

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

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

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One of the new bells at Ypres

One of the biggest dates for ringers is fast approaching - 11 November, when we remember all those who gave their lives in past conflicts, and particularly in the first world war, on the 100th anniversary of its Armistice. So many new ringers have joined our community thanks to the Ringing Remembers campaign and we hope you will all feel your efforts to prepare for this will be rewarding. With so many new ringers joining us this year, we are including some stories about some of the different milestones they have passed as they progress through Learning the Ropes.

Vicki Chapman, the Central Council Liaison for Ringing Remembers, said "The campaign is going really well and we're really pleased with the numbers. We encourage all learners to make sure that they've registered and updated their profiles to ensure we know where they're ringing by 12 October. We'll be starting to send badges out, in batches, after that date. Anyone who registers after then might not get their badge in time."

You might notice that we have slightly changed the format of Tower Talk to remove the side column. If you enjoy reading it, please download it, print it and share it with your ringing friends!

The Best First of Many Firsts

By Janet Bond (Maids Moreton/Buckingham)

Having achieved a “first” in the usual stuff such as: first on the treble to plain course of Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire, first time covering to a Doubles method, first time ringing at a wedding, first time ringing on holiday (Isle of Wight) and abroad (Miami); I was looking forward – a long way forward – to my first quarter peal. With some trepidation. Only 45 minutes, they said Rhythm, apparently. You’re ready, they said.

Hmm. Fingers in ears and “Laa Laa Laa” said I.

Meanwhile ... I was doing all the ringing I could to increase my practice time, and try to get better and move ahead.

I heard about a new “Midweek Ringing Group” which was being set up in my branch (North Bucks Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild) and, being a lucky girl who can pick and choose her working days, I decided to attend the first meeting of this group. I liked the idea of meeting people from different towers, with different skills, and also to be able to ring different bells. All good for the soul and for experience.

So, I arrived at St Andrew’s Church, Great Linford, Milton Keynes; a lovely place (aren’t they all?) with a 16cwt ring of six. This is a ground floor ring, with a nice facility for tea and coffee, plus a charmingly-1960’s-style toilet. Important!

Anyway, we all chatted and introduced ourselves – I had met only one of the ringers before; Gary, the Secretary of the branch, who already knew me because I had changed my name twice since joining the ODG less than a year ago ... long story. (Happy ending though!)

It seemed that there were only six of us, so we rang a couple of things until more folks arrived. Everyone was kind enough to include me and ring to my level. But nobody else arrived

Then the immortal words ...

“Well, there’s only six of us, and we have time Shall we just ring a quarter?”

JUST. RING. A. QUARTER.

My heart-rate shot up, but I tried to be calm and told them that actually, yes, I’d love to, but this would be my FIRST QUARTER! If they would be happy, I would certainly be happy!

So, yes, that’s what happened. I rang the treble to Plain Bob Doubles and got my first QP and BLISTERS! Sweated like the proverbial, shook like a leaf afterwards, and said “Oh My God” a lot. It took a good 24 hours to come down from that particular high. I was beyond thrilled!

It was on BellBoard later the same day (14/6/18) and ... in the Ringing World on July 27th! The Ringing World! ME! (**faints**)

We all learn at different rates and that’s as it should be. I started learning to ring in February 2016. I dare say younger or quicker folk rang their first quarter much earlier in their learning career, and maybe other



Janet Bond doing two of her favourite emojis, with her home tower of St Edmund’s, Maids Moreton, in the background.

people a bit later. Who cares? It's totally personal and on an individual scale that we all achieve our own particular goals.

I am totally loving this ringing thing. Can't wait for my next First.

Footnote - thank you again to the band who helped me to achieve this First QP.

By bell -

2. Anne McIntyre
3. Liz Wagstaff
4. Gary Reading
5. Barry Eglesfield (C)
6. Nick Read

50 Ringing Things 'Hall of Fame'

By The Editorial Team

Here are the details of the certificate achievers since we last published the names. Congratulations to all of them!

Sep 2018	Noah John McDermott	Bronze
Aug 2018	Annie Cunningham	Silver
Aug 2018	Janet Bond	Bronze
Aug 2018	Catherine Neyland	Silver
Aug 2018	Adam Turner	Silver
Aug 2018	Sally Nicols	Silver
Jul 2018	Viv Endecott	Silver
Jul 2018	Mandie Bell	Bronze
Jul 2018	John Close	Bronze
Jun 2018	Monica Hollows	Bronze
Jun 2018	Bogumila Myers	Silver
Jun 2018	Jenny Halliday	Gold
Jun 2018	Gillian Hosking	Silver
May 2018	Alison Foster	Bronze
May 2018	Annie Cunningham	Bronze
Apr 2018	Kathy McCarthy	Silver
Apr 2018	Alex Bell	Bronze

Apr 2018	Daniel Francis	Bronze
Mar 2018	Vicki Rowse	Silver
Mar 2018	Barry Garrett	Gold Plus
Feb 2018	Fukine Minai	Bronze
Feb 2018	Elaine Scott	Bronze
Feb 2018	Vicki Rowse	Bronze
Feb 2018	Barry Garrett	Bronze
Feb 2018	Eliza Hull	Bronze
Feb 2018	Jay Downes	Bronze
Jan 2018	Vicki Rowse	Bronze
Jan 2018	Roger Booth	Silver
Jan 2018	Sally Nicols	Bronze
Jan 2018	Robert Nicols	Bronze
Jan 2018	William Tudway	Silver
Dec 2017	Piers Myers	Bronze
Dec 2017	Lucy Gwynne	Silver

The full list is available to view on the SmART Ringer web site at smartringer.org/fiftythingscert.

In future we will publish the last quarter's data alongside the numbers of Ltr Level passes.

If you like goals and challenges, this scheme aims to show you that ringing is both interesting and fun. The challenges encourage ringers of all ages to experience the wide range of ringing-related activities available. To get started with the challenges you will need to buy your logbook from the online ART shop at www.ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop and then register online using the special code in the book. If 50 Things are completed within 100 weeks of registration, a Gold Plus certificate can be claimed.

Recent Successes

By The Editorial Team

In the third quarter of 2018, 294 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	167 (123)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	83 (58)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	21 (18)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	13 (8)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	10 (5)



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/.

This quarter has seen record breaking numbers of people achieving at all levels:

The 2,000th Level 1 certificate was awarded to Bob Rae of St Marie's RC Cathedral, Sheffield;

The 1,000th Level 2 certificate went to Tricia Mitchell of Leominster Priory;

The 350th Level 3 certificate was awarded to Vicki Hipwell of Goldhanger, Essex;

The 200th Level 4 certificate went to Clare Gebel, also of Goldhanger; and

The 200th Level 5 certificate was awarded to Ellie Seddon of Kirtlington, Oxon.

50/50 Club Draw News

By Gill Hughes (50/50 Club Administrator)

Chris de Cordova, who rings at Whitehaven, Cumbria, has been the 50/50 Club Administrator since its start. She has now stepped down and the rôle has been taken over by Gill Hughes from Belper, Derbyshire.

The Third Quarter Draw took place on Saturday 22 September at Melbourne, Derbyshire, while ringers were assembling for the new Robert B Smith Trophy competition for aspiring 12-bell teams.

The draw was made by Janet Horton, a teacher at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing and a member of the Birmingham Cathedral team:

The 1st prize of £68 was won by Steven Tibbetts (No. 111).

Two other prizes of £34 each were won by Tim Forsey (No. 30) and Evelyn Loweth (No. 132).

Information about how to join can be found at www.learningtheropes.org/5050club.



No Such Thing as a Free Lunch ...

By Mary Jones, South Walsham, Norfolk

Four months in from first meeting a bell rope and I am invited to my first bell ringing competition by the South Walsham band in Norfolk. Obviously, no one is expecting me to compete - that's way above my pay grade, so I readily agree, eagerly anticipating the picnic lunch the 'opposition' were providing. We set off, eight ringers in two cars (six to ring, one to conduct, one (that's me) to cheer from the sidelines).

Arriving at an unfamiliar tower in Suffolk, I am happy to have a play on some new bells, trying hard not to bump the stay or do any damage. Then it comes to the organisation of the competition. The two captains discuss terms, flip coins, write down order of play, and then my captain casually mentions "of course, we will need some rounds for Mary ...". Suddenly my jolly trip morphs in to something more scary. Are they seriously expecting me to compete? I only learnt to stand a bell a few weeks ago. But, as the saying goes, there is no such thing as a free lunch, so compete I must. I prepare for public humiliation.

The competition commences. I try to remain calm. How bad can it be? Eventually, with thumping heart, a dry mouth and shaking hands I take the number 3 bell. A teacher to the left of me, an apprentice teacher to the right of me and a 6 foot tall security blanket alongside, ready to salvage any disaster. I am so far out of my comfort zone that it is off the scale. "Look to" and off we go. And it is OK. Not brilliant rounds, but OK. I even manage to stop at the same time as everyone else. A feeling of euphoria drifts over me.



The South Walsham band with Mary in the middle - not holding a rope!



Enjoying the free lunch.

Now it comes to the judging. My team is praised for the steady tenor (with over 50 years of experience, he should be steady by now) and the competent treble, who kept everything going nicely. "But one thing puzzled us" they announced. Here it comes, I thought - "why did you allow someone you had just picked up off the street to ring at number 3?", or similar. But, no. Instead, "you started quite well and there was some nice ringing. Why didn't you go on for longer?" Our captain looked sheepish, hesitated and confessed, "I could see that Mary was fading, so we quit while we were ahead!" Cue general mirth.

So, if invited to a bell ringing competition, do say "yes", however inexperienced you are. It is an exhilarating experience. With a strong band around you, you can achieve something that seems unimaginable. Just don't be so naïve as to think that you are being invited for your sparkling conversation and to enjoy a free lunch.

As for the lunch, it was delightful. A picnic in a beautiful garden, in perfect sunshine, with a group of wonderfully supportive people. I am already looking forward to the next competition, when our new ringers plan to challenge another Ringing Remembers group to a duel. What can possibly go wrong?

“Wechseläuten”: What in the world could that be?

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

Preparing for a two-week vacation in Suffolk and Norfolk in July 2017, I foraged the internet and stumbled across “Englische Landschaften” (roughly: English Countrysides), a paperback selection of short and highly interesting articles by a German journalist, Peter Sager, whose ongoing infatuation with all things British I would say I share.

One chapter was titled “Mord im Glockenstuhl, Die Kunst des Wechseläutens” (Murder in the Belfry, the Art of Change-Ringing) and took Dorothy Sayers’ “The Nine Tailors” as the starting point for spinning the yarn about ringing and the history and peculiarities of “Wechseläuten”, the German translation for change ringing. I had often wondered what was so special about church bells and the way they were rung in Britain. I now became curious.

So, during that summer vacation in East Anglia, my wife and I visited our first belfry in Linton near Cambridge, our second one in Kersey and our third one in Litcham.

Suddenly, I felt I needed and wanted to at least give it a try. I wanted to “Learn the Ropes”!

But how?

How could I, a 62-year-old American (from Los Angeles), living and still working in Braunschweig, Germany, as a hand surgeon specializing in congenital hand anomalies, ever “learn the ropes”? Who would teach me, where, when and how?

Through the beneficial aspects of the internet, and more importantly thanks to email correspondence with ART and Graham Nabb, I was eventually able to “find” people who were happy to meet me and see what might be done. Late August 2017, I first met David Bell and David Rake at bell ringing practice on a Saturday morning in Shipston-on-Stour in Warwickshire.



A welcome break between our morning and afternoon sessions.
From left to right: Niels Benatar, David Bell, David Rake.

When asked why I wanted to learn, my enthusiastic reply was probably so exuberant (“so unique and typical to the English countryside, the long tradition, the concept of full-circle ringing, the idea of permutations and their direct influence on bell ringing, the daunting challenge of methods...”), I was politely interrupted: “Okay, okay!”

But how would the two Davids, one from Lower Tysoe and the other from Middle Tysoe, meet the challenge of even trying to teach someone like me how to even get started with bell ringing?



Watercolour of Middle Tysoe in April 2018.

fingers on a knot between the sally and the tail-end, fearing as the worst possible outcome the end of my bell ringing adventure and the possible end of my calling as a hand surgeon. But no, I am hooked, I am addicted and I know why. And for all of that, I am extremely thankful. Particularly to both Davids, their wives and Inka, my wife, who now slowly realises that there is something new in my life, something I feel strongly about.

“How soothing, how quieting, how calming first the backstrokes and then the handstrokes could be.”

So, how do we manage this bell ringing fling over such a long distance?

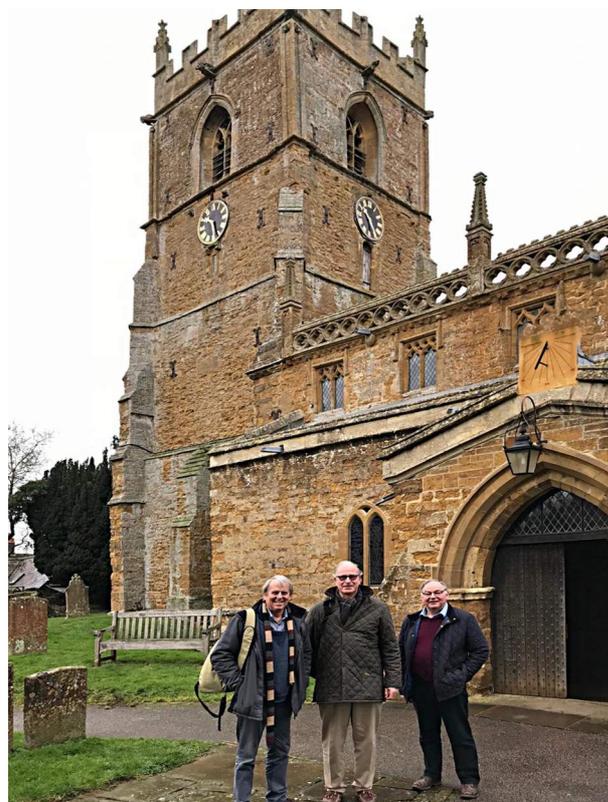
I fly in from Hanover to Heathrow on Thursday, midday, take a rental car and stay in various B&Bs near the Tysoes in Warwickshire. Bell ringing practice with David Bell and David Rake is on Friday morning from 10:30-12:00 and in the afternoon from 13:30-15:00 and on Saturday morning again from 10:30-12:00. Then it's off to Heathrow for the last flight to Hanover on Saturday evening.

And, you may wonder, how long has this craziness been going on? Here are the dates I will confess to: 26-27 January; 20-21 April; 11-12 May and most recently 19-20 July. If all goes well (and I begin to stop bumping the stay so much!), I will be back 7-8 September and 9-11 November, hoping even to actively participate in “Ringin' Remembers”.

Well, we have at least tried!

Our first set of lessons was scheduled for 26-27 January 2018. My wife Inka and I made our way to Stratford-upon-Avon - the only way I could convince my wife of over 30 years to accompany me to Middle Tysoe in cold January weather. I also tried to reassure Inka: “It's just a crazy idea, I have to try it at least once, just to get it out of my system!”

Everything changed over those couple of days in January. Actually, within the space of only a few hours! David Bell especially and David Rake were able to quickly allow me to realise how soothing, how quieting, how calming first the backstrokes and then the handstrokes could be. How important bell handling was. I was hooked! Once, in fact, almost literally, when I caught my



In front of the church in Middle Tysoe in January 2018. From left to right: David Rake, Niels Benatar, David Bell.

Learn to Ring in a Week

New ringers from Dunblane Cathedral describe their week learning to ring.

As part of the Ringing Remembers Campaign, the Dunblane Cathedral Change Ringers ran a five day course to encourage new people to join them. There were three of us in total, all keen to give it a go. The following will give you an idea of how the week went and our thoughts.

We were made to feel very welcome by our teachers, all members of the Dunblane band, who would be giving up their time throughout the coming week to show us the ropes! The week started with a trip to the bell tower and included the all-important safety aspects, seeing the bells and being shown how it's done. We also heard a little about the history of bell ringing here in Dunblane. None of us had any idea just how complicated ringing would be, it's certainly not a case of yanking a rope and a bell would tunefully ring. Our teachers allowed us to progress at our own pace. There was an excellent balance of practical sessions in the tower and other activities in the Cathedral Hall. A lot of thought had obviously gone into the planning of these activities, all designed to reinforce the practical side but also a lot of fun. Clapping exercises to try and get the rhythm of rounds, listening to recordings of bells to try and figure out how many were ringing and also using handbells, to name a few. The teachers had lots of clever ideas up their sleeves to ensure that learning was achievable and fun. Above all they were positive and patient – thank you.

The course title was 'Learn to Ring in a Week' and we have managed this – just. We've also got much, much more from the experience. We've made new friends; bell ringers are extremely nice people. We thoroughly recommend bell ringing to anyone, of any age, who wants to learn.

Miranda said:



Miranda about to ring handstrokes.

When I read about 'Learn to Ring in a Week for Armistice', I thought to myself "that is for me" and quickly signed up for the course. How very tragic that more than 1400 bell ringers lost their lives during WW1. Reflecting on this and upon my love of the sound of tower bells I decided to try to learn myself. I was very enthusiastic before I started learning and despite some frustration when taking or letting out coils without 'knitting' them, setting the bell without an almighty thump and trying not to play in unison with those on my right and left during a round, I still am. I have certainly taken exercise and the gentle aches are rather welcome. I remain extremely keen to ring with others and continue to learn and master techniques.



Molly proudly ringing back-strokes on the 24-cwt tenor.

Jane said:

I'm retired and moved to Dunblane a few months ago. I was looking for something different to do and saw the poster for the Ring in a Week course on the Cathedral notice board. I talked myself in and out of it several times but decided to give it a go. Our teachers were great, so patient and enthusiastic. I have found it quite challenging both mentally and physically but persevered and am so pleased that I did. I've learnt a lot during this week, with so much more to learn. There is quite an age range between the three of us on this course, just highlighting that this really is for anyone of any age who is willing to learn. I hadn't been aware of the Ringing Remembers campaign before seeing the poster but feel privileged to have been part of it.

Molly said:

I heard about bell ringing through my Scout Leader and immediately signed myself up. I found it so useful how patient and encouraging our teachers were. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself. Surprisingly I was the only Scout that went for it and I'm definitely glad I did. This week has been so useful and an amazing experience, I'm definitely going to continue with this awesome skill. Living in Dunblane I have listened to the bells frequently, so to get the chance to ring them was so cool!



Jane positioning the dummy tail end on the sally.

Young Ringers Together

By The Editorial Team



Young ringers in full flow.

What do you do on a Saturday afternoon in Derbyshire when you are on holiday? For Simon Linford, it was organising a young ringers' training outing. The ringers consisted of the children of families on a group holiday, as well as local ringers from the Derbyshire Young Ringers. Sessions were organised at Brackenfield and Clay Cross, both sixes, before finishing at the ten in Ashover.

The Learning the Ropes scheme made this relatively informal gathering very successful - every young person was able to describe exactly what they could ring, and the adults running each tower could readily understand what that meant. So, each ringer had a tailored training experience to complement and build on the training they do elsewhere, with an opportunity to ring with new people. And have a bit of fun too. After all, they were on holiday!

Moresby benefits from Cleator Moor's bells - and gets a new band

By Anne Denwood

In 2016-17, we were thrilled to learn that the tower of Moresby in Cumbria was to benefit from the eight bells from the nearby church at Cleator Moor, which was closing. Moresby already had two medieval bells (from c1400) but these were unsafe to ring and badly in need of conservation due to salt corrosion, it being a coastal church. However now they will be refurbished and rehung in the tower - not for ringing but just to be kept in their original home.



Moresby's bells at Taylor's; the first complete newly cast set by a woman founder in hundreds of years.



Moresby's old bells going for conservation (not re-casting)

This has been really helpful for us to make progress. Recently, we visited the tower at Wigton where they have eight lovely bells which are a similar weight to ours. We were able to ring rounds all together - not always perfect but, in between, some nice ringing.

In July, work started in earnest at Moresby when the bells and their frame all arrived ready to be installed! This was a momentous day for all of us and the local press came to record the event. The bells were firstly placed in the church for a service of Dedication, then all the lifting gear and willing workers appeared to start getting the bells into the tower. Everyone who worked on this was amazing! We all went to hear the first ring of six of the bells in early August. We could not believe how lovely they sounded and we felt so thrilled to see the sallies coming down from the ceiling. Even more exciting was the first time we rang them in the middle of August - what excitement! The very first pull of our own bells.



The new band gets their first ring - Chris de Cordova at left with Anne Denwood next to her.

Looking to the Future at Ypres

By Martin Adshead

Martin is British by birth but has lived in Belgium for many years

Since starting to learn to ring, I have had many 'firsts', and to list them all would fill a book. Most of them have been pleasurable, although one or two not so much.



Martin with one of his teachers, Vinni Sullivan.

I suppose as with many ringers, it all started with first entering the ringing room. It is a place which the ordinary person in the street never gets to see and has no idea what goes on inside. The privilege of being allowed in and, moreover, allowed to use the bells was an incredible 'first'. I still remember climbing those narrow winding steps for the first time on 15 March, 2018, with no clue what to expect. I went up the steps to the room, and on entering being amazed at its simple beauty. That day has changed my life, and it is a wonderful first memory.

The town of Ieper (as it is known in Flemish, or Ypres to most British people) itself is not to be forgotten as a 'first'. Prior to 2017, when 8 new bells were installed, no traditional change ringing tower existed here in Belgium, nor ever has, and therefore no ringers existed here. They had to be found and taught. After the bells were up and ringing - itself a mammoth task made possible by some very special people - the push was on to find and train ringers.

“ We are the first ever resident Belgian ringing band ... all resident in and around Ieper [Ypres].”

That's where we come in; and our ART Teachers. We are the first ever resident Belgian ringing band, and yes, I can say 'ringing band' thanks to the 50 or so teachers who have given their time and energy over the last six months to teach us and form us into the band we are. We are a mix from Belgium, Holland and Brits too, but we are all resident in and around Ieper. Some of our band do not speak English, something our UK trainers have struggled with.



Theory session in full flow.

A hundred years ago Ieper was reduced to a pile of rubble, but has been transformed into a thriving energetic town and now, "with a little help from our friends", we are adding to that energy and helping to preserve the memory of what happened here 100 years ago.

“ We are helping to preserve the memory of what happened here 100 years ago.”

Vicars are Doing It For Themselves!

By The Revd Andrew Thomas, Dulverton, Somerset

Like most people in the church, my first experience of ringing was as a small boy hearing the bells before church while getting my choir robes on. The world of ringing was always a bit mysterious – even though I was interested in it and enjoyed listening to it and watching it, but it was something that I never got involved in. I suspect part of the reason was I always thought you needed to be good at maths, and I'm abysmal!

My arm's length interest continued into my curacy at Cookham in Berkshire where there is a very good tower and ring of ten bells. When I came to Dulverton in Somerset as their Rector (and for four surrounding parishes), ringing didn't really get a look in as my schedule was pretty packed with caring for five parishes and six churches. That was until my now priestly colleague, Paul, joined the team. He started ringing for the Millennium, and is now a very good ringer indeed. As ringing is one of his passions he very soon began to ring here and as well as supporting a new band in one of my parishes, Brushford, he was also able to build a new band to ring in another parish of mine, Brompton Regis. With these new bands and everyone ringing, it seemed that I was the only one missing out on ringing!



Three of the many clergy ringers in the Dunster Branch. Right to Left: The Revd Andrew Thomas, Caroline Ralph (Rector of the Dunster Benefice), and Tim (a retired priest living in the Dunster Benefice).

I approached Jude Atkins, a qualified ringing teacher, and asked her to teach me. She has recently said that she was a bit nervous about teaching the Rector, but to me there were no nerves, not on her part anyway. I began to ring in May this year and, ringing on average once per week at a learner's session run by Jude, I passed my Level 1 – on August 15; not bad going really.

It was a bit daunting to begin with. I'd heard horror stories about people being lifted to the ceiling by uncontrollable bells, not to mention all those blisters on the hands, but for me it all went well. I only broke one stay! The most taxing parts of the Level 1 syllabus were learning how to combine the handstroke with the backstroke on my own, and getting my 'ten in a row' of standing the bell at handstroke and then ten in a row at backstroke. I got there though, and the sense of achievement was great.

So now it's onwards to Level 2. Next year, the local branch is holding their AGM at Dulverton and, as there are several clergy ringers in the branch, our goal is to have a clergy band ring something together ... hopefully not too complicated.

The Inveraray Ringing Festival

By Tina Stoecklin

The Inveraray Ringing Festival is an intensive weekend of ringing and socialising that has been an annual fixture for nearly 50 years. The historic tower, with its heavy ring of 10 bells, the scenic location, and excellent options for food, beer and whisky, make it an excellent ringing holiday or stopover on the way to or from a Scottish holiday.

The bells are the second heaviest ring of 10 (after Wells Cathedral), so it may seem an unlikely place for a training session for new ringers. However, being well-maintained and easy for their weight, the Inveraray bells make an ideal introduction to ringing heavier bells and for exploring a little beyond your comfort zone.

To this end, the organisers decided to try a new training session, designed to help new ringers get to grips with the bells, with plenty of ART teachers and experienced ringers to help. It was felt particularly important for this not to be a crowded event so that newer ringers could have a go without 30 other ringers looking on! To ensure a good turnout, invitations were sent to all the ringers who had attended an earlier SACR (Scottish Association of Change Ringers) training day, and they were joined by some visitors at the weekend as well.



The impressive ringing room at Inveraray.



Coaching one of the young ringers.

Ringers of all ages took part, ranging in progress from basic handling to Plain Bob Doubles inside. Attention was focused on the front six, ending with some rounds on 10. There were five young ringers, including two who were getting their second handling lesson (their first being at Tulloch), and others well on their way to becoming Inveraray regulars (see Joel Cairn's article, below).

They all found the extra session helpful and it gave them more confidence to try ringing in the busier sessions as well. Dawn, a new ringer from Inverness, found that this was exactly the boost she needed: "I was really nervous ringing with so many good ringers, but the morning session was more informal and smaller. I just needed that confidence to ring them."

For the helpers, it was thoroughly worthwhile, especially to see ringers grow in confidence over the remainder of the weekend.

For more information about ringing at Inveraray - maybe to plan your own visit! - look at their website at inveraraybelltower.co.uk.

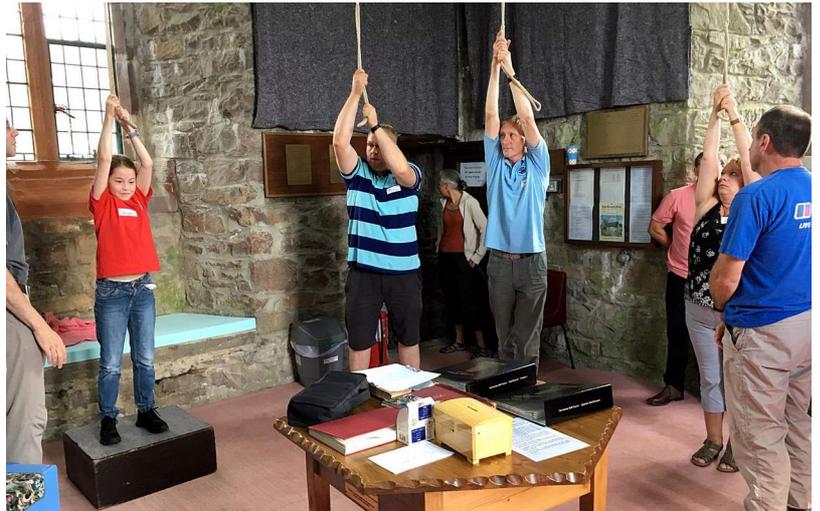
Impressions of Inveraray

By Joel Cairns

On Friday 27 July my dad and I drove up to Inveraray to ring at the annual Ringing Festival. We stayed in a hotel at Arrochar and drove over an impressive pass in the morning to get to Inveraray for the new ringers' session. Inveraray has an impressive big stone tower and ringing room. I am sure it may have felt daunting to ringers from smaller towers, for example sixes or eights. I am from a 22cwt six myself but have rung at quite a lot of big towers including the Bull Ring at Birmingham.

Inveraray is well known for being a very nice ten and I found most of them very easy going. I rang up to the sixth. The fifth and sixth are hard work but aren't odd struck and the front three are especially nice.

The new ringers' session really helped me get a feel for the bells, so I knew what to expect when we rang in the afternoon. We rang some Plain Hunt and Called Changes. It was a great session and everybody was very friendly and nice. It also meant I had more chance to ring. Afterwards we went up to the roof which had great views over the majestic countryside and Loch Fyne.



Look at those straight arms!



Concentrating hard.

When I rang in the afternoon (after going around the shops and lunch) I felt very at ease because of the morning session. There were around thirty people there but everyone got a fair ring as it was a two-hour session and we rang on eight, and mostly on ten. There were a lot of very experienced people there and I think they rang some Stedman Caters as well as Plain Bob, Cambridge and Bristol; I got to treble to Grandsire Caters which I rarely get a chance to ring, as we only have six bells at my home tower.

I very much enjoyed the trip to Inveraray and look forward to going up there again.

Father and Son Join the Team at Northallerton

By Jennie Town

On 7 July this year, Harry Helyer rang his first quarter peal (age 10) by covering to Doubles. This was eight months after starting to learn and he is now preparing to attempt a quarter peal on the treble so that he can complete his Level 3 for Learning the Ropes.

At All Saints Northallerton, as at many other towers, we have a history of families ringing together. Harry Helyer and his dad Colin are the most recent recruits to follow this pattern, although Colin originally had no intention of becoming a ringer. They got in touch through the ART scheme to ask about learning to ring and were pointed in my direction as being the nearest qualified teacher (they live twenty miles from the tower).

Colin contacted ART because Harry had become obsessed with bells. This started with an interest in Big Ben when it was about to fall silent and led to a search on the internet about bells and bell ringing. Harry already knew lots about ringing before he met us. When we took them up the tower to show them the bells, the first thing Harry did was to accurately point out the stay and explain what it did. The next thing he asked was "Where is the slider?" (because we have Hastings stays). As we walked down the steps to the ringing room, he turned to my husband, David, and asked "Do you ring 'Go Grandsire'?" He had clearly been watching ringing on YouTube!

Harry was just nine years old when he started to learn and needed some big boxes so that he could reach the tail end. After two lessons it was clear that he was still as keen as ever and that he was going to be an apt pupil. David had a word with Colin and said "You are clearly going to have years of travelling to towers, so why not learn yourself?"

Colin has not found learning as easy as Harry, but he has reached his LtR Level 2 in quite a short time, and he loves having a shared hobby with his son. I expect Harry to streak ahead though and he is already giving his father helpful hints at times ("You're over the 4, Dad"). It has been a pleasure teaching both of them and I hope they continue to enjoy their ringing.

Colin writes:

I have been ringing at Northallerton since November 2017 and I was first introduced to ringing by my ten-year-old son, Harry. I took Harry along and thought that I would just be a taxi service. Wrong! Jennie and David Town, who run the local band, had other ideas and I soon became an avid ringer. I am now working towards LtR Level 3 and I thoroughly enjoy every aspect of ringing.

I would also like to dispel a slight myth. You do not have to be religious to enjoy ringing. Ringing is for everyone: young and old, religious and non-religious, and it is a great family activity.



Colin and Harry with their Level 2 certificates in Northallerton tower.

Harry (who is slightly better than me), completely loves to ring and he spends every minute away from the tower researching bell ringing. He even has a rope which hangs out of a bedroom window at home.



Harry with the bell rope that we gave him.

Harry writes:

I have been ringing since 13 November 2017 and I was very nervous, but as soon as I met Jennie and David my nerves settled. When I started ringing I was taught on the 2nd and when I felt the bell for the first time it felt amazing. When we went to see the bells they were HUGE. I had so many questions to ask.

When I became more of a competent ringer I started ringing at other places. The first place I rang was Ripon Cathedral for a birthday treat and it was very hard because it had a long draft and it was the first time I rang rounds on eight. Now at Northallerton I ring rounds on ten with my Dad who is on the same level as me and we both enjoy bell ringing together.

[Just as we were finalising this edition we learnt that Harry rang treble to a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles and so he has now achieved LtR Level 3. Congratulations Harry!]

Taster Day to Masterclass

By Emma Bailey

It's 1976 and I am 5, barely tall enough to see over the pew in front of me at St. Etheldreda's in Hatfield, but I can turn around and look up at the bell ringers in their gallery and the stripy weasels flying up and down - fascinating to me! Fast forward some 36 years and I find myself, albeit temporarily, living in Wallington - a village in North Hertfordshire.

Philip and I are sitting in the garden in late summer listening to the bells ringing at St Mary's. We chat about how lovely it sounds and wonder if maybe we could give it a go - a leaflet we had recently picked up at church advertised learning to ring. Lucky for us the extra push we needed came in the form of a ringing taster session organised in a neighbouring church. Here we learnt amongst other things that the stripy weasels were in fact called sallys!

We met some of the local ringers; all very friendly and enthusiastic. As we retired to the pub we decided to give bell ringing a try.

Attending practice night at Wallington (a six bell tower) we met Geoff Horritt who enthusiastically welcomed us in to the fold and encouraged us to follow the ART Learning the Ropes scheme. A bit like the old I Spy books, it gave us achievable goals to tick off as we learnt different skills and knowledge.

Firstly, bell handling. It became apparent that I found this easier to master than Philip, and his 'party pieces' (as they became known) continued on for some time during our Learning the Ropes odyssey! However, when it came to theory and learning Plain Hunt, Philip grasped this more quickly. Another area where we differed was ropesight, where again it came to me easier than Philip, though I think that may be partly due to the fact that I was regularly on the treble at practices while Philip was on tenor behind. Since Philip has had more opportunity to ring the treble and inside, his ropesight has much improved.

Learning as a couple has great advantages. Obviously it means you are not alone when visiting new towers that may seem daunting but also, when it comes to learning methods, we can test each other on the bobs and singles and go through the blue line or circle of work together. During my learning I have hit several plateaus, feeling at times that I am not getting anywhere fast, and at these points Philip keeps me positive to carry on!

Geoff Horritt very kindly organised the quarter peals required in Learning the Ropes to include us both at the same time. The prospect of our first quarter-peal made us extremely nervous, Philip far less so, but we completed it – one on treble, one on tenor, to Plain Bob Doubles, and subsequent quarters with one of us inside and one on the treble or tenor – joking with each other who had the easier task (obviously not Geoff who, whilst conducting, had to keep an eye on us both!).

Since moving to Stotfold from Wallington we became Sunday service ringers at St Mary's, an eight bell tower in Bedfordshire. Here, under the auspices of Roy Webb and Richard Castledine, our ropesight has been improving with the increased number of bells.

Having completed the little blue book we were awarded our LTR Level 5 certificates at the ART meeting held in Royston, and shortly afterwards invited along to the Masterclass in Birmingham with all the Level 5s of 2017.

On 8 September we arrived in Birmingham to a highly organised and extremely friendly event. Stephanie Warboys, the ART Awards Leader, welcomed us and gave everyone, including the helpers, a bit of classroom work to start, honing our listening skills and marking up where ringing errors occurred in a series of short ringing videos – more difficult than you think, but this highlighted the importance of listening being the key to good ringing.

Everyone had been allocated a mentor for the day; Janet Horton for me and Matthew King for Philip, both very accomplished ringers who talked to us about what we were currently ringing and what we would like to achieve during the day. The mentors were fantastic, helping us throughout the day with questions regarding the theory, prompting us from behind while ringing, and reviewing our performance afterwards.

We started on eight of the 16 bells at St Martin's in the Bull Ring. After a shabby start due to nerves we were happy to emerge from there having rung Plain Bob Triples! On to St Philip's Cathedral, a ring of 12, where we were encouraged to try and ring something different. So for us, Grandsire Triples and Rounds on 12, learning to ring close on hand but right up to the balance on backstroke.

Snaffling some lunch between towers we proceeded to St Paul's – a ring of ten where our group was split in two, one for theory work with our tutor and a cup of tea while the other half went up the stairs and rang. Encouraged to push ourselves, I worked with Janet on a simple touch of Grandsire Triples and so was able to have a go here, which, with her assistance and fantastic ringers around, I achieved. We also had a go at Plain Hunt on nine which was a great opportunity for developing our ropesight.

Final trot back to St Martin's for a go at Rounds and simple Called Changes on 16 bells – amazing – and then the presentation of our Masterclass certificates.

Although nervous at the start we thoroughly enjoyed the day, finding it inspirational, and feel privileged to have had the opportunity to ring at such towers with such fine ringers helping us. We feel indebted to all the people who gave their time to help us to improve during this weekend and all the ringers we have met along the way for their support since it all started in Wallington.



Emma and Philip with their masterclass certificates.

Learning the Ropes Facebook Group

By Monica Hollows

Did you know that we have a Facebook group, set up just for learners taking part in the Learning the Ropes scheme? If you are on Facebook do find us and join us.



I started learning to ring in November 2017 and joined the Facebook group in January 2018. Not long after, there was a post asking for people to join the admin team, and as I've got experience of that I thought I would volunteer. I'm now one of the admins for the group alongside Chris de Cordova and Ann O'Hare. Chris set the group up originally and is one of very few teachers "allowed" in our group, Ann is a fellow learner. I've

really enjoyed helping out with running the group. It's not too onerous being an admin, mainly checking out people asking to join are genuine learners on the LtR scheme (luckily we don't get too many requests from spammers!) and welcoming new members to the group. We always try to ensure we respond to member posts to encourage everyone to feel part of the group and join discussions. In addition we post about topics we think members might be interested in such as Ringing Remembers and 50 Ringing Things.

The idea behind the group is that it's a place for learners to meet each other and chat about their experiences. We love hearing about and celebrating your successes with you, but equally it's the place to come for empathy when you've had a bad ringing session and it feels like everything is going wrong. We've all been there (I know I have a few times!) and we can reassure each other that it was just a "bad day at the office" and the next session is bound to be much better, which it almost invariably is! The group is also a great place to ask for tips. Recent questions have included:



Learning the Ropes

- What are your top tips for pulling off the first time on an unfamiliar bell?
- How can you ensure you don't "forget" to lead at the right point? (Yes that was me...)
- What simulators/apps do people find useful?

If you want to know the answer to these questions or ask one of your own, please do join us!

To sum up the group I'll quote one of our members, Anne Tansley Thomas:

The thing that has really transformed my learning experience is the supportive Facebook group. The opportunity to share things with people on the same level as you and outside your tower is such a motivator. When I tried learning the first time it was hard that everyone else knew what they were doing apart from me. However, the support of knowing that it's not just me who has found it impossible to set a bell, tied a knot in the bell rope when ringing up, or live permanently in fear of breaking a stay is priceless. Also invaluable is the fact that I can go online, buzzing with excitement after practice and regale my triumphant performance playing "Twinkle, twinkle little star" to an appreciative audience when my spouse is heartily sick to death of hearing about it.

It's great that I have the opportunity to give a little bit back to the ringing community by helping out with the group, having been on the end of huge amounts of kindness, friendship, help and patience from the dozens of ringers I have met so far. Please do join us, you will receive the friendly welcome that ringers everywhere are renowned for!

The Answers to the Acrostic Quiz

By The Editorial Team

The answers to the quiz in the previous edition follow the questions, in bold:

1. What the bearing of a bell sits in: **Gudgeon**.
2. What we ring when we first pull off: **Rounds**.
3. "That's ... " at the end of a touch: **All**.
4. Complete the phrase for our favourite bit of the week! "Practice ... ": **Night**.
5. When a bell changes direction for one blow before continuing on its path: **Dodge**.
6. That fluffy coloured thing on the rope: **Sally**.
7. When you've got the hang of ringing Plain Bob on the treble, where will you ring next? **Inside**.
8. The name of the campaign to recruit 1400 new ringers in 2018? **Ringing Remembers**.
9. What we call the number of changes which can be rung on a given number of bells: **Extent**.

If you take the first letter of each answer, which popular method do you come up with? **GRANDSIRE**.

Fascinating Facts

By The Editorial Team

The facts this time require you to do a little work by way of a quirky number puzzle! You will soon find out if you know your Major from Minor, or Triples from Cinques!

Add DOUBLES and MINIMUS to get the current edition number of Towertalk!

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.

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.

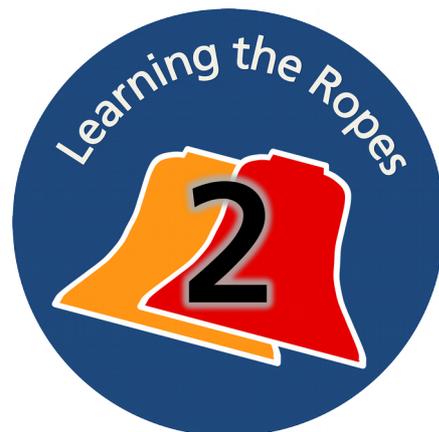
Multiply MAXIMUS by MAXIMUS by MAXIMUS. Separately, add MINOR and TRIPLES together, and then subtract this number from your first answer. This final number is the year in which the very first recorded peal was rung (at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich).

Learning Tips 9: Your Place or Mine?

By Mike Rigby, ART-Accredited Teacher and Tower Captain at Lighthorne, Warwickshire

Learners are introduced to the concept of their “place” in the row very early on since it’s so fundamental, but most beginners first come across the words “make places” as an exercise at LtR Level 2. When you learn to hunt you realise that you’re making places both at the front and at the back. And when you start to learn methods, you learn about making places such as seconds in Plain Bob, thirds in Grandsire, and fourths when you “make the bob” in Plain Bob. I’m going to give you some tips for each of these situations in turn.

“Making places” is an exercise in bell control. You exchange place with the bell next to you, either going up or down a place for two blows before returning to your starting place for two blows, and then repeating it. This can be either hand and back, or back and hand – you need to be able to do both, comfortably and accurately. At Level 1 you’ll have been introduced to how to change speed: catch the sally early (higher) to pull in at handstroke or move up the tail to shorten the rope to pull in at backstroke, or “floating” the handstroke nearer to the balance or letting out rope to ring later at backstroke. Making places requires you to do this repeatedly, with a blow at rounds speed in between alternate faster and slower blows. The fact that it’s repeated will help you to learn how to anticipate what’s coming, and you can use this to learn to ring with less effort.



First of all, get your bell handling right. Don’t ring “short armed”, but fully extend your arms at the top of every stroke. Instead of your muscles taking the strain, the elasticity in your tendons will help to recover and re-use energy from the bell at the top of the stroke. And if you can anticipate the next stroke, you can use your muscles more efficiently and still ring accurately. So, if you need to pull in, don’t pull the previous stroke quite so hard (so you’re not working against yourself); and if you need to ring later, pull the previous stroke a tiny bit harder (or longer, for a backstroke) so that the bell stays up more easily.

Next, hearing your own bell strike is important. It’s the only way you’ll know whether you’re in exactly the right place. Learn to pick out which bell is yours in the row, even as you change place. Many people like to say their place to themselves as they’re ringing: “3rd, 3rd, 4th, 4th, 3rd, 3rd, 4th, 4th”, for example. Try to keep the blows sounding at an even rhythm in each row; your changes should introduce no gaps or clashes.

Now let’s look at Plain Hunt. You ring two blows when you’re leading and two blows at the back, a bit like making places, but you only ring once in each place everywhere in between. At first you will probably concentrate on hunting evenly up and down, ringing slower or faster as needed. The places, especially the second blows (which are at Rounds speed), often don’t receive much attention. But if you’ve learnt to count your place as you go, and you can hear when your bell strikes, you should be able to notice these blows too. Get the handstroke lead gap right and make sure there is no gap at backstroke, just as you would do when leading in Called Changes. And at the back it’s very common not to get the bell high enough: listen for any “clipping” with the bell below you and aim to get even spacing on both blows here, too.

Finally, a look at making places in methods. If you’re hunting – to either 2nd, 3rd or 4th place and back – the bells you pass on the way out will be the ones you’ll pass again on the way back to lead. Once you get to your last place you don’t need to look for any others: they’re behind you in the row and cannot get past you while you’re making places, however many there are (such as long thirds at a Grandsire single). Many learners look for another bell that they don’t need, and then stumble when they don’t see it. Don’t make that mistake. But do keep listening; the change of rhythm should not introduce gaps or clashes.