

## Chairman's Chatter

by Pip Penney

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### Central Council supports the ART and the ITTS

At the Central Council meeting on the 4th of June in Chester the incoming President Chris Mew presented a list of proposals to delegates amongst them were the two following recommendations

- Adoption of the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS) programme as the recommended scheme for training new instructors, for which adequate funding will be sought and manpower provided
- Encourage membership of the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART)

### Application for funding for administrative assistant to work two days a week

The proposal to the Ringing Foundation to apply for funding for an administrative assistant is well underway. It is hoped to have an employee in place by the end of 2012.

### Learning the Ropes

Have you got all your learners on the Learning the Ropes scheme? Future funding of the ITTS courses by the Ringing Foundation will be related to results on the Learning the Ropes scheme. This is the measure of our performance!

So to help secure our future get all your learners working on the scheme!

If you haven't taken a Module 2 course yet, contact your Tutor and ask for one. It's a good day, much less demanding than the Module 1 and its fun!

### PS...

Logbooks and certificates for learners available for level 1 to all New Teachers and Mentors and for levels 2-5 to Associate Members and to all those who have taken a Module 2 course, Apply for them on the Moodle site.

# Doing it the Ledbury Way

By Frank Seabright

We are a small district of the Hereford Diocesan Guild comprising 8 towers, of which 6 are active.

The tower members have worked together for many years; helping each other with weekly practices and service ringing, regular monthly evening practices and Saturday morning training sessions. The District is wrestling with the nationwide concern as the average age of ringers increases and too few new ringers are either recruited or retained.

## Analysing the Problem and Issues

A meeting was convened, involving the captain and one representative from each tower, where the strengths and weaknesses of each tower and the District as a whole were considered. The main points to emerge from the meeting were:

- The shortage of teachers and the fact that any potential teacher lacked the confidence and knowledge to attempt teaching new recruits.
- The existing teachers were becoming disheartened by the continuous and unsupported nature of the existing individual tower-based teaching, and the difficulty of retaining learners.



## Our Way Forward

The tower captains and other ringers at the meeting agreed to centralise our teaching to one district teaching process, where all learners would be taught to handle a bell using an agreed approach to bell handling. There was a firm commitment by all to support this initiative. The teaching team commenced its own training programme and are all learning and teaching using Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS).

The date was fixed for an intensive course to teach a new group of learners. This would comprise 5 consecutive evenings using tied bells. The new approach and an invitation to new recruits were heralded through the press, television, posters, door to door leaflets and face to face contacts.

The 12 experienced ringers from the original meeting were an

integral part of the initial course, teaching the recruits under the mentorship of one of the ringers who had already completed some ITTS training.

We used the simple-step, progressive ITTS called 'Learning the Ropes' (LTR). The scheme is structured in a way that all the teaching can be shared by all the teachers thus each recruit is taught by several different teachers.

We also incorporated into the process the approach of teaching from 'Bell Down'. This has proved revolutionary and has eliminated the loose flying ropes and sallies which can be so off-putting and alarming both for the student and the new teacher.

During this week we also introduced the new learners to the vital social aspects of ringing. The first evening concluded with bread, cheese and beer, and on

the last evening the local pub provided us with food and drink when rain put paid to the planned BBQ.

Students and teachers all wished to continue after the introductory week. A weekly 1½ hr session on tied bells followed, and as progress was made to ringing both strokes unaided, simulated sound was introduced. Initially only one tower had a simulator but during this time a second was added, with the additional facility of 6 separate laptops and earphones allowing each learner to practice with sound without disturbing the others. Each learner was tasked with ringing rounds on an increasing number of bells, started with rounds on 3 with the computer infilling the sound of the other 2 bells. With increasing competency in ringing and listening the computer generated ringing was increased to 4, 6 and 8 bell rounds. This stage of the process culminated with the learner ringing rounds with simulated sound, with experienced ringers taking the other bells – again starting with 3 bells and progressing upwards.

Once a reasonable level of achievement had been reached, the learners 'went live' and were introduced to each of the tower practices in the district. This enabled them to meet the rest of the ringers, to experience ringing on open bells and to widen their awareness of the varying nature of different peals of bells.

The concept of tower membership was introduced at this stage, the



learners being encouraged to join a local band on practice night but to continue coming to the tied practices, ensuring they still had the opportunity for one-to-one teaching.

It was a deliberate decision that prior to this stage the learners were considered 'district learners' and did not go or belong to one specific tower, a decision that has worked well.

### Outcomes

The District has 5 new ringers ringing rounds by rhythm (unfortunately one had to give up due to ill health).

Each learner quickly became accustomed to visiting the other towers in the district and knew and was known by other ringers. This has helped to avoid the hang-up of "I'm not going there - I heard the bells are difficult/heavy/too light etc". The learners have learnt at an early stage to handle all sorts of bells and the techniques needed to deal with the differences.

They have become a cohesive group who have supported each other through the process, and continue to be good friends.

The "Learners' Outing" was a particular success – a venture to be repeated and recommended

We have 12 teachers throughout the district, 2 at each tower, who are all able to continue to support the new learners.

### Advantages

- The learners are taught as a group and give each other support
- The teachers also have each other for support, help and guidance
- The teaching commitment is not as onerous as it might be, as it can be shared between the whole group of teachers, not every teacher has to be at each session
- It brings and keeps the towers together, and further promotes the social side of ringing, aiding retention.



## Reflections following the first Course

Since the initial course we have fitted a simulator in a third tower and upgraded the original simulator to a multi-computer system. This gives a choice of 3 venues, and a wider variety of bells. The multi-computer facility is a huge advantage and very definitely worth the small extra cost.

The enthusiasm generated by the scheme raised another 6 interested potential ringers that encouraged us to embark immediately upon another course. In hindsight this was a mistake! We should have given ourselves a break, putting the potential learners on a waiting list for a course starting a little in the future.

We reinforced the point that each new learner should achieve the recognised level of competence before moving on and handling/striking issues should be ironed out before they became a habit. Evidence suggests that it takes 200 attempts to learn a

particular technique and 2000 attempts to unlearn and relearn in a different way. The presence of 3 – 6 teachers at the sessions, each bringing their individual experience, helped address the varied learning styles and needs of the learners.

## Final Points

Any group of towers in relatively close proximity can make this work.

Towers not ready or able to join at the start can be involved later. Any tower wishing to be part of the scheme should be prepared to put forward 2 teachers or potential teachers from within their band.

It is important to identify and fix an appropriate practice night. It needs the majority of the teachers to be available, but a fixed night suitable for the learners is essential. The fixed night for the course inevitably clashed with one tower's practice night, which excluded this band from full participation in the first course.



This situation is being considered as further courses are planned. It is also important to bring all the learners back to a tied practice on a regular basis. This ensures that handling issues and faults do not creep in, facilitates the teaching of raising and lowering in peal, and continues the practice of ringing by rhythm and listening with the simulated rounds.

For further information contact Frank Seabright 01531640252 or [frankseabright@ringingteachers.co.uk](mailto:frankseabright@ringingteachers.co.uk)

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# AGM 2013 Event Announced

The first Annual General Meeting of the Association of Ringing Teachers will be held at Kineton Village Hall (pictured), Warwickshire on 9 March 2013.

There will be lectures, a masterclass in teaching your band to raise and lower in peal, a discussion forum and further activities still to be announced.

The event is open to all ART Members, so please put the date in your diary!



# Teaching Tips #1

## How long do I go on working on improving my learner's handling style?

To help us as Ringing Teachers understand how long we should continue to work with learners we need to learn about the learning process.

Learners will need a different approach to teaching when they are at different stages of learning.

The different teaching techniques are all about coaching the learner rather than just teaching so the ringing teacher will be referred to as a ringing coach or coach. As a learner becomes more skilful through practice, assisted by coaching support three stages are passed through.

### Stages of Learning

1. Novice (Cognitive)
2. Improver (Associative)
3. Expert (Autonomous)

#### 1. The Novice

The cognitive or mental stage, the learner is attempting to understand the basic task and is figuring out the skill. He or she is learning to identify all the component parts of the skill and forming a mental picture of what is required.

#### Characteristics of the Novice

- Relevant movements to perform the skill are being assembled
- Major errors can be seen
- The style is fitful and jerky

#### Coaching Requirements of the Novice

Basic instruction of explanation, demonstration and small step exercises to help the learner get the feeling of the actions. This will all help the learner get the mental picture of what is required.

This is the time to get the foundation skills accurate. Learners are not aware of what they are doing wrong or how to correct errors.

Good feedback during this phase is important. Correct performances are infrequent at this stage and should be reinforced through external feedback and positive reinforcement from the ringing coach. Words and gestures are both relevant, a quick thumbs up can convey a lot.



The learner needs praise at this stage. This is the time the learner is ringing on an individual bell.

## 2. The Improver

This is the phase where the basic skills are becoming refined the learner is linking the component parts into a smooth action.

### Characteristics of the Improver

- Some errors are still evident
- The style is hit and miss (sometimes they get it right and sometimes they get it wrong!)
- The learner is starting to feel when they have got it right or wrong. They are starting to be able to correct their own errors

### Coaching Requirements of the Improver

This is the phase where continued feedback from the coach, coupled with frequent opportunities to practise gradually shapes and polishes the performance of a learner.

Practise on an individual bell is still important to enable feedback and reinforcement to be given and to provide opportunity to practise

Practise of handling must be performed regularly and correctly.

Learners will be ringing on open bells and they need a variety of bells to help them develop their skills. The feedback they receive through the rope from the bell is an extremely good tutor.

## 3. The Expert

In this final stage of learning errors are rare, performance has become consistent and fluid. The movements are well learned and stored in the long-term memory of the brain as a *movement pattern*. Bell handling has become automatic and involves little or no conscious effort.

### Characteristics of the Expert

- Few small errors can be seen
- Fluid style

- Can transfer most learning to novel situations (The learner can cope with different bells easily)

### Coaching Requirements of the Expert

At this point the brain now has spare conscious capacity and it can give this spare attention to focusing on learning new things such as call changes, plain hunting and method ringing.

It should be noted that not all performers reach this stage which may explain why older learners who are naturally less coordinated than younger ringers find it harder to develop their method ringing. They still have to use a large part of the brain to consciously control the bell!

To retain the new skilled performance at this level it must be constantly practised to reinforce the movement pattern. At this time coaches can diversify practice conditions; this is the time to take your learner on a ringing outing!

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# Your news is our news

As a new organisation, bringing new methods and approaches through the ITTS and Learning the Ropes, it is important to be able to share best practice among other Ringing Teachers and with the wider ringing community.

So, we need your news and updates about the teaching you are doing and the successes you have achieved.

We always appreciate pictures and photographs so please attached them to your story.

To be included in ART WORKS and the Association of Ringing Teachers website, please contact Rob Parker via [robparker@ringingteachers.co.uk](mailto:robparker@ringingteachers.co.uk)



# Where are the new ringers?

By Colin Ward

Like most of us, whenever I am travelling around the country, I try fit in with a tower's practice night. I am usually made most welcome, with the local band saying 'Oh good, now we have 6' – the shortage of ringers is so obvious in many places.

This has prompted me to ask around in the areas where ringing is in a healthy state to find out how towers have managed to keep up their numbers.

One obvious, but not really helpful, point is that success breeds success. If you have new ringers who are enjoying their ringing, and the social side of bell ringing, they will spread the word around their friends and new recruits just turn up.

Getting to that point is the difficult bit. In the rural areas where I have been finding out how bands have succeeded one common point has come out. It makes more sense to work as a group of towers rather than trying to recruit for one parish. That way there can be a new ringers' practice night in one tower or ringing centre for half a dozen people each week in the early stages of bell handling rather than one or two feeling like spare parts at an established practice. This is helpful in building the idea of being part of a team, and most people find it

comforting to see how others find the coordination involved in ringing just as difficult as they do.

Finding people to come and 'have a go' is never going to be easy. Apart from word of mouth success can be found from...

- Colourful eye catching posters in shops, libraries and village notice boards (right).
- Leaflet drops – I put several hundred through peoples' letter boxes last year.
- Articles and even advertisements in local news papers and free papers. Most editors are only too pleased to have material given to them in a form that can be published.
- Local radio stations are often pleased to cover any special ringing you are doing and could well give a plug for any event you are planning.
- Asking a particular group to come to the tower – Guides, Scouts, Round Table, Year 6 at a primary school etc.

With all of these approaches I think it is most important to make it publicity for a particular event rather than the 'Come and find out more sometime' posters that one sees gaining familiarity and gathering dust on so many Church notice boards.

Why not try

**Bell Ringing.**

A great team activity to exercise brain and body



Typically the event is either a new ringers' course or a tower open day / demonstration.

The group of towers where I ring are totally sold on the idea of a week long ringing course, which has been used successfully in another part of Herefordshire for several years. By getting half a dozen people committed to at least four evenings in a week, together with some social event like a barbeque, fast progress is made through the initial handling and people really do get hooked.

With the ITTS scheme making sure that the teaching is so much more competent and good fun we are experiencing good retention of our new ringers. Of eleven that have started with us during the last year and a half we have only lost two, and both of them were through health issues.

For tower open days to actually recruit people they have to be well thought out. More people are likely to come into the tower if the open day is part of some other event in the Parish which is likely to be well attended.

If there is easy, safe access a visit to the bell chamber, particularly seeing a bell being rung, always makes an impression. Failing that a video camera in the bell chamber with a monitor in the Church gives some idea of what is going on. I am amazed that you can run about 30 metres of light

weight cable from a camera at the top of a detached tower to the back of the nave without losing much of the quality of the image.

In the ringing chamber it helps to have several well qualified teachers on hand to let the visitors have a safe and fun pull on a rope.

Now the hard bit – I was involved in two tower visits recently, one of Guides and one of Scouts, and in both cases not enough thought was put into the delivery in the

tower. We need to be careful about the image of a bell ringer, and it is really important to have young people teaching and helping rather than reinforcing the image of bell ringers being 50+.

If you are aiming for a recruitment campaign soon and would like to see any leaflets or posters that I have please email me at [colinward@ringingteachers.co.uk](mailto:colinward@ringingteachers.co.uk) and I will happily send anything I have that could be useful.

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## Learning The Ropes

# Records of Achievement May, June & July 2012

Compiled by Peter Bennett

### Level 1

Bob Juleff - Ledbury  
Catherine Vernon - St Peter's Harborne  
George Watson – Bosbury, Herefordshire  
Dan Powell - St Peter in Thanet  
Matthew Porter - Berkswell  
Julia Porter - Berkswell  
Leisa Hodges - Cradley  
John Medley - St James Cradley  
Jason D'Arcy - St Peter's Harborne, Birmingham  
Sandy Innocent - Offchurch (HWRC Kineton)  
Helen McGill-Kerr - Kineton  
Robbie Dyer - Welford-on-Avon & HWRC Kineton  
Paul Kaye - HWRC Kineton  
Sam Archer - HWRC Kineton  
Joan Holah - East Haddon  
Rosemary Hyde - Alveston  
Rob Lawrence - St John the Baptist, Mathon  
Anne Toussaint - St Michael & All Angels, Ledbury

### Level 2

Conan Chitham - St Peter's Harborne, Birmingham  
Thomas Horton - St Peter's Harborne, Birmingham  
Catherine Vernon - St Peter's Harborne, Birmingham  
Peter Lewis - St Peter's Harborne, Birmingham  
Izzie Millar - Shirenewton  
George Watson - Bosbury  
Robyn Ledger - Hanwell  
Sally Dick - Lighthorne  
Nigel Dick – Lighthorne

### Level 3

Rhiannon Millar - Shirenewton  
John Booth – Lighthorne

### Level 4 Doubles

Rhiannon Millar – Shirenewton

As yet, there are no New Ringers who have passed Level 4 Minor, Level 5 Doubles or Level 5 Minor.