

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



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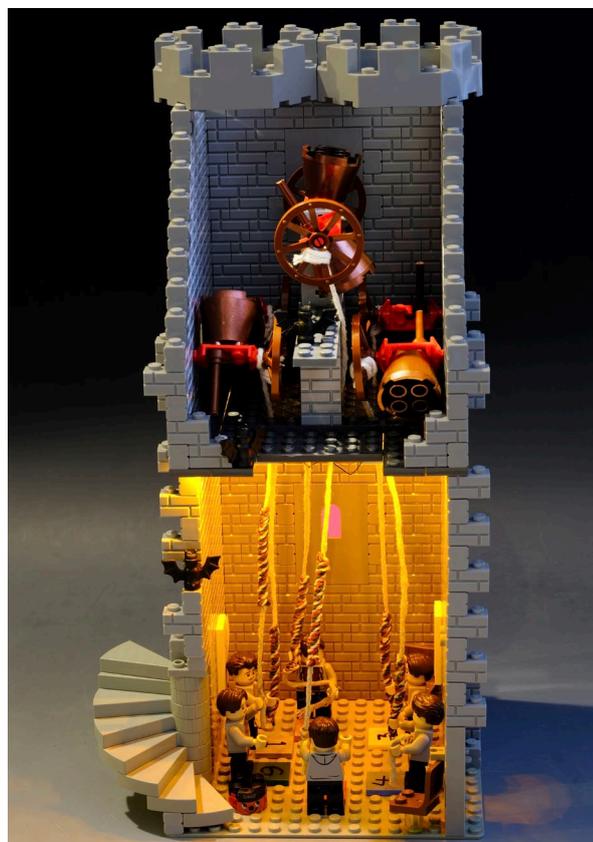
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Emma Hughes of Puddletown, Dorset has kept herself busy by creating this intricate Lego model of a tower, complete with bells and ringers

No sooner had we published April's Tower Talk than we knew with certainty that another one had to go out, and soon! There is so much going on at every level of ringing, some of it the ordinary day to day banter but using Skype and WhatsApp, but a lot of it excitingly experimental. We have tried to cover as broad a range as we can. From technological developments right through to a St Martin's Guild Bake-off, songs, poems and webinars, a handbell tutorial using red and blue pens and reflections of how ringing gives us a sense of identity - there is something for everyone. And if you're just discovering all this for the first time, we have developed some handy 'How To' visual guides. At the very least it's a hello from your community to let you know that while ringing may have stopped, ringers haven't and their ingenuity and sociability seems boundless. So dip in and take part, if you're not already!

Bells and Belonging

Viv Endecott, Lytchett Matravers, Dorset

At a branch practice at Spetisbury in about 1980 I was surprised to see a pair of teenage boys ringing. "Gosh" I thought, "they are the first non-white ringers I've seen". I then thought again. "Actually, I'M the first non-white ringer I know!"

In recent years I've become interested in what gives individuals a feeling of belonging and how it can be invoked, so that people feel happy and at home here.

You may recall that in March 2019, a bell was stolen from the smallest church in England. It was touching to hear what the bell meant to the local farmer, whose family had lived there for generations; it was where he got married and where relatives were buried. It was clear that the bell wasn't just a lump of metal to him, but an important part of his identity. That direct connection by blood and land just isn't available to our new citizens.

I think that partaking in an activity like bell ringing can help the process of integration, because genetics are irrelevant when it comes to learning the skills. You are participating in a living tradition, and when you ring to mark an important occasion, be it a village wedding or the centenary of World War One, it can give you a sense of being actively involved in the national story.



Viv being presented with her LtR Level 3 certificate by Debbie Phipps, Tower Captain at Lytchett Matravers

It has always given me a great thrill that the bell I learnt to ring on as a teenager was cast in 1440. It was made in Salisbury, and sometime later it was loaded onto a cart and brought to Lytchett Matravers. Its 'ding' has resonated around that secluded valley for over 500 years and I don't need a genetic connection to the medieval villagers buried in the churchyard to hear the very same sound!

People love to make connections to the past. My ringing teacher, Lionel Pink, is listed on a peal board from 1931. I pointed out to our youngest learner that if she is still ringing here in 11 years' time, there will be a living link in the tower of a full century, and she was delighted at the thought.

All six of our bells at Lytchett Matravers were restored last year at Loughborough. I thought it very sad that our school couldn't be persuaded to let the small lorry loaded with the bells into the playground so the children could admire them. Apart from a Bronze-Age figurine, our 1440 bell is the oldest portable thing the village possesses. A child like me would have loved to have seen it or even touched it, because it helps to develop a sense of place and belonging.

Bells mark England's story, sometimes in sorrow but most gloriously in celebration. At my suggestion, the bells of Dorchester are now rung on the day of Citizenship Ceremonies. What could be a more appropriate welcome to those who have decided to make their home here than the bells of St Peter's?

I have just achieved LtR Level 3 – my first ringing prize since I achieved my Girl Guide bell-ringer badge! Having been 'stuck' on Plain Hunt for over 40 years I am taking justifiable pride in the certificate, soon to be pinned onto the ringing chamber wall. Proof, if it was needed, that I have a place as a bell ringer!

Debbie Phipps, Tower Captain at Lytchett Matravers, explains how Viv returned to ringing and what a difference she has made to the band:

Viv started to ring as a schoolgirl and had gaps of not ringing. When she heard we were following a recognised scheme – the ART scheme – she returned to help with our new learners. She always said she would help as others had helped her but she would not be going beyond Plain Hunt... until some of those learners started to learn methods and ring quarter peals... and Viv, though an excellent ringer, was getting left behind. She decided she would move on too and has achieved her first bell-ringing certificate in 40 years. Missing out levels 1 and 2, she jumped straight in at LtR Level 3. Congratulations!

Not only was she keen to help others, but she was also interested in finding out more about bell ringing. Never content just to stand in a cold tower with not enough people to ring on a winter's evening, she was one of the first to sign up for the 50 Ringing Things challenge and had soon achieved her Bronze award and made a model bell out of Meccano in the process. Her Silver award soon followed and now she has reached Gold. We are very proud and privileged to have such a good ringer in our band.

Onwards and Upwards, Viv!

Behind the scenes at Tower Talk

Ruth Suggett, Editor

Tower Talk is now in its sixteenth edition, which means it has been going for three and a half years. It started small with just an idea and now I hope it is a regular fixture for all LtR ringers.

It's great fun to produce but it is also hard work. I get the easy bit of sniffing out stories which I think will be inspiring, entertaining and informative. The hard work is done behind the scenes laying it out, working some technological magic and making it into an attractive, readable and accessible newsletter.

Up until now this has been done with 100% dedication by Mike Rigby of Lighthorne in Warwickshire. Although we've never met, Mike and I have always worked really well together and I never cease to be amazed by the superb job he makes of the random collection of files I send him in all different formats. Ill health has meant that since April, Mike has been unable to work on Tower Talk, and I and the whole of ART would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all he has done to make Tower Talk the fantastic publication it is. He has set the bar high, and we are thankful to David Smith who has stepped in at short notice to so willingly take this difficult task on.

Ringling at Home

Roger Booth, Hampshire

Yes, you can ring at home, although to many using a phone, tablet or pc may at first seem daunting. However, ART has put together a series of YouTube videos, starting from first principles, breaking down the myths, and introducing things in easily manageable steps. There are also some tips, such as slowing the ringing down to start with, or using the 'wait for me' command in Mobil.

Whether you are pressing the 'J' key on your keyboard, or tapping the bell in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen, the videos start with how to ring rounds. The videos then go on to explain how to count your place and pick out your bell, with exercises which you can try at home, at your own pace. The videos go on to explain the concept of the open hand stroke lead, as well as the theory of call changes. There is also an introduction to ropesight, covering and plain hunting.

Listening skills are something that many of us have difficulty with, and the videos will help you to prepare for the resumption of tower bell ringing. Even if you do not aspire to ringing methods, ringing really well struck call changes is a very worthwhile end in itself, and something that not only members of the general public, but also ringers in the black zone, the pinnacle of method ringing achievement, will appreciate.

The videos can be downloaded from the ART YouTube Channel - Abel Playlist, at

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFmbPplmdCHOvqN0X0VPn5Zluo9doccQV>

Abel and Mobil can be downloaded and purchased from

<http://www.abelsim.co.uk>

Ringling Room can be downloaded for free from

<https://ringlingroom.com>



Puzzle corner



This puzzle comes from David Smith of Brisbane, Australia, and was first published in *The Ringling World*,

In this puzzle, you have to fill in a grid. Every row and every column is something that might occur during ringing in a six-bell tower (so must contain the integers 1 to 6).

In the clues, the word 'row' is used in the sense 'row as opposed to column', rather than in the bell-ringing sense 'something like 134652'.

CLUES

One of the columns is rounds.

Exactly one row and one column are reverse rounds.

Row J occurs in plain hunt on 6.

Calling up from rounds: 4 to 5, 2 to 3, 1 to 3, 4 to 6 gives row M.

Row K is Queens.

Hint: remember that every row and every column must contain all the numbers from 1 to 6.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
G						
H						
J						
K						
L						
M						

Solution on page 23

The True Story of Ringing in World War II

Beth Johnson, Shenfield, Essex

The *Fun with Bells* podcast – “True and entertaining stories from people who ring bells” – has released a special episode to coincide with the 75th anniversary of VE Day, 8 May 2020.

Alan Regin, CCCBR Steward of the Rolls of Honour, has researched the story behind ringing – or not – during WWII, the last time that church bells were silenced due to government intervention. Alan collected Ringing World articles and letters, from which the podcast host, Cathy Booth developed this special edition and discovered the amazing story, couched in wonderful language, of what part bells really played during the war.

It's a well-known story that the bells were silenced in 1940 and were not rung again until VE Day. The directive to stop ringing came about following an incidental comment during a Local Defence meeting in Kent when it was decided bells would be the invasion alarm “until we find something better” – echoes of ‘Dad’s Army’ spring to mind.

In the podcast, contemporary reactions to the wartime silencing of bells are brought alive by readings of letters written at the time. Concerns that the cessation of ringing might lead to a loss of ringers and that the Exercise would be unable to continue essential recruitment resonate with issues that today’s ringers are contemplating.

Records of debates in Parliament on whether ringing should restart are reported in the Ringing World of the day, and even Churchill became involved. Bells rang for the victory at El Alamein in November 1942, and Simon Linford, current CCCBR President, reads the statement on ringing for this event by the then President Mr E. H. Lewis, printed by The Times and Daily Telegraph.

In fact, ringing resumed permanently after Easter 1943, when the Daily Mail stated, *‘Next Sunday and thereafter the bells will ring ... their sound, sweet with distance as it drifts across the sunlit meadows, strong as it shatters in the city street, marks not an isolated but a permanent victory. Britain has repelled the threat of invasion.’*

The podcast features an interview with Dennis Brock, a ringer from Sunbury-on-Thames, who had been a prisoner of war from the end of 1942 and was unable to make it home for VE celebrations, and concludes with an interview with Eric Hitchins who did ring for VE Day – in fact he rang his first peal along with his brother, on 8 May 1945.

Many ringers will be sorry they were not able to mark the occasion of the 75th anniversary Victory in Europe in the traditional way – ringing at all levels had been planned and eagerly looked forward to on the evening of 8 May. However, as we stay out of our towers to maintain the essential directive of staying safe and protecting the NHS, perhaps you would like to listen to the podcast, and encourage others from your towers or districts to do the same. Follow this link for information about the whole *Fun with Bells* series:

<https://funwithbells.com/about-fun-with-bells/episodes>

You will find many other fascinating topics covered in the *Fun With Bells* podcast and now could be the time to discover it.



1941 bomb damage to St Mary Le Bow

You Can YouTube

Simon Edwards, Swindon

In these extraordinary times, the ringing community has found a number of ways to keep ringing going, even whilst we are not able to ring bells for real. Practices, pub sessions and quiz nights have transferred to Zoom, Ringing Room appears to have hit it off rather well, and handbells are coming into their own – never have I seen so much love for Minimus!

Of course, social media – a major part of modern society anyway – is playing a not insignificant part in the current climate. However, YouTube is playing an even bigger role than most – if not all – other social media sites.

An Introduction to YouTube

I am firmly of the belief that YouTube is the best platform – on social media at least, but also on a wider scale – for promoting ringing – a view shared by a good number of other ringers too. In particular, but not exclusively, it strikes a particular chord with younger ringers.

For anyone unfamiliar with the site, YouTube is a video sharing platform, with content for any and every topic – from the weird to the wonderful – but it's fair to say that ringing does have a stronger presence on YouTube than many people realise.

Unlike most other social media sites, any content uploaded is publicly available to anybody – one does not need an account to watch any of the videos. Indeed, many young people are browsing YouTube videos before getting any other social media account. Videos are relatively easy to look for; just by typing “bell ringing Swindon” into a search, say, the relevant results would likely include a video(s) of said tower, providing one (or more) exists.



Simon at work editing a video

My Experience as a bell-ringing YouTuber

YouTube has been a big part of my ringing social life for the last ten years. Going under the alias *simonbellringer*, I have – at the time of writing – 627 videos uploaded to my YouTube channel, and pretty much exclusively of bells and bell ringing, featuring a multitude of towers across the UK (including a couple from Ireland).

My interest was piqued as a teenager, when I saw a few videos of ringing others had posted, and I decided I wanted to get in on the act. In part, this was because there was no footage of any Swindon towers online, and I wanted to show off the bells in my town! It also looked like a fun and empowering thing to do – one way to get my name out there. And, even then, I could see the attraction of building a portfolio of towers from across the country, for mine (and others') interest, and as a reminder of all the places I had visited, the people I was ringing with, and the fun I was having whilst ringing! That said, there is also a satisfaction in one's work being presented – and other people seemed to enjoy my videos, which was encouragement enough to keep making them!

During the last decade, I have met, and been able to keep in touch with, a number of ringers – many of whom I consider good friends – through our shared interest in bell-ringing videos on YouTube. One particular memory I have is from a few years ago, when Steve Rowe, a ringer in Sydney and someone who I got to know on YouTube, was in the country, and made a trip to a St Mark, Swindon practice to meet me in person.

The Technology and Making a Video

Filming and uploading a video for YouTube is not tricky, and you do not have to be wonderfully tech-savvy – all you need is something to film with (most phones do this these days!), and an internet connection. The video quality on most phones these days is excellent.

Some people are happy to take the footage and upload it directly to YouTube; most people I know try and enhance the video with a bit of editing.

It's entirely down to the individual how they make their video - what editing software they use, and what they include in the final copy. Personally, my style is to give around 5 minutes per tower - less if making a video of multiple towers - as most people's interest (in my experience) doesn't tend to last much beyond that. I do take time to listen back to the ringing, and pick two or three good bits - poor striking reflects badly on the band and the uploader, and does not show the ringing world in a good light either! Finally, and **most importantly**, it is crucial to ensure **permission from everyone who appears in the clip has been sought** - if someone requests not to be filmed, that should be respected, above all.

I have compiled a brief guidance video, which I hope will be useful and helpful - it can be found on my YouTube channel (simonbellringer):

<https://youtu.be/hT2LHqZl0a4>

And finally...

For those unfamiliar with YouTube and the wealth of resources, I hope this article has been of benefit, maybe even enlightening. YouTube is well established, and is a very powerful tool. I also am firmly of the belief that it is **THE** site to promote and recruit bell ringing, as well as playing a crucial role in keeping both ringing and our interest alive whilst we are currently unable to go out and ring for real.

If you have not done so already, why not go and have a look for some ringing on YouTube? Is your tower featured online? If not, why not plan to film a video of your band and your bell ringers once we return? Perhaps even use the opportunity to try and attract some new people to your tower... Many people will be looking for a new hobby once we are allowed out again!

Above all, make use of the wide range of resources available online - be that a view of ringing from many hundreds of towers and bands worldwide; be that a training video or tutorial; be that one of the Central Council's blog videos; or be that a recruitment video! Get inspired, and I look forward to seeing new material appearing just as soon as we return to ringing.

And, if you need a steer on where to start, the following YouTube channels are regular uploaders of relevant and interesting bell-ringing related material:

simonbellringer
AR_RingingVideos

Bellr1nger
markcp81

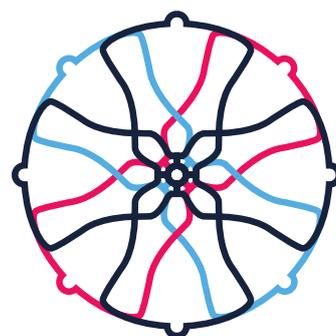
lovesguide
Bells on film

YouTube Competition

To recognise the coming of age of recording ringing on YouTube, to encourage the discovery and production of high quality online content and to have a little bit of focus and fun while we cannot go out and ring, the Central Council is running a competition for the best YouTube videos of ringing. This is a monthly competition to uncover the best of these YouTube clips. Full details can be found on the Central Council website, on social media or you can read about it in the Ringing World. Check the details at:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/youtube-competition>

For the rest of 2020, submissions for the best YouTube video will be invited each month for a different category starting with the best striking on 6 bells or fewer as the theme for May - keep watching! Or start YouTubing!



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Want to be a YouTube Star?

Tim Hart, Bury St Edmunds

An increasing number of music groups are creating videos of themselves playing together in virtual ensembles. Choirs, brass groups and string groups are finding that they can get their performance 'fix' by recording independent parts and then joining them together into an online ensemble.

As an amateur musician and IT professional this immediately caught my attention. I've whiled away a few of my lock-down hours experimenting with creating YouTube videos. However, while there are plenty of music recordings out there, I couldn't find any similar bell-ringing ones. There are probably a couple of reasons for this, the primary one being that most of us don't have access to our private belfry to record things! However, many have handbells, or handbell substitutes.



A couple of typical YouTube musical performances

Left: I Vow to Thee My Country
https://youtu.be/3NBJTr0C_14

Right: Rondo from Mozart 4th Horn Concerto. K495
<https://youtu.be/9KYraTeGGcg>



The second reason I think is the different technique needed. Recording a musical instrument while listening to a metronome beat is difficult enough, particularly if the last time you had to do it was at school! Ringing a handbell while listening to an external beat is totally alien.

Or is it? Many of us are now regularly practising with Abel which forces the ringer to rely less on rovesight and more on rhythm. Would it be possible to ring handbells while listening to an Abel generated rhythm?

Well there was one way to find out – give it a go. Oh – and learn how to ring handbells first. Although an established ringer of grown up bells, I've only ever dabbled with little ones.

Multiple retakes of 3 videos later, I was the proud owner of a video of plain hunt on six. Flushed with success, I proudly announced my break-through – only to receive a video from Norfolk ringer Simon Rudd of him ringing a half a course of Bristol Surprise Major within a couple of days. I did have to explain the technology to him though...

The videos received a fair amount of feedback. One of the comments got me thinking – 'This is Tim ringing on 6, but could it be 8, 10 or 12?' While I'd reached my handbell-ringing limits, the opportunities for faking it on the internet were enormous.

When you are busy learning to ring a bell, you don't have much time to think about the underlying theory behind the methods. However, as you progress and start experimenting, there are some useful concepts out there to help you. One of those is place notation – a shorthand code for describing what a bell in a particular place in the change should do as the method progresses from one change to another. A bell either stays at the same speed in the same place, speeds up and moves a place earlier, or holds up and moves a place later. We've all been there, but if you jump more than one place or even more than one change, something has gone wrong!

This provided me with a great opportunity for some video manipulation – all I needed to do was record four building blocks – each hand ringing a handstroke and then a backstroke. Then, based on the place notation for each bell, I combined the building blocks separated by the appropriate delays. Once the 12 separate videos were joined together into one long line I had my very own internet fake change ringing.

Additionally, I had some recordings of the Norman Tower bells in Bury St Edmunds ringing separately. While I couldn't do anything clever with the video, I could use the same technique to generate some of the finest ringing (not) heard at the Norman Tower in recent times. The St Edmundsbury Cathedral have cleverly used this prior to their Sunday Service Facebook broadcast to call the faithful to err... their iPads.

As fun as it is experimenting with technology, it's going to be great to get back in that real-life ringing chamber!

Webinars - two reviews

Laura E Goodin, Melbourne, Australia

Reviews: *Blue Lines, Parts 1 and 2* (Ely Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers) and *Plain Bob Doubles Revisited* (Mark Robbins, St. Mary's, Shenfield)

In these days of isolation, most ringers are searching diligently for ways to keep connected with ringing and other ringers. Online tutorials and webinars are one way to actually progress in ringing expertise until one can lay hand to rope yet again. I look here at two recent offerings.

Blue Lines, Parts 1 and 2 is a jam-packed two-hour webinar. As I was working my way through it, I was reminded of something my very wise tae-kwon-do teacher said to me: "*Laura, our greatest strengths are our greatest weaknesses.*" Such is the case with Blue Lines. Just about every feature and topic – and their name is Legion, for they are many – is simultaneously (1) just what one ringer has been waiting years for, (2) far too simplistic for another, and (3) enough to immobilise a third in blinking incomprehension.

The title is a bit simplistic, because presenter Stephen Burr uses the concept of the blue line – the notation system that bell ringers use for methods – as a jumping-off point to discuss bell-ringing history, place notation, the structure of methods, naming conventions and types of methods, circles of work, self-rescue when lost in the bell-ringing woods, the use of place bells in learning methods, and a glimpse through the swirling mists at the arcane mysteries of what actually happens when someone calls a bob or a single. That's an awful lot to shove into two hours of video, no matter how carefully planned and deliberate the explanations.

Burr starts at "*What is a method?*", which may desperately bore the skilled and experienced ringer even as it reassures the wary newbie. However, he thoroughly (and I do mean thoroughly) explains each concept, and as the explanations march inexorably on, growing in complexity as they go, a relative beginner like me starts to feel a little overwhelmed. Then a lot overwhelmed. Then entirely baffled. It's right about then that a feeling of quiet despair settles in, as one realises that one is only small, with the body but of a weak and feeble learner.

That said, the webinar is well worth watching, whatever one's level of ringing knowledge. Those to whom the content is old news will enjoy its methodical (no pun intended) presentation in a comprehensive framework that relates each topic to the others. Those who can tolerate a bit of quiet despair will benefit not only from encountering the concepts they already understand in a new and rich context, but from their first exposure to the more complex ideas the videos contain. While these ideas may not stick on this first hearing, there must always be a first hearing so that the second hearing can start to stick. And why not take advantage of this comprehensive, carefully constructed, professionally delivered presentation?

Part 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVENHXA_t90

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weiXc-vvFLQ>

Slides: http://www.cambridgeringing.info/2020_04_EDAWebinar_Blue_Lines.pptm

In marked contrast, **Plain Bob Revisited**, while similarly jam-packed, works on a small scale: an hour and twenty minutes of hyper-detailed examination and analysis of everybody's comfort method, Plain Bob Doubles. Presenter Mark Robbins starts by taking close to a half hour to dissect and reassemble the method from the ringer's point of view, focusing on an understanding of not just what each element in the circle of work is, but why it is the way it is, how it interacts with each of the other elements, and what the underlying inexorable laws of mathematics and permutation are that decree how these interactions actually function. As a result, the learner (at least, this learner) begins to gain an intuitive grasp of the inner workings of all methods and the immutable galactic mandates that shape them. Robbins seldom strays far from Plain Bob Doubles, and yet his explanations do more than merely describe; instead, they analyse, thereby guiding the learner along toward a deeper understanding of methods in general.

The second section of the video is a primer for new conductors, starting with the first steps of “Go” and “That’s all”. While many ringers have no conducting ambitions, I’d recommend that even so, they grant this section their earnest attention, as an awareness of what the conductor is aiming to do at each point can only benefit them as they ring. And for those who do aspire to conducting greatness, Robbins presents the skills in a logical progression that aids learning and helps impart an intuitive understanding of how these conducting skills can be applied more generally. Finally, he puts the pedal to the metal in a section on keeping yourself and your band right during the furore of battle. Here’s where he goes quite past my own current ability to comprehend, but I’ll be bookmarking this video to return to as I reach new levels of learning.

The only thing I found myself yearning for in this video was some sound files as each explanation progressed. Perhaps idiosyncratically (although I do suspect I’m not alone in this), I rely very heavily on my brain’s sound-processing functions when I ring, and hearing examples while looking at the diagrams would have been a boon to me.

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEiAutCCA_k

If the Great Pause continues to inspire and motivate skilled and compassionate people to generate resources like these, then that’s a win for bell ringing, and I, for one, give these people my thanks.

No ringing? At all?

Sue Taylor, Great Gransden, Cambridgeshire

Yes, it took us all by surprise how quickly things changed, and the prospect of no ringing, no teaching sessions or meeting up with ringing friends was depressing. But with a bit of flexibility our team have not only managed to keep our spirits up, but we have developed our ringing talents in several ways.

As a relative learner, the worry is that you will forget HOW to ring, but others are concerned they will forget WHAT to ring and all the progress on methods that was just starting to come together will be lost. In addition, our weekly practice nights are a social event and provide us all with an opportunity for a natter, which is sometimes too much of a distraction for the Tower Captain, Sheila George and our teacher (Philip George) – but we enjoy it anyway!



The great Gransden band proudly wearing their new T-shirts

The HOW we can’t do much about – but I suspect all will be well as soon as we get back in the tower even if the striking isn’t spot on (was it ever?) But as for the other concerns, well, theory sessions on place notation, methods, bobs, blue lines and more have been enormously helpful, with the opportunity to make sure each individual has a deeper understanding of each issue tailored to their level. We have had really good video conferencing sessions, largely using Zoom, on our usual practice night with lots of laughter and catch-up with all. There have also been dedicated individual teaching sessions for many of us around once a fortnight in addition to our practice night and lots of contact by WhatsApp, so we are all aware of what is happening and what district webinars and other learning opportunities are out there. We have tried Ringing Room and Abel with varying success.

We are all very grateful to our dedicated teacher Philip and to the Tower Captain Sheila for their constant support and their amazing ability to master (and also teach us) all the new technology we have been using. We are still very much a team. Missing the sweets though – the big question is will *they* be all right?

The Zoom Room Song

Sue King, Sidmouth, Devon



Sue (in the foreground) after her first quarter peal at Combe Raleigh last July, with her band, background, left to right: Maureen, Anne, Trevor Lisa, Anne

One of the groups I am lucky to ring with – and get extra rope time – is Lisa Clarke's 'Friday morning group' at Combe Raleigh. It's a wonderful practice session led by Richard Coley. Richard is an Ottery St Mary ringer and leader of several practices, including monthly Plain Hunt at Sidbury and the Combe Raleigh Friday morning sessions, too. It's a brilliant support to all of us novice ringers. The Friday morning sessions have been really key to my preparation for my quarter peals so far, as has my 'golden' simulator time with Anne Bailey my ART teacher. Not to mention my own tower practice nights, visits to other towers in Plymouth (when I used to have my weekly visits to my grandchildren there), and Sunday morning ringing at Sidmouth, too. None of this is happening now, though.

However, we do have our 'Combe Raleigh Zoom Room' virtual Friday practice coffee morning – in place of an actual coffee break in the church. This has been a fantastic idea of Lisa's and a lot of fun. It is the highlight of my week – just as the Friday morning ringing

used to be. Our group feels like a real family. As well as chat, mutual support, quizzes and funny anecdotes, we have always finished the session with a song!

It started in a very ad hoc way at the first coffee time, as I had my guitar right beside me. I was a guitar teacher and a working singer/guitarist – before the lock-down, and I improvised a 'silly ditty' off the cuff! By Week 2 I had it locked down, and in Week 3 sang it properly... with everyone joining in the chorus... but all except me were 'muted', so each person was not affected by everybody else's signal time lag. It worked brilliantly. Each person could sing along perfectly in time with my own singing... or so they said!



Trevor Hitchcock, Quizmaster

Trevor is our main quizmaster. He's a Combe Raleigh resident and ringer, and also Publicity Officer for our East Devon Branch. He is a great help and moral support to me during my ringing journey. Trevor's pearls of wisdom have been the most useful of any I have received and have helped me no end. He wrote an excellent poem, which I decided worked very well as a song if using the traditional Scottish melody, 'Mairi's Wedding'.

We are now into our sixth Combe Raleigh Friday Group's 'coffee room' meeting, hosted by Tower Captain Lisa, and we now have a regular quiz, (courtesy of our resident bard, Trevor), a 'guess the method' game where Charles plays the (6 bell) method on his keyboard, and we have to recognise it by the music. Plus, we have lots of banter and the swapping of news, jokes and anecdotes. And always now ending with a song. I try to write a new one each week! The Zoom Room Friday morning coffee club at Combe Raleigh is the highlight of my week. And it's Friday tomorrow. Hurrah!



The Combe Raleigh ringers with a mystery guest on a recent outing to Bath

Keeping a band motivated

Mary Jones, Reedham and South Walsham, Norfolk

I am a learner but because of a particularly unusual set of circumstances I find myself as a tower leader of a new band, despite my own inexperience. Therefore I look at the challenges of keeping ringers motivated and a band together, despite towers being closed for the foreseeable future, from both ends of the spectrum.

From a personal point of view, how do I remain connected to a long-established band, in which I am the newbie (with a couple of others) among a range of experienced ringers, who have years of shared history and are probably able to continue ringing imaginary bells in their heads?

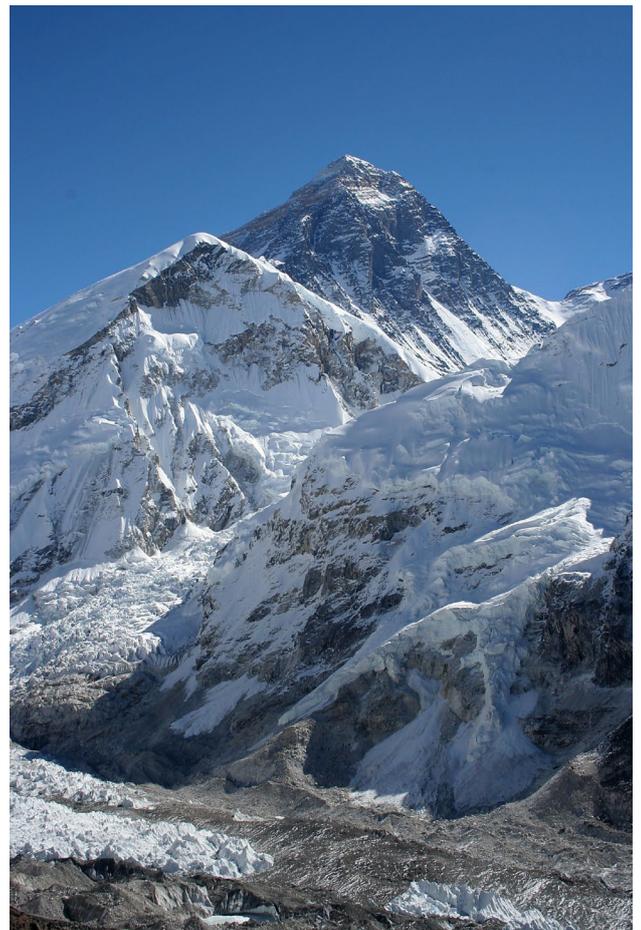
Naturally, the survival of this band is 'not my problem', but neither is my remaining or not remaining involved a risk to its survival. It falls to that tower's captain to keep us all motivated and to maintain the bonds of the group, built up over many years, so that come the 'new normal', we all troop back to the tower eager to pick up where we left off. I might require a minder for the first hesitant session as I feel my confidence to ring an actual tower bell slipping by the day, but the band will just sail on.

Relatedness is an intrinsic part of keeping people motivated. Band members need to see themselves as a unit and not just as individuals who come together to ring periodically. To this end, our captain has organised us into meeting up for a weekly practice session on Tuesday evening, although we skip the bell raising/ringing/lowering bit of the practice and go straight to the pub – the virtual pub. But chivvying 15 or so ringers (there are some welcome gate crashers) on Zoom is not easy, since the rules of internet conversation are different and tend to lead to people either crashing on top of each other or awkward silences. A bit like the bells in the hands of inexperienced ringers at a real practice night.

After the first experimental session, our Tower Captain came up with the brilliant plan of inviting a guest speaker to our practice nights. We would still see each other's smiling faces, admire the décor in each other's houses, but might avoid stilted conversation and perhaps learn something new about ringing. Luckily, our leader has lots of contacts and a persuasive manner (she was recently described to me, quite charmingly, as "a golden fist in a velvet glove") so we have not had just any old speakers. We have enjoyed an impressive range of people speaking about all manner of things.

She launched the programme with Jon Bint, talking about Devon call changes – a favourite branch of ringing for me. "60 on thirds" is now the first thing that I want to have a crack at once we are able to ring again (obviously without the ringing up/down start and finish – that would be too much after months away). I believe he was actually speaking from a Chagford sitting-room as he explained how the changes work and it was interesting to have a real live Devon call changer to question rather than to learn such things at second hand. Jon has been returning to the virtual pub most weeks since, so he clearly enjoys our company. I hope he comes along in reality one day and acts as my minder while I have a go.

Next up was Amanda Richmond from Ipswich. This was the second talk from a lady climber who has summited Everest that I had enjoyed in a month. The first was at the ART conference a few weeks previously. Is it expected that lady ringers also climb mountains?



Mount Everest has featured in two recent motivational talks to ringers – from Bonita Norris at the recent ART conference, and from Amanda Richmond, as described in this article.

Photo by Pavel Novak.

I do hope not, because it sounds cold and dangerous, but I have changed my Zoom background to The Vallée Blanche in Chamonix, to give the illusion that I am in high altitude training.



Richard Offen in the Australian pre-dawn

In week three, Richard Offen talked to us from Australia about ringing in the Antipodes. He had to get out of bed at some unearthly hour in order to amuse us and it was lovely that he was an old ringing friend of some of the band. This is where relatedness scores. To pop down to the virtual pub on a Tuesday evening and to bump into an old friend that you have not seen for ages is a treat and one that does not happen accidentally. Someone had to engineer the surprise.

Last week we were treated to a ringer much closer to home. David Brown is a Mancroft ringer whom we all know to some degree. He entertained us with a talk on extreme ringing – an insight into those curious individuals who choose to ring long length peals. The first question was of course ‘Why?’ closely followed by ‘How do you pee?’ and other interesting

technical details. Apparently, the consumption of multiple tins of creamed rice pudding prior to an extreme peal attempt is recommended. We were not told whether you eat it straight from the tins or decant into a bowl. Whereas Jon inspired me to ring like they do down Devon way, David failed to convince me that standing for 14 hours in a cold tower, full of rice pudding and busting for a wee, would ever be a good idea. It takes all sorts!

This week’s guest speaker is, as always, a closely guarded secret and we are looking forward to it. It will be another chance to learn something new, but more importantly a vehicle to interact with our friends in a meaningful way.

The other side of the coin is how to keep my own very new band connected so that they return to the tower? I do not want them to drift off into playing bowls or some other equally fascinating pastime, rather than have to go through the effort of relearning all those skills that we have struggled so hard to acquire (or renew) over the past 18 months.

Of course there are ways other than virtual practice nights to keep a band motivated. These include light-hearted posts on your Facebook page, competitions, suggestions of interesting non-ringing things to try (we are becoming amateur astronomers), attempts at using ringingroom.com, or just a friendly phone call or email to those band members who live alone and may be feeling very isolated. In the same way that we look out for each other in the tower (I have lost count of the times that I have been rescued by a fellow band member – with a wink or a smile when I am struggling to know who to follow, or even a steadying hand if I have made a serious handling error), we can continue to look out for each other in the current challenging situation. Meeting up for a virtual talk from a guest speaker is proving to be one good way that can be recommended, but to sustain that requires a list of contacts around the ringing world built up over decades which a new band is unlikely to have. And it is this absence of a long-established hinterland which makes the struggle to sustain a new band that much more challenging – I hope we and all other newly established (or re-established) bands can manage it.

How do you stay in touch?

Are you missing ringing and your ringing friends? Do you know something about social media or technology? How about setting up something for your band to get together, have a drink, a quiz or learn new things? Bell ringing is a team activity. We’re working together to ring, to have fun, make friends and be welcomed by ringers anywhere. We go to the pub and we all enjoy putting on and eating ringers’ teas!

Take a look at the options on the next two pages and see if any of them might work for you, your ringing friends or your tower. They’re not difficult, so don’t be scared of trying anything that you think might help and seeing how you get on.

SHOULD WE HAVE A TOWER GROUP?



Do we want a tower group that helps keep us connected and is fun and easy to use?

NO

Are you sure?
How do you know if you've never tried?
One message can be sent to reach all of your band.
Why not have a go?

YES

Great!
Now we can all see tower conversations in one place. But are you happy about security?

Choose wisely!
Check the news for past incidents and see if they've been fixed.
Do try one!

NO

YES

Amazing!
Now let's get on with using this high-speed way of connecting us all.

Off we go!

WHICH FREE VIDEO CONFERENCING PLATFORM CAN WE USE?



Good for:
100 participants
Across all systems
Across all devices

The race leader that's ramped up its security. The free version stops at 40 min. Re-click to rejoin.
To get started:
<https://tinyurl.com/sn38bto>



Good for:
50 participants
Across all systems
Across all devices

The oldest and still way up there for ease of use and security.
To get started:
<https://tinyurl.com/zvxyqpm>



Good for:
100 participants
Across all systems
Across all devices

Less known but a great conference tool.
To get started:
<https://tinyurl.com/y8jh6br8>



Good for:
50 participants
Brand new and still being rolled out worldwide

Worth the wait? Facebook's long history of poor data safety means we need to wait and see if this is a safe environment to use.

MAKE A TOWER GROUP IN WhatsApp




www.ringingteachers.org
 @RingingTeachers

Start here!
Do you have WhatsApp on your phones?

NO

Download WhatsApp free from the App Store or from Google Play. Tap on the names you want to invite to your WhatsApp address book.

YES

Maybe you could try something simpler – perhaps just keeping in touch with your band by phone, email and text messaging.

Launch WhatsApp
For IOS:
Go to *chats*. Tap on *New Group*. Tap *Add Participants*. Tap *next*. Tap *Group Subject* (name). Tap *Create*.
For ANDROID:
Go to *chats*. Go to *settings*. Tap on *New Group*. Tap *Add Participants*. When done, tap green arrow. Give group a name. Tap green arrow.

Congratulations!
You are now ready to easily exchange info about tower diaries, reply to requests for help, share photos and video-call your group.

NO

 Tap the video icon to group-call up to 8 people.

YES

Did everything work out successfully?

MAKE A TOWER GROUP IN FACEBOOK MESSENGER




www.ringingteachers.org
 @RingingTeachers

Start here!
Does the group have enough enthusiasm and people for this to work?

YES

Do you have Facebook?

YES

NO

Maybe you could try another group, like WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype or Google Meet. Or just keep in touch by phone, email and text messages.

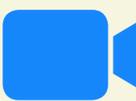
NO

Make a 'shell' FB account
Go to Facebook.com Fill out boxes under *create a new account*. Skip the profile photo & adding friends section. Click *sign up* button.

Go to the App Store or Google Play and download Messenger as a separate item.

Congratulations!
You are now ready to easily change messages about tower diaries or reply to urgent requests for help, post photos of outings and memorable events.

Launch Messenger
For IOS:
Tap *compose* on the right. Tap *names* & then *done*. Your group is now made. Tap *names* in activity bar. Tap *edit* to change group name or photo.
For ANDROID:
Tap *compose 'pen'*. Tap *Create a new group*. Tap *names*. Tap *next*. Name your group. Tap *Create*.

 Tap the video icon to group-call up to 8 people.

Merry Christmas, Bell Ringers

Chris Willoughby, Eye, Suffolk

We would normally be horrified by any mention of Christmas as early as May, but somehow this song by Chris Willoughby seems entirely appropriate. It is sung to the tune of the 1962 Paddy Roberts song "Merry Christmas You Suckers - (You Miserable Men!)" several renditions of which can be found on YouTube. It's in 3/4 time; guitar accompaniment chords are shown.

Verse

G
Merry Christmas, Bell Ringers
G A7
We're at it again
A7 D
Ding-donging those bells,
D G
To bring joy to all men
G
There are tails to hang on to
G A7
And sallies to grab
D G
And boxes to stand on until you grow tall|

Chorus

G
All hold, look to
G G
Trebles going, means you
G C
Have to haul on your sally, heave ho
C
In a ripple of sound
G
The bells echo round
G D G
'Till the call rings out "that'll do!"

We'll be climbing the stairs
Going round and around
A shame that the chamber
Is not on the ground
By the time we get high enough
To swing on a rope
We'll be panting for breath and
Run right out of puff

We'll waken the village
With a nice festive round
And then call a few changes
To alter the sound
And to finish on a high note
We all try to stand
If we can get this right
It would really be grand

Then its knot up your ropes
And back down the stairs
For prezzies and turkey
And to be caught unawares
Under mistletoe sprigs
Where you've got to get kissed
If you've missed Christmas service
You'll certainly be missed

Chorus

If you've got to the end
Just think of it now
It's New Year next week,
Another sacred cow
We'll be back on the bell ropes
With an aim to annoy
All the would-be late risers
We'll be climbing the stairs
Going round and around
A shame that the chamber
Is not on the ground
By the time we get high enough
To swing on a rope
We'll be panting for breath and
Run right out of puff

We'll waken the village
With a nice festive round
And then call a few changes
To alter the sound
And to finish on a high note
We all try to stand
If we can get this right
It would really be grand

Then its knot up your ropes
And back down the stairs
For prezzies and turkey
And to be caught unawares
Under mistletoe sprigs
Where you've got to get kissed
If you've missed Christmas service
You'll certainly be missed

Chorus

If you've got to the end
Just think of it now
It's New Year next week,
Another sacred cow
We'll be back on the bell ropes
With an aim to annoy
All the would-be late risers
So lets swing out with Joy

Chorus

Base Camp to Summit - Virtual Handbells

Simon Linford, Moseley

Learning the Ropes on Virtual Handbells

Progress on the Learning the Ropes scheme has come to a juddering halt for the Brumdingers (a group of young ringers in Moseley) just as it has for everyone else. We were quick to start meeting in Ringing Room - in fact we only had one week in between the last physical meeting and the first virtual meeting - but we have found that large virtual group sessions are not the place for making progress in change ringing, especially with youngsters. It is difficult enough to control a group of 10-13 year-olds when you can see them, let alone when you have no idea who it is ringing all the bells at once, who it is that thinks repeatedly pressing the 'Single' key is funny, who is assigning different people to bells when I am not looking, and why multiple fictitious characters keep coming into the room and 'catching hold'.

We needed focus! And for focus I have turned to Learning the Ropes handbells.

The Handbell version of Learning the Ropes is far less used than the tower bell version, but still has the attainment of progressive skills and awarding of certificates at its heart. Recognising progress with certificates is a big part of ringing for youngsters, with the certificate presentation taking pride of place at Brumdingers' Thursday night practices, just before the award of the weekly chocolate medal for progress, and the ritual singing of the group song (Simba-ya) while the spider is hoisted.

Armed with Ringing Room, Abel/Mobel, and a bit of motivation, it is possible to learn to ring handbells in a virtual environment. Even the most recent recruits who are not even at the plain hunt stage in the tower are doing it. One of the group (who never ceases to surprise) has not rung Plain Hunt on tower bells but can already get half way through a course of Bob Minor on the trebles!

I am adapting the usual LtR curriculum a bit to introduce more stages and recognise the limitations of the environment. I have got six levels going from a basic understanding of how to use Ringing Room and through to being able to ring touches of Bob Minor, Little Bob and Kent. The levels are named after stages of climbing Mount Everest, which gives us the opportunity to conquer the Death Zone!

In the chart below, a green box indicates achievement at that level and orange indicates 'work in progress'. The letters down the left hand side are just the initials of the ringers.

Ringer	Base Camp	Valley of Silence	Lhotse Wall	Hilary Step	Death Zone	Summit!
	Using Ringing Room, ringing one & two bells	Plain hunt a single bell - treble then second	Plain hunting on coursing pairs	Opposites and 2-3 position	Bob Minor on the tenors	Bob Minor 1-2 and touch, Little Bob, Kent on 5-6
C						
K						
S						
S						
O						
E						
B						
P						
R						
L						
M						
C						
C						
E						

Ringling with Pens

Helen McGregor

Helen McGregor is an ART member. Helen runs a number of basic ringing courses (virus regulations permitting) in Scotland and Alderney. Details can be seen at these websites:

<http://tullochbells.com> and <http://alderneybells.com>

Are you in lock-down and unable to ring with others? Fancy a challenge which will help your ringing when we can get back to it? If you enjoy this exercise there will be more fun to be had with pens in the next edition - can't wait? Join the Learn the Ropes Handbells scheme now:

<https://smartringer.org/ltrh>

What you need:

1 x blue pen

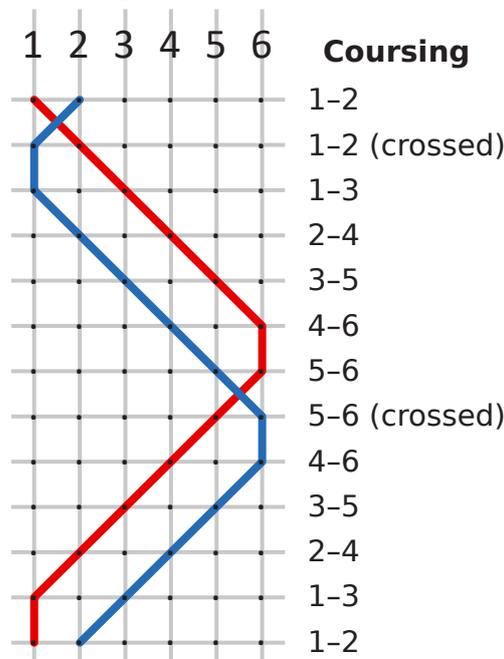
1 x red pen

Squared paper

An internet connection

Method:

Write out plain hunt on 6 for the treble with the red pen and on the same diagram write out plain hunt on 6 for the 2 with the blue pen. Look at the diagram you have created - it should look like the diagram below:



Note that in the first half of the lead the 2 (blue) strikes before the treble (red) in every row and in the second half of the lead the treble (red) strikes before the 2 (blue) in every row.

Apart from when the bells are in consecutive places (front and back rows) there is a consistent gap of just one place between them. This pattern of 2 bells, both just hunting, but where the characteristic of the relationship between them is a gap of 1, except at front and back, is called COURSING.

Now sit down and hold the red pen in your right hand (the treble) & hold the blue pen (the 2) in your left hand. Imagine you are ringing rounds on 6 with 2 other ringers. For the handstroke: raise your right hand (red) and say 'first', raise your left hand (blue) and say 'second'. Pause while you imagine someone else say 'third', 'fourth', 'fifth' 'sixth'. Now ring the backstroke of rounds with you lowering your right hand and say 'first', lower your left hand and think 'second', imagine others saying 'third', 'fourth', 'fifth' 'sixth'. Repeat this a good few times to feel the rhythm of rounds.

Now watch the beginning and middle of the video. If you have access to the SMART Ringer website, log in first then use the first URL given below. For those of you who haven't joined the 'Learning the Ropes Handbells' scheme, it can also be found on YouTube at the second URL:

<https://smartringer.org/resource/14695>

<https://youtu.be/6jG-NZUZGvE>

Now reach for the piece of paper with your diagram and put it in your lap. The convention in handbell ringing is that the ringers ring only 2 rows of rounds and then commence the method - this is often referred to as 'up, down & away'. So with your pens, ring 2 rows of rounds (one up stroke and one downstroke) then follow the chart you have drawn on the paper:

In the table on the next page, I have emboldened the hand which strikes first out of your pair - think of it as the dominant hand - keep it correct and you will achieve BOTH hands in the right place.

90% of your concentration must be on the hand which is going to strike first out of your pair, leave a gap and then sound the other hand. You must always know which hand is going first out of your pair. Place your dominant hand correctly, leave a gap of 1 and then place your shadow hand. Don't forget that the gap of 1 disappears at both ends of the change when you strike consecutively, cross over and the dominant becomes the shadow and vice versa

The table is comprehensive but sadly is unmemorable!

	Right hand / red / treble	Left hand / blue / 2	Relationship
Upstroke / handstroke	First	Second	Together (rounds)
Downstroke / backstroke	First	Second	Together (rounds)
Upstroke / handstroke	Second	First	Cross
Downstroke / backstroke	Third	First	Gap of 1
Upstroke / handstroke	Fourth	Second	Gap of 1
Downstroke / backstroke	Fifth	Third	Gap of 1
Upstroke / handstroke	Sixth	Fourth	Gap of 1
Downstroke / backstroke	Sixth	Fifth	Meet
Upstroke / handstroke	Fifth	Sixth	Cross
Downstroke / backstroke	Fourth	Sixth	Gap of 1
Upstroke / handstroke	Third	Fifth	Gap of 1
Downstroke / backstroke	Second	Fourth	Gap of 1
Upstroke / handstroke	First / lead	Third	Gap of 1
Downstroke / backstroke	First / lead	Second	Meet
Upstroke / handstroke	Second	First / lead	Cross
Downstroke / backstroke	Third	First / lead	Gap of 1
Upstroke / handstroke	Fourth	Second	Gap of 1
Downstroke / backstroke	Fifth	Third	Gap of 1

Now try ringing it, thinking of each row this way:

Rounds (red then blue)
Rounds (red then blue)
Cross - still 1st/2nd but blue then red
1st (blue), gap of 1 then red
2nd (blue), gap of 1 then red
3rd (blue), gap of 1 then red
4th (blue), gap of 1 then red
5th (blue) no gap the red (meet)
Cross - still 5th/6th but red then blue
4th (red), gap of 1 then blue
3rd (red), gap of 1 then blue
2nd (red), gap of 1 then blue
1st (red), gap of 1 then blue
Meet - 1st and 2nd place - red then blue
Cross - still 1st/2nd but blue then red
1st (blue), gap of 1 then red
2nd (blue), gap of 1 then red

Ring what's on the left a few times, reducing what you say to yourself until you can say this:

Rounds
Rounds
Cross
1st, gap, sound the other hand
2nd, gap, sound the other hand
3rd, gap, sound the other hand
4th, gap, sound the other hand
5th no gap (or meet)
Cross
4th, gap, sound the other hand
3rd, gap, sound the other hand
2nd, gap, sound the other hand
1st, gap, sound the other hand
Meet
Cross
1st, gap, sound the other hand
2nd, gap, sound the other hand

Et voilà - you are ringing plain hunt on 6 on a coursing pair! To check you are correct please watch the rest of the video. Ring in time with the treble ringer on the screen & hopefully all will be well.

Next you may wish to ring in time with the ringer on 5/6 - she is ringing the same pattern as the treble ringer but is starting at what was your half-way point.

There are only 3 patterns to know about and here we have just learnt coursing. We can look at the other two patterns next time and I will explain how you can put them together to ring plain bob - or indeed any other minor method! And just with pens!

When can we next ring together?

Lesley Boyle, ART Tutor, Cambridgeshire

'Actually we're busy every night - maybe at the end of the week? Friday evening? We're ringing at 5.30 so it will have to be after that...'

This is not a quote from the pre 'lock-down' days - this was me earlier today arranging some online handbell ringing in five days' time. I've never been so busy! This evening we had two attempts at quarter peals on two different platforms and managed, with a great deal of concentration, to score one of them.

I'm an experienced handbell ringer. You may not be. But I'd like to encourage you to have a go at one of these virtual ringing platforms. Seize the opportunity out of this restriction imposed upon us all to practise ringing, whether a single 'tower bell' or a pair of handbells, in a different way and maybe with different people. Part of what we enjoy in our hobby is ringing with each other. These virtual ringing platforms let us indulge without leaving our houses or fear of what it sounds like to the general public! And learn and improve in the process.

If you are at the earlier stages of your ringing career, use the opportunity to learn about improving your striking. With fewer visual clues you have to listen and count. If you are at the stage of ringing call changes, challenge yourself to see if you can call some (everyone knows that call changes are the hardest thing - harder than ringing methods!) Then take the opportunity to learn to ring Plain Hunt. If you ring Plain Hunt, ring Plain Bob or Treble Bob hunting. The possibilities are endless.

So what do you want to do?

Solo ringing with computer simulators

You can use Abel, Virtual Belfry, Beltower and Mobel for iPhone or (just released) Android. These programs will ring anything you like with you - even just rounds, but anything is possible including some learning exercises you may have done in the tower. Secrets to help with success: slow the speed right down by changing the peal speed to 4 hours or more to begin with. You can speed it up later. Check out Roger Booth's YouTube channel for some great short videos giving you a quick start guide to a number of topics with more coming soon, so follow his channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/fabianstedman/channels>

Ringling with others

If you want to ring with other people you have some new fun and exciting options, all developed since 'lock-down'. Many thanks to all the clever people in our ringing community for putting their energy and efforts into doing this!

For all of these you need a voice channel - a way of communicating with each other over distance. This can be whatever you are used to, for example, MS Teams, FB Messenger, Google Hangouts or Zoom. Many people are using Zoom and getting on very well with it. It has a 40 minute limit on using the free version but actually that is a pretty good amount of time. Discord is another option that is commonly used by the gaming community (my son uses it!) and I like it because you can appear to talk over each other more naturally. Zoom tends to cut a voice out if you talk on top of each other. Zoom is simpler to get set up, though.

Ringling Room

Ringling Room is web based and simple to use and this has meant it has become perhaps the most popular platform. It has been used by countless towers and ad hoc bands having virtual practices across the web. You simply press computer keys to ring the bells. It requires no downloading or set-up expertise - you just need to register and give your email address the first time you use it. Like anything new, it takes a bit of getting used to - ropesight is unfamiliar and technical shortcomings can cause delays, but if you start simple it can be very satisfying even if you are only ringing rounds.

There's loads of help available. Search for Ian Scott on Facebook for his Ringling Room Guide - version 3 is the current one. If you are lacking people to ring with, join the Facebook group 'Ringling Room Take-hold Lounge' and join one of the open practices.

Muster

Muster, developed by Dave Richards and Jonathan Agg, works with Abel and you use computer keys to ring your bells. It uses peer-to-peer computer networks so you hear the other bells ring via your copy of Abel on your computer. Download Muster and read the simple instructions here:

<https://drichards2.github.io/muster>

As with all these platforms, you may find that things work better if you plug an ethernet cable into your router rather than using your house wi-fi. One person in my tower got his internet supply upgraded as he's in social isolation so needs it for all sorts of things including ringing. Now's the time to do it!

Handbell Stadium

The most sophisticated of ringing platform is Handbell Stadium, developed by Graham John. This is perhaps of most interest to more experienced handbell ringers. As the name implies, this platform is designed to simulate handbell ringing, so you have to use a pair of action controllers. These are available from Graham John so if you're seriously interested in handbell training, bag yourself a pair. They cost £27.50 including P&P and are available from

graham@changeringing.co.uk

You'll be able to use them with Abel and Ringing Room as well.

Graham organises open practices on Mondays and Fridays at 8.30pm (UK time). Go to the Discord 'Changeringing' channel first to see who's there. Make sure you have downloaded the 2D or 3D software – the links are available from Discord.

Get Started!

I would suggest getting a group together, even if you are all complete novices, and using Ringing Room. Plan a simple first session to get everyone up and running. Set up the Zoom meeting (or whatever you are using to communicate – you don't need the video part to be running but it is nice to see everyone's face!). One person has to set up the ringing room in advance and acquire the ID. You then supply that ID number via Zoom chat to every subsequent visitor to the tower. They give their name which is not retained by the system. Then when everyone is there, you click on a rope to 'assign ringer' to each bell. Focus on counting your place, and listening to the whole row – both these skills are invaluable later on in the actual tower. Err on the side of simplicity. Have fun!



Screen and motion controller (adapted with a spanner to make it heavier!) in use with Handbell Stadium

I look forward to ringing in real life again when the new normal resumes. I realise I'm lucky to have connections with ringers who can help me with virtual ringing, but we are all out there willing to help you too and we would love to see you in Ringing Room. Join Facebook. Join the Discord group. Encourage your tower captain to organise Ringing Room practices, or if they don't want to, then join an open practice yourself. If you're keen on handbells now is your chance. Access the ART videos and resources online with how to get started on handbells. Maybe try out Helen McGregor's 'Ringing with Pens' tutorial also published in this edition of Tower Talk and see how you get on. If you think you're going to be keen, invest in a pair of controllers from Graham John and get going. You might end up ringing with me – I expect you'll be surprised when you see me in real life though, as I don't look much like my Handbell Stadium Avatar!

St Martin's Guild - "Going online"

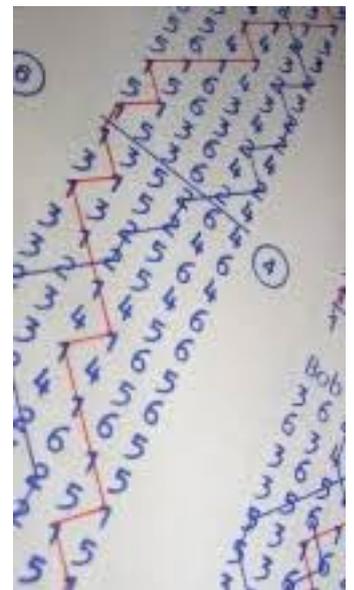
Arthur Reeves, Birmingham

Ringing is, by its nature, a practical activity and hence the lock-down has hit the very core of our hobby. The St Martin's Guild in Birmingham however, felt that now, more than ever, we needed to bring people together. Guild Master Clare McArdle quickly took the lead with an offer to support any members self-isolating. Just a practical gesture, but it let our members know they had someone to turn to if they needed it. We also made an ambitious plan to host two training sessions a week.

We had no idea whether this would be of interest to people, whether we would find people to present or indeed whether any of us could work the technology. But we gave it our best shot. We started with a quiz night to test the waters with Zoom. Nearly 30 participants attended and it was particularly pleasing to see members from across the Guild.

So following this, we began our twice-weekly sessions. A range of speakers have planned and led sessions on several different topics including:

- How our minds and memory work
- An introduction to Plain Bob Doubles
- How to learn methods
- Ringing connections (focusing on variations of a range of methods)
- How can technology support our ringing? (Abel, Methodology, Tadhil)
- Place notations
- Bobs and Singles: what are they and how do they work?
- What is place notation?
- Coursing - what is it and how do you use it?



We've had emails thanking us for the regular contact these training sessions provide and below is a short review of one of our sessions by participant Sarah King. Finally, we have worked hard to ensure our website is updated so anyone can access our training resources. You'd be welcome to explore them too:

<http://www.stmartinsguild.org/teaching/training-and-resources>

Learning online - a student's view

Sarah King, Birmingham

I have been a student of the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing since January 2019 and have enjoyed every minute of it!

Saturday morning school sessions were a highlight of my week so it was very sad, although understandable, when they were cancelled. Very quickly however the tutors set up online sessions so that we could keep in touch and focus on improving our listening and theory until we are able to practise again.

One such session that I have attended was Phil Ramsbottom's '*How to Learn Methods*'.

I have been to some of Phil's theory sessions previously and his teaching style was by no means hampered by the change of medium! The session was very informative and pitched at a level that was accessible to everyone.

The focus was on showing how it is not always necessary to commit the blue line to memory and lots of new methods can be 'built' by jigsawing together pieces of other methods that are already known.

The examples he used and clear, step-by-step explanations made it easy to see how you can apply this building process and as we broke down more complicated methods into chunks that we had already seen previously they began to seem a bit less daunting.

We also looked at why it is useful to know when you pass the treble and why and how it makes a difference to what your bell should be doing.

The session was very well attended, by both students of the school and much more experienced members of the Guild and judging from the feedback at the end I was by no means the only one who found it very useful.



Sarah King

Some of the '50 Ringing Things' you can do now!

You may not be able to do many of the **50 Ringing Things** right now but there are quite a few challenges which don't require you to be in a tower or with anybody to complete!

Here are a few of them:

- Make a visual aid for teaching
- Study the history of bells and ringing
- Publicise ringing on social media
- Make your own handbells
- Learn a method using an app
- Write an article

That last challenge is of particular interest to us at Tower Talk as we are always keen to hear your stories and share them here!

You can find out more about 50 Ringing Things at

<http://www.learningtheropes.org/50-things>

Puzzle Corner Solution

The puzzle appears on page 4

	A	B	C	D	E	F
G	5	6	3	4	1	2
H	6	5	4	3	2	1
J	2	4	1	6	3	5
K	1	3	5	2	4	6
L	4	2	6	1	5	3
M	3	1	2	5	6	4

Challenging Times

Fiona McKenna, Northampton Ringing Hub

After all ringing was cancelled, I wasn't sure how we would keep in touch for however long this crisis lasted. I have been ringing for two and a half years, but I've only recently got my LtR Level 1 certificate in February (confidence issues and bell handling), so I was worried that any extended suspension of ringing would mean I'd be back to square one.

The April challenge (a question, task, photo to do every day of the month) has been a great way to keep in touch with bellringing and other ringers. We have reproduced it here in case anyone else is seeking inspiration! It has been interesting to see other people's experiences and knowledge and discover something new, like Jennie's ability to compose limericks and how many bellringing books people possess! Oh, and a pub in County Durham has its own set of bells...!

Jennie also started doing Saturday school and this worked well, even though there was no way we could ring. We could ask for topics to be covered and Jennie did theory questions for us to answer. I discovered I knew more than I thought, as I had time to think, which isn't always possible with a rope in your hand! Then we started using Zoom and Ringing Room and this has been an interesting experience. I found it a challenge the first week with an uncooperative phone, but it's improving. I've done drumming behind in Plain Hunt which was new for me. I'm still finding call changes a bit of a challenge.

The **Daily Challenge** is great to have this way to keep in touch and to keep connected with bellringing, which I love doing.



*One of the Daily Challenges
Write out a Method!*

Daily Challenges

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--------|---|
| Day 1 | Write out a method (photo) | Day 15 | A bell ringing word you like (text) |
| Day 2 | Draw a picture of a bell, its fittings and label it (photo) | Day 16 | Name of someone you are going to introduce to bell ringing (text) |
| Day 3 | Something you are proud of in ringing (text / photo) | Day 17 | Something frustrating about bell ringing |
| Day 4 | Your bell ringing ambition (text) | Day 18 | A bell related menu (text) |
| Day 5 | Download a bell ringing app (photo) | Day 19 | A bellringing book you own (photo) |
| Day 6 | Find out something you did not know about bells or ringing (text) | Day 20 | A teaching video on YouTube (link) |
| Day 7 | Find a YouTube example of good ringing (link) | Day 21 | Something you have learned about yourself through bell ringing (text) |
| Day 8 | Find a YouTube example of bad ringing (link) | Day 22 | A photo of your local Church |
| Day 9 | Think of good names for bell ringers (text) | Day 23 | The best thing about ringing (text) |
| Day 10 | Find a bell related pub (link) | Day 24 | The worst thing about ringing (text) |
| Day 11 | Write a limerick about bells & ringing (text) | Day 25 | How should we celebrate when we can ring again? |
| Day 12 | Photo of bells (photo) | Day 26 | The most useful piece of bell ringing advice you have been given (text) |
| Day 13 | Explain what coursing order is (text) | Day 27 | The tower you most want to ring at (text) |
| Day 14 | Selfie of you practising bell handling at home (photo) | Day 28 | Favourite peal of bells (text or link) |
| | | Day 29 | Why did you learn to ring? (text) |
| | | Day 30 | Worst peal of bells (text or link) |
| | | Day 31 | Best ringing social (text or photo) |