

The Barrow and District Society and the Barrow Ringing Centre

By Central Council of Church Bell Ringers: Ringing Centres Committee

The Barrow & District Society came into being on 1st March 2004 and has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. That itself was the culmination of a project that started with a mostly silent and neglected tower at Barrow-upon-Humber in 1999.

The Ringing Centre

At that time the tower was re-opened, a new band was taught from scratch and considerable effort was started to increase the amount and quality of ringing around the immediate area. In 2002 the tower was 'recognised' by the Central Council for its work as a Ringing Centre. In the following years the bells were overhauled and augmented to 12, and the ringing chamber was fully restored. They have been a ring of 12 since early 2008.



The need for the Society

In the period leading up to the Society's formation the tower committee at Barrow, headed by the Tower Captain Barry Peachey, and the Ringing Centre Manager Heather Peachey, carried out a thorough and careful assessment of what they thought was needed for the preservation and improvement of ringing in the long term.



A great many people were spoken to and their opinions sought. The conclusions reached about the future of ringing generally were worrying, and have been aired extensively in the Ringing World and elsewhere. Of course in some areas there was a lot of very good practice and teaching going on, but it seemed to be widely agreed that in far too many areas the opposite was true. The tower committee at Barrow decided to form a Society for the quite specific purposes of supporting the growing Ringing Centre and focusing on addressing the problems identified. The mission statement of the society is to bring together ringers from across a wide area with the specific purpose of training and giving opportunities to ringers who are not able to get them elsewhere. The Society is a registered educational charity with the Charity Commission.

The Society is not in any way in competition with the existing territorial organisations in the Humberside region, indeed many of the officers of those organisations are also Society members. It is a Society designed to support the activities of the Ringing Centres and local ringing at all levels. In fact the current membership comes from a much wider area as people travel long distances for the opportunity to ring on 10 and 12 bells surrounded by experienced bands.

Management

The 120+ member Society is now managed by a ten person Executive Committee and enjoyed the Patronage of the Bishop of Grimsby before his recent retirement, and now the Bishop of Hull, the Rt Revd Richard Firth. The officers and committee members come from across East Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire and are elected by the AGM in the usual fashion.

Ringling Centres Committee

The ethos of the Society management is that the Executive Committee does not waste time meeting in person unless it is essential. Most of its work is done by electronic communication and there is a great deal of that. There is one general business meeting a year, the AGM. All available time is spent in actually ringing, rather than talking about it.

The heart of the Society's communication is a monthly Newsletter which is distributed electronically, so that everyone knows what has happened and what is going on. The Society does not hold traditional Ringling Meetings. That role remains with the territorial associations. Barrow & District Society ringling is specifically targeted at training needs and particular ringling projects.

The Integrated Teacher Training Scheme

The Ringling Centre tutors and a number of other Society senior members are keen tutors, members and supporters of the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme and the Association of Ringling Teachers. The scheme is in active use at the Barrow Ringling Centre in the teaching of initial bell handling and is being spread to other towers around the area. Ringling Centre tutors teach and support bell handling teaching at towers across the region.

In particular two key members of the Barrow & District Society, Heather Peachey and Neil Donovan are ITTS Scheme Tutors who are now regularly providing Module 1 and Module 2 Courses across the north of England as well as locally in our Ringling Centres.

The Society provides technical advice on all kinds of training issues such as bell and rope maintenance, Listening Skills courses, tower management, legal advice, and financial management advice using the professional skills available to it through its committee and contacts.

The Society provides other towers with experienced and reliable Quarter Peal conductors so that their learners have the best possible chance of success in their attempts. There is a Quarter Peal programme which takes people from Plain Bob Minimus up to Spliced Surprise Maximus according to their needs. There are usually several Society or Society-supported Quarters every week of the year around the area.



The Society is not a Peal ringling Society as such, but there is about one Society Peal a month. Peals are used as one more tool in the training toolkit. Many people have rung their first Peal with the Society, quite a few after many years as a ringer, never having had an opportunity before. The Society has now scored over 140 Peals since its formation. The Society also runs a 12+ Peal project to give opportunities to ringers to take part in Peals on more than 12 bells. A great many ringers have rung their first Peals on more than 12 bells in Society Peals.

A model for others to follow

The application for affiliation to the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers which was approved at the Guildford meeting in 2013 arose out of a motion proposed from the floor of the 2012 Society AGM by a very senior member of the Lincoln Diocesan Guild, and seconded by an equally senior member of the Beverley & District Society. The proposer felt that the Society was now a proven model for what could be achieved and affiliation could provide an impetus for other similar Societies based around Ringing Centres to be formed and in due course affiliated to the Council.

In 2013 the East Riding Ringing Centre was formed at All Saints, North Cave by Tower Captain Simon Plows and his team, in a joint initiative between the Barrow & District Society and the Beverley & District Society. The two Ringing Centres are now working together very successfully providing a range of training opportunities.

Also in 2013 the Barrow Tower Engineering company was formed by members of the Society to provide bespoke engineered access solutions for church towers.

