

Survival & Recovery

Latest Coronavirus Guidance

The coronavirus guidance pages of the Central Council website are by far the most popular pages on the whole Council website – a bit ironic really that only in a period of little or no ringing has there been so much interest in the Council’s work!

If you have not found them yet they are at <https://cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/> and also linked from the BellBoard Virtual Hub.

The latest guidance is unsurprisingly restrictive, moving away from the guidance based on Tiers which did at least enable some ‘normal’ ringing in Tier 1. We hope of course to be able to get back to tiered guidance when restrictions are lifted, which will include the guidance for enabling young ringers’ groups to meet which nearly got off the ground before this lockdown hit us. We

are also working on different guidance for more open ringing settings like chancel crossings.

Coming out of lockdown into a world of partial and increasing vaccination is going to be very challenging indeed in terms of guidance but we are thinking about it now, and working on how we can use CO2 monitoring to understand ventilation and enable more ringing in well ventilated spaces. We have done a limited trial of the technology and although plans to trial at some towers in the Isle of Wight were thwarted by lockdown, there are places in the world that are still ringing and can help us get data.

Simon Linford, CCCBR

Survival and Recovery Champions

As we are now in the third lockdown, it would seem our return to ringing has been delayed again. Many of us have taken up new hobbies to fill the time, but I know so many are missing the camaraderie and challenge that ringing offers. The Central Council and ART have been working together to identify what might be needed when we can return to ringing.

There has been a plethora of new ideas and virtual ringing opportunities championed around the country. New resources are being developed and many ringing societies are coming up with innovative events, from which others could learn, for example tower outings and striking competitions on Ringing Room. Great ideas which need a platform to inspire others to replicate in their area.

To coordinate the flow of ideas and information, ringing societies have been asked to identify Survival and Recovery Champions. Information has been sent to them for distribution in their area. The intention is not to create an administrative burden, but a mechanism to share, receive and distribute information promptly and more importantly, relevant to that area.

If you think this is a progressive idea, which will help maintain your fellow ringers’ interest in ringing, contact your Association or Guild secretary for more details. And if you wish to become a Champion you can contact Annie direct at annie.hall@sky.com

Annie Hall, Coventry Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers

Successful YouTube Video Competitions

You will have seen over the last several months that the Central Council has been running competitions for submissions of videos that support various elements of bellringing. Each month had a separate theme, was judged by different, independent judges, and the winner rewarded with a £25 gift voucher. In December, each winner from each of the previous categories was pitted against each other for a public vote as to the best overall video for a prize pot of £200. The monthly categories ranged from best striking on 6 bells or fewer; most unusual or interesting bell ringing video; best striking on 8 or more bells; best video demonstrating change ringing, not on tower bells; most effective instructional video; film that promotes ringing in the most positive way, and then the People's Choice best of the best. If you missed it first time around, the playlists, and the winning entries for each category can be viewed at <https://cccbr.org.uk/youtube-competition/>

Just because that competition has ended, don't let that dampen your enthusiasm. Next, we will be looking at photographs that could form part of a photo repository so that anyone, including the public and media, looking for a stock image of bells, churches or bellringers, would be able to have access to good quality, contemporary images, the sort that we'd want to be seen, that showcase bells, bellringers and bellringing in a good light. We are putting the final touches to what that competition will look like and will share details soon, but are likely to be looking for images that cover: bells and installations; art and abstract; young people; ringers in action; ringing for celebration; and ringing throughout the year.

There will be guidance on the quality and size of image, as well as permissions, especially around photos of young ringers.

More details soon.

Vicki Chapman, CCCBR

Cast of 1000

New Year 2019 at Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre, Simon Rudd set a challenge to ring a quarter peal each month based on the Method of the Month that appeared in the Ringing World Diary. I found this challenging and rather compulsive. Lots of quarter peals and lots of learning.

New Year 2020 I decided I would like to continue ringing more Surprise Major and had bought a 2020 Ringing World Diary. I set myself the challenge of learning the Core 7 and maybe ringing them to a quarter of spliced by the end of the year. Simon misunderstood and I found myself in a quarter peal of spliced at the end of January! No, I found myself in two quarter peals of spliced before the end of January.

Then it all came to a halt. Except ringing didn't really stop as we have Ringing Room, eBells, and lots of enthusiasm.

In December there was a call out to those who might be interested in Ringing Room practices based around the Core 7 plus those methods that appeared in the diary. Well, what's not to like? I ticked every box and sent it back. What happened next was an email saying could I attend on Saturday afternoon, oh and in January look after one of the sessions? This is what happens when you tick all the boxes.

I rather quickly had to do a lot of re-learning! My first practice in late December was hugely enjoyable, efficiently run, very friendly and supported by the very best ringers we have. I was treated to off the cuff comments on how the



methods were constructed, why they were worthy methods, what makes them great methods to ring, plus some excellent virtual ringing.

I have just spent another lovely afternoon with the very best ringers at a well organised practice with something for everyone. Homework had been done, those learning given the choice of what they'd like to ring, and a new title given to the conductor, a 'trip advisor'. Perfect!

Once we return to ringing, hopefully in the not too distant future, the expectation is that these practices can continue in the tower, with experienced surprise ringers supporting and encouraging those wishing to learn with focus on those Core 7 methods.

If you would like to be part of this exciting initiative, email cast1000@cccbr.org.uk. You can find out more by following this link <https://cccbr.org.uk/cast-of-1000/>

Nikki Thomas, Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre, Norwich

Newsletter Showcase

Staying in touch with our bellringing community has been so important over these last few months when we haven't been able to ring together and meet up as usual. The advent of on line video conferencing has, of course, made that so much easier, along with various social media platforms.

It shouldn't be under-estimated however, the number of people who don't use social media, or videoing software, either because they can't get to grips with it, or do not find it gives them what they need. One of the good old ways of keeping people up to date with what's going on in your tower, group or Association, is by producing regular newsletters. This of course, can still be distributed by electronic means, but there are still some who prefer a paper copy. And I always say that you should have a paper copy in the tower as well, so that anyone who comes to visit you, or to have a look around for the first time, can see what other thriving activities are taking place.

Recently, the Central Council has been sent some really good examples of newsletters that have been produced, and we started to wonder what others were out there. We are not launching a competition to find the most interesting newsletter, but would like to share examples of good ones to encourage others to use this method of keeping in touch and up to date.

If you have an example of a great newsletter and would be happy to share it as an example please email a copy to me at pro@cccbr.org.uk with the subject line NEWSLETTER.

When you submit an example, please let me know who produces it, how frequently and where it gets distributed to. We'll find a repository somewhere to share them.

When compiling your newsletter, remember to:

Celebrate the victories

Celebrate all the good things that are going on. This can be anything from introducing new members, individual or group achievements like first quarters, or peals, or conducting etc. It's also nice to share good news stories that involve ringers, but are not ringing related such as someone who has just passed their exams, or gained an achievement in another hobby.

Announcements

Share short biographies of newly appointed officers so that everyone can get to know them. Where have you been recently published or interviewed?

Formal communication

Meeting dates, venues and times. Special practices. Courses and how to sign up for them. And, if you need to, address any difficult situations.

Photos

Bright, exciting, enticing photos of things happening. Just make sure you get permission from those in them, particularly if they include young people.

Vicki Chapman, CCCBR

Minor Stepping Stones

If you're starting to learn methods on Ringing Room or wondering how to introduce one of your ringers to treble bob methods, then *Minor Stepping Stones* is for you.

It's a progressive learning scheme which starts with Plain Bob and ends with spliced surprise minor with 45 minor methods in between. You can start where you want in the scheme and work your way through with your fellow ringers. There will almost certainly be something new for everyone.

The scheme is for those who are learning methods in the virtual world, however it is just as applicable to learning on tower bells. It introduces concepts such as: ringing by the treble, second and sixth place methods, above and below the treble. If that sounds a bit scary, think of it as a way of developing your method ringing in small steps which allows you to earn certificates when you've completed each of the five levels. You will have earned them.



Minor Stepping Stones is an unexpected by-product of 50 Virtual Ringing Things. It's been interesting to develop, with the methods and the order they should be introduced a topic of fierce debate between the various contributors. Sometimes you or your band might disagree with the fine detail, but hopefully you will have as many interesting discussions as we had.

<https://onlinelearning.bellringing.org/>

Lesley Belcher, ART

Online Teaching and Learning: Bell Ringing's Newest Cunning Plan

Bringing friends to ringing practice in the hopes they'll become as enthused as you are is like the parable of the sower: some seeds fall on the path, some fall on rocky ground, some are choked by thorns. But some seeds fall on good ground and gloriously, your friend takes to ringing like they're coming home after a lifetime of exile in a foreign land.

Determining the kind of ground each potential ringer is demands a huge investment of time and energy, and there's generally no way of predicting who will or won't hear the call of the bells. But what if there were some way to give them a taste? A way that required a relatively low investment of time, was fun, was physically safe while yielding quick advances in understanding of bell ringing theory and culture? A way that was open to people with limited mobility, impaired vision, or social anxiety, or who lived impossibly far from even the closest tower?

Ringing Room is that way. But its near-miraculous creation by the justly lauded Bryn and Leland (who probably no longer require last names, so great is their fame among bellringing kind) is, while crucial, only part of the solution. People all over the world who already know how to ring have been making excellent and prolific use of Ringing Room. But that's, as my grandma used to say, preaching to the choir. We also want to bring *new* ringers in. Giving them a fun, low-stress, yet structured introduction to ringing is the other part of the solution. A supportive class with clear goals and a sensible progression from one level of skill to the next will give prospective ringers a safe and encouraging introduction to the theory, practice, and culture of bellringing. The jokes and banter, the cheerful acceptance of one's own and others' mistakes, the mystical secret language ringers use – all of these are at least as important as learning how to plain hunt. This is what sets online ringing classes apart from, say, using Abel all by yourself.

Not long after doors started slamming shut all over the world earlier this year, it occurred to me that, really, it would be quite possible to teach bellringing even to those who had never laid hand to rope, and maybe never would.

I also realised that even though I was nowhere near skilled enough at either handling or the teaching of handling to attempt working with beginners in a real-life tower, I had a solid grasp of the ideas behind basic change ringing. So I invited a few friends who I knew had at least a curiosity about ringing as a sort of game or puzzle, as well as a cultural artefact, to join me online, in my first Zero to Plain Hunt Virtual Bellringing Class. I've since brought them through Plain Hunt to Grandsire Doubles, as well as run two more Zero to Plain Hunt and a number of ad-hoc sessions, and have assisted in classes that others have run.

The results have been very positive. Granted, not many of my students have become maniacally obsessed with ringing (although a couple have), but that's not the only way virtual ringing can contribute. Everyone who goes through the four half-hour sessions of Zero to Plain Hunt finishes knowing a whole lot more about bell ringing than they did. And that fulfils a few very important goals.

First, it keeps ringing going in at least some form during lockdown. Keeping teachers involved and engaged is as important as keeping learners engaged, because ringing needs both to persist in the wilderness in which ringers worldwide have been wandering for agonisingly longer than 40 days.

Second, it advances the state of the art in bellringing learning and teaching as a field of study. Every virtual class someone teaches brings new insights into what does and doesn't work, how things can be improved, and what innovations can be introduced.

Finally, and probably most importantly, it normalises bell ringing – makes it something that people can picture themselves doing, instead of something that just happens magically, maybe by a machine or elves. I lived for 17 years in Washington, DC, and for just about all of that time, I lived within earshot of the National Cathedral and its bells. Oh, I loved those bells. But did it ever, even once, occur to me to ask about learning to ring them? It did not (and I could kick myself).

Virtual ringing offers an unprecedented opportunity to fortify ringing for the uncertain times ahead. No, of course we're never going to make ringing appeal to everyone. Indisputably, it's esoteric, geeky, and niche. But the more people who know about it and – crucially – get a chance to try it, the more will be able to hear the call of the bells. And that could change everything.

Laura E. Goodin, St. James Old Cathedral, Melbourne, Australia

Note: the lesson plans I drafted for Zero to Plain Hunt and Plain Hunt to Grandsire Doubles are available from the files section of the Ringing Room Take-Hold Lounge Facebook group or by email at lauragoodin@gmail.com, but you should know they're still a work in progress.

Change Ringing Without a Tower

As always, one must start at the beginning. How did I even learn about change ringing? I'm a tune ringer in my church. I love bells and started researching on the internet about bells, ringing, organisations and stumbled across this thing called change ringing. I went down the rabbit hole and never looked back. I found the North American Guild website (nagcr.org). North America spans an area of 9.54 million square miles. The North American Guild has 572 members, 51 towers and 8 handbell bands. I expect that there are more handbell bands but, for the most part, the 8 are 'stand-alone' bands in areas that do not have a tower. My nearest tower is 400 miles away in Chicago, but I was lucky enough to live near one of the handbell bands in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. I contacted them, and the rest is history.

So what is it like to ring only on handbells, and why do I ring? Well, I suspect that it's no different than ringing in a tower. I like learning the methods, thinking about the permutations, figuring out the puzzle of how the bells fit together, ringing and learning with a band, the feeling of accomplishment when we all figure it out, the sound of the bells when we are all ringing just right and the bells are humming along, the camaraderie and the socialising after ringing over beer or tea.

Abel gave me the opportunity to do homework and learn new methods so when the opportunity came to ring, I was able to keep my bells right and be a more solid member of the band. Our local band is a dedicated group that has



been ringing together for over 20 years. I've travelled occasionally to US area meetings and gatherings to ring handbells with other like-minded individuals who want to spend a weekend ringing.

The development of Ringing Room and rapid embrace by ringers has meant that I've done more ringing in the last 9 months than I've done in the 20+ years since I started change ringing. I'm excited to ring with people all over the world. I've rung two tower quarter peals which I will never do in real life. I'm learning and ringing methods that would be a challenge to ring with my local band. I enjoy the same things that I do in real life ringing ... ringing with a band, the feeling of accomplishment as we all figure it out, scoring a quarter peal after several attempts, the camaraderie and virtual socialising.

I hope someday to travel again and ring in real life with new friends. In the meantime, I'll be hanging out in the virtual towers. I hope to see you there soon! And if you ever happen to be in Minnesota, do look me up!

Susan Fautsch, NAGCR

Keeping it Local

We really want to hear from you if you have a local story to tell about how you have kept your band of ringers together, with the aim of publishing positive stories to inspire others. Send your stories to Mary Jones at mary.jones@bellringing.org

In this edition of the newsletter, we've included some ideas from around the world about what ringing groups are doing to keep together, despite restricted or in a lot of cases the non-availability of their usual bells.