

# Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using  Learning the Ropes™

Association of Ringing Teachers / Learning the Ropes - [www.learningtheropes.org](http://www.learningtheropes.org)

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### Editor

Ruth Suggett [towertalk@learningtheropes.org](mailto:towertalk@learningtheropes.org)

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Never underestimate the power of cake!

Image: Lesley Boyle

Hopefully you're reading this full of renewed enthusiasm and excitement about the ringing year ahead! Many of you might have joined us through Ringing Remembers and, as we have just passed the first anniversary of that, it felt timely to take a look at a snapshot of how people around the country are getting on and continuing to get more and more out of their ringing. And it also gives us the opportunity to thank Vicki Chapman who co-ordinated this unbelievably successful campaign.

Plain Bob Doubles can often be a huge hurdle for ringers to get to grips with. It is frequently the very first method we learn and it can take a lot of time. We thought it would be interesting to gather together some different angles on this as there are many, many different routes you could take on your Plain Bob journey!

And finally, we couldn't resist putting this beautiful ART-themed cake on the front page! Any ringing event is better with cake and it seems ringers are very very good at conjuring something special out of very different ingredients. Oh yes, they can make nice cakes too!

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# Recent Successes

By The Editorial Team

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In the fourth quarter of 2019, 288 certificates were awarded to ringers at the various stages of Learning the Ropes (LtR) as shown below (last year's numbers given for comparison):

Level 1 - Bell Handling	134 (274)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	80 (125)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	32 (29)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	21 (17)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	21 (9)



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

Nov 2019	Catherine Neyland	Gold
Oct 2019	John Close	Silver
Oct 2019	Joanna Harris	Silver
Oct 2019	Bogumila Myers	Gold Plus

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/](http://smartringer.org/public/records/) and [smartringer.org/fiftythingscert](http://smartringer.org/fiftythingscert).

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## 50/50 Club Draw News

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

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The fourth quarter draw for the 50-50 Club came out as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Prize of £180.37: Number 1 - Pip Penney
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize of £37.71: Number 2 - Mike Penney
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize of £37.71: Number 21 - Jane Thornley
- 4<sup>th</sup> Prize of £37.71: Number 88 - Mandy Burnett

Mike Penney won the big one last December!

You need to be "in it to win it", so why not consider joining and at the same time donating to ART? Information about how to join can be found at [learningtheropes.org/5050club](http://learningtheropes.org/5050club).

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# My First Quarter Peal - The Result of a True Team Effort!

By Niels Benatar of Braunschweig in Germany, ringer at Tysoe, Warwickshire

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Take a lot of Tysoe, namely David Bell and David Rake as my mentors, an idealistic and ideal band in Lighthorne and one crazy 63 year-old-American hand surgeon, bent on at least trying to learn the ropes, handstroking and backstroking his way between Braunschweig via Hanover to London-Heathrow and Tysoe six times a year and two years of that sort of craziness. And then, presto, a quarter peal in Lighthorne on Saturday, 9 November, 2019! Plain Bob Doubles. And I still don't know what it means and how it happened. Except that it was fun. All 43 minutes of covering.



Niels' watercolour of Lighthorne.

The first 8-10 minutes, I did what I think I was told to do. "Don't even try to understand or memorize the method, just listen! You always strike last: one-two-three-four-five-SIX!"

Those minutes went well, as I just counted and tried to strike my bell properly. Looking straight ahead, not even trying to watch the sallies as they slithered their ways up and down around me. It was almost blissful. Relaxing and soothing, at least for me. What had I been so anxious about? This was fun, I even felt myself smiling and laughing, venting my pent up uneasiness. Like a small child, secretly wearing the much too large clothes and shoes of a parent, admiring itself in front of a full-length mirror.

Then, something happened. Even I noticed it. Something had gone wrong. But what and how? I, at the other end of my bell, was out of touch, out of step, out of line and completely out of synch. Clipping and gapping. Even to my ears, it sounded nearly awful. How would the others, the five experienced bell ringers, my handlers be able to help me out of this mess? How would they be able to save the quarter peal attempt? Could they, would they? They did. Graham Nabb, the conductor, caught my attention, prompted me and encouraged me in a number of his own special ways. A raised eyebrow here and there, a nod of the head in one direction or another, a discreet hint, an overt gesture. As indicated. Through his cajoling, through his experience and help, the one lost sheep had been brought back to its flock. I finally seemed to have found my place again. Of course, sixth and last, but that was fine with me, it was where I belonged!

And then, just when everything seems to have felt just right, Graham called out "This is all!" and we went into rounds and then rang the bells down in peal. It was over, done, my first quarter peal! I think my pallbearers were just as relieved as I was. And, now, there is even talk about another quarter peal the next time I come to Tysoe in January. Who knows?

Today, I can only say thank you. Thank you to David Bell, "Captain, my Captain" and David Rake, my tenacious and infinitely patient instructors in Tysoe since January 2018 for taking me under your wings for so long and so often, helping me along a soul-searching journey that often seems daring and impossible in equal measures. Thank you to Mike Rigby, Tower Captain at Lighthorne, ever friendly, ever helpful, ever gracious. Thank you Graham Nabb, instructor wizard of Kineton and Edgehill and beyond, a formidable ringer and knower. And thank you John and Lucy Gwynne for your selflessly kind help and support, not only that Saturday in Lighthorne, but long before that, whenever our paths crossed.



The quarter peal band. L-R: Niels Benatar, David Rake, Lucy Gwynne, Graham Nabb, Mike Rigby & John Gwynne.

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# Need a Special Practice? Why Not Organise One?!

By Margaret Burling, Deputy Ringing Master at St Giles, Sheldon, Birmingham

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At St Giles, Sheldon in Birmingham we have been organizing special monthly practices for some time. The main aim of these is to improve our Sunday Service ringing. In August we concentrated on St Simon's Doubles and are now able to ring a reasonably well-struck plain course. Our recent September practice helped one of our ringers practise the work at bobs for Plain Bob Doubles to help her achieve ringing a touch. At the same practice more experienced ringers rang touches of Reverse Canterbury Doubles.

The difference between a Special Practice and an ordinary practice is that everyone commits to coming in the same way that they would to wedding ringing. This then enables us to invite helpers from nearby towers to provide the necessary support and enable ringers to benefit from having a 'stander-behind'. They are held on a different night from our usual practices.

Having set ourselves personal targets we use Special Practices to help us achieve these. Sometimes we focus on individuals, such as helping someone ring inside to a method; on other occasions we may target the whole team by focusing on something like ringing down in peal.

As it requires intense concentration we have a short break for refreshments and a chat. To make it worthwhile it is necessary to plan these practices carefully in advance, but the hard work involved is well rewarded by the sense of achievement that we feel as a tower as a result. Even the best laid plans don't always go as expected: our recent practice had two out of the three ringers who were keen to practise bobs and singles in Grandsire Doubles calling in sick on the day, one more unable to attend due to working late and another who just failed to show up! However, all was not lost as the remaining learner had three solid Grandsire ringers and a reliable treble ringer so we went ahead without a tenor behind. By the end of the evening the learner had practised all the work at bobs and singles. I and my partner had only previously called half hunt callings for Grandsire, so we were also on a steep learning curve, but due to good preparation we rang a great many short touches and I was able to prompt the learner what work she would do at each bob or single before each one. I had carefully planned to have a 'stander behind' but of course this was not possible as we only numbered five. We came away feeling that although the evening did not quite work out as intended it was definitely a very productive evening that we can build on with future practices.



St Giles, Sheldon in Birmingham.

Over the course of the last year we have improved our ringing up and down in peal and we are usually able to augment our better-struck Rounds and Called Changes with touches of Doubles methods for Sunday ringing. It is also nice that some members of the congregation have noticed improvements and commented on our ringing.

I was encouraged by Phil Ramsbottom (St Martin's Guild) to begin organising these practices and I am very grateful to Phil for his continuing advice and support.

I hope our experience will encourage other towers to organise some Special Practices of their own!

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# The Do-It-Yourself Quarter Peal

By Mike Keeble

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As a group of former students of Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, we began to realise that even though we had rung a good number of quarter peals between us, we were still struggling. In many of the quarter peals we had each rung, our mistakes were corrected by the experts around us.

So when one of our group, Andy Hardy, came up with the original idea to ring a quarter to celebrate five years of the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, we asked, "Could we ring a quarter peal ourselves?"

To do so, we knew we would need to help each other correct any mistakes and someone would need to be able to conduct. Just 45 minutes of perfect ringing; 33 bobs, and a "that's all!"

At about this time, St Peter's Church in Harborne (the home tower of three of the group) was fitted with sound control, so we got busy and organised our first practice in March 2019.

St Martin's Guild Birmingham was already running an X practice, so we decided to prove we could remember the alphabet and called ourselves the Y practice, which rapidly became the 'WHY' practice.

So off we went. At first, we couldn't even manage a plain course. We had been used to keeping quiet and our tutors setting us straight, but now we had to practise helping each other out, calling out "dodge with me" or "you're making seconds".

We met roughly fortnightly and gradually got better and better; the ringing evened out, fewer mistakes were made and the conductors gained confidence. We also did general ringing exercises and methods including Minor, so we could practise "turning in the tenor".

By September, we felt we could have a go. Things went fairly well until the final 60 when it collapsed and we had to admit defeat. We looked at each other and determined not to be thwarted, and quickly organised another attempt for the following week, this time at the home tower of other band members, St Michael's in Brierley Hill.

I can't remember all the details, except that as the conductor, my throat got drier and drier as we neared the end. When we were down to the final 60, I knew all I had to do was call the five to make the bob three times and call "that's all". We had done it! Home and dry and looking forward to celebrating with tea and home-made cakes. But that's not all .... We are now very keen to carry on with the Why practices. Andy Hardy couldn't ring in the first quarter, even though he came up with original idea! So here is our next goal, I think we definitely need to plan another one.



The jubilant band looking forward to celebratory cake!

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# Level 5 Masterclass - Spreading the Love!

By Judy Farrimond

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If you are relatively new to ringing and are lucky enough to have found an ART-accredited teacher to take you through Learning the Ropes (LtR) Levels 1 to 5, then achieving Level 5 should be your target. When you achieve Level 5 you will be invited to attend the ART Masterclass in Birmingham. This is definitely a prize worth having.

After two years of intensive (and yes, I would say obsessive) ringing, both my husband and I were encouraged to aim for Level 5 and the prospect of the ART Masterclass. Our teacher, Nikki Thomas, was keen to keep us moving forward in our ringing, especially when we seemed to hit a wall. However, through hard work, hours of practice and being a bit stubborn with ourselves, we passed our Level 5 in 2018.

Right from the first contact with the organisers we could tell this was going to be something special. Many experienced ringers from Birmingham, and other places, were involved in planning and executing a busy weekend.

Saturday was to be taken up with intensive practice under the guidance of personal tutors allocated to each of us for the day. We undertook listening exercises, which sharpened everyone's focus for the day ahead, and then divided into smaller groups to three different towers across the city of Birmingham - each one steeped in the history of bell ringing. Walking between the towers gave us a great opportunity to pick the brains of our tutors which was invaluable, and to take in the atmosphere of a city which to many is synonymous with ringing.

On the Sunday, quarter peals were planned, though unfortunately we couldn't participate this year as Martin was taking part in the Great North Run. However, three quarter peals were rung and Sally Nichols, Melissa Hunt and Cara Tatterton all scored a first in Plain Bob Major, Plain Bob Triples and Cambridge Surprise Major respectively.

The practices were efficiently run and intensive, with plenty of helpers on hand. All ringers were 'placed' on their bells each time, so everyone got to ring or watch while others rang. All chances to learn something were eagerly taken. I particularly loved the way that no time was wasted chatting about what to ring next! The final session of the day culminated with the whole group coming together at St Martin's in the Bullring which has sixteen bells. Here we had the unique chance to ring 'jump changes' on all sixteen.



I will never forget the experience of the Masterclass weekend. It was one of those big events in your life when you can remember almost every detail. One of the best things was meeting some very experienced ringers who not only are extremely pleasant people but are totally committed to helping other ringers, no matter what their level of ringing. It also gave me a chance to network with people who have amassed immense amounts of experience in every area of ringing. In fact, the leader of our group was Simon Linford who was elected as the new President of the Central Council on the same day as our Masterclass!

Thank you very much to Stephanie Worboys, Mark Eccleston, Simon Linford, Lesley Belcher and everyone else who gave up their time to organise the Masterclass and spent the weekend with us 'spreading the love' of ringing - it was priceless!

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# Plain Bob Doubles for Dummies

By Mary Jones (The Accidental Ringer), Reedham and South Walsham, Norfolk

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Re-reading something I wrote a while ago on Plain Hunting, I realise what a remarkably long way I have come in the past six months. What seemed tremendously difficult then, strikes me as trivial now. I only hope that the same alchemy will occur now I'm embarking on Plain Bob Doubles.

Einstein once said that the definition of insanity was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. I am no Einstein and can cheerfully make the same mistakes in a slightly different context and be surprised when things do not work out.

Curiously, the first few items on my list of tips, such as:

1. Make sure that you are attempting Plain Bob Doubles and not Plain Bob Minor,
2. Beware the sadistic conductor, and
3. Just because you can manage it in one tower, it does not mean that you can manage it in any tower

ALL STILL APPLY!

Now for some additional pitfalls when learning Plain Bob Doubles (PBD for short):

- On the treble. You might think it is perfectly possible to ring a plain course by following the numbers, as long as you are able to transpose fairly quickly. ABCD becomes DABC, becomes CDAB, becomes BCDA. But if someone yells "Bob" things quickly become more complicated and you cannot possibly learn them all off by heart. Believe me, I have tried very hard for some weeks and it just fried my brain. You have to come up with a better strategy. Namely count your place, follow the ropes, feel the rhythm. Teachers will tell you "but it is just plain hunting over different bells". Quite - over different bells. They have forgotten that at this stage of learning most of us are all slavishly following the numbers. We do not easily do different bells.
- Covering for PBD is great fun if you are allowed to rely on rhythm alone and stare at someone else's shoes throughout. All you have to do is count 1 2 3 4 5 me, 1 2 3 4 5 me, and everyone else can bob in front of you as often as they like. If this is your strategy but someone insists that you look at the ropes (with the best possible intentions - they really do want you to develop ropesight), it can be like attempting to pat your head and rub your tummy at the same time. My rhythm disappears as I consider "is that 2 or 3 I should be following?" and it all starts going wrong. If you do want to stick to what works best for you, it may be necessary to develop an intelligent-looking gaze around the circle which is actually a glaze rather than a gaze, but don't tell anyone that I said so.
- Ropesight. My nemesis - that shy unicorn always lurking just around the corner. I catch a flash from the corner of my eye - is that the mythical beast finally? - and then it has skipped away. I have come to realise that the better you are at remembering the numbers of the bells you have to follow, the less easy it is to develop ropesight, however hard you wish for it.
- Ringing by rhythm alone is possible with a virtual and perfect band. If you can practise on a training bell whilst mirroring a good ringer, you can learn a lot, but do not be surprised if this does not transfer easily to a real bell in a real tower with some real human ringers.
- Moving to an inside bell. I am still not sure what is the most sensible order of play. Treble to PBD until you can manage to follow the bobs without a care in the world before moving inside? Or move inside once you can manage a plain course on the treble? I suspect, if like me ropesight is elusive, you might as well move inside sharpish and get to grips with the dodges and places, otherwise you might be hanging around on that treble for years to come.

Those are my tips for learning to ring Plain Bob Doubles. At the start it is not easy - it is the hardest ringing thing that you have done so far by a long chalk. Hopefully, it will not be the hardest ringing thing that you ever do, because that would mean that you never have a crack at Plain Bob Triples or Caters or Cinques or Minor or Major or Royal ... . That would be a great shame.

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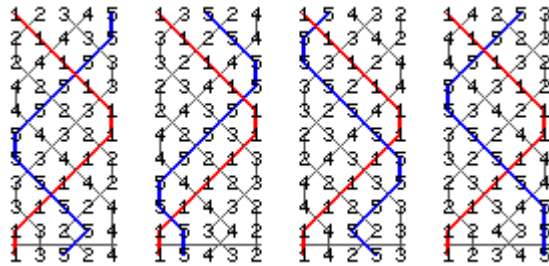
# The Only Way is NOT Bob Doubles!

By Phil Ramsbottom, Birmingham

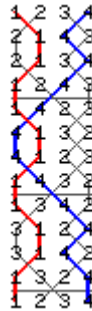
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*Phil is a teacher at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing and is passionate about getting the basics right for every new ringer, especially bell handling and ropesight. Here he shares some thoughts on moving on to Plain Bob Doubles.*

Plain Bob Doubles has become the “go to” method for beginners to take their first steps in change ringing. This is what it looks like:

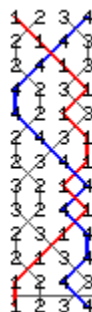


However, if I were to suggest that you might instead prefer to start by learning this:



you would most likely choose it because, for a start, it's much shorter and, even when rung on just four bells (as shown here), it provides the basic building blocks of other methods you will encounter – hunting, dodging and place making – which you can then transfer when you’re ready to take on Plain Bob.

This method is called Bastow Little Bob Minimus, and the aim here is to learn the blue line (literally) and convert that into the ability to manoeuvre a bell through this path of work. However, to make life a bit easier, what you see below is the same method but with the 2nd bell doing the work of the treble, and it looks like this:





Now you can ring the treble (which is now a working bell) and all the bells you will need to keep an eye on will be within a much narrower field of vision. I would suggest ringing on at least five bells, six preferably, and having the extra bells as cover bells. This will make the speed variation required much more manageable.

No need to try and ring all 12 rows from the start, just see if you can get to the halfway point having done the 3-4 up dodge (whoever is in charge calls 'stand' at that point). Master this before then carrying on to do the 3-4 down dodge and hunting back to lead. When you can do this, try it again but pulling off in a different order, say 1,4,2,3 (with cover bells if you can). This will prevent you from simply learning the numbers and will gradually develop your ropesight. This is another important skill to acquire and like any skill, it takes time to master. Ropesight is the ability to see which bell to follow without knowing beforehand. Once you get confident with the pattern of work you have to do and are comfortable with the speed variations, maybe pull off in the order 1,4,3,5,2,6 so that 2 and 6 are covering. This all adds to the fun whilst at the same time aiding ropesight development.

From here, there are a few other methods you could try, sometimes without necessarily learning the blue line. You can find these methods on the SmART Ringer website under LtR Resources (see [smartringer.org/ltr/ltrres](http://smartringer.org/ltr/ltrres)). Bastow, for example, is one of the 'stepping stone' methods for Level 4.

Another skill of ringing is the ability to transfer what you have learnt in one method to help you learn another, so after plenty of practice ringing Bastow, Plain Bob Minimus shouldn't present too much of a problem if tackled next, and it looks like this:



This has the same components as Bastow but with more plain hunting and seconds being made over the treble. To ring this you could learn the sequence of the work (3-4 up, 3-4 down, 2nds over the treble). Alternatively, you may be able to visualize the line in your head – some people can, others cannot – not everyone learns lines the same way. Alternatively, it can be rung by remembering a few simple rules such as:

- Having hunted to the back, if the treble is the last bell you pass, then lie and dodge;
- Having hunted to the back, if the treble is not the last bell you pass, then dodge and lie;
- If the treble turns you from lead, then make seconds and lead again.

You may wonder how experienced ringers remember all the complicated methods they ring, and the answer is often by remembering a few simple rules such as the above and applying them to different situations. So if you can spend time acquiring these elementary skills you will find your change ringing career very rewarding.

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# Death by Bob Doubles or What a Load of Bayles

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

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One of the things I do for my (ringing) sins is to organise the Thursday morning training sessions at the Edgehill Ringing Centre in Kineton, Warwickshire. We run two sessions of about 75mins each, each with two trainees who take it in turn to ring with a 'good' band around them. Of course, this means that I have to find enough helpers to make the sessions possible, and it always helps to have at least a couple of 'spare' helpers so that someone is free to talk theory with the trainee who isn't actually ringing, and so that someone else can take a break from ringing. Sometimes we find that we've only just got enough helpers, and sometimes it turns out that all the trainees are learning Plain Bob Doubles. It's times like that when the helpers start to complain about "Death by Bob Doubles" (although, to be fair, we always try to find a few minutes when the helpers can have a bit of fun, too).

I suppose that sessions of this level of intensity are only possible in a ringing centre - you probably wouldn't want to spend that long on just a couple of trainees at a normal tower practice night. But some things can be carried over and, after a while, the trainees start to come back as helpers. That's when learning little 'tricks' like Bayles can really help. If you've started to learn Plain Bob Doubles, and your tower tries to help you but doesn't yet know Bayles Doubles, then you should encourage them to learn it. It can be fun learning to swap between Plain Bob Doubles and Bayles Doubles, and Bayles is a fantastic way to help learners get to grips with the dodges in Plain Bob Doubles and to improve their striking and rope sight.

You've not heard of Bayles Doubles? It's used to repeat a lead of Plain Bob Doubles over and over again. The two dodging bells and the one making long fifths just keep repeating that work, and many of the treble cues remain correct. This means, for instance, that if someone makes a bit of a hash of one of the dodges, the conductor can just call "Bayles" at that point, and they do the dodge again next time around, and keep doing it until the conductor calls for Plain Bob to continue. The only two bells with something different to do are the treble and the bell that made seconds. There is a resource file on SmART Ringer at [smartringer.org/resource/14927](http://smartringer.org/resource/14927) which gives the grid and a description of how to ring it and when to use it, so I'm not going to repeat that here. If you think this might be of use to you, go and get a copy and encourage your tower to try it.

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## "Is Ringing THAT Dangerous?"

By Mike Rigby, Lighthorne, Warwickshire

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Image: Sally Dick

The photo shows two ringers from my tower who both damaged their right foot within a few days of each other, thus forming what they chose to call 'Club Foot'. They found that they could still enjoy ringing, even wearing a surgical boot, provided they added a little extra height to their other foot. But it also meant that I then had to convince members of the congregation that ringing wasn't dangerous as they caught sight of them leaving the tower.

I'm pleased to report that they're both now back in normal footwear and have since rung a quarter peal together.

I'm writing this on 11 November 2019. Already a year has passed since the culmination of the Ringing Remembers campaign, the aim of which was to recruit 1,400 new ringers to commemorate those that lost their lives during the Great War.

We know that on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice 3,332 people had registered on our database, with 2,810 Ringing Remembers badges distributed to those who had updated their status to show that they were still ringing. 48 Associations and Guilds actively recruited new ringers, with 1,130 different towers listed. 150 towers had more than 5 recruits and at least 10 towers had more than 10 recruits. We know that 20 complete new bands were born as a result of the recruitment for bells that had not been rung for a while, and 14 previously silent towers were ringing again. 3,237 events were listed on [BellBoard](#) at 2,213 different venues. A phenomenal response.

I know how I felt when I took hold of my rope on 11 November 2018. I took a deep breath knowing that bells across the UK, and further across the world, were about to ring in memory of the losses of 100 years ago. What it must have been like for these new recruits, knowing that this was what they had signed up for, what they had been training for, for the weeks and months leading up to the day, I can only imagine.

The stories behind why people got involved in the campaign, and what has kept them interested has been a true privilege to be able to read. Many recruits registered on the [Ringing Remembers Facebook page](#) and have been keeping in touch with their progress. A year on, reading everyone's progress updates is fantastic. Everyone progresses at their own pace and hearing how there is still a sense of collective support is really great. *[You can read some of these, and related stories, below.]* Please do keep those updates coming.

A video and presentation were put together for the Central Council's Roadshow in September and, if you haven't already seen them, you can view them at [ccbr.org.uk/bellringing/ringing-remembers](http://ccbr.org.uk/bellringing/ringing-remembers).

Thank you to everyone who got behind this campaign, whether as one of the recruits, a teacher, helper, supporter or mentor.

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### Monica Hollows - St Annes on the Sea, Lancashire

Myself and my son Ellis were early recruits to the Ringing Remembers campaign in November 2017, so just before Remembrance Sunday 2018 we had just rung our first quarter peal. (We rang our second quarter on Remembrance Sunday 2018!) Since then we are both totally hooked! Ellis joined the Lancashire Association Young Ringers group and took part on the RWNYS in Liverpool in July 2019. I've taken on the role of LACR Fylde Branch Secretary and also LACR Young Ringers Secretary. We have also been working our way through the Learning the Ropes scheme and on Ellis' 12th birthday we rang the final quarter we needed to achieve our Level 5. We are delighted to have achieved this within two years and grateful thanks must go to everyone who has helped and supported our progress, particularly to our Tower Captain, Stuart Newton. Neither of us can imagine a life without ringing! It will always be an honour to ring on Remembrance Sunday to remember all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, particularly remembering my bell ringing great uncles John and William Hakes who were killed in WW1 and who inspired us to take up this great hobby in the first place.



Ellis and Monica Hollows.

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## Luke Tobin - Holbeach, Lincolnshire

I'd recently moved to Holbeach from Watford and just happened to express an interest in the bells at the local church to my manager when he offered to teach me! (I had no idea he was a ringer!) I started to learn with him as a Ringing Remembers recruit in February 2018. By 11 November, the Armistice Centenary, I was able to drum behind to a quarter of Minimus at a local tower, Gedney Hill, where there is seldom any ringing. Once we'd finished we were greeted by a few of the locals who were delighted to hear the bells being rung and expressed an interest in learning. To cut a long story short, after some arrangement, in February this year myself and another ringer started teaching and now the bells are rung twice a week! So the campaign lives on! On a personal level, I've been ringing quarters most Fridays this year, and have my first peal attempt coming up. From an outside perspective and seeing how even local Guilds engage (mine being Lincoln) the Ringing Remembers campaign was certainly a few cuts above, and it's no wonder it was a success. Great job!



Luke with Remembrance Day cake he made.

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## Matthew Cooke - Lighthorne, Warwickshire

Myself and my wife Sheila both started ringing in August 2018 in preparation for Armistice celebrations as new recruits under Mike Rigby at St Laurence, Lighthorne. We both ring for services and feel honoured and proud to serve our community. Although we have not progressed at the quickest pace we have benefited from extra tuition in the ringing centre in Kineton. I have passed Learning the Ropes Level 1 and my wife is about to ring her first quarter peal. Although I am behind my wife in my ringing journey I would like to say how grateful and pleased I am with all the help and support I have had from the Lighthorne ringers. We both also particularly enjoy the social aspect and camaraderie we have with our band. Thank you guys.



Matt & Sheila Cooke.

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## Martin Gilbert - Tower Captain, St Edeyrn's Church, Cardiff

The Llanedeyrn band had been disbanded over eleven years before I saw the Ringing Remembers recruitment drive. I put a band together on 1 April 2018 - nine ringers in total. I got instructors to teach us and we rang three times during the day for Remembrance 2018. Since then two members of the band left, but we have recruited two more and we are back to having nine in the band. We entered our first competition in May 2019 and won the Monmouth striking competition for Called Changes. We got put forward to the Pitman Trophy in Sully where we rang against bands from Monmouth and Llandaff and came second. Initially we only turned up for the buffet as we thought we would come last, but a first and second place was brilliant. The band are at the start of method ringing, but everyone is plain hunting and some are covering on the treble and tenor to Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire. Hopefully by the year-end several of the band will have attempted a quarter peal.



Some of the band receiving their Level 1 and Level 2 Learning the Ropes certificates.

The band goes from strength to strength and has worked incredibly hard. Our instructors and the experienced ringers that help train us on a Wednesday evening have been a great support and we are indebted to them. Bell ringing is a great hobby, but it is bringing a lot of joy to the congregation of St Edeyrn's Church and the local community. Our only regret is we didn't start this earlier in life.

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# What A Difference a Year Makes

By Mary Jones (The Accidental Ringer), Reedham and South Walsham, Norfolk

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Thinking about what I've been up to over the past year as a Ringing Remembers recruit, I started to make a list of my ringing related "achievements", and they were not quite what I was expecting. I wish I could recount tales of quarter peals scored, new methods mastered and important rings conquered, but that is too optimistic.

What I have been doing - and in my mind to a higher standard than my ringing - is probably a little different to most other Ringing Remembers recruits. I have been writing about ringing; both recording my journey to becoming a ringer and my thoughts on the Exercise from the perspective of a recent recruit, enthusiastic and wanting to be involved but with no preconceptions as to the unspoken rules and customs of the ringing community. Doubtless at times I have made a complete prat of myself and written something so ignorant and uninformed that the more experienced have sniggered into their hands at my rawness. Probably a few people have thought, "who does she think she is, to march in with a few months' experience and tell us how we can do better?" But above all, I have tried to be honest, to be entertaining at times, and to acknowledge the enormous gift of being welcomed into your community.

It started with a little piece about The Dog Days of Summer, written one hot night last August, when it was too sticky for sleep and my head was buzzing after a practice night. I then wrote an A-Z of bell ringing, just for the band, as a thank you for all their support and friendship. Naturally, it starred them - everyone likes to read about themselves - and some of the things that we had been up to together. I joined Facebook and posted something about how it felt the first time that I rang rounds without a minder standing close by to rescue me if needed. Again, it was well received so I decided to start a blog, and thus *The Accidental Ringer* was born.

I knew nothing about blogs and it took some time to get it off the ground in a user-friendly format. Since its inception it has had well over 80,000 visits. I have posted most days and written a total of nearly 300,000 words. It is mostly about ringing, either advice for teachers on how best to help us learners, or encouragement for other learners, perhaps struggling with the same things as me. Most of us, make mistakes, misunderstand, suffer from self-doubt and sometimes think that we are rubbish at ringing. Similarly, I hope that many of us are lucky enough to occasionally have those glorious moments when something suddenly makes sense and it is these moments that we must celebrate, because that is what spurs us on.

So that is my contribution to ringing "one year on". I may not be particularly good at *doing* it, but I believe I am rather good at writing about it. Clearly, I have to continue ringing in as many places as possible and with as any people as possible in order to have something to write about. That is why I am often to be found out and about, attending different practices and courses, organising this and that, and looking interested at branch meetings and other events. I am a writer in search of good copy. That is all!



A big thank you to all who have encouraged me to ring and all who have encouraged me to write. This time last year I would neither have called myself a writer nor a ringer, but now I am proud to call myself both.

[Mary's blog, *The Accidental Ringer*, can be read at [dingdong887180022.wordpress.com](http://dingdong887180022.wordpress.com)]



# Ringling Remembers Recruits - What they Say



“ We rang on half-muffled bells this morning, at our home tower of Market Deeping. We wore our Ringling Remembers badges with pride and are so happy that we continue to enjoy our wonderful new hobby and the friends we have made in this wonderful community.”  
[Julie Hynes, Lincolnshire.](#)

“ Progressed really slowly, BUT still ringing and determined!!!”  
[Lynn Bibb, Brewood, Staffordshire](#)

“ After ringing for 11 November last year I have continued to ring for Sundays and on practice night. I had a break after surgery but am now back and managing Plain Hunt. I'm glad to be part of the 'family'!”  
[Susan Rivett, Hertfordshire.](#)

“ A year ago we rang wobbly rounds supported by very able ringers, the first service ring at our church for 20 years. Today we rang well struck rounds and whole pull and stand on half-muffled bells.”  
[Jo Belsten of Norwich.](#)

“ I am a returning ringer after a 15-year gap from Devon Call Changes. Together with a fellow Ringling Remembers recruit (Treble) and a local band I have just completed my first quarter peal on 8 (Tenor for Bob Triples). I am so glad that I came back to ringing and tried change ringing again.”  
[Howard Allen, Staffordshire.](#)

“ When I read everything that everyone has done I feel so privileged to be part of such an amazing project. The outcome is our churches have more ringers and churches whose bells might have been silent now ring out on a Sunday.”  
[Jayne Elliot, South Yorkshire.](#)

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# My Story

By Barry Garrett of Carlisle, Cumbria

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I started ringing after I retired. Not long after I remember my teacher telling me that it would probably take approximately three years to reach Learning the Ropes Level 5. I naively thought it couldn't take that long but, sure enough, on (almost to the day) the third anniversary of me taking hold of a rope I completed the final quarter peal required for Level 5.

Wow, three years have flown by, and I have been in the fortunate position to be able to say yes to the opportunities that were offered to me. At the tower AGM in 2017 I was elected as one of the Steeple Keepers and, since the Tower Captain at Carlisle Cathedral is also the Diocesan Bell Advisor, I have been privileged to be invited to be part of a team of volunteers that have helped with the installation of new rings of bells at both Bampton and Moresby, and with many other bell maintenance projects throughout Cumbria. The breadth of work that I have been involved in led to the great honour of being presented with the Westley Award this year, but there is a greater pleasure in hearing bells ringing that I have helped to install.

My greatest joy in ringing is seeing the progress of others, and in 2018 I took the opportunity to complete Module 1 of the ART Training Scheme. I have recently attended a Module 2 course and I hope to have the practical aspects assessed in December. These have enabled me to assist the other teachers in both Carlisle Cathedral and Thursby (one of the other local churches at which I regularly ring). In both towers there has been definite growth in the number of ringers, improvement of striking, and expansion of the complexity and variety of methods rung.

Steeple keeping and teaching have enabled me to have a greater depth of knowledge about ringing in general, and I have formed stronger relationships with people I might not otherwise have met, so I am extremely glad that I was fortunate enough to be able to take all the opportunities that were presented to me.



Barry receiving the Westley Award.

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## Ringer Plus One

Back in the year 2000, many people took up bell ringing as part of a national campaign to get bells around the country ringing for the Millennium. One of these new recruits was Sarah Hughes of Layer de la Haye in Essex, a tower whose bells were restored in 2000, after many years of silence since the tower was struck by lightning in 1884.

Sarah had to stop soon after while she gave birth to her son Jamie, but the good news is that she's back in the tower, and she's brought Jamie with her. Recently Jamie was presented with his Learning the Ropes Level 1 certificate and both he and his mum are learning together. Some people start their ringing careers early but surely Jamie had a head start on everyone else?



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# Opportunities for All at Truro Cathedral

By Hayley Young, Truro

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We are extremely fortunate to have a ring of 12 at Truro Cathedral, which is the only ring of 12 in Cornwall. They are probably one of the most difficult rings of 12 in the country due to their excessive draught and audibility issues. We are also limited by the extremely busy cathedral diary to organise any additional practices. As a result, it has become difficult to offer the much needed support to the local band, who often only ring six or eight for Sunday service.

In order to set up more practice time, we entered the South West regional 12-bell striking competition. Some of the band also went on a 12-bell mini-outing and up to Exeter for their open practices to gain more experience. I'll just say that we were not a band who would class themselves as an experienced 12-bell band, so we all know what it feels like to be learning to ring on 12. We all had frequent reminders about keeping our backstrokes up and leading. We were all petrified on the day of the competition, but we reminded ourselves that we were doing this to secure more opportunity for all in Cornwall.

After the competition, we found that we had the momentum to keep going. Another 12-bell practice was arranged and, once I had secured the attendance of the band that rang in the striking competition, I opened the practice up and advertised it as a Guild practice "open to all". We had a brilliant practice with lots of rounds and plain hunting on 11. For the more advanced, we rang Little Bob, Erin and Stedman. 25 folk from all over our Guild attended, some ringing at the Cathedral for the first time. We had plenty of support - standing behind, filling in round the front- and back-ends, and offering helpful tips and advice on striking. The overwhelming feedback was "Yes please! Let's have these practices every month!"

I think that many people from all over our Guild have realised that, without this type of practice, our 12 bells are in danger of not being rung. The entire band that rang in the striking competition wants learners to be able to aim for ringing on 12 in Cornwall. We realise that those of us with more experience have to provide that practice opportunity. The resulting attendance rates at the regular Truro Cathedral practice nights have doubled, so that we're now able to ring at least rounds on 12 every week. I'm proud to say that we now have ringing on 12 in Cornwall for all.



[The first Truro Diocesan Guild open 12-bell practice at Truro Cathedral.](#)



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# Learning Tips 14: ‘Quirky Call Changes’

By Susan Hall of Old Brampton, Derbyshire

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“Which bell do I follow?” is often asked during Called Changes. This is probably because conventional calling focuses on bell number, but variations of Called Changes can be rung to shift the focus from which bell to follow to developing the skills required for Plain Hunt and methods: bell control, place awareness, counting, rhythm, listening and ropesight. They can involve ringers of all abilities, add interest and great fun to your ringing, and can sound great too. Here are some quirky ideas:

**Call by ringer’s name** instead of bell number: At Christmas, inject some fun with silly seasonal nicknames, resulting in hilarious calls such as ‘Baubles to Rudolf’.

**Call by place** instead of bell number: All the ringers need to know which place they are in! Use listening skills to work that out and ropesight to find who they are following.

**Facing outwards** from the rope circle: This should encourage ringers to count and listen to their striking and place. Initially try just one or two facing outwards at a time, then more of the band as confidence increases.

**‘Dodgy call changes’**: At each call, the pair of bells affected dodge into place, i.e. they swap over at handstroke, swap back to the original change at backstroke, then swap again at handstroke (into where they would be if it was a normal Called Change) and remain in that place.

**Rounds & Crosses**: From Rounds, call pairs of bells to swap and call that row ‘Crosses’. Alternately call Rounds and Crosses at intervals, then speed up the calling frequency to places (swapping every whole pull). Finally ring Crosses at handstroke and Rounds at backstroke so that everyone is dodging.

**‘Judging call changes’**: When sitting out, listen to the striking and suggest how it can be improved.

**‘Rhubarb call changes’**: Each ringer in turn calls out one change. The only rule is that they do not call the reverse of the previous call.

**‘Morden call changes’**: Each ringer in turn calls themselves from lead out to the back.

**Pull off in a different row**: Each ringer draws a card numbered 1 to n (or n-1 if you want to keep the tenor at the back) where n is the number of bells. The number drawn is the place that they ring in when they pull-off. Challenge a ringer to call it back into Rounds.

‘Quirky call changes’ are inclusive, useful and fun, and can be used in any tower to great effect.

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## Missing Vowels

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Here are a some phrases you’re likely to hear in the tower. We’ve taken out the vowels and put in some misleading gaps! Have fun!

1. KPYRB CKST RKSN!
2. WHC NRN GNSNDY?
3. STRTCHP HGHTHND STRKE
4. BNDTLWR
5. GPLNB BDBLS

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# A Spell - When Sally met Bob

By Annie Longstaff

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Over the last three years I have been circumnavigating the globe with my husband in an Oyster45 Sailing Yacht, and since June this year returned back to England; not only to regain my land-legs, but to catch up with family and friends and to renew my love of singing.

Even in retirement I still look for a challenge! I think it's good to try something new. Having sung in churches and cathedrals over the years, I thought it would be a marvellous opportunity and privilege to have a go at the grand old art of bell ringing. Through surfing the net, I was pleased to find out that bell ringing was suitable for all ages so, undaunted, I contacted ART and it was Rose Nightingale who put me in touch with my nearest teacher, Alan Bentley, who has a wealth of bell ringing experience. It was Alan's warm and welcoming e-mail which encouraged me firstly to visit the tower at Wimborne Minster to watch the team rehearsing and then to continue with a weekly one-to-one hourly lesson learning the ropes. My one-to-one sessions with Alan went well and he certainly put me at my ease and is an excellent, patient teacher. I now attend practices at Ringwood on Wednesday evenings and, although very much a newbie, I am enjoying the experience.



At the helm on an ocean passage.

As well as technique to grasp, there is a lot of new jargon, which inspired me to put pen to paper:

**B**ackstroke took him by surprise  
**E**ncouraged by her big blue eyes  
**L**eading the hunt, seized his chance  
**L**eaving Sally in a trance

**R**unning in and hunting down  
**I**n and out, slower, quicker  
**N**aughty Sally's handstroke slicker  
**G**arter hole then caught his eye  
**I**nspired by her major cry  
**N**ever one to miss a sound  
**G**randsire Bob was left spellbound