

Taking Striking Seriously

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Why Me?

- I am not sure
- I have a reputation, which may not be deserved, of helping bands achieve good striking
- You are, of course, free to disagree with the content of this presentation – these are my thoughts alone

What is Good Striking?

- Can we agree on a definition of good striking?
- In perhaps the purest form it is:
 - even spacing between each and every bell
 - regular gaps at handstroke lead (unless in Devon or parts of Yorkshire)
- And to make it sound nice we must:
 - ring at a good speed
 - adapt to subtle changes in pace
 - cope with occasional method mistakes
- Good striking is very satisfying indeed to the participants, and is noticed by the public

Is Good Striking Common?

- One ringer's "good striking" may not be everybody's!
 - This may be down to the amount of effort each ringer allocates to the listening process
- Good striking doesn't happen very often, and some towers hardly ever get any at all

What is Achievable?

- The strikeometer used at the National Twelve bell Contest has provided us with some insight:
 - ringers can only strike as well as the tower allows:
 - Audibility
 - Go
 - at an average weighted 12 bell tower the best bands consistently strike their bells to within one fortieth of a second. At towers with excellent acoustics some band members can do this to one sixty-seventh of a second.

Bad Striking

- is unpleasant to listen to
 - some European countries seem to get away with it so why is it unpleasant here?



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Bad Striking

- is unpleasant to listen to
 - some European countries get away with it so why is it unpleasant here?
- is easy to accomplish
- is not meant to be bad
- is unnecessary

Good Striking – what do you need?

- Good acoustics
- Reasonably well maintained bells which go well
- A well trained band of ringers
- A good leader
- Quality feedback and advice

Driving a Car – An Analogy

- Steer
- Pedals
 - Clutch
 - Brake
 - Accelerator
- Gears
- Observe dashboard instrumentation and react
- Control indicators, lights, windscreen wipers
- Look in mirrors
- Observe and obey road instructions
- Anticipate dangers and react accordingly
- Navigate
- Have a conversation with your passenger too

The Developing Ringer Must:

- control their bell
- listen to and follow instructions
- ring methods perhaps
- listen to their and other bells
- adjust their striking as necessary

WHY ARE THE LAST TWO SO OFTEN LACKING?

IF WE CAN MULTITASK WHILST DRIVING WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM WHEN RINGING?

The Learning Process (in lots of places)

- Bias is on bell control
- Once basic control is mastered, then rounds
 - Learner still worried about catching the sally, and trying to work out whether to pull or not
- Once rounds is being managed then call-changes are started
 - Learner still worried about catching the sally, and also now puzzling about bell numbers and whether the conductor is telling them to do something
- Plain hunt
 - Must be doing alright or I wouldn't be doing this

Listening and reacting

- Listening should be encouraged from the outset
- Exercises need to be introduced:
 - Whiting Society
 - New ART resources
 - Encourage the ringer to assess ringing they are not in
- Surround learners/developers with good strikers
- Encourage an environment where everyone can accept constructive criticism

St Paul's, Jewellery Quarter Birmingham

- It is critical to run practices efficiently and effectively
- Only have one learner per touch
- If 'Fred' is hunting for a line as others are catching hold, then leave Fred out or change the method
- Test the ringer has done their homework by getting them to write the line out on squared paper during the previous touch. No-one can strike to their potential if they are unsure of their line
- Place every band
- Only give useful advice
- Use exercises to help ringers understand their areas for improvement
- Social activities where everyone can ask questions and receive advice and information
- Some very good ringers support the practice, because they know their time is being well used
- Sunday ringing is not a practice



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Some St Paul's Experiences

- Frequent university student arrivals
- Often cannot strike to City standards
- Learn from being surrounded by competent strikers
- Often comment at end of first year that they realised they were now the best striker at their home tower

Levels of Listening - Setters and Fitters

- Setters
 - Listen to the whole change and detect the underlying rhythm irrespective of whether the changes are perfect or not. They build and enforce this rhythm
- Fitters
 - Listen more locally to their ringing – typically a bell or two in-front and the bell behind. They try to fit in with those bells. The more competent can cope with striking errors of others around them
- It's easier to be a fitter, and this process is most usually started during the learning to ring phase whilst ringing rounds
- Smashers
 - Someone who is not a setter or a fitter. Generally oblivious to the outcome!

Working with Birmingham Contest Bands

- Recognise individual's strengths and weaknesses
 - Tendency to be slow or quick at one stroke or another
 - Consistency
- Band placing crucial
- 12 bell bands and 10 bell bands have many compartments – front, middle, back. They are all important. Give setters influential positions – let them work together for the betterment of the ringing
- Recognise each ringer is already accomplished and give advice in the most suitable way to achieve the desired result
- Rehearsals / Practices
- Impact of method mistakes

The End