

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning
the Ropes™

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An uplifting note left on the door of All Saints' Northallerton.
Credit - Gordon di Domenico.

It's yet another edition of *Tower Talk* in a world with very little ringing going on, and so again we hope we are bringing you encouragement and fellowship, with articles from around the world as ringers adapt to the restrictions in place. Ringing is being missed by ringers and non-ringers alike, and we must remember that we are all custodians of a historic and unique tradition. With this in mind, I asked Simon Linford, President of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, for his message:

"Bell ringers everywhere have been coming to terms with the restrictions placed on us. We are currently limited in England to 15 minutes of socially distanced ringing, which is leaving most towers only able to ring three or maybe four bells. Sadly, these restrictions, and particularly not being allowed close contact, are often going to exclude the least experienced ringers from participating - those who are probably missing ringing the most. *Ringling Room* and *Ding* are managing to fill the gap to some degree, but there's nothing like the real thing! When we do get back to some sort of normal, we will no doubt have lost some of the more experienced of our number, and newer ringers, fresh with enthusiasm and ideas, will be even more welcome than they ever were. Hang on in there!"

Learning to Love Call Changes

Helen Brown, Bedfordshire

An interesting thing has happened during my lockdown practice on Abel: I have gone from dreading call changes in the tower to loving their musicality on 8.

From reading other learners' experiences, I am not alone in sometimes struggling to see the bells that I should be following when called down. I have been using Abel for about two months now and only wish that I had started practising with it sooner. It has really helped to consolidate my knowledge of knowing when and where to move without all the worry of bell handling.

My first few attempts using Abel were basically hopeless. But after slowing down the peal speed and reducing the number of bells, I was able to see which sally to follow and the one before that and keep in the rhythm. Gradually I increased the speed and I can now regularly score 9 in called changes on up to 8 bells.

Abel has been particularly helpful for me to learn the timing of the handstroke lead. My challenge now is to listen out and recognise the musical sequences: Queens, Tittums and Whittingtons being the most common.

I was just starting to Plain Hunt before lockdown and I have also practised plain courses of Plain Hunt, Plain Bob and Grandsire on Abel, but continually counting places can become a bit monotonous. Now that I am able to concentrate more on the sound, I have found that I prefer the musicality of fast call changes to many methods.

I have tried to find a definitive list of the named musical changes, as I have come across some variations during online searches. Below is the list of a few of the better known named changes. You don't even have to ring on Abel; you can just listen out for them being rung by the simulator.

Happy call change ringing.



Helen shows us what she's really thinking

Here are some of the more popular named changes. Note that there is no universal agreement about some of these names, so they may mean something different in your tower. Bells number ten, eleven and twelve are denoted by 0, E and T.

	On 6	On 8	On 10	On 12
Queens	135246	13572468	1357924680	13579E24680T
Kings	531246	75312468	9753124680	E9753124680T
Tittums	142536	15263748	1627384950	172839405E6T
Exploding Tittums	342516	45362718	5647382910	675849302E1T
Roller Coaster			3216549870	<i>Popular on ten</i>
Hagdyke	341256	12563478		<i>Useful on the way to Tittums on 8</i>
Whittingtons	531246	12753468		<i>Same as Queens on 6</i>
Crossed	132546	13254768	1325476980	132547698E0T

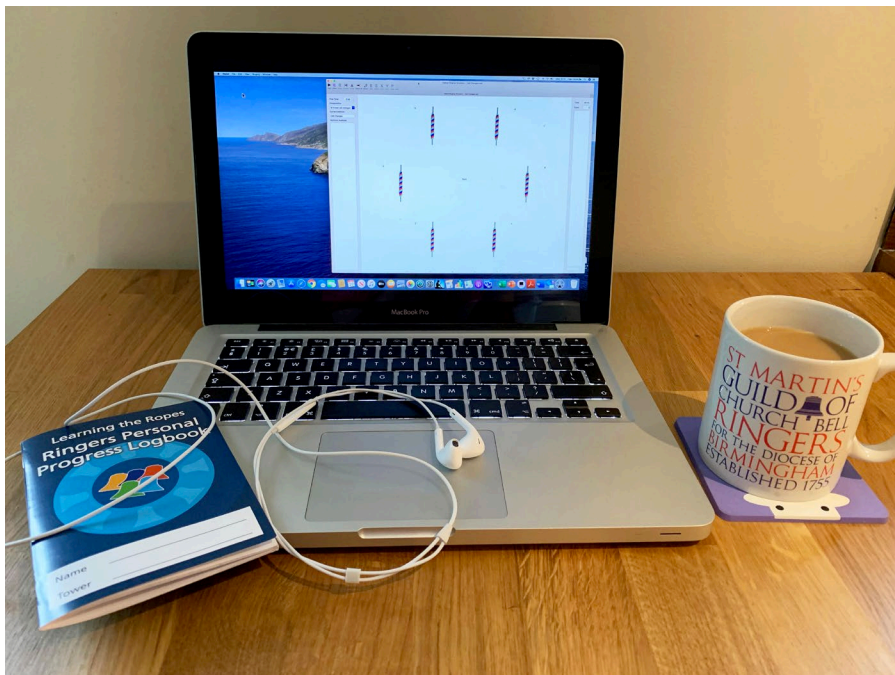
Who Knew there was So Much to Learn?

Jane Morris, Birmingham

I've been learning to ring for almost two years, starting off at Castle Bromwich then joining the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing which has helped to develop and improve my ringing. It was a bit daunting at first. My friend Elaine and I had just passed Learning the Ropes Level 2 and were starting to learn basic methods in preparation for Level 3 when the pandemic meant the UK was in lockdown and the bells fell silent.

Workwise, I had been furloughed and found that I had lots of time on my hands when I received an email from the School about online theory classes and thought 'Great! - something to focus on other than the pandemic'.

Who knew that there was so much to learn? There have been so many subjects covered; Coursing Bells, Introduction to Place Notation, Bob Doubles, Handbell ringing, Conducting and Understanding Methods, Understanding Stedman, The Importance of Passing the Treble and Ringing Big Bells, to name but a few. All have been made available by the fantastic team behind BSoBR on the St Martin's Guild website with access available anytime as a reference. It's definitely worth having a look to see what you could learn - there is something for everyone!



Jane Morris
Workplace essentials!

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

We were asked if we wanted to download Abel/Mabel simulator so we could practise at home any time. I've started using Mabel a lot and have made good progress. Then *Ringling Room* came and the School has held virtual classes using it. It was a bit strange at first, but we started with the Minor methods that we were working on before lockdown, such as Bastow and Plain Hunting. I have recently started on Bob Doubles, at first on the treble and tenor but now I have started to ring on the inside bells which I never thought I'd be doing so quickly - but I do like a challenge and I don't give up easily.

Things that had previously confused me have started to make sense. I now no longer look at a method and think "Oh my goodness, how will I learn all that?" I can now see and understand much more, for example, why the blue line is displayed as one line for everyone. I now understand clearly that as the other bells just start at a different point on the line, I just need to look at that point on the line for my bell, rather than looking at the lines of numbers. It's so much easier!

When we eventually go back to tower ringing it will be strange holding the sally and not tapping my finger to make a bell ring. The positive is that I will go back with a real grasp of the theory of what I am doing and how to put it into practice. I've even started to learn to ring handbells which I thought I'd never do and it is really great fun.

There has been so much information and support from the St Martin's Guild and BSoBR during lockdown and so many positives that I would like to take this opportunity to say a personal thank you to you all for everything.

Achievements

With so little ringing going on, it's no surprise that there are far fewer LtR achievements to report than usual. However, a small number of tower-bell certificates have been awarded in Australia, and below is a picture of a group of new recruits in Adelaide who have achieved LtR Level One, along with their teacher Hannah Tayler.

The exact number of LtR certificates issued since March 17 is

Tower bells	8 Level 1	1 Level 3	1 Level 5	1 LrT Plus
Hand bells	15 Level 1	2 Level 2		

As you can see, the most active area of Learning The Ropes in terms of achievements has been handbells. The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing has promoted handbell teaching and several of their students have now achieved Level One.



*Hannah with some of her Adelaide learners.
L to R: Conroy Saldanha, Hannah Tayler,
Daniel Alexander, Elbe Alexander,
Susan Parker, Eve Stewart.*

Have you ever thought about handbell ringing? It is a great way to continue learning and developing your ringing skills while we are not able to practise in the tower. You can practise easily on your own using your pc, tablet, phone or laptop, but if that doesn't appeal then you only need two other people to ring with, either with real handbells or on Ringing Room.

The previous edition of Tower Talk included an introduction by Helen McGregor on how to get started, and in this edition, and she continues with a second lesson on page 10.

Helen has posted some excellent videos on the Association of Ringing Teachers You Tube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/ringingteachers/videos>

You will find some additional resources there about using Abel and how to set it up for handbells. There is also an excellent introduction by Tom Hinks which is highly recommended!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93_0MmAjxo4



If you're on your own and you want to find out more about handbells, do contact the Editor who will be able to help get you started and who knows, maybe you will have achieved an LtR certificate by the time the next Tower Talk comes around!



Some of the LtR handbell achievers concentrating hard in a sunny Birmingham garden!

The Rewards of a Ringing Life

Anthony Heath, Long Stratton, Norfolk

I was born in Brighton in 1934. After the end of the war, church bells which had been silent for five years, (since there had been no invasion) were rung again. I remember with pleasure the bells of St Peter's church ringing out over the town, celebrating a wedding or a Sunday service. Years later in 1972, I moved to Norfolk with my family and we settled in Long Stratton.

The village magazine of April 1974 announced that a team of ringers would be in the tower of St Mary's Church one evening to demonstrate ringing, and invited anyone to turn up and have a try.

On the appointed evening, three of us arrived for the demonstration led by Mark Walland, and then we were invited to have a go. One volunteer decided there and then that ringing was not for him, and we never saw him again. However, two of us persevered, and over the next few weeks practised backstroke, then handstroke, and then, a big step forward with both together. Wobbly rounds followed, then inaccurate call changes.

Having mastered rounds and call changes, Bob Doubles came next. I had a handbook which suggested Bob Doubles was one of the easiest methods to learn, ideal for beginners. I thought this did not auger well for subsequent methods. My daughter Nikki became interested in this activity, but Mark made her wait until she was 9, and tall enough. Having started, she came on in leaps and bounds, quickly overtaking her old dad.

My first attempt at calling call changes happened by accident. I was asked to ring at a wedding, and when I arrived, I found I was the "senior" ringer present. None of the others had called call changes either. I did my best, but the result was chaotic. After the wedding the bride's mother remarked to me "Didn't the bells sound lovely!"

However, over the months and years I persevered; I visited other local towers, made new friends and learned more basic methods. I've rung in three quarter peals, Bob Doubles all the way, but I've never wanted any more.

So, what have I achieved in 43 years of ringing? Progress? Very little, but I have made many friends, enjoyed many Christmas dinners and ringing outings, and helped out at services and weddings. My greatest satisfaction and reward, however, is that my daughter Nikki has become a very accomplished ringer and has taken ringing to heights I could never achieve.



Puzzle Corner

Deborah Blumfield



This puzzle comes from Deborah Blumfield of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk.

In this puzzle, you have to work out what each phrase is. For example, an answer to "S N H" could be "Stand Next Handstoke".

Solutions are on page 21.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1. | 5040 C in a P | 7. | 12 B M are called M |
| 2. | G P B D | 8. | T A, S |
| 3. | 13572468 is Q | 9. | 1260 C in a Q P |
| 4. | L T, T G | 10. | C C C B R |
| 5. | 15263748 is T | 11. | L N 3 S R |
| 6. | H S and B S | 12. | R C P P D |

The 'Strictly Basic' Ringing Room

Chris de Cordova, Cumbria

An Opportunity to get to know 'Ringing Room'

A few years ago I set up the 'Learning the Ropes' Facebook group, to give new ringers (and new ringers *only*) a means of connecting with others at the same stage. I firmly believe that learning should be consolidated by sharing the highs and lows with one's peers. So this was not going to be an online Q and A forum to duplicate teaching already given by ART teachers, but something just for new ringers. The group has enabled many of them to make their own friends, and to help each other out. I try to stay in the background!

Since March, I had started to worry that no one was commenting any more. I started a few discussions, and asked how people were getting on with virtual ringing in *Ringing Room* or one of the alternatives. "Not at all!", came the resounding answer. So to get them ringing and chatting together, the *Strictly Basic Ringing Room* session was what I came up with. Two of the participants in this group tell us of their experiences:



Ann O'Hare's advice

Mary Leneis, whose home towers are Steventon & Drayton, tells how she got involved:

“ A couple of weeks ago, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and join the beginners' night in *Ringing Room*, hosted by Chris de Cordova. Not having anywhere pressing to be on a Friday night, my tequila sunrise and I sat down at the laptop to find out exactly what this online bell ringing is.

I should have realised that any group of bell ringers would be friendly and welcoming. Sure enough, I found a group of 6-10 people ranging in age from a university student to... well, the age of an individual who you're proud of for having a laptop and giving online activities a go!

We have practised rounds and call changes, and this week we had a go at Plain Hunt. I discovered another advantage of these practices, which is that (as long as you mute yourself properly) nobody can hear you while we ring. I find myself stamping my feet to keep the rhythm, and during Plain Hunt I was saying out loud: 'ONE two three four five six, one TWO three four five six, one two THREE four five six...' You can be as animated or loud as you want - as long as you push the space bar at the right time, nobody notices or cares! ”

Claire Whiting of Suffolk explains what Ringing Room is:

“ To start with you need to visit: <https://ringingroom.com> and familiarise yourself with the set up. You can do this on your own and have a look around. To join the practice you create a username/password and add your email address. This will then remember you and the towers you have visited and make it easier for everyone else to know who you are when you join a new tower. Chris has also set up a 'chat room' which is free to use; just use this link: <https://meet.jit.si/BellringingBeginners>

If it's your first time it should ask for your name, or you can set it up once you're in. Adding your name means everyone knows who they are talking to. I know it's a bit odd, but you can also go into the meeting when no one else is there and get used to muting and unmuting yourself as well as playing with the controls.

It may be a virtual tower, but there are still some points of etiquette to remember: log in to *Ringing Room* and the chat room to say hello first; and work out how to mute your microphone in the chat room and do this as soon as the ringing starts.

There are a few keys on your keyboard worth remembering. To ring, you can use the spacebar, the bell number on your keypad, the 'J' key, the right-hand arrow key, or you can click the rope with your mouse. The help section is easy to navigate and explains what the hot keys are - for example if you press the 'L' key the computer will say "Look to, treble's going, and gone". ”

Here are some more tips from Mary and Claire:

“ Sometimes, of course, a key doesn't get pushed at the right time (says Mary). There are intermittent interruptions from husbands with tea, children with questions, or dogs wanting cuddles, but all things considered, Chris runs a tight ship and keeps everyone on track with the practice moving steadily forward. People pop in and out as needed, so if you can only make it for an hour it's still worth coming along.

Ideally (adds Claire) you need a computer where you can have two windows or screens open at the same time – some people have tried with a phone and a tablet but there is a known problem with some phones and iPads running *Ringin' Room*, so a desktop or laptop is recommended. Personally, I also think using one device and two windows is much less complicated! Headphones make it easier as they can stop the bell noise coming out into your room and causing echoes. A camera is nice so everyone can see what your house, sorry, what YOU look like, but not essential. Having both the *Ringin' Room* screen and the chat room screen open on your computer will make it easier to switch between the two. You can then smile and wave and talk to the rest of the ringers while we are not ringing, and so you can hear Chris' tips when ringing!

So once you're ready to take the plunge, come and play with the rest of us between 7:30 and 9:00 on a Friday night. You'll get to meet ringers from all over the country, and Chris has suggested that we could split up into different towers and do different things, but for now she has been focusing on the technology and getting used to the virtual bells. We have been trying to improve our rhythm and speed, not forgetting that all-important handstroke gap at lead.

Personally, I have found that in the *Ringin' Room* it's so much easier to count your places than in a tower where you're struggling with your bell handling and breathing, never mind trying to count! I had only just started ringing Plain Hunt back in the real world so *Ringin' Room* practices have reassured me that when we do get back into our towers I won't have completely forgotten what to do. I may even have improved.

Come for a laugh (say both Mary and Claire). Join us for some rounds and maybe a bit of Plain Hunt. If you enjoy it, you could encourage the rest of your tower to join or you could also consider setting up a tower of your own. Go on, give it a go!”

If you've got reservations, here's what Ann O'Hare has to say:

“ I was interested in trying out this *Ringin' Room* that I had heard so much about but to be quite honest it sounded complicated and beyond me. However, when I saw Chris de Cordova's friendly invitation to a session for beginners I thought I would have a go. Not being technically minded, I was quite nervous but Chris and I had a one-to-one session where she guided me through the basics. Within a very short time I understood what I was doing and I could log on, find the 'Room', choose myself a bell and off I went. I can see a lot of potential for me. No, it isn't the same as actually ringing but it goes side by side with other non-ringing ways of learning. And I'm really looking forward to doing more.”

Chris concludes: Through the *Strictly Basic* sessions, I would love to empower new ringers to organise their own sessions and invite others so that there is something on every night of the week. Then everyone could attend at least one weekly session to continue their learning but also to have fun in the process and develop some skills which will be useful back in the tower, such as listening, counting, understanding and responding to rhythm. And who knows what else could be learnt?

There are lots of people who will help, when and if you want it. Or you might just enjoy the chat, some simple rounds and a lot of laughs, not forgetting the virtual cake or the tin of choccies! And I bring the pub session with me too with a glass of nice real ale ready to drink between rings!

Don't be afraid – give it a go! Private coaching one-to-one happily given, any time. You can contact me via the Learning the Ropes Facebook page, or via the *Tower Talk* editor. Cheers!



Chris enjoying a real-life pint!

Hannah's Hymn

Hannah Musgrove, Lithgow, NSW, Australia

Hannah is tower captain at Hoskins Memorial Church – a 7 cwt ring of eight. Lithgow is 150 km west of Sydney, just west of the Blue Mountains. She has composed this version of the bellringers' hymn.

For anyone unfamiliar with the original, it is hymn 496 (Ancient and Modern, Revised), often called "Belfry Praise". The words (which start "Unchanging God, who livest / Enthroned in realms on high") were written by Henry Charles Wilder and the music was composed by John Matthews. They can both be found at

[https://wiki.changeringing.co.uk/%27Belfry_Praise%27_\(hymn_tune\)](https://wiki.changeringing.co.uk/%27Belfry_Praise%27_(hymn_tune))

The tune is notable for starting in rounds on eight, with Queens for the third line of the verse.



Hannah at home during lockdown, and with her band at a practice night.

Bellringers Hymn (COVID version)

Oh God, I hate this Co-ovid,
Enthroned at home alone,
Not able to go ringing
Or meet and have a moan.
I used to ring three evenings,
And Sunday mornings too,
And now I sit and wonder
What is it I can do?

No Sunday service ringing,
No practice nights for me,
No beer or coffee after,
No chatting over tea.
I send a weekly email,
Get little in return
Except some strange and naughty
Jokes I don't understand.

Our Church is very friendly,
But now it's not allowed
To meet and sing and worship,
Except by wi-i-fi!
All groups are now in limbo
And all the ropes are still,
Whilst COVID marches onwards
So many folk to kill.

Oh Plain Bob Doubles where art thou?
Oh Grandsire I need you!
I'd even call some changes
Without "Bill, that means YOU"
And when the striking's awful
I'll cope, and grin and bear,
As ringing and the friendship
Is what I've missed this year.

Getting 'Match Fit'

Janet Horton, Birmingham

Not everyone has a mini-ring in the garage or a dumb bell hung in the attic. Many people have concerns about going back to ringing and using those muscles that have been idle since March.

I asked Senior Physiotherapy Lecturer and Eastbourne ringer Hazel Horobin for some advice.

Janet: So, Hazel what should we be doing to get ready for ringing again. Should we be doing stretches?

Hazel: Stretches can help with muscle soreness. If people are feeling stiff, then the key movement is shoulder flexion.

<https://fitnessfeedhq.com/the-7-best-mobility-drills/shoulder-flexion-stretch/>

Hold any stretch position for 30 seconds and repeat 3 times.

Stretches alone won't prevent post-activity muscle soreness. This is probably not due to stiffness but just hard muscle work and the delayed onset muscle soreness that occurs.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/pain-after-exercise/>

The important thing is to warm up before ringing. That means 10 - 20 minutes of cardio-vascular exercise prior to ringing; to the effort level where you can talk and exercise - but not sing.

So, walk or cycle to the tower rather than drive, or if this is not possible, park a 10 minutes' walk away and finish the journey on foot in order to prepare for the physical activity of ringing. The return journey can have a 'cool down' function.

Janet: What are the most common problems that you have encountered in connection with bellringing?

Hazel: Low back pain or sciatica, tennis elbow and painful shoulders are all common, and people can get general advice for these conditions on-line;

<https://www.facebook.com/ConnectPhysiotherapy/video/>

These videos are made by physio students, and some are better than others but they have all had qualified practitioner support to develop them and they contain good advice for different conditions associated with ringing (low back pain or sciatica, tennis elbow and painful shoulders).

However, if you have any persistent health concerns, then you should consult your doctor for specific advice. In addition, all ringers should be aware of their core stability...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU_8kY5a0DA

...(Advice about Core Strength), and general level of fitness...

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/free-fitness-ideas/>

...in order to avoid getting injuries.



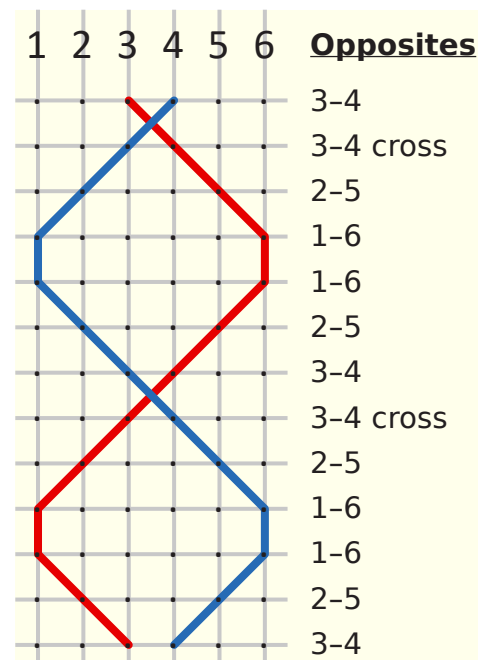
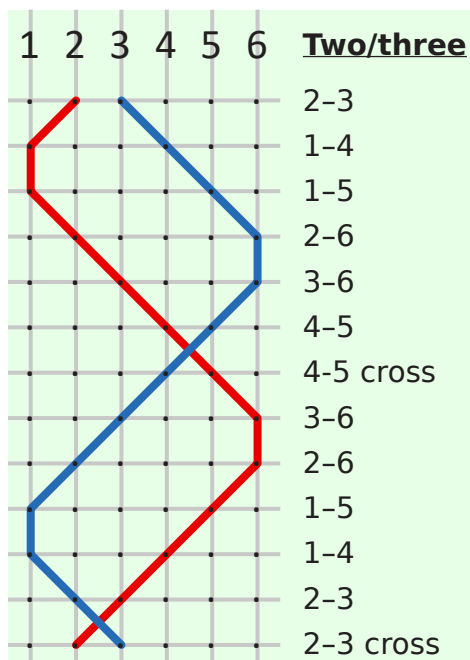
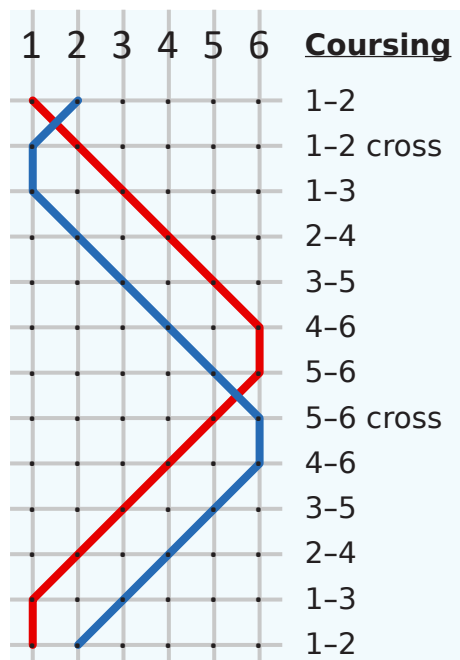
Try walking to the tower!

Ringling with Pens - lesson 2

Helen McGregor

If you read the last article you will probably have tried plain hunt on 6, holding a red pen in your right hand and a blue pen in your left hand for a coursing pair - either trebles (1-2) or tenors (5-6).

Whichever two bells you ring when plain hunting on six, there are only three possible patterns: these are 'coursing', 'opposites' and 'two/three'. Let's start by looking at the two new patterns, opposites and two/three. To explore opposites, we will think about what the 3 and 4 do in plain hunting, and for two/three we will (as the name suggests) think about ringing the two and the three.



The last article described coursing in some detail. Here are similar explanations for the two new patterns (opposites and two/three), starting in each case with a handstroke and backstroke of rounds. Handstrokes are marked H: and backstrokes are marked B:

Opposites

H: Rounds, 3rd & 4th, red then blue
 B: Rounds, 3rd & 4th, red then blue
At the start, 3 (red) moves out and 4 (blue) moves in, so your bells cross.
 H: Cross - still 3rd/4th but blue then red
 B: Move further apart - blue in 2nd, red in 5th
 H: Lead and lie - 1st (blue) and 6th (red)
 B: Lead and lie - 1st (blue) and 6th (red)
 H: Move closer - blue in 2nd, red in 5th
 B: Meet - 3rd & 4th, blue then red
 H: Cross - still 3rd & 4th but red then blue
 B: Move further apart - red in 2nd, blue in 5th
 H: Lead and lie - 1st (red) and 6th (blue)
 B: Lead and lie - 1st (red) and 6th (blue)
 H: Move closer - red in 2nd, blue in 5th
 B: Meet - 3rd & 4th, red then blue (rounds)

Two/three

H: Rounds, 2nd & 3rd, red then blue
 B: Rounds, 2nd & 3rd, red then blue
At the start, 2 (red) moves in and 3 (blue) moves out, so your bells move apart.
 H: Red leads; gap of 2, blue in 4ths
 B: Red leads; gap of 3, blue in 5ths
 H: Red to 2nd; still gap of 3 so blue in 6ths
 B: Red to 3rd; gap closes to 2, blue still 6ths
 H: Red to 4th, blue down to 5th, they meet...
 B: ... and cross; still 4th/5th, but blue then red
 H: Blue to 3rd; gap of 2, red to 6th (lie)
 B: Blue to 2nd gap of 3, red still 6th (lie)
 H: Blue leads; gap still 3, red down to 5th
 B: Blue leads; gap of 2, red down to 4th
 H: Blue to 2nd, red down to 3rd, they meet...
 B: ... and cross. Red then blue, rounds

Try ringing 'opposites' first. When you start, 3 (being odd) hunts out, and 4 (even) hunts in. Notice that if one hand is in first place then the other hand strikes in last place. If one hand is in 2nd place (one away from the front) the other hand is in 5th place (one away from the back).

Once you've had a few dummy runs, go and watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waaqv7BO8Ys>
Mimic the ringer in the middle, who is ringing 3-4.

Now try ringing a different pair of bells: 1 and 6. You will find that they also follows the 'opposites' pattern, but starting at a different place, as the diagram at the right shows.

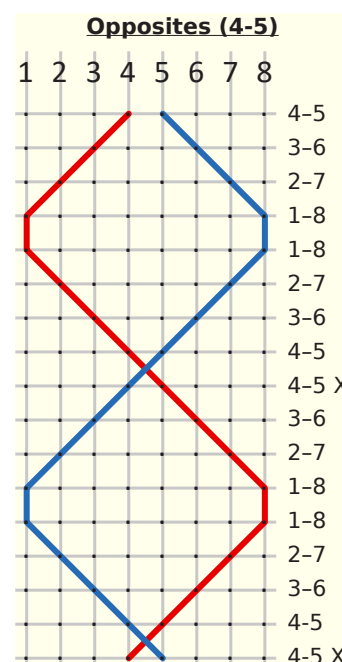
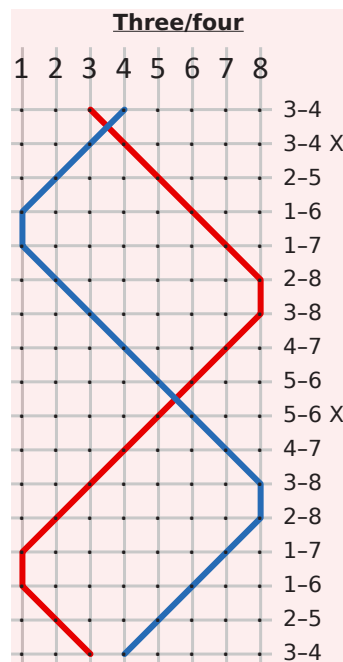
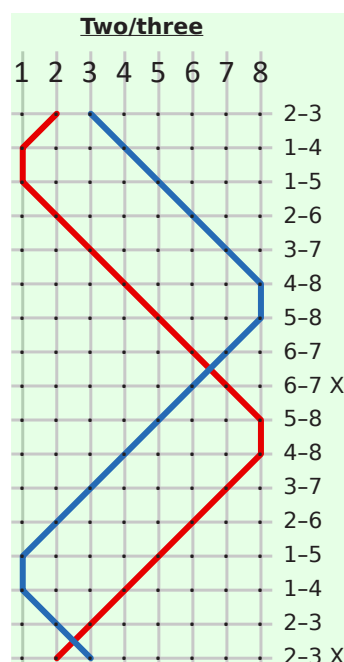
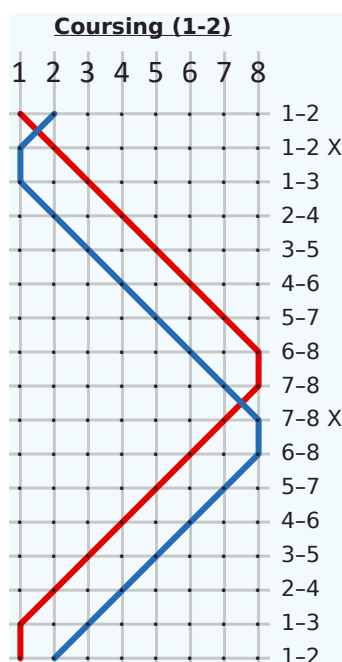
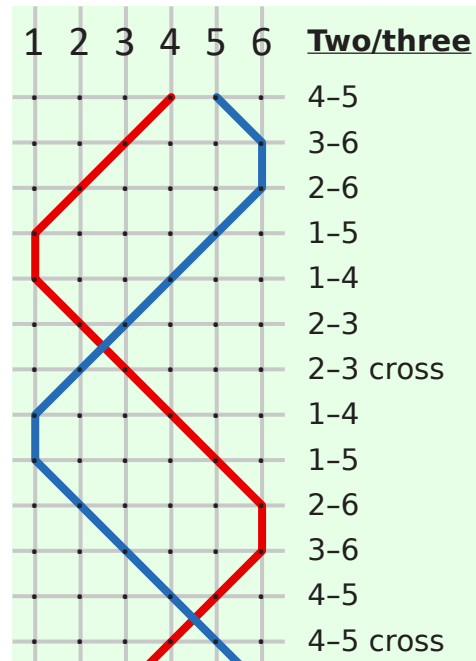
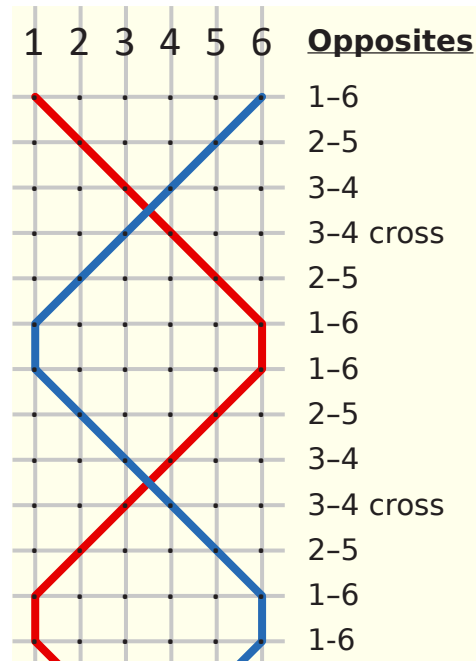
The final pattern to master is 'two/three'. You may wonder why this pattern is needed, as you don't generally ring the 2 and 3 on handbells! You need to understand that when you go beyond plain hunt your bells may have to do all sorts of things, so that you may find yourself needing this 'two/three' pattern even though you aren't ringing bells 2 and 3. But the best way to learn this pattern is to pretend you are plain hunting on the 2 and 3.

The essential characteristic of this relationship is a *gap of 3*, but of course ringing only 6 bells a gap of 3 doesn't last very long before one of your hands reaches an end (first or last), makes a place (leads or lies) and the gap decrease to 2 then you have to meet and cross. Learn that the meeting-and-crossing points are in 2/3 and 4/5. These can become 'safe havens' - points where you *know* you are in the right place with both hands.

Just as 3-4 and 1-6 both ring the 'opposites' pattern, 2-3 and 4-5 both ring the 'two/three' pattern (starting in different places), as shown in the diagram at the right.

In fact *any pair of bells* will ring one of the three patterns. Pick some other pairs, such as 2-5 or 3-6 or 1-3, and see which pattern they ring. For example, if you ring the 2 and the 5, the 2 starts by hunting down (being an even bell) and the 5 hunts out, so they will start by moving to 1st and 6th position. Look in the tables for 2-5 followed by 1-6: there it is, near the top of 'opposites'! So this pair of bells rings the 'opposites' pattern. (Here are the answers: 2-5 ring opposites, 3-6 ring two/three, and 1-3 are coursing.)

Finally, before we leave plain hunting, let's have a very quick look (below) at what happens with plain hunting on eight. Coursing and opposites (what 4-5 does) are similar to what happens on six bells, but this time there are two other patterns: two/three and three/four.



A New Way of Connecting

Rebecca Legowski

Rebecca started ringing in 2017 at Hessle in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Being totally blind, she found learning on a ground floor ring with a long draught to be quite a scary experience, and had extensive bell handling training before beginning to ring rounds. Having rung two quarter peals, she was getting into her stride when everything changed. Here is her story of how she has pursued her love of ringing.

I started using *Ringling Room* on 15th April this year. With the Covid-19 pandemic putting paid to all physical ringing (for me especially, as I require some assistance navigating and ringing in new towers) a new way of connecting with fellow ringers was needed.

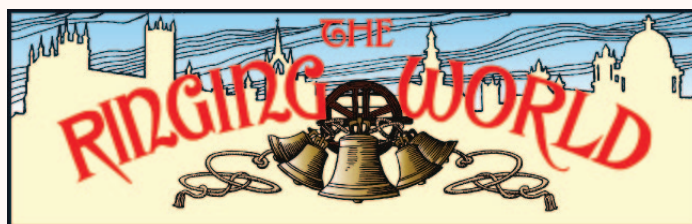
I received an email from my local tower captain saying he was hosting a bell practice using *Ringling Room* and *Google Meet* (for social interaction) so I tried out *Ringling Room* before the practice to make sure it was accessible. It was, and it worked really well. The first practice was just a few of us ringing Rounds and a bit of Plain Hunt on six and eight. However, it wasn't long before Plain Bob Doubles and Minor were introduced, along with Kent and Cambridge.

After a few sessions, I offered to start hosting ringing practices as our tower captain was busy with work commitments.

The first time I hosted, I was late sending the practice links out due to some teething problems setting up my virtual tower in *Ringling Room*, and also some of my fellow ringers had trouble accessing the tower. However, this caused me to compile an instruction email to circulate to all potential practice ringers. It was a walk-through about how to set up, and log in to, *Ringling Room* and it enabled everyone to solve the various problems we'd had in the first session. We've since rung one quarter-peal of Plain Bob Doubles and are attempting Plain Bob Minor regularly.

Ringling Room can also be used for handbells as an accessible alternative to *Handbell Stadium* and *Muster*, which are not compatible with my screen reader. The handbells side is still a work in progress due to connectivity issues, especially with *Discord* (the platform my local handbell group uses).

For the most part, sessions have gone reasonably well. We've had a few internet connectivity issues, and some sessions where *Ringling Room* has logged people out or bells have failed to ring properly. However, I do believe that once ringers are used to virtual ringing, a rhythm can be established and methods can be rung well. Some people have progressed beyond what they were learning in the tower, and for some younger ringers, *Ringling Room* has enabled them to get back into the activity they love, and have missed, since Covid-19 started. New ringers are joining all the time so virtual ringing is developing well.



Beverley and District Ringing Society

On Sunday, 14 June 2020 in 50m

Ringling Room, East Riding of Yorkshire

1320 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Andrew J Bicknell
- 2 Rebecca M Legowski
- 3 James T Goodwin
- 4 Simon Plows
- 5 James E Blackburn (C)
- 6 Christopher M Baxter

First quarter on Ringling Room for all.

Rebecca's quarter peal

Lovely New Bells...but Where's the Tower?

Neil Thomas



The tower under construction

Neil Thomas is a bellhanger who previously worked for Whitechapel before it closed in 2017 and now works with Matthew Higby. Being a bellhanger has got to be one of the more unusual and interesting jobs around, but even Neil got a surprise with this one...

In 2006 I was sent to St. Paul's Cathedral Birmingham, Alabama to install a new ring of eight. I knew they were going into a new-build tower which was the vision of Stephen Calvert who got the project rolling. When I arrived, they were behind schedule and there was no tower! The construction guys were all taken off site and it was over to me to get the bells into the new tower, which hadn't been built!

So I had a fabulous two weeks in the sun instead of the usual dark "dungeon in the sky".

The guys assigned to help me had obviously never seen anything like this before and as we progressed they got stuck in, and were proud to be part of it. The bells were duly installed and the day came to try them, but with no tower around them, boy were they loud!



The finished tower

A while later I was back in the States on another job which timed perfectly with the Dedication, so I was able to be there and ring the bells in their new tower. That was definitely a first for me and one I won't forget.



The bells installed in the unfinished tower



The bells ring out!

A Year Full of Surprises

Dylan Thomas, Wellington, New Zealand

Dylan Thomas rings at St Paul's Cathedral in Wellington, New Zealand. He started ringing in 2019, and is the winner of the 2019 ART Achievement Award.

As 2020 began, so did the second year of my ringing career. But things turned out in a way I never expected them to!

The year started off with a bang – after being in Europe for the whole of January, I returned to the cathedral in Wellington determined to pursue every single Ringing World Pathway:

- Blue (Plain Bob Minor +) for conducting
- Red (Some Surprise Minor +)
- Yellow (Surprise Major +) for quarter peals.

Within only a few days I had successfully conducted quarters of Double Oxford, St Clement's, and Buxton Bob Minor, which was definitely a massive step up. Keeping everyone right and remembering the calling was a challenge!

In February, a band of twelve-bell ringers from Exeter visited Wellington. This was an amazing experience. They helped me to achieve my first QP of Yorkshire Major – conducted by David Hird. Sunday Service ringing was also well taken care of, with plenty of Surprise Maximus and Stedman Cinques wowing the local band. A quarter of Yorkshire Maximus was rung in the afternoon, the first maximus here for about a decade.



*The bells of St Paul's Cathedral, Wellington
12 + 2, 27 cwt*

Then, one Sunday morning in March, I got a massive surprise when it was revealed to the band that I had won the ART Achievement Award for 2019! I had no idea I had even been entered. After Sunday Service ringing we celebrated at a café down the road.

All seemed to be going so well... and then... lockdown.

Community transmission in New Zealand was accelerating and as a result, not even a week after I received my award, the country was placed into lockdown for at least 4 weeks. Not a very nice present from the virus for winning the award!

I soon realised I was going to go insane without ringing, so I constructed a dumbbell out of a bicycle wheel and a metal bar, which kept me going for the entire two months and ten days that we didn't ring.

This bell still hangs on my wall today, and still works well.



Dylan's bicycle wheel

I substituted normal ringing times for ringing on Abel, and ran my own practices. It was during lockdown that I managed to finally make sense of Stedman.

Another positive aspect of lockdown was ringing in *Ringling Room* with other young ringers who I met on *Discord*. English ringers Francesco Greenslade, Thomas Ashwin Siejkowski, Ollie Watson, Kye Leaver, Tim King, Michael Shaw, and Lewis Benfield made my lockdown experience so much more enjoyable and gave me something to look forward to every day.

The Wellington band also discovered the joys of *Ringling Room* and many successful practices on Tuesdays and Saturdays were run. We also enjoyed many social gatherings and quizzes.

We held our breath as cases started to drop and after one and a half months the restrictions were relaxed enough that I could ring handbells with fellow ringers Derek Williams and Ruth Lightbourne. Just being able to ring handbells was such a pleasure after so long. It was during this couple of sessions that I made most of my handbell progress, climbing from Plain Bob Minor to Cambridge (badly).

Soon after this, we were allowed back into the cathedral, so Tower Bell ringing could restart, with strict regulations in place (same person-same rope rule and hygiene practices).

A QP of Plain Minor (PB and St Clement's) was rung on the John David Mini Ring (shown in the picture below) on the 31st of May, just over 2 months after ringing ceased.

But as restrictions were eased further a couple of weeks later, general ringing and practice nights could also restart.



Dylan ringing the 7th of the 12



*Wellington's mini-ring:
the John David Ring, 9lb 10oz in F#*

We soon got back into the swing of things with quarters of Appleby and Norwich 5 Minor for evensong in the first two weeks. With many other ringers returning, we were also able to ring eight on several occasions. To round off the Blue Pathway I called Grandsire Doubles, April Day, and after calling Hull Surprise Minor and Hunslet Bob Triples I also finished the Red RW pathway. Yellow still has a long way to go! A massive achievement was also my first peal - 5088 of Rivendell Treble Bob Major, well conducted by Gerald McIlhone and rung in 2 hours 58 mins. Thanks to everyone in the band that helped me achieve this.

My goals for 2020 include calling more quarters of Major, and ringing a QP on the back eight at the cathedral. Unfortunately, as I write this, New Zealand has moved back up to Alert Level 2 and Auckland to Alert Level 3 after a community outbreak.

I shall soon discover what the rest of the year holds!

Ringling Room Ropesight

Mark Davies, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Mark Davies is an experienced ringer who, like most of us, found his early sessions in Ringling Room frustrating until he started to develop 'Ringling Room ropesight'. Here he offers some tips which are useful whether you're just starting out or trying something more complex.

I first tried Ringling Room a couple of months ago, and to start with found the tower bell ropesight almost impossible. I couldn't see who to follow, and kept losing track of what was handstroke and backstroke, so would set off at the wrong stroke, or get completely confused halfway through the method. Ringling in handbell mode was slightly easier for me, I think mostly due to hours spent practising on Abel in years past, which has similar graphics for handbells. However in Abel I'm still ringing largely by ear, and my listening skills aren't good enough to ring tricky stuff with a band who aren't Abel-perfect.



Mark Davies

Returning to Ringling Room and getting a bit more practice in tower bell mode, I found I needed both sound and visual cues to be able to ring effectively. I was still struggling with ropesight, but I picked up tricks like following my course bell around, which worked well – as long as they stayed right – and gradually things got easier. The next step was to use coursing orders to predict exactly which bell I needed to ring over next. When the ringing is slow enough, you can wait for the right bell to ring, then hit the space bar, but as it speeds up this becomes a test of reaction speed, so listening to the music of the method plays a bigger and bigger part. This is the only way to strike accurately, too.

When I called the 'Transatlantic Quarter' of Yorkshire Major, I was still at the point where I had to listen intently, focus incredibly hard on the screen, and concentrate all the time on my place on the line. I had to count every dodge and it was hard work. But things gradually improved, the required concentration levels grew less, and at last I found that a form of Ringling Room ropesight was coming to me.

It has taken many hours of staring hopelessly at a morass of sallies and tail ends on the screen, but I'm now getting to the point where I can see my place on any number of bells, and put my bell there without really thinking about it. What's more, I'm starting to see more with this new-found ropesight than I ever did in the tower – I can be at the back of the change and spot which bells are working on the front with greater ease in Ringling Room than I can manage in a real tower.

So for all of you struggling, and thinking maybe ropesight doesn't work in Ringling Room – have faith. It does. And once you're used to it, it might even be easier than on real bells. It's important to realise that they are two very different things. In the tower, you're looking for a bell whose rope is at a similar point to yours, but moving fractionally before it. In Ringling Room, you need to watch the bells flipping state, remember who they are and how many there were, almost what pattern they made around the circle. The big disadvantage of Ringling Room is that it's an instantaneous flip of a graphic rather than a smooth motion of a real object, so you have to focus closely to be sure not to miss any; but actually there is a real benefit in the lovely symmetrical rope circle laid out before you, which makes it much easier to spot bells working in any part of the change. No issues with peripheral vision here.

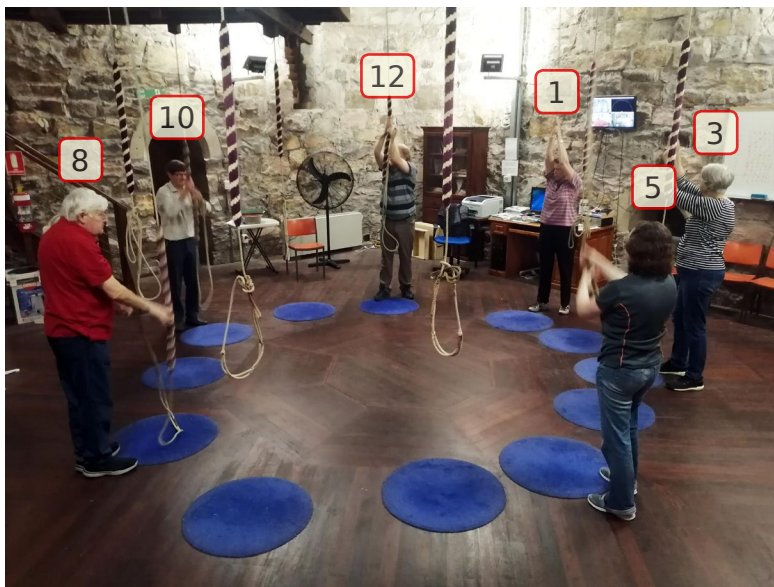
How to get better at Ringling Room ropesight? I would say, practise, practise and practise, but do so in the knowledge that ropesight definitely does exist on the platform, and you can learn it. To start with try to follow your course bell, then learn about coursing order and use that to follow the bells (2468753 in Plain Bob Major – easy!). Then keep staring at those ropes, train your subconscious to watch them flip to the next stroke, see the pattern that makes, and relate that to the number of bells in front of you. Maybe practise reading off the order the bells are ringing in at every stroke. Start on six, build up to higher numbers. Work at it – it will reward you! What I wouldn't recommend is trying to consciously count the bells ringing in front of you. Counting places is too much effort, and detracts from the rest of your ringing. Instead, do it just by looking, and letting your subconscious count for you. That's ropesight, and it has the great benefit that it leaves you free to relax, ring the method well, look at people's funny expressions in Zoom, drink your beer... Cheers!

Ringling Room — Lack of Ropesight!

David Smith, Brisbane, Australia

One of the advantages of helping with the layout of *Tower Talk* is that I get to read the articles well in advance of publication. In this edition, I found Mark Davies' article "*Ringling Room Ropesight*" particularly interesting because his comments were so different from what I would have written. Ruth's reaction, when I mentioned this to her, was that I should therefore write a contrasting article of my own on the same subject – so here it is.

I do stress though that I'm not writing to disagree with Mark, but to explore the very positive way in which different people react differently to new challenges (*Ringling Room*, in this case), and find different benefits. I ring in several *Ringling Room* towers, one of which hosts the practices for St Andrew's in Brisbane, Australia. The other Brisbane tower, St John's Cathedral, has recently resumed 'real' ringing, helped by the fact that it is a 12 with a large ringing chamber so that we can satisfy the local regulations and guidelines by ringing what we call the 'socially distanced six', being the 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12. Mind you, that has been an interesting challenge in its own right, particularly ringing the tenor to surprise minor, given the large time-intervals between the six bells combined with the significant difference in weights and wheel-sizes.



The 'socially distanced six' (1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12) at St John's Cathedral, Brisbane

However, St Andrew's is a much smaller ringing chamber, so our practices remain in *Ringling Room*. Like Mark, we found it surprisingly difficult to get the hang of this new environment. We prefer the handbell setting (because we find the sounds easier to hear), and took a while to get the feel of handstrokes and backstrokes, with one of our number (a later UK visitor – so easy to do in this virtual world!) much preferring the sally images to the handbell images for visually distinguishing the two strokes – but we'd already made our decision by the time she joined.

I certainly found ropesight much more difficult than on tower bells, but my solution has been to ring most of the time with my eyes shut. The result is that I'm much more aware of the pattern of the sounds than usual, to the extent that when something goes wrong I usually work out which bell should be next from the sound I was expecting to hear, rather than coursing orders or course bells; the flip-side of this is that I'm much less aware of for example who I'm dodging with than I would be on tower bells.

The other *Ringling Room* towers that I ring in are more training sessions where many of the ringers are at the stage of learning plain hunt or their first method. These are UK-based virtual towers (if that makes any sense), though I have 'really' rung with most if not all the ringers during trips to UK. What is interesting is that everyone is making great progress in *Ringling Room*, in some cases achieving breakthroughs in areas where they were struggling on pre-COVID tower bells.

With 'real' tower ringing, it is tempting for us to rely too much on learning by rote which bell to follow, at the expense of understanding what place we are in. But the difficulty of ropesight in *Ringling Room* has pushed us into understanding how important it is to know what position we are in, and using that information to tell us when to sound our bell.

There have even been some real 'Eureka!' moments – with one ringer exclaiming 'I was always being told to count my position and not just rely on knowing who I am following – now I see what this means!' Let's hope these new insights remain when we resume tower ringing.

'Niet Plooien'

Martin Adshead, Ieper, Belgium

How the ringers of Ieper continue to remember

Ieper the official name of the Belgian city and municipality in West Flanders that is more commonly referred to as **Ypres** by English-speakers. The Ypres Salient was the scene of horrendous carnage in the First World War, culminating in the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.



The Menin Gate in Ypres / Ieper

Here in Ieper (Ypres) in Belgium our lives through April and May 2020 were no different to the rest of you, with society put on hold. This includes the special thing we do in Ieper - "*Remembering the Fallen*". All remembrance ceremonies were cancelled and all places of worship closed. We all know the impact this has had on bellringing, but bells are still ringing out in West Flanders.

In West Flanders, the bells of most catholic churches are automated and only need someone to push the right button on the control panel. In this way church bells are being rung all around West Flanders in support of and in solidarity for the people, to give some encouragement to fight and win over the coronavirus.

Bells and carillons in Flanders are also being used to support and show solidarity

for our marvellous health care workers, hospital staff and all the essential workers who keep the wheels turning during our lockdown. St. George's Ieper is no exception in finding a way to ring in solidarity. This church is unusual in Belgium, having a ring of eight bells rung for change ringing.

Each bell had a dedication inscribed on it at casting, along with red poppies. Our bells and dedications are all equally important to us, the Ieper ringers, and nothing gives us more pleasure than an official ring when we can open the sound system fully and let Ieper know we're here.

So now every Sunday morning a lone bell is rung at St. George's. Usually it's our Tower Captain who cycles into town, rain or shine, and rings. Her biggest complaint is to be standing alone in a ringing room which is usually so full of life and energy.

We have a saying in Flanders "*niet plooiën*" which literally means "*don't bend*". Its real meaning is "*never give in*" - I think someone famous said that once before.



The 'Last Post' ceremony held each evening

Regrettably the service for ANZAC Day in April was cancelled but St. George's could not let this day pass completely unnoticed, so two very limited tributes were undertaken. The town's resident carillon player Ludo Geloen played his carillon bells in the Bellforte tower and in St. George's tower, and I had the honour of ringing the Anzac bell of St. George's. It was the best we could do within the restrictions

With no ringing practice or church services happening at the moment, we are taking the time to look beyond the lockdown. Since the bells were hung in September 2017, St. George's has proved to be a popular ringing destination, not only for UK ringers but ringers from around the world.

We would like to raise more awareness as to why there exists an Anglican church on Belgian soil, and why the bells have been installed in this important church. We are working on the idea of linking the day of a visit to a particular ringer who fell on that same day in the Great War. Many visitors already dedicate their ring to a fallen family member, or someone who rang in their own church or parish.

We are not yet sure how it will work, 'tis but an idea, but all parties seem to be on board and enthusiastic with the basic theme, which is to make ringers aware of why they are ringing at St. George's.

Corona has put everything here in Ieper on hold, but we maintain connections with our ringers and our UK mentors through social media. We have found this to be a very useful link for us, and sometimes very entertaining. Our Captain has also started on a program of "homework". The idea is to send regular packages of videos and Q & A's, so we don't forget all that we've learnt, and yes the top student will get a prize. Wow!

We have yet to work out and make our own strategy for when we are permitted back to ringing, though we cannot see this happening any time soon. In true leper style we hope to turn the Corona disaster into something positive. With a greater relaxation of the rules, we have started to use our handbells as a way back to ringing. The small problem is that first we have to learn how to use them, but that won't stop us. Just before Corona happened, Alan Regin delivered our refurbished handbells and hung them in their display cabinet, where they have remained.

I wasted no time in asking for the Tower Captain's permission to "go ahead", and from the church council came equally quickly and easily; Alan Regin who has final responsibility for the care of the handbells also agreed, saying, "it will be good to have the bells back in use". So, Tower Captain Marlies and I spent hours searching the internet and YouTube, and after weeks of research we put together some objectives and lessons. After many years of sitting in a loft in north London and then months of restoration, the handbells are back in use. Observing social distancing regulations to the letter, we held our first open air handbell lesson in the garden of St George's on 7 July.

These are just some of the things we in Ieper have been doing to keep our young band together through the 'corona weeks'. We are keeping one eye on the future and we are prepared to adapt.

Since the conception of this article in May the regulations have been changing for the better almost on a weekly basis. Now they are changing again for the worse. Who knows where we will be next month or next year?



*In mask and gloves, Martin leads the way in introducing Ieper ringers to handbells.
Photo by Sven Berg*

ART Awards 2021

Stephanie Warboys, ART Awards Leader

It is never too early to be thinking about who or what you would like to see recognised through the annual ART Awards. There are so many amazing people in our ringing community who support us, innovate for us and inspire us! Now is the time to make sure potential Award nominees are on your radar and that you are in a position to gather the information and evidence to do justice to the nomination of those you most value and admire. Here is a summary of the Awards and anyone can submit a nomination.

The Sarah Beacham Youth Awards

This year there will be one category covering all aspects of youth ringing (including schools) and the judges will allocate the total prize money (£800) to nominees as they see fit.

Inspiring Leadership in Ringing (sponsored by Talent Innovations)

Inspiring leadership breeds success, moves us forward and helps a wide range of endeavours to flourish at individual, tower, regional or national level. We are keen to stress that this Award is not only open to individuals, but also to towers and ringing societies, including Guilds / Associations.

The judges are keen to consider nominations not only for those who provide inspiring leadership to others, but also to those who inspire others to lead!

Excellence in the Development of Technology (sponsored by John Taylor & Co)

This is the year in which we have seen a huge range of the most imaginative, innovative and useful technical developments, including on-line platforms, tools and even robots!

Many of these were referred to in the last edition of *Tower Talk* and there have been even more since. If you have used these platforms to help retain your ringers or even to recruit new ringers and you have evidence and examples of success and good practice, then you should consider the Recruitment or Retention category below, rather than this technology category which is intended for those responsible for the creation and enhancement of the underlying technical developments.

Excellence in Recruitment or Retention (sponsored by Abel Sim)

Given the restrictions on UK ringing that we have had (and are currently experiencing), we are expecting the majority of this year's UK nominations to focus on retention, with innovative approaches.

Again, we are keen to stress that this Award is not only open to individuals, but also to towers and ringing societies, including Guilds / Associations.

Individual Learning The Ropes awards (sponsored by The Ancient Society of College Youths)

The individual awards, for those who are enrolled on or have completed one of the ART Learning The Ropes Programmes, are divided into two separate categories (and will use separate application forms this year):

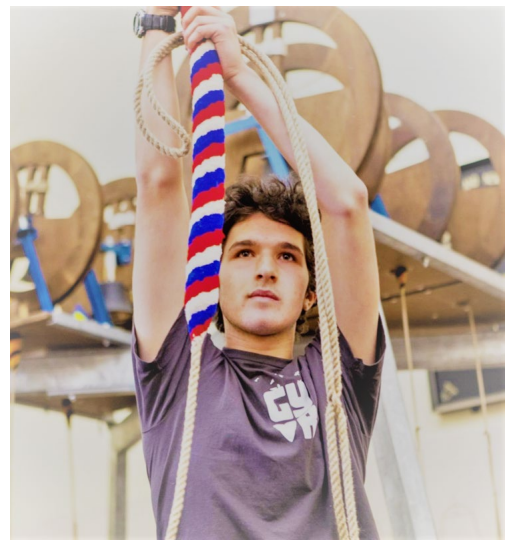
- Ringing achievement
- The ringer's contribution



Jane Grellier with her 2020 award certificate

This year, the ringing achievement award will be open to both the handful of individuals who attained LtR5 on tower bells before UK Lockdown in March (and hopefully some more from overseas later this year) **and** all those achieving **LtR3** on hand bells by 31 December 2020. The judges consider the individual's ringing development in terms of quality, quantity and complexity, the timescale over which the progress has been made and the support available.

The ringer's contribution award is not based on ringing ability or attainment but is for contribution to the wider ringing community, for example, within a band, local area, Guild / Association or even the Central Council. For 2020, the contribution category will be open to anyone who is or has been enrolled on the Learning the Ropes programmes (on tower bells or hand bells) at any level. The judges are particularly keen to see evidence of organisation or leadership or technical skills or wider initiative / innovation.



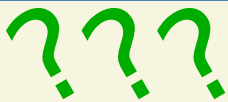
*Dylan Thomas also won an award
- see his article on page 14*

Masterclass 2020

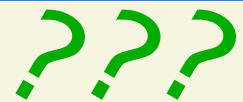
We are obviously bitterly disappointed that the Covid-19 situation has meant that we are unable to run the Masterclass for all the 2019 LtR5s in Birmingham or indeed anywhere else this year! The Masterclass has become recognised as one of the highlights of the ringing year. As and when the position changes, replacement arrangements will be made for that cohort - so that they do not miss out. It is still too soon to be able to advise replacement date(s) for 2021 but we will be in touch with the 2019 cohort as soon as is practical.

As usual, the deadline for receipt of nominations for this year's ART Awards will be 31 December 2020. We expect to have the updated entry forms on the ART website by the end of September. We have tweaked the Awards to reflect current circumstances and look out for an article in the *Ringing World* and on the ART website by two former judges on how to submit a strong application. Please don't be shy! If you have any queries at any point in the process, please do not hesitate to contact me at

stephanie.warboys@bellringing.org



Answers to Puzzles



[Here are the answers to the puzzle - see page 5](#)

1. 5040 Changes in a Peal
2. Go Plain Bob Doubles
3. 13572468 is Queens
4. Look To, Treble's Going
5. 15263748 is Tittums
6. Hand Stroke and Back Stroke
7. 12-Bell Methods are called Maximus
8. That's All, Stand
9. 1260 Changes in a Quarter Peal
10. Central Council of Church Bell Ringers
11. London Number 3 Surprise Royal
12. Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Place Doubles

From Ropesight to Rambling

Sonia Field and Marilyn Langridge, Middlesex

eKenton's First Social Event

Sonia Field writes: An unexpected consequence of lockdown has been the emergence of eKenton (a *Ringling Room* virtual tower). Previously I had established a programme of training based on ART's *Learning the Ropes* scheme in the north of the S&W District of Middlesex, despite having no fixed practice tower. This was primarily for local ringers but also open to those from further afield, and events were proving increasingly popular. So after the Covid crisis prevented 'real' ringing, I decided our learning should continue, using *Zoom* and *Ringling Room*. eKenton runs theory and practical sessions, rings virtually for services and special occasions, and offers virtual tower tours and taster sessions in *Ringling Room*. Membership has expanded across the UK and even internationally! Now that lockdown has eased, we also offer some non-cyberspace activities.



In this article, Marilyn describes our first live social event – a ramble that helped us to get to know one another better, but also included some ringing exercises.

Marilyn Langridge writes: One bright but unsettled morning seven bell ringers, a next-door neighbour and three adorable dogs gathered to walk what we were told would be a three mile round trip along the Ebury Way: Watford – Rickmansworth. After informal introductions (some of us had only met on-line in eKenton), we held a socially distanced certificate ceremony. Wendy received LtR level 1, Katy received level 2, and Sonia her full ART membership having completed Module 1 just before lockdown.



Socially distanced presentation of ART certificates

Our walk began through the delightful Oxhey Park, on to and along the canal where two of our four-legged companions decided it was time for their first swim. Continuing along the towpath we passed many loved barges and long boats in various stages of splendour and dilapidation. This is where Lottie and Lois, our Labrador dogs, took a second swim in black murky silt, while Jake (a Lhaso Apso x Poodle and somewhat smaller dog) watched, then decided he too would join in the fun. All three returned to their owners happy and delighted, legs and tummies covered in the black murk.



How to Plain Hunt on a ramble – dance it!

necessitating rapid goodbyes to each other and retreating to our cars.

In total we decided we must have covered some nine miles... not quite what we thought we had signed up to! However it was an excellent result as good friendships were made and a fine time had by all.

We continued our walk, chatting and finding out about one another. To our delight we came across a garden cafe selling teas and snacks – time for lunch. Orders were made for sustenance and we made our way to a charming garden next to The Café @ lock 81, Rickmansworth to eat our snacks. After replenishments we amused ourselves by doing some Plain Hunt Minor moves in dance form in order to teach Becca what it's all about.

The return journey involved retracing our steps along the towpath, the park and on to Malden Fields. A heavy shower of rain burst forth