives.



Ellie in a Ladies' quarter peal band, 4th February 2018, celebrating the centenary of women's suffrage (bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1212323)

Left to right: Judith Vickars, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Sue Rhodes, Ellie Seddon, Julie Minch, Sue Macready



The band for the Grandsire Doubles quarter peal, 5th September 2018, which completed Ellie's LtR Level 5 objectives (bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1245155)

Left to Right: Steve Vickars, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Michael Haynes, Ellie Seddon, Michael Probert, Julie Minch.

Ellie continues:

My favourite thing about bell ringing is the extended family which you're introduced to; not just in your immediate tower, but in all the surrounding parishes and beyond! Despite living outside Kirtlington, I have been welcomed to the village as if we had all been neighbours for years. As well as looking forward to our fun regular practices, ringers take part in village quiz nights, village fêtes and Christmas parties (with our "relaxed" hand bell ringing). I also appreciate the opportunity to see so many beautiful towers, each of which has a unique piece of history, such that I now find that I'm on the lookout for bells regardless of which county (or country!) I'm in.

I have just signed up to Learning the Ropes Plus, and have recently completed trebling to my first triples quarter peal. My next short-term goal is to ring inside to a Triples method quarter peal, and longer-term to conduct a Doubles method. Although it feels like an ambitious challenge now, I think it's always great to have something to work towards. Also, whilst I can't say I'm a huge fan of bats or spiders, I would love to learn more about the art of steeple keeping.

Didn't We Have a Lovely Time?

By Debbie Moore (learning to ring at Marsworth)

To be hummed to the tune of "Day Trip to Bangor (Didn't We Have a Lovely Time)" by Fiddler's Dram:

*Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went Western Turnville,
Halton, Ivinghoe and Whipsnade!*

A beautiful day, we had lunch on the way,

And all for under ten pounds you know.

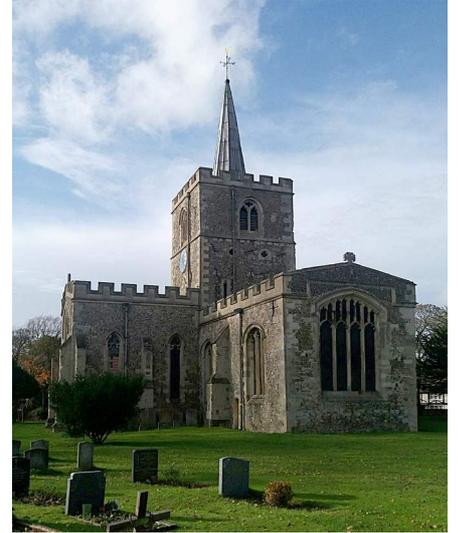
*On the way back we stopped at a thatch (the Hunters Lodge in
Whipsnade),*

And opened a bottle of cider.

Ringin a few of our favourite bells,

As the wheels went round

Training for the past year under the watchful and ever patient eyes of Richard, Rose and Ruth, we finally had our first tower outing! I think it took poor Rose nearly as long to find a date that we could all make as it had done to train us to ring in the first place!



On the day the weather was amazing so, as we made our approach, every church looked beautiful; framed by the wonderful autumn colours. Each church was made all the more majestic as they were decorated in readiness for the Remembrance Day commemorations the following day.

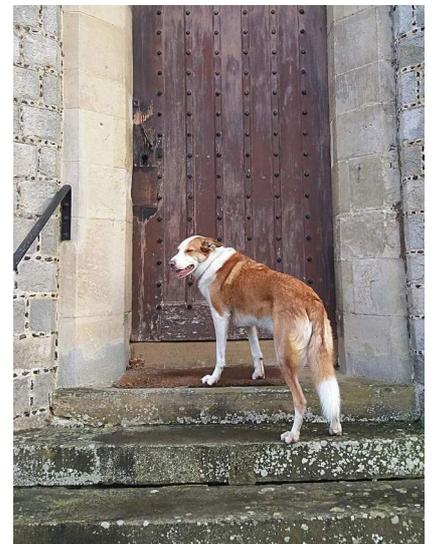
As nervous beginners we were very appreciative of being made so welcome at each tower by the respective tower captain. To hear the bells ringing out was a real treat and, although not always our finest ringing as we were challenged by the different feel and temperament of the bells, we all agreed we loved the variety and experience that the day brought. In addition to our usual ringing in Rounds and basic Called Changes, the chance to ring the bells half muffled was a real plus. Each of us had a different 'favourite' tower or individual bell that had helped make our day all the more enjoyable.

In addition to Richard, Rose and Ruth, mention must go to Simon Head for his calm encouragement and to Marley the Welsh Sheepdog for his ever waggy tail and enthusiasm!

Sadly, in the event not quite all of our group could make the day, but we were able to link up with our remaining band member using WhatsApp to share our progress. The coming together of the old (bells) and the new (photos and video clips sent via WhatsApp) had a second, unexpected benefit as, after the event, we were able to review our ringing techniques via the saved video clips. That proved a valuable learning tool.

I'd definitely recommend taking up the chance if you are invited.

Thanks to all involved for a great day. Here's to next time.



The Steeplechase

By Niels Benatar of Braunschweig, Germany – and The Tysoes in Warwickshire

In the previous edition of Tower Talk, I described my long-distance relationship with English bell ringing from my home in Braunschweig, Germany.

I have now developed an affinity for the Tysoes and the Cotswolds which makes me feel giddy. It's not just the addictive (six times this year alone!) elopement-like jaunts from Thursday to Saturday, jetting me out of Hanover to London and back, the breath-taking drives "on the wrong side of the road" from Heathrow's Terminal 5 through the English countryside to Tysoe, but the bell ringing itself. The many talks and practices under the caring and hospitable wings of both my teachers, David Rake and David Bell, and a growing circle of bell ringing acquaintances: "Oh, so you are Niels!"

The culmination of this year's Exercises was the extended weekend from 8 to 11 November. An experience of utmost intensity, moving and touching in many ways.

On Thursday, 8 November, I took the first flight out of Hanover, arriving in Heathrow shortly before 8am. This time I made a "short detour" to Taylor Bells in Loughborough, where I was given a personal tour of the foundry. The last bell foundry in the United Kingdom and I was there! A place worth visiting, an institution worth supporting, not only by bell ringers.

Later on that afternoon, there was a bell ringing practice in Tysoe and an evening session in Lighthorne, where I was able to try my luck at ringing Rounds and try the patience of the others in Called Changes. The bells were already half-muffled, in preparation for the upcoming solemnities.

The next morning there was more practice in Tysoe and then, on Saturday, the presentation of a new peal board dedicated to the Women's Institute in Tysoe, followed by another practice session leading up to "Ringing Remembers Routes across the Guild, 10 November 2018".

It was nothing less than a superbly conceived, well organized and minutely orchestrated "Steeplechase" by the Coventry Guild. Four Routes were plotted and with my teacher, David Rake, we chased down part of Route 1, so off we jaunted on our own little steeplechase, taking us to Halford, then to Oxhill, and then "back home" to Tysoe, where my other teacher, David Bell, was waiting with others interested and intrepid enough to not only scale the staircase up to the ringing chamber, but past the clock chamber and the bell chamber and even onto the roof of the bell tower itself, gaining access to the old crenelated tower, the flagpole hissing the Union Jack, and giving way to a view of England's finest countryside, flanking the Cotswolds.



The presentation of the peal board

The next morning, sunshine. Sunday, 11 November 2018, was the day all had prepared for! I had my “Ringing Remembers” badge and my poppy-appeal wristband and waited a few steps behind to witness and participate in what unfolded that morning and early afternoon.

All of you reading Tower Talk were present, each in your own way. You have your memories, your thoughts and your emotions, none of which I would want to water down or alter in any way.



A watercolour, by Niels, of Tysoe, with the church in the background and one of the black metal silhouettes of a first world war soldier standing guard in the foreground

For me, being part of “Ringing Remembers” was extremely moving. Not only the small pamphlet “Silence ... we will remember them”, so well worded, so touchingly illustrated, and so full of solemnity, grief, thankfulness and hope. The Kohimah Epitaph “When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.”

The morning began in Tysoe at 10am with half-muffled ringing, followed by a service held at the War Memorial, where numerous wreaths were carefully set down, before we silently gathered together to form a procession leading us back to “The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary”, where David Bell had remained to toll the half-muffled tenor at exactly 11am. We entered the church-yard in silence and in respect, overcome.

At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

As an American, born and raised in Los Angeles, I was only seven years old when President Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963. But I still remember very clearly the mournful music played, while his casket was escorted down the Mall in Washington, DC.

It was the hymn “Eternal Father”. One of several hymns, so aptly chosen for the church service on Remembrance Sunday, 11 November 2018 in Middle Tysoe. A hymn which I had not heard since 1963, a hymn that in Tysoe touched me in many waves and ways.

Then, after the church service, beginning at 12:30pm (as everywhere else in Great Britain), Tysoe’s bells rang forth in celebration, as they were meant to. And I was allowed to be part of this.

Ringing Remembers. Thank you, my teachers David and David, and all of you!



Tysoe's “Ringing Remembers” band: Niels is second left, with David Rake (L) and David Bell (R) in front of him

How about us learning to ring the bells properly?

By Brian Giles

This was the question I was asked – I’m the Lay Worship Leader and Churchwarden at the church of St Mary the Virgin in the Northamptonshire village of Weekley.

A bit of background

Sadly the six bells have been relatively quiet for 20 years with only occasional visiting bands and our sister church’s ringers coming over for weddings. We have been encouraging the children and some adults to chime the bells before the service so that the village knows we are here. And if ringers have not been booked for weddings, I ask the congregation if they would help me ring out the couple at the end of the service. With a little encouragement I can usually round up half a dozen willing volunteers who have a short practice before the bride arrives. The smiles of the couples as they walk up the aisle is a picture and those who have rung are proud as punch. Many photographs and stories about how they rang the bells at the wedding are extra mementos of the great day.

Ringling Remembers

Sitting at the computer, I search for someone who can teach us to ring the bells as part of the Ringing Remembers project. I find ART and send in an enquiry. Almost by return, I get an email from Elaine Greatrex, an ART teacher, who offers to visit the church and talk about learning to ring. Sounds simple enough, but we have six bells on plain bearings that have not been maintained for years and bits that need repair. I have been associated with steam engine enthusiasts in the past and am familiar with how they rush to help when a new project comes up but the support we have had from ringers has been amazing. Bearings oiled, ropes adjusted, stay replaced, wheel cheek repaired and advice by the bucketful.

So, what about learning to ring? “It’s like learning to drive” and “We all have days when it does not work” have been the key phrases we have heard. “Reach up as high as you can”; “pull through and point your thumbs to the floor”; “don’t look up”. We will ring those **** bells up one of these days.

Eventually, with four regular trainees we are really beginning to enjoy our Thursday evenings. But what about Ringing Remembers? On the Thursday before the 11th we decided that we would chime in Rounds. On the day, the four of us gallantly stood at the ropes and started to chime. We may not have achieved perfection, but we did it and afterwards felt we had made a contribution to remembering the 1400 who did not return to their tower to ring after WWI.

So what next?

With Challenge One over, we are determined to learn how to ring for services and make St Mary the Virgin a ringing church. We may even be visiting a church near you as we start to visit other towers. And for me, I’ll be tower grabbing instead of train spotting.

Right: At Rothwell with a young lady hoping to join us next year.



By Royal Appointment

By Bob Cox, Walsoken

A year or so ago the one 10-bell tower in our ringing district lost its tower captain by resignation. As president of the local ringing district I knew that losing access to this tower would be problematic in the longer term. One of the Walsoken Hub's ringing students (Martin Slough) was keen to increase his involvement in the wider ringing world and the 10-bell tower was in need of new stewardship so I made the introductions between the church and Martin. A few months later Martin was installed as Tower Captain.

A month or so ago local Wisbech ringers were asked to ring for a visiting dignitary although, at the time, only a few people knew who was actually visiting. The priest in charge of the 10-bell tower said to his team "It would be nice to get the visitor to present something". Hearing this, Martin was spurred on to get his 'Learning the Ropes' Level 3 certificate. Martin had completed the practical parts of the syllabus and all that remained was the theory. With this successfully done, Martin completed his Level 3 at Walsoken Hub.

We had been fortunate in the timing and opportunity for HRH Prince Charles to present the certificate. The pictures taken show the success of the day. The only unfortunate part was that I had to be in the USA on business on the week of the Royal visit.



I'm unashamedly proud that six of these eleven ringers in the band that rang for HRH Prince Charles have Walsoken Hub as their home tower or started to learn to ring there. The Hub, Martin Slough, and my wife Jeanette Cox, made a most significant contribution in highlighting bell ringing nationwide and have promoted ART by confidently stepping up when the opportunity presented itself. Congratulations!

Martin Slough also sent us his account of the day:

We were able to get a bird's eye view of the arrival of The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and of the cheering crowds from the tower window! In between, we rang Grandsire Triples and Rounds and Called Changes on 10. Down in the church, we lined up to be presented to HRH, who took the time to shake everyone's' hand and had a smile and a joke with all of us! I was thrilled to be presented with the LTR Level 3 certificate by him and he appeared quite knowledgeable on the subject of bell ringing, although he declined my invitation to give him some lessons! A lovely day in a relaxed and happy environment, producing lasting memories. I never dreamed bell ringing would give me that when I started in May 2017!



Martin Slough is presented with his LTR Level 3 certificate by HRH Prince Charles

Stage Facts

By The Editorial Team

Last time we set you the task of finding your own “Fascinating Facts” by solving a quirky number puzzle which was designed to see if you knew your Major from Minor, or Triples from Cinques. Here are the answers:

- Add DOUBLES and MINIMUS to get the [then] current edition number of Tower Talk!
Doubles has five working bells, and Minimus has four. $5+4 = 9$.
- What is the maximum number of different changes (called an extent) you can ring on five bells? Find this answer by multiplying MAXIMUS by ROYAL.
Maximus has 12 working bells, and Royal has ten. $12 \times 10 = 120$.
- How many ringers are thought to have fallen in the First World War? Find this by adding MAJOR and MINOR and multiplying the answer by ROYAL, and again multiplying by ROYAL.
Major has eight working bells, Minor has six, and Royal has 10. $(8+6) \times 10 \times 10 = 1400$.
- Multiply MAXIMUS by MAXIMUS by MAXIMUS. Separately, add MINOR and TRIPLES together, and then subtract this number from your first answer. This final number is the year in which the very first recorded peal was rung (at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich).
Maximus has 12 working bells, Minor has 6, and Triples has 7. $(12 \times 12 \times 12) - (6 + 7) = 1728 - 13 = 1715$.

If this is not an area that you’re familiar with, what we’re talking about here are the “stage” names given to methods. This is the last part of the full method name, as in “Chartres Delight Royal”. The stage name describes the number of working bells, not necessarily the number of bells actually being rung. For example, Doubles methods are often rung on six bells, with the tenor staying in the same place, at the back, and acting as a “cover”. Doubles can also be rung on eight bells, for example, usually on the front five with the three covering bells in the order 768 (it sounds better than 678).

As a reminder, here are all the method “stage” names:

Singles	3 bells	Minimus	4 bells
Doubles	5 bells	Minor	6 bells
Triples	7 bells	Major	8 bells
Caters	9 bells	Royal	10 bells
Cinques (pronounced sinks)	11 bells	Maximus	12 bells
Sextuples	13 bells	Fourteen	14 bells
Septuples	15 bells	Sixteen	16 bells

These names – at least, the ones for lower numbers of working bells – are very old, and were decided upon many years before the first peal. The odd-bell stage names were named to describe the number of pairs of bells that could change places. (That doesn’t make sense for even-bell methods, as the same pair would swap and then swap back to where they were if the same number of bells changed place at each change.) The names Caters and Cinques come from old Norman French (maybe you’ve heard of the “Cinque Ports”, the five major English channel ports in Kent and Sussex). The modern names for the higher numbers of working bells have followed the same pattern.

A Short Quiz

By Monica Hollows

1. Where is the heaviest bell hung for change ringing in the world?
2. Who or what are the nine tailors?
3. What does the gudgeon pin do?
4. When was the first ever peal believed to have been rung?

Answers will be in the next edition.

Learning Tips 10: Ringing ‘Round The Back’

By Ewan Hull, ringer at York

16-year-old Ewan rings in York, and was taught by his parents: David Hull and Alison Edmonds. He rang his first quarter peal aged 7 and his first peal aged 8. As well as being an accomplished ringer – he has rung the tenor to young band peals of Cambridge Royal and Bristol Maximus and has rung three quarter peals on the 3-ton tenor at York Minster – he is helping to teach several learners in York and is the current leader of the Yorkshire Tykes youth band. Here he explains his approach to ringing the back, or bigger bells.

- Use your whole body: arms, legs and core; with both strokes.
- Keep your back as straight as possible. If you bend it then it may start to hurt.
- Keep tension in the rope all the way down at backstroke to give an even pull throughout the stroke. This will allow you to pull less sharply and more fluidly. This will reduce friction with the rope and may reduce blisters!
- Think ahead! If you are ringing a heavier inside bell – try and prepare for each bit of work. For example, pull harder in seconds place before leading to make it easier to turn around to hunt away from the front.
- Let the bell do the work. Only pull as hard as you need to. Consistently over-pulling can make ringing a heavy bell so much harder and will wear you out quickly.
- Dictate the pace of the ringing (when you are on the tenor). If the lighter bells ring too quickly, resist the temptation to speed up.

