

ART WORKS

Issue 32
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Association of Ringing Teachers - www.ringingteachers.org
Patrons: Paul Flavell, Helen McGregor, Peter Bevis and Len Roberts

ART Awards 2021

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.

To help support your chosen nominations, we have asked two former judges to write an article on how to prepare a strong application.

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!

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):

Achievement Award

This year, the 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.

Contribution Award

The 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.

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. 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 practical.

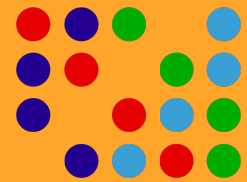
As usual, the deadline for receipt of nominations for this year's ART Awards will be 31 December 2020. We expect to have the updated entry forms on the ART website by the end of September. Please don't be shy! If you have any queries at any point in the process, please do not hesitate to contact me at stephanie.warboys@bellringing.org

Stephanie Warboys
ART Awards Leaders

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The next issue of ART WORKS will be November 2020.
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 Association of
Ringing
Teachers



I talk to quite a few people every week as part of my role as ART Chair – keen people, driven people, people who love ringing – and I've noticed a change in mood in recent weeks. People are becoming disheartened. The gung-ho spirit of the early months of lockdown which produced a flurry of technical innovation and activity is being replaced by a feeling that it will be a long time before "normal" ringing resumes and that a fair number of learners and older ringers won't be returning. Even *Ringin' Room* is palling for some people – it's not the same as physical ringing.

I do believe there has been a real mood change and we should talk about it.

There have been some positives in the conversations I've had, though. The forced break from ringing has made some reflect on what is important in their lives and the role of ringing within it. They don't want to give up ringing but are looking for a better balance – be it stopping peal ringing or stopping going to that awful practice where no-one learns anything – so they can concentrate on what they do like doing, including teaching.

Supporting ringing in their tower and the people they ring with is still a priority for many and it is good to see the thought and activities going into keeping people together and planning for the future.

So, what do we do now? In the here and now we must carry on, working to retain existing ringers and planning for the best return to teaching that we can deliver. What's the alternative?

Keep in contact with fellow ringers socially and continue other ringing related activities to keep bands and individuals motivated. ART are offering to teach ringing teachers how to use *Ringin' Room*. It might not have been what you wanted at the beginning – after all technology is not for everyone – but sometimes needs must.

We can give you the opportunity to learn how to use the technology before getting together with your band. If you haven't got enough to set up a *Ringin' Room* practice, then why not have a look at *Ding* – it allows you to assign an automated ringer to ring one or more bells if you're short. And what about

handbells? This can be taught online and then finessed in the garden. Quarter peals are now appearing on *BellBoard* with firsts for both new and experienced ringers who've never touched handbells before. We're talking Plain Bob here, by the way, not Bristol Maximus. Again, we're looking to resource and train people up in ringing handbells.

When it is time to teach again, we all need to be looking to move quickly, which requires a bit of planning and preparation.

First, as ringing teachers we each need to ensure that we (re-)start where we left off. After a long break from teaching we need to take time to remember what good teaching is – those little in-between steps, and alternative ways of teaching something. To help you, we are building online refresher courses for each of our teaching Modules and I've asked the ART Tutors to organise and run physical refresher courses when the time is right.

Recruitment and retention will be a priority so why not organise a recruitment and retention workshop in your local area. This shares good practice and ideas from around the country and you will build a personal plan fit for your unique local needs.

You might already have read about the 10-point plan in the *Ringin' World*, but if not, copies are available as part of the ART Recruitment and Retention resources. It is best to plan ahead for recruitment and retention so why not book an online version of the workshop now.

Finally, we are planning to run small, local day courses – Module 1 and Module 2 – as soon as possible after ringing practices resume. You might well feel more comfortable attending a course with ringers that you know rather than travelling to a course and spending the day with strangers. We won't be restricting the size of courses so if just a small group of you want to hold a course in your local area, that will be just fine.

So, why not contact ART to express an interest in a refresher course, a recruitment and retention workshop or a small Module 1 or Module 2 course.

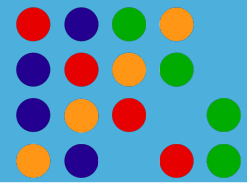
Together, we can plan as much as we can and then fix a date when we're able.

Lesley Belcher
ART Chair
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Three ladies of varied experience joined together during lockdown to form this lively handbell group. There's the relatively new ringer who has never touched a handbell and two others who are experienced tower bellringers and ART teachers. Together they embarked on the Learning the Ropes (LtR) Handbell Scheme. Let's see how they're getting on...

The ART teacher who can ring handbells (trebles preferred)

I have always had a rather timid approach to handbell ringing. In my head I simply cannot get to grips with it. I rely on others to help me achieve and I am always under the impression it's the first time I've ever rung this or tried that. Now lockdown has given me the chance to really put some effort into understanding what I am doing and help others while having some fun along the way. I have been ringing trebles for over 30 years. I really do enjoy ringing handbells but, at the same time, find it quite frustrating.

Following the creation of *Ringling Room* I managed to wangle my way into a group of experts who were keen to use it to ring quarter peals and improve on what they could already ring. My first attempts were horrendous but using *Abel* to practise there were some signs of improvement. Unfortunately, my previous strategy of filling in gaps and waiting to be helped does not work in *Ringling Room*, and I have had to learn exactly what I am doing.

My unstoppable, enthusiastic learner had also discovered *Ringling Room* and had made it widely known she was keen on trying handbells. A buddy had started practices for her learners and we also had regular practices set up alongside weekly talks for the Broadland Bellringing Centre (BBC) band. My diary was filling up when, somehow, we started regular *Ringling Room* handbell sessions as well. I'd also managed to fit in some *Ringling Room* sessions during lunch hours but now I really needed to up my game. Some of the others wanted to ring 1-2, so that meant I would have to ring other pairs, so we decided to enrol on the LtR Handbells scheme.

At time of writing, lockdown is being eased and there is now the possibility of sitting in the garden, having afternoon tea with cake,

whilst trying to cope with wild hair in a strong wind. I am also invited to other people's gardens for handbells and picnics. I still have the expert sessions each weekday morning plus the online BBC Handbell School. So, all is well in my ringing world.

The problem is, the unstoppable, enthusiastic learner is putting in some serious practice. She's learning fast and trying anything and everything, with the odd amusing comment. For example, after she pummelled me for instructions on how to ring Kent on 1-2 and wrote in a blog about trebling to Bristol Maximus, she looked vague over a cup of tea and said, "A dodge? What's a dodge?"

An ART teacher new to ringing methods on handbells

About five years ago I started teaching people to ring. The gentler ART approach seemed a great improvement on the way that I had been taught. Despite hyperventilating during my early lessons through fear of hanging someone, plenty of practice has imbued me with a feeling of quiet competence as far as teaching handling is concerned.

Come lockdown I felt lost. I made a half-hearted attempt at continuing my Surprise Major learning on *Abel*, but button pushing was soon pushed aside with a complete loss of motivation, and anxiety about being able to obtain food supplies for my aged mother. Then the wonderful *Ringling Room* enabled our local Ringing Remembers recruits to continue extending their learning — their enthusiasm and progress was inspirational.

The *Mobel* app became available for Android, and CCCBR released a couple of beginners' handbell books free to download (bit.ly/3hKYQFo). I decided to make an attempt at lockdown-learning despite my prior prejudice that the tinkly-ness of handbells set my teeth on edge. Handbell ringing was sufficiently different to be something of itself rather than the pale ghost of what I was missing.

My god-daughter managed to knock out her first successful handbell quarter peal about six weeks into lockdown, declaring it to be "boring". I, on the other hand, took weeks just to be able to Plain Hunt. I clattered

away on my tablet, working through William Butler's 14 stage guide to ringing Plain Bob Minor, telling myself that it would be a good reminder of what it is like for struggling learners, and that it is possible to improve, even if only slowly, if you just keep at it.

Very gradually, I made progress, until I eventually plucked up courage to join the Broadland Bellringing Centre's *Ringling Room* Handbell School, thus enabling one of the novice tower bell ringers to exalt in her push-button handbell superiority. I found that any slip by me or anyone else would instantly lead to my complete collapse, and a great deal of repetition was needed to build a stable enough framework to support a few wobbles. I now understand that some of the people I have taught on tower bells are probably not suffering a loss of confidence or lack of preparation when they can't get right after a mistake — they just need to stop, regroup and start again because they suffer from a similar 'framework collapse'.

Having progressed to occasionally being able to stagger through a plain course of Plain Bob Minor, William Butler told me at stage 13 that, 'If you have worked your way steadily through each stage in this book then bobs and singles should present you with no problem'. Ha! Similarly, Mr Accomplished Handbell Ringer indicated this to be trivial, 'There's only the three patterns!' Yes, but it's the transitions that are difficult, and how do you cope with calls as well? And nothing is trivial when your brain is already overloaded.

I'm afraid to say it was only at this point that it occurred to me to sign up to the LtR Handbells Scheme. And I'm so glad I did, because half an hour's reading on SmART Ringer made it clear that I needed to adjust my thinking and it gave me a way forward.

The easing of lockdown permitted a non-virtual gathering in a garden and we attempted to ring some actual handbells. At long last I felt that I was myself again — with that feeling of group endeavour that I so missed from tower bell ringing. Okay, the physicality is not the same, but it was joyous to be having a laugh and striving for improvement together and in the flesh!.

We are continuing to practise both virtually and on physical handbells. I doubt that I shall ever reach the dizzy heights of Level 5 of LTRH, but I have high hopes for Level 2!

A Ringing Remembers recruit who has never rung handbells and is still often alarmed by tower bells

When I sat down, sharpened my pencil and began to write about ringing during lockdown, I quickly realised that although I am a bellringer without an accessible tower, I am not a bellringer without bells. I have virtual bells to ring and I have ART teachers available to help me keep on learning. Certainly traditional change ringing in towers has stopped for the foreseeable future, but necessity is the mother of invention, and many committed ringers are seeking out new opportunities to remain engaged with the bellringing world and to further hone their skills. Like our forebears faced with cold dark towers during winter months, I am learning to ring handbells and to practise things that I might have been working on with tower bells.

In my naivety I assumed that most tower ringers also rang handbells, perhaps not as well as the big ones but that they could at least knock out a plain course of something in an emergency. I had not appreciated what a niche activity it is. When I asked around, very few ringers were able to help but my 'Big Bell' teacher was. She knew someone else who could also support me, so we entered the *Ringing Room* together and started to learn. The first task was to learn to Plain Hunt from any pair of bells. I know how to Plain Hunt. As a *Ringing Remembers* recruit I mostly Plain Hunt. But never with two bells. With handbells, after the first nervous janglings, it was almost straight in to Plain Bob Minor, despite the fact that I have only ever once rung anything on an inside bell in the tower, and that certainly was not a minor method.

For the first month we were restricted to virtual ringing. Each week at least three of us met up online and I was guided through what I needed to know to ring handbells successfully. In between I practised on *Abel*, perfecting the patterns and trying desperately to link them together, transferring the little that I already knew about ringing methods to this new skill. The patterns were not a problem, but the transitions between patterns at each lead end were very difficult for me. "You are now dodging," I was told, as if I was a frequent dodger and knew what that must entail. "Make places at the bob". Um – how exactly? But

we worked on it, worried at it, and repeated ourselves until we got things straight.

Feeling bold I ventured into the *Ringing Room* Take Hold lounge and sought out other nascent handbell ringers. Someone had put up a post seeking like-minded people who wanted to learn to ring in hand. I contacted them and asked to join their Handbell Clinic, fully expecting that at least a few would be inexperienced ringers such as myself. I was quickly disabused of this notion. They were all 'proper ringers' – anyone who conducts *Zoom* meetings in front of a wheel attached to their wall is not a recent learner. But we get along fine – meeting for an hour each week – and since they have no idea of just what a neophyte I am, they push me to do things that no sane teacher would consider. Since there is no preconception as to what I may be capable of, they assume that I understand all sorts of things that I have no clue about and expect me to tag along with their progress, rather than stumble along in the slow lane.

Although, I think they were somewhat shocked the other day when it was suggested that I learn the first two leads of Kent, and I ignorantly enquired how many leads of Kent are there. This required an explanation about how methods work – something that to them was so basic, but news to me.

Then, with the easing of lockdown in June, two people arrived at my door with a set of handbells. For the first time ever, I was able to ring a physical bell in a group. There was some initial banging and clashing as I was instructed on how to make the bells sound correctly and my handling is still amateurish ('staccato' is how my teacher describes it) but so thorough was my virtual grounding that within a few minutes we were able to stagger through a course of Plain Bob Minor. Admittedly with a very determined conductor waving his bells at me every time I wandered from the path.

Since that first foray into 'real ringing', we have formed a ladies only band: 'The Clanging Belles'. We meet once or twice a week for the purpose of improving our skills. Through storms and other distractions we have been working together for three weeks and are now reasonably confident on a plain course of Plain Bob Minor, as well as venturing into the world of bobs. We have experimented with various combinations and found our favoured positions, and I have

lucked out on the trebles – no need to watch for the sneaky treble if it is in your own right hand – which releases a little brain space for other things.

I love ringing handbells. Even if towers do not reopen for some time, I am quite content. I find this new skill intensely stimulating, as convivial as its bigger brother, and very democratic. We decide between us which bells we want to try, who wants to make the calls, and when to stop for tea. Through working out what exactly is going on in a method in order to memorise it, I am learning a lot about blue lines. How transferrable all this knowledge is to the tower remains to be seen.

Nikki Thomas, Catherine Sturges and Mary Jones

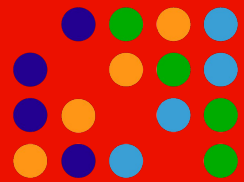


Socially distanced handbells



Handbells and cookies

Roos' Young Ringers in the Ringing Room



When the lockdown first started, none of us had any idea how long it would go on for or what the long-term implications would be. However, in common with many other community groups, it seemed important to maintain regular contact with our ringers – the children in particular. In a fit of enthusiasm, I emailed a ringing quiz to all the ringers in our little village of Roos. This met with mixed success.

Meanwhile *Ringing Room* was getting off the ground. I was vaguely aware of it but have to confess to not being very interested. I was more concerned with when we could get back in the tower. The ringers were missing it.

Somewhat reluctantly I joined a Beverley and District Ringing Society *Ringing Room* meeting and it was instantly apparent that this would be an excellent way of engaging with our ringers and keeping them in touch with each other.

Parents were contacted about signing up the young ringers and we have held our weekly practice online ever since. The young ones have taken to the *Ringing Room* like ducks to water. They have all made a significant amount of progress. On tower bells some were just ringing rounds or still learning how to handle a bell. In the *Ringing Room* Call Changes have not caused any problems, they can all Plain Hunt on any bell. Some have progressed onto ringing Plain Bob Doubles and Plain Bob Minor inside.

Some have attended the Beverley and District *Ringing Room* meetings to get some extra practice with a solid band around them and Jayden aged 10 had the excitement of speaking live on BBC Radio Humberside with his mother. Jayden was able to convey just how much he loves ringing and how interesting it can be.

Of course, it remains to be seen how easily this additional knowledge is transferred back onto the tower bells. We adults have found it quite a challenge to ring even simple methods electronically. I certainly struggled without the physicality of a handstroke and backstroke. The concept of changing speed isn't nearly so obvious in the *Ringing Room*.

What is clear though is that the young ringers' knowledge of theory is now ahead of their practical skills and it has been really useful to have this time to explain things away from the busy environment of tower practices.

We are now able to ring in a very limited way back in the tower on Sundays. Any learner who is worried about whether they have 'forgotten' how to ring has the opportunity to have a solo practice midweek. Thankfully, because they have all been taught using the 'Learning the Ropes' method it means they can all ring up and down without assistance which means we are COVID-19 compliant.

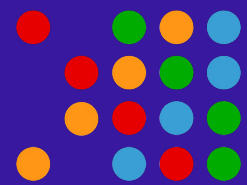
Helen Audley



Abigail a young ringer at Roos



Emily a young ringer at Roos



Teaching New Recruits Using Ringing Room

I won't lie: I was nervous. I'd approached some friends of mine, each of whom had come with me to a belltower at some point and been intrigued, but both of whom lived in rural Pennsylvania, well outside a reasonable distance to the nearest tower. I'd asked them if they wanted to try learning to ring on this new thing that had just come out: *Ringing Room*, a virtual belltower.

Of course, they wouldn't be able to learn bell handling as such, but it was a chance to have fun learning the puzzle-and-game aspect of ringing that so many people actually consider the real draw card of the exercise. Alarmingly, they scavenged together a group of eight and gave me a night of the week that would work for them.

I hadn't come up through Learning the Ropes. I hadn't gone through the ART training scheme. However, what I did have was decades of experience in teaching everything from writing, history, and risk management to karate, fencing, and acting. I knew how to tailor my teaching to specific groups, how to make everything I taught directly relevant to specific goals for the learners, and how to construct learning sessions that built confidence as well as skills.

I decided to make each lesson only a half-hour long. That way, nobody would feel that the lessons were a burden, and they'd be able to finish each lesson exhilarated and eager for more, rather than exhausted and overwhelmed. Next, I decided to use a 'flipped classroom' approach, where the learners would spend a few days ahead of the lesson going over the tutorial materials that I had produced myself to bring them through a progression of skills specifically with virtual ringing in mind. During the lesson, they would apply those skills by actually ringing.

Because these learners were highly motivated adults (mostly because lockdown was making them antsy and they were desperate for novelty), I knew I could trust them to go over the materials in advance.

The four-week module had a number of overall learning outcomes that guided my choices in designing each lesson. These were explicitly stated using 'action verbs': the objective was to elicit behaviors that would demonstrate the learners'

Learning Outcomes for Introduction to Virtual Change Ringing

By the end of the module, learner will be able to:

- Ring rounds, dodge, and ring the Mexican wave with regular striking and few to no errors.
- Ring Plain Hunt reading from the blue line.
- Use standard ringing vocabulary when trebling and discussing the learning materials.

competence. If I couldn't see and hear them ringing competently, I would know I had more work to do. There was no point having, "Learners will understand this and that", as a learning outcome. What does 'understand' look like? What does it sound like? How can you tell from the outside whether someone understands? Instead, I thought long and hard about what I wanted to be able to see the learners doing.

Each week's materials had several learning activities that supported these outcomes.

Learners encountered bellringing history, engineering, culture, and theory through the inclusion of links to videos, articles, and other resources. This supported the learning outcomes by helping them visualize what they were doing in *Ringing Room* in terms of what a physical bell and rope would be doing, and give them a chance to see and hear people using bellringing vocabulary, and thus to understand it better.

Moreover, it would support their engagement with the material by helping them feel that they were welcome members of the ringing community, and giving them a context for understanding ringing's appeal and its historical place in society.

Learners began assimilating the vocabulary of ringing based on a list of thoroughly explained terms and concepts relative to the learning material for that week; this, too, was to help them feel like a part of the community, but also to start thinking about ringing in a more technical way and to be prepared for the

ringing terms I would be using with them that week.

The actual practice of ringing included one or two fundamental concepts that they would learn by doing, based on the concepts that they had read about during the week: rounds and basic vocabulary in the first lesson; dodging and making places in the second; counting places in the third; and, gloriously, plain hunt in the fourth.

Each week's lesson provided a scaffold for the next, leading ultimately to the ability to plain hunt. In four weeks they didn't necessarily commit everything to memory, but they had the skills they needed to progress: they could move up, move down, or stay in the same place; they could read a blue line; and they could count their places. I made sure they knew that they weren't just learning these skills to have something to do, but to give them authentic, practical competence that they would be using continually for as long as they wanted to ring and no matter how far they advanced.

Moreover, the learners got to know the traditions and rituals that would have become familiar to them had they been able to ring in a real tower: how to treble and cover, what "go next" and "that's all" mean, when to stand, what to do when you make a mistake, and (of course) the all-important art of banter and tower chat (often taking the form of lengthy and digression-filled discussions based on the questions they asked me about the material – just like in a real tower!). I thought of them as real ringers, and that's how they learned to think of themselves.

Of course, things didn't always go smoothly. Technical issues from the small ("I don't own any headphones") to the large ("My screen's just gone blank", "I suddenly can't hear anything") plagued the first two lessons in particular, as everyone (including me; *Ringin' Room* was still very much under development at the time) got more familiar with the technology.

Occasionally someone wouldn't quite get a concept, and the ringing would fall in a heap as the whole band, beginners all, tried and failed to figure out where they were supposed to be. I usually let this happen, because the struggle itself expanded their awareness of other bells and the overall pattern they were ringing and helped them build problem-solving skills, moving them beyond a mere slavish and myopic following of the blue line.

When things ground to a halt, I modelled cheerful (albeit rueful) acceptance of the collapse and an utter refusal to blame anyone, and we reset and started again. One of the stunning advantages of *Ringin' Room* was that this was the work of a moment, and nobody was in danger from a flailing rope or a broken stay.

Over the course of the four weeks, the learners began to set up their own practice sessions, completely on their own initiative (and, in fact, are still ringing on their own together). And – to my deep gratification – six of the original eight asked if they could keep going for another four weeks (we spent the time on an in-depth study of Grandsire Doubles, ensuring that everyone got a chance to ring each bell in a plain course before we were done).

I would strongly encourage any ringing teacher who has either learners who had just signed on when lockdown hit or proto-learners who have never laid hand to rope to start taking advantage of *Ringin' Room* as soon as possible as a teaching forum. In fact, *Ringin' Room* has been invaluable during lockdown as a teaching tool at all levels.

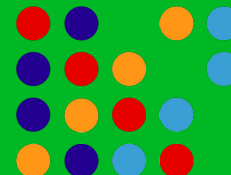
I'm confident that it will continue to be an excellent way to bring new learners up to speed on the concepts they'll encounter in the tower in due course. After all, why should they have to learn bell handling and theory while frantically trying to avoid carnage and humiliation as they attempt to manage everything at once?

The lesson plans I used for my first group of virtual-only ringers are available from the Files section of the *Ringin' Room* Take-Hold Lounge on Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/873214286480660/files/), or by emailing me at info@lauraegoodin.com. (Note: they are a moving target, and I intend to keep revising them as I teach more groups of learners, so if there's anything you disagree with or have questions about, please don't hesitate to drop me a line.)

By the way, the other day one of that first group of learners asked me whether I'd be willing to keep going with a third module. (Reader, I said yes.)

Laura E. Goodin

Should it be called M2V?



Watch out for details of our new ART workshop on running a virtual practice using the *Zoom*, *Ringin' Room* combo.

Maybe you haven't had a chance to experience using *Ringin' Room* in a way that helps learners understand theory and progress in their striking and method ringing, engages band members and takes advantage of the benefits of ringing with each other over the internet? It could well be over twelve months before we are able to teach bell handling again so it's worth attending this new short (just over 60 mins) workshop in order to get the most out of lockdown ringing.

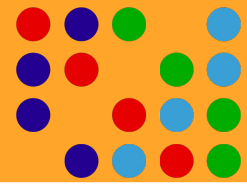
The workshop is especially relevant to those who have attended the ART M2 modules on teaching rounds to Plain Hunt and beyond, and anyone interested in running practices and helping to keep and progress the hundreds of learners gained during the *Ringin' Remembers* and other recruitment initiatives.

Please email Rose (rose.nightingale@bellringing.org) to register your interest and we'll be in touch with details and times.

Lesley Boyle

**" The best listening practice ever " -
Barbara Murray**

**" No need to worry about rope length or
bell weight - just ring! " - Nick Cant**



ART Abel YouTube Videos - a Review

ART has produced six short YouTube videos to help you get the most out of *Abel*. You can use these to discover how you can use *Abel* to study and improve in the comfort of your home. *Abel* is a programme for your PC which allows you to simulate aspects of tower ringing. There are also versions for tablets and smart phones. It costs £20.00 at www.abelsim.co.uk

Who will benefit from these videos?

- Newly recruited ringers who would like to continue developing some ringing skills
- Improving novice ringers who would like to practise and improve some ringing skills
- Ringers who have never used *Abel* before.

Why use these videos?

- Currently you can't ring the tower bells
- You can bring *Abel's* virtual bells into your home!
- Learning to use *Abel* could help you take part in a virtual practice night with others using *Ringing Room*.

Introduction to the videos

The directions and on-screen demonstrations are extremely clear and the pace is suitable for beginners. The aim is to support your use of the *Abel* ringing simulator. The narrator relates the skills practised on *Abel* to tower ringing where applicable. I found the most practical way to use the ART video tutorials was to have them running on my tablet at the same time as having *Abel* open on my PC. It's useful to watch the series, but each one gives an explanation of its individual topic.

Some of the simulator skills are transferrable and will help when tower ringing is resumed, but ideally both should be practised together.

Video 1: Getting Started Using Abel

This video provides an introduction to *Abel* for beginners which explains how to select the screen view and learning exercises.

- There is an option to have moving ringers on your screen which might seem good but choose 'HDRW Sallies' as directed because the aim is to practise listening skills with minimal visual distraction. The narrator demonstrates how to choose this option
- Adjusting the peal time is important. The higher the peal speed the more time you will have to take part in the activity. You can reduce it as you improve.

Video 2: How Accurate is my Striking?

This video shows you how to use *Abel* to get feedback and keep a record of the accuracy of your striking on the simulator over time.

- Halfway through the video plays rounds and shows the red, amber, green chart in the bottom right corner. This is a useful audio-visual demonstration of how *Abel* grades your striking. It is also an opportunity to listen to accurate striking without having to control a bell
- *Abel's* accuracy is spot-on which can be daunting for a human ringer!
- Like the narrator says, your striking will be variable, but will improve with practice
- Practice sessions are a bit like practice nights some go well, others less so. But all are worthwhile.
- Don't forget what the narrator says, many ringers can't detect an error of 10% of the gap between adjacent bells.

Video 3: Help, I Can't Hear my Bell!

This video clearly explains how you can use *Abel* to practise listening skills. This is particularly useful to train beginners' listening skills without having to concentrate on bell control at the same time. There are three parts.

Part 1: Listening for the bell you are ringing as part of a band

- You are shown how to use the programme with simple activities using a small number of bells ringing at a ringing speed you are

comfortable with

- You can also adjust the pitch of the bells if necessary
- As your listening skills increase you can introduce more bells, choose the bell you want to ring and adjust the speed
- The narrator explains how to take part in ringing (as in video 1 and notes above)

Part 2: The open handstroke lead

- This is explained as a rhythm
- A useful hand clapping activity is suggested to introduce and consolidate the rhythm
- Practising this on the simulator shows that it is not always easy to achieve but will help when ringing in the tower

Part 3: Counting your place

- Explains a technique to count your place
- And use your sense of listening to rhythm to identify irregularities in ringing

I have found the series very helpful indeed re how to use Abel and to improve practice at this time. I have a simulator in a barn at home, but it wouldn't have had as much use as it has without these videos. My husband said, 'You spend as much time up there as when you kept horses!'

Video 4: Call Changes

This video gives a straightforward explanation of what is involved in call changes and provides a step-by-step guide on how to set up/edit *Abel* to practice call changes.

- It explains the jargon involved supported by a diagram
- It describes what happens in call changes – including the three different ways they can be called – focusing on calling ‘up’ (towards the back)
- It explains how to operate *Abel* to allow you to practise Call Changes including an example of how to progress from rounds to Queens
- You are shown how to use *Abel*'s pre-programmed call change programmes, including how to modify them to make them easier if you are a beginner
- Four key principles to concentrate on are given – with a useful example
- And, most importantly, supportive practical suggestions are made to aid improvement over time

Video 5: Covering by Listening

This video is a good one to link with video 3. It describes how to extend your listening skills to ring the cover bell to a method.

- You are shown how to set *Abel* to ring the tenor for Cloister Doubles
- Given guidance on how to count places to 6th, rhythmically taking account of the handstroke gap
- Once the method starts just keep your counting rhythm and your bell should be in 6th place each time
- In addition to your listening skills the coloured indicators under your bell rope will show how accurate your rhythm and timing are.
- Don't forget to slow down the peal time if you need to and then increase it as your skill develops
- You are shown how to select longer methods for more practice
- And reminded that *Abel*'s automatic ringers have perfect rhythm that doesn't always exist in a tower. But the purpose is to develop your rhythm and listening

Video 6: Covering by Watching - Understanding Ropesight

This video explains how to set up *Abel* to show the ‘Moving Ringers’ view. All the other videos have used the ‘Sallies’ view which is relevant to their content. If your version of *Abel* does not have the ‘Moving Ringers’ view you can update it via the *Abel* website.

Activities are mainly observation only to build up your skill. This is really important. Keep at it. Then you take an active part later in the video.

- Rhythm and listening are the key elements of good ringing. Watching and ropesight provide additional visual confirmation that your sense of rhythm is correct
- Individual learning styles can include varying combinations of auditory, visual and motor skills, therefore, one of these modes may support others to develop the key elements
- You are guided through observation activities to spot the order of handstrokes only first, then backstrokes only, then both hand and backstrokes together on 4 ropes
- At this stage you only have to watch – not take part. So all your concentration can be given to that part of the activity. If the ropes move too fast for you to spot the order slow the peal time down as the narrator suggests. Keep watching it will come.
- Next is another observation activity. There are now six ropes on the screen and you need to look for the bell which is in 5th place each time – either 3, 4 or 5
- You watch for handstrokes only (sallies) first and are told the order to look for them in and they are labeled on screen
- I repeated this several times! Slow the peal speed down if you need to then speed it up gradually
- Then you watch for backstrokes only, then both strokes together, set the peal speed to one that makes the activity achievable for you then gradually speed it up
- Make sure you have the blue line chart showing on the right of your screen as it does in the video tutorials. If it's not showing go to ‘View’ and click on ‘blue line’.

Link to the YouTube playlist
bit.ly/2YCAAndX

Links to the individual videos:

Video 1: bit.ly/3bffuKU

Video 2: bit.ly/3hA9UFb

Video 3: bit.ly/3gGL4Cn

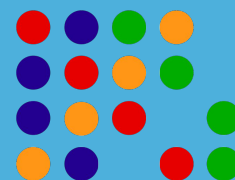
Video 4: bit.ly/2QzePuj

Video 5: bit.ly/32yJoWA

Video 6: bit.ly/2QyrL3h

- Having the blue line on enables you to pause the video (using the pause symbol on the toolbar) to periodically check if your observation of ropesight is accurate
- Now you are shown how to take part covering Cloister Doubles
- When you are ready the narrator suggests covering while watching five bells on Grandsire Doubles and how to extend your skills as you improve

Lucy Naish



Ding is a virtual ringing platform written originally by David Norman and subsequently developed by his fellow Trowbridge ringer Giles Wood. It is an alternative to *Ringing Room*. In both, you ring online with other people, but *Ding* also allows you to ring with 'Bob', the automaton who can ring as many bells as you like.

Bob enables you to practise a method on your own, and he can also fill in for you on a practice night, ringing as many bells as you need. You are never one short for Stedman Doubles, or even eleven short for Orion Maximus!

Let's start by understanding why you'd want to use *Ding* as a learning or teaching aid.

Ding as a learning aid

Learners are able to learn more easily about method ringing when uninhibited by their ability to control their bell. Ringers can be taught to watch for their course and after bells before ringing, and can practise it with Bob in place to provide each learner with reliable bells to course.

The real world ringing environment encourages learners to look at the bell that they are following. Call changes reinforces this approach, until the learner has acquired just about enough bell control to learn to plain hunt by numbers. In contrast, *Ding* encourages you to listen and count your place. When you learn to plain hunt, it is not an issue if the other bells are coming at you in different orders, and it is not much of a step from hunting to doubles to move up to minor and beyond.

Of course, the learner still needs to acquire ropesight on returning to the tower; but they now do this with a much better understanding of ringing. Viewing options with moving ropes gives your learner a chance to acquire some initial ropesight.

Bob waits for you to ring before continuing. For learners, this is highly beneficial. In the real world, it can all go too fast, and as a learner, by the time you realise you are looking at the wrong bell it is much too late, the change is messed up and you are struggling to find your place again.

Bob gives you the chance to realise that it is your turn, and to carry on unimpeded by your earlier mistakes.

It also allows you to practise at a slower pace initially.

With the prospect of *Ding* offering 3D virtual reality in the future, it will become possible to put in hours of practice ringing in a realistic virtual environment, both with Bob and with other people, some of whom might also be using dumbbells.

Differences from Ringing Room

In *Ding* you are not limited by the number and ability of the ringers present, because you can use 'Bob' to ring all the other bells.

Ringing Room's standard layout shows sallies at handstroke and tail ends at backstroke, laid out in a circle. The view is as if from above. *Ding's* standard layout has two rows of buttons, for handstroke and backstroke. The buttons are laid out like a piano keyboard.

Whilst you can get to *Ringing Room* simply by logging on to a web site, *Ding* is an app that must be downloaded and installed before use, adding a layer of complexity.

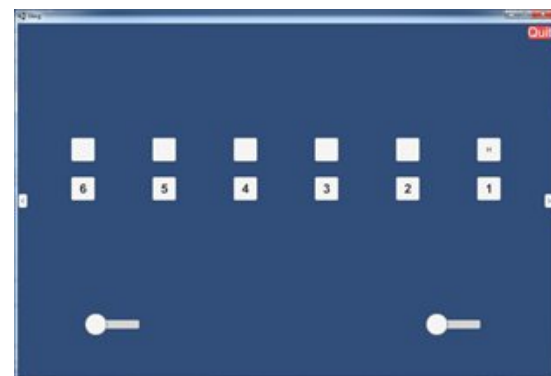
Overview

Ding Unity runs on Windows, Mac, Linux and Android, and has the potential to run on iPads and iPhones. The default layout has the bells represented by boxes containing the numbers of the bells, laid out as on a piano keyboard with the treble on the right, with a letter showing you which key to press to ring your bell. Like the ropes in the tower, the numbers go up and down, but they stay in the same places – this is not an online version of *Diagrams!*

Ringing in Ding

To use *Ding* you choose the tower that you want to join from the list of available towers; if your tower isn't on the list yet then you create one. The first person to go there becomes the Conductor, and from that point onwards only the Conductor can change the band. The conductor can be changed at any time.

The default view is two rows of boxes, with numbers in the lower row. Above one of the numbers is an 'H' (for handstroke), telling you that this is your bell and you can ring it by pressing the H key.



The Ding Interface

When you do so, your bell number moves up to the top row, like the sally going up in the air, and there is now a 'B' (for backstroke) telling you that you can ring your backstroke by pressing the B key.

Other ways of ringing the bells are available, including one designed for mobile phones.

It's best to start by ringing rounds. It may take a moment to get used to ringing electronically if you haven't done it before. Those who consider themselves dinosaurs when it comes to technology may benefit from looking away from the screen initially, instead listening and counting, pressing their key at the appropriate time – One-Two-Press-Four-Five-Six.

Ringing by ropesight

Ding has the ability to view moving ropes, which provides a learning aid for acquiring ropesight. The bells are arranged clockwise, with the treble on the left, so this viewpoint looks more like that of someone watching the front six from the other side of the room than that of someone actually ringing. There are options for linear layouts and for a full circle as if you were ringing the bell.

Whilst *Ringing Room* shows you a circle as if viewed from above, *Ding* shows a three-dimensional view. Each rope is successively higher than the one before, so that the tenor's sally is noticeably higher than the treble's, to help to identify which bell is which.

By default the full circle layout presents a view from behind the treble. However, you can choose the viewpoint from a different bell. The circle layout is nice to watch as though you are standing behind a bell. You could set your computer to full circle mode while others are ringing, or you could set Bob to ring all of the bells.

Ringling with Bob

Bob rings by waiting for you, so for example if he is expecting to ring after the third and fourth, he will wait forever for those two bells, even if every other bell has already rung.

If you want to ring with Bob then of course you need to tell him what to ring, and you do this using place notation.

As the conductor, the Ringing Page allows you to call Bobs and Singles. The call appears on other ringers' screens. You can click the button at any point during the lead, Bob won't get confused by an early or late call.

And finally ...

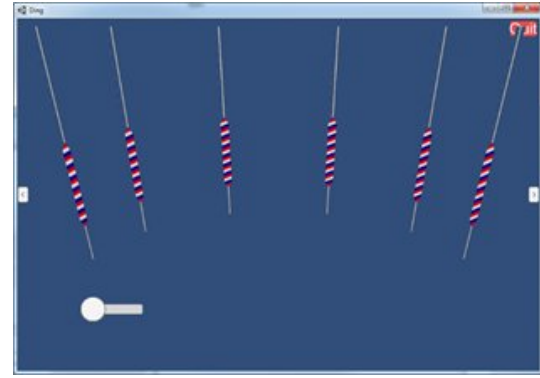
Ding was originally written for lockdown but has a use well beyond that.

The most significant plans for *Ding* include:

- Full 3D with ability to 'walk' around the ringing room for a more realistic viewpoint
- Virtual Reality capability using VR goggles
- Option for Bob to force the rhythm instead of waiting
- Ability for Bob to act as conductor, calling bobs and prompting ringers when out of place

Why not give *Ding* a go? More information and downloads are available from the *Dinging* website - www.dinging.co.uk

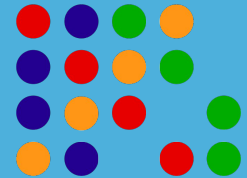
If you're into social media why not join the *Ding* Facebook Group and you could join one of the practices located there - www.facebook.com/groups/dinging/



Using the full circle layout in *Ding* to develop ropesight

Giles Wood

A Novice Ringer's Experience of Ding



Prior to lockdown I rang two or three times a week in three different towers – bells were quite a big part of my life. So when we had to stop ringing it was a godsend when in April, Marion Moldon (Maz), the Corsley Tower Captain, invited me to join her virtual ringing group. Ever since, four of us have been ringing on *Ding* weekly. I was able to ring Call Changes and Plain Hunt on tower bells, but the other three are more experienced ringers. It was so good to be part of a team again and to continue bell ringing and learning albeit on a computer.

Ding is an app which allows you to ring a bell on a computer screen using the mouse or keyboard. Also available is a sister app called *Bob* which automatically fills in on any bell(s) for which there is no ringer. It is easy to use and makes the practice very flexible as just a small number of ringers can enjoy a session.

Ding has a message pane for the ringers to communicate via text but

running a *Zoom* meeting in parallel makes communication between the ringers much easier. Initially our sessions were hampered by an echo which made precise striking difficult. We have now replaced the pc loudspeakers with headsets.

A successful session requires three different roles: a session organiser who deals with setting up the session including booking a *Zoom* meeting; an IT-savvy person to assist with technical difficulties; and most importantly, the conductor to run the practice and teach.

These roles don't necessarily need to be done by one person. For the smooth running of the *Zoom* practice it is vital that people know how to use the technology. A lot of time can be wasted if people try to come to grips with the technical side during the time set aside for a practice.

This aspect needs IT knowledge and can be facilitated by someone introducing people who are new to *Zoom/Ding*, how to set up their IT. It

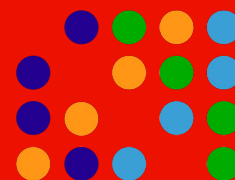
would be best done during a period dedicated to technical detail.

I have benefited greatly from regularly using *Ding*, especially under the guidance and personal encouragement of Maz. Through *Ding* I have been introduced to method ringing. It is as if a new door has opened and my horizons expanded. I have progressed from Plain Hunt to Plain Bob and Grandsire, and even had a go at Stedman. *Ding* has taught me to concentrate 100% on listening to bells and counting my places. The challenge will be applying this learning when we start practices in the tower!

Ding is an excellent teaching and learning tool, and I believe that it has the potential to continue to be used for that purpose in the future when the pandemic is over.

Lenka Stokes

Risk Assessments for Bell Ringing



How many times have you heard the phrase, "You need to do a risk assessment for that". This may have come from your PCC, from another ringer. Maybe even from your insurance company...

As a ringer of nearly 40 years myself and a veteran of insurance for 35 years I've heard them all and more in the past. There's a lot of mythology that goes around about what you do and don't need to do in order to comply with insurance conditions and requirements. Equally some of it is true!

Most commercial insurances, (i.e. not personal insurances such as Household or Private Motor), will have a condition towards the start of the policy along the lines of;

Reasonable care

It is a condition precedent to liability that you shall

- (a) take all reasonable precautions to prevent damage, accident, illness and disease;
- (b) exercise reasonable care in seeing that all statutory and other obligations and regulations are observed and complied with;
- (c) maintain the premises, works, machinery and plant in sound condition.

This is effectively saying that you should not rely on your insurance to pay when you have failed to make reasonable efforts to keep property maintained and people safe. So for example if you know for sure that the floor of a ringing room chamber is unsafe and may not stand the weight of a person or persons it would not be acceptable to send someone up to test this theory, hoping that the insurance will cover it!

Firstly I will draw a distinction between 'risk assessments' to meet statutory obligations and implementing practical precautions.

Statutory risk assessment is not a concern for most churches given that this is broadly a low-risk activity in a predominantly volunteer, non-employee environment. As such, most churches/tower captains would not be under any obligation to complete these. More proportionately, the key would be to take sensible precautions given the specific circumstances or location.

In many cases, you will already have tried and tested arrangements in place to keep safe all those who regularly ring at or visit your premises. As such, all you may need to do is review your existing precautions to check that they will be adequate.

Equally it is important to remember, that any health and safety precautions you identify should be proportionate. This will depend on your own circumstances. For example, reflecting the size of your ringing chamber, the numbers of expected regulars and visitors and any idiosyncrasies or peculiarities of your bells.

For the average church, where ringing is usually service and practice night only or occasional peals/ quarters/ branch practices, these will generally present few hazards. Therefore the risk assessment can be quite simple, based on informed judgement and reference to appropriate guidance.

For more notable and iconic rings, such as cathedrals, greater churches and those with a little extra 'frisson', (Merton College and Pershore Abbey for example) a more detailed assessment may be required.

Our experience has shown that by having established and documented risk assessments it helps considerably in defending claims and allegations against churches, tower captains and bellringers as well as identifying and minimising or eliminating risks associated with ringing.

Remember that every church and tower is different and one-size does not always fit all! For example:

- Ground floor ring or up a staircase?
- Rope guides or low ceiling?
- Length of the draught
- Weight of the bells – heavy or light?
- Layout of the ringing chamber/ room
- Idiosyncrasies! "The 5th is slow at backstroke and needs a good pull"

Therefore please use any risk assessment template as just that and make this bespoke to your own situation. No-one knows their own tower better than those who ring there.

However, remember that a risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork - it is about identifying sensible precautions for your ringing and your tower and taking appropriate steps to minimise any risk.

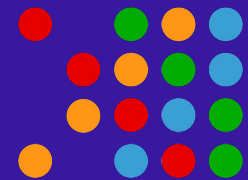
Anyone can do a risk assessment. In practice, it is usually the tower captain or some suitable person who knows and understands ringing matters, risks and hazards and other relevant guidance. But this is not a rule or a requirement

Of course, completing risk assessments on their own won't prevent accidents happening. It is important that you take the precautions you have identified as being necessary, which may save a lot of paperwork in the future!

Marcus Booth BA FCII Chartered Insurer Church Underwriting Manager Ecclesiastical Insurance



Marcus speaking at the 2019 ART Conference



Time to Check Your Bells?

ART is developing a series of online learning courses based around short videos. You can dip in and out of these courses swotting up on various areas or you can work your way through from beginning to end. Once such course is, 'An introduction to basic belfry checks and routine maintenance' which was released to help people performing their post-lockdown checks. The course is still under development, but the basics are there for those who are less experienced. Obviously if this is new to you try and take a more experienced person along with you and if you're uncertain about anything once you've checked, then contact a bell hanger or official in your Guild or Diocese.

I found the course very useful and interesting. I suggested that two of my fellow Northchurch ringers, who were going to check the bells with me, also look at the course. They too found the course interesting and informative, liking Richard's approach. Having the videos definitely helps. For all of us this was the first time carrying out any maintenance and the course helped us work out what to do. I could not find any maintenance schedule in the tower so we created a check list from the example provided in the course adding several columns to document: our findings, the remedial action taken, and whether any further actions would be required.

We all agreed that the way the course is broken down into sections helps jumping to any particular chapter to review the content easy. Having discovered that we had 'Hastings stays', we were glad to see a section on them.

Having been through the course before venturing into the tower meant that we could help each other work out what to do. Several of us also obtained a copy of the CCCBR's *Manual of Bell Maintenance* to support the course. We would definitely recommend the course to anyone who is new to bell maintenance and is unsure of where to start.

On venturing up the bell tower to commence our safety checks, it was discovered that a bird had made a nest on one of the window ledges to the ringing chamber, and a further two bird nests had appeared in the belfry. The birds had flown, so following the guidance given in the course, the nests were safely

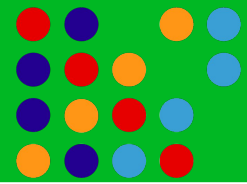
removed and the entrance holes blocked up. We also checked the small space between the ringing room ceiling and the belfry floor. Whilst carrying out our checks we discovered that several Hastings dinger bolts were loose and their nuts found on the floor. Several stays had only finger tight bolts. Since there seemed to be no record of stay dimensions, each stay was carefully checked, measurements recorded and bolts tightened with a spanner. Having finally completed our checks we then rang each bell in turn to check the bearings and that everything turned over smoothly.

The course can be found at ART's online learning portal - onlinelearning.bellringing.org

Micheal Robinson



Course tutor - Richard Booth



Call Changes - a Comfort Zone?

What is your ambition as a ringer? Most people would say, “to be able to ring and strike my bell accurately”. But what do you want to ring in order to strike your bell accurately? Do you mean 'methods'? How complex do you want them to be?

In reality, many people sacrifice the, “strike my bell accurately” bit for the sense of achievement they derive from having mastered a complex method. But who is the winner here? Not the other team members (unless they are of similar mindset to this particular individual), nor the listening public. And not really the individual with the ambition.

What are the key factors to striking accurately?

First and foremost, it is to be able to hear the bell that you are ringing. Next, it is to be able to hear your bell in relation to the other bells.

Then, to be able to discern where the striking errors are in relation to the bell you are ringing – are you too close to the bell in front at backstroke, or is the bell in front ringing late?

None of this information is of any use to you however, unless you have the bell control to be able to translate that information and accurately make your bell strike in the correct place. This could mean holding every backstroke up because the bell you are ringing is oddstruck and strikes early at backstroke, or it could mean pulling your handstroke early when ringing “over the 5th” because the 5th is quick and your bell is slow at handstroke.

These are the skills that first of all make a good bell handler and then make a good ringer. The question is how do you know if you're getting it right? And if not, how do you acquire the skills? Think back to when you were taught to ring. Nobody catches hold and rings perfectly at their first attempt, or their second, or their third.

The teaching of bell handling is broken down into manageable chunks, each building on, or essential to the mastery of the next step. You don't start by putting both strokes together, you practice each stroke ad infinitum until you can, “do it with your eyes closed” (figuratively speaking) and then you see whether you can do them both, in sequence, once, twice, three times etc.

Incidentally, having good bell control doesn't stop at being able to ring a bell that is up, it means being able to ring up and down confidently and then progresses to being able to do it in peal.

Mastering bell control is like reaching the first floor, having taken the stairs one at a time, placing your feet securely on each tread. The same principles apply to learning how to ring the things that we ring, whether it's rounds, call changes or methods. Trying to take a shortcut to ringing complex methods is to be on a hiding to nothing. A mad dash to the top of the stairs is inelegant and your risk of stumbling is considerable.

If ringing is taught and learned properly our stair carpets should all be worn out, in equal measure on each stair. Sadly, I think there is uneven wear on many of our stair carpets.

What can we do to improve?

First, be honest. Critically self-assess your capabilities. Is my bell handling up to scratch? Can I ring up and down confidently? Can I hear my bell when ringing with others? Do I listen to my bell when ringing with others? Do I think about where my bell strikes in relation to the other bells? If the answer to any of these questions is no, then these are the things you need to work on before you take any steps towards increasing the complexity of your ringing ambitions. If it's your bell handling you need to improve, can you get access to a tied bell or a dumb bell? Spending time practising your technique in isolation can be invaluable. There are plenty of YouTube videos you can watch to help you.

If it's listening you need to practise then that's something you can do at home with a simulator application on your PC, or anywhere if you have one of the mobile apps. Again, there are YouTube videos that will help you get started. If you have access to a simulator in a tower, you can transfer these listening skills to ringing a tower bell. Bear in mind it will be different because of when the bell strikes in relation to when you pull the rope. Guess what? There are YouTube videos that can help you with this too.

That's you as an individual sorted out, but ringing is a team activity. What about everybody else? The same principles should really be applied to bands as individuals. We should all, as individuals, strive to ring as well as we can every time we ring. Bands are made up of individuals. If every individual can improve their technique and their listening skills, then bands as a whole will improve.

What can a band do to improve?

The complexity of a piece of ringing attempted by any band must be determined by the capability of their least experienced ringer. By least experienced I mean the ringer who has least understanding and practice at whatever it is the band has decided to ring. Overambition is probably the greatest pitfall for many bands; when you are one short for Plain Bob Doubles, but think that it might be OK for someone who has successfully rung Plain Hunt a couple of times to ring the treble so that someone else can have their first go at ringing inside, but only if another person rings the 3 who normally only ever rings the 2... I wonder if anybody recognises this scenario?

If your band is that weak, then attempting to ring methods in this way can mean only one thing – that nobody has given any thought whatsoever to how it is going to sound. Fifty percent of the band will be preoccupied with 'sticking to the line' and unlikely to be giving even scant thought to their striking. How could they be? They are all at the stage of grappling with the method, they probably won't have any spare capacity for listening as well. The ability to listen to something only comes when people have the capacity to consciously think about it and concentrate on it.

Let's say that against the odds this band manages to get to the end of their Plain Bob Doubles. How satisfying would it be? Maybe because there was a high risk of it firing out the band would feel a sense of achievement. But, just because it was possible, doesn't mean that the band should have attempted it. Trying to hear your bell, let alone strike it accurately under these circumstances would be a challenge to many experienced ringers.

There will be many bands that have experienced this sort of scenario, either temporarily because some regular members are away, or more permanently if people have moved away or left. It is quite likely that many more bands will be in this position or worse once the true cost of COVID-19 to ringing is assessed, with no new ringers for twelve months and probably more than the 7% annual loss of ringers. Rather than persevere with trying to preserve the method-ringing traditions of the band, perhaps bands could look at some new ways of regenerating by taking a pathway together. Learning together as a band can be fulfilling and social empowering.

If listening is a problem to a few of your band members why not all learn to listen together? Start by ringing rounds together, ring different bells, be critical about the striking and try to analyse together what could be improved. It is easier to listen if you don't have to ring at the same time. If someone is sitting out, let them be the judge. It can and should be any member of the band.

Set the band small challenges – time how long it takes to ring 20 perfect rounds the person sitting out can be

in charge of timing and deciding which are the perfect rows. When you start looking at this critically you might find that overall your handstrokes are better than your backstrokes or vice versa.

Repeat the challenge every week and note down the improvements.

Once the rounds are good, introduce some simple moves, also known as Kaleidoscope Exercises. Two bells swapping places or dodging. Start simple and make sure everyone has a go – not just at ringing them, but deciding what to ring, or inventing new ones. Let everyone have a go at conducting – saying when to start and stop each sequence.

Expand your call changes repertoire together. Get everybody to learn how to call call changes – identify the feature rows and work out how to get to them. Invent call change sequences, or take a look at some of the Devon Call Change 'peals'.

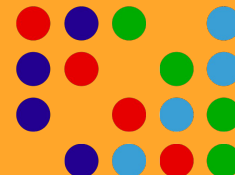
Learn the sequences together, so everyone knows what is coming next and everyone can call them. Make sure you all keep ringing different bells and keep working on the listening.

I'm from a method ringing culture and it was, and still is in many places, an expectation that having learned to handle a bell, progression was to be able to ring methods. Method ringing has a lot to be said for it, but it should not be the goal at the cost of making a dismal noise. It may be clichéd to say I would rather ring something simple well, such as call changes, than a badly struck method, but if my circumstances were as described above then that is how I feel. And if I was in that situation, I would not feel it was somehow second best.

It is of far more value to have a band that thrives on ringing to everyone's capability, learning and improving together, than a band that relies on one or two individuals to take them on a path that takes you to a wilderness where nobody improves and very little is learned.

Clare McArdle

Developing Ropesight Skills at Home



I have often seen learners being told to stand behind and watch someone else ringing something that they will be going to try to ring next. Often they are not told what to look for, or how to look for it, and the ringer they are watching doesn't explain what they are looking for or seeing whilst ringing. The learner is led to expect that ropesight will just come sooner or later!

A ringer can start to develop ropesight well before they can ring a bell by themselves and, whilst ringing has ceased, they could be working at this on their own at home. Simulator software is needed, and the display should be set to show real ringers. *Abel*, *Belltower* and *Virtual Belfry* are all able to support the following exercises.

YouTube videos are available showing how to set up *Abel* for these exercises. by visiting the *Abel* Ringing Simulator playlist at bit.ly/2YCAAndX

Why not share these exercises with your new ringers?

Start with few bells and slow ringing

Choose the three-bell methods file, select any of the methods available and set up your simulator package to:

- Ring continually and not stop when rounds is reached.
- Ring at the slowest speed possible. *Abel's* slowest is a peal speed of six hours.
- If your software shows four ringers, put the ringer on bell four over to the right and try to ignore them. You might want to cover that ringer with paper or cloth to hide them altogether.

Concentrate on seeing the last bell to ring at backstroke

Starting with the backstrokes is slightly easier as the screen is less cluttered. Set the ringing going and focus only on the backstrokes. At the exact moment when all the sallies are up in the air (or out of sight) and the ringers start to pull their backstrokes, watch the whole screen to see which ringer is last to get their rope moving. Ignore the handstroke and wait for the next backstroke – this will give your brain a moment's rest. It is ok to miss it sometimes ... just keep watching till you next see all the sallies are up in the air and start again.

Repeat, repeat and repeat again, and eventually, if not quickly, you will be able to spot which bell is last to ring, every alternate pull. If you are having difficulty, try looking at a different level, such as at the very top of the pull, or at the ringers' face height as their hands start to move downwards, or even as the sallies come down into view. Try them all.

It might take time but it will come. Remember, you're not aiming to see the order – just which bell is last each backstroke.

Before you move on, try the other three-bell methods to make sure you really can see it happening and are not just remembering the numbers.

Introduce more bells

Change to the four-bell file and select a method. Now all four bells will have to be watched but go through the same steps as above. Change the method as soon as you find you are remembering the order. If you're feeling confident, try the five-bell file.

Make sure you go to the settings and select the 'no cover bell in doubles' option. If you find this five bells too hard, don't worry – leave it for now.

Move on to handstrokes

Once you can spot the last bell coming down at backstroke, you need to start trying to spot the handstrokes. Don't try to do both at once, yet! Go back to three-bell methods and try to see the last to ring on just three bells. Be alert when all the sallies are in the ringers' hands and when one is starting to move be ready to spot which sally is last to move up. It might help to say the bell number as you spot it each handstroke.

Once you can spot the last sally to start moving, move back to your four-bell file and work on that.

Which is the first bell to ring?

Now is the time to learn how to see which bell is the first to ring, using the same exercises, in the same order on three then four bells. Remember to reduce the speed of ringing until it is slow enough for you to see.

Start again with backstroke as the screen is less cluttered. When all the sallies start to rise at handstroke, rest and don't focus – just glance lightly at the screen and note the moment when all hands and tailends are up in the air. Concentrate and look for the first ringer to start to bring their tail-end down – watch for hands with no sally.

Then move on to handstroke. Wait till you spot a row where all the bells are at backstroke – the sallies are out of sight – then watch intently. As the sallies start to come down, don't bother looking for the first - you have just been doing that!

You will now merely note that all backstrokes have been pulled and then watch carefully to spot the first sally to move again.

I think this is the hardest of all four exercises so make sure you give your brain opportunity to rest in between strokes. Call out the bell number of the first bell to move as you spot it each handstroke, then relax through the backstroke, till the next handstroke is about to start.

Don't worry about missing any, just pick up as soon as you can.

Test and extend yourself

Now mix the exercises up and set yourself random challenges, such as spotting the last back stroke, the first handstroke, then the last backstroke. Try and build up to spotting them each row. As you improve, keep speeding the ringing up, until you are ringing at three hour peal speed, which is about average for most ringing.

Seeing the order in which the bells ring in any row

The next set of exercises will help you spot the second and third bells to move. Using three bells, rung slowly if necessary:

- Watch every row to see if you can pick out the last bell to be rung.
- Watch every row to see if you can pick out the first bell to be rung.
- Watch all three bells every backstroke and spot the order they ring in.
- Watch all three bells every handstroke and spot the order they ring in.
- Watch all three bells every pull and spot the order they ring in.

At this point, if you have four bells ringing and are still covering up bell 4, you can now uncover it, focus on the three that are changing, and simply incorporate it as the last bell to ring every time.

This will require lots of concentration (no-one said acquiring ropesight was easy) but when you feel confident at each of these exercises, repeat using four bells.

Who is following whom?

The simulator software allows you to watch call changes on different numbers of bells. See if you can spot:

- Which bell is ringing first?
- Which bell is last?
- Which bell is the bell that is ringing last, following?
- Which bell is ringing after bell 2?
- Which bell is bell 4 following?

As each new change is called, you will have to look again. Endless practice is possible and the pause button can be very helpful.

Seeing the order of all the bells in any row

Select Plain Bob Minimus in the four-bell file and set a very slow speed to start with. Increase the speed as you get more confident.

- Watch every backstroke and say the entire order of the four bells.
- Watch the handstroke and say the entire order of the four bells.
- Watch both strokes and say the entire order of the four bells.

Does it work?

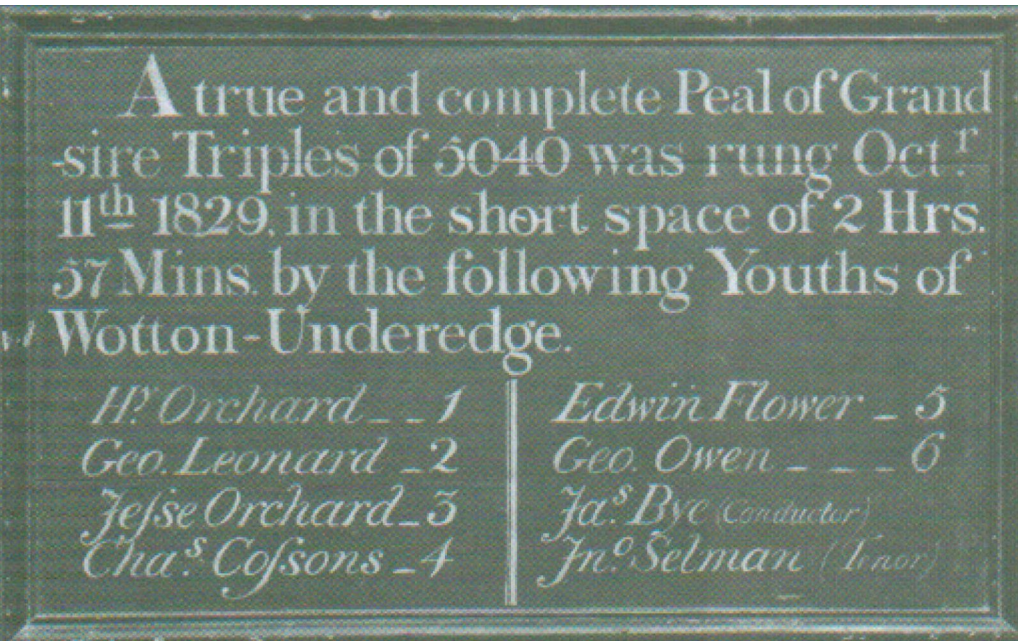
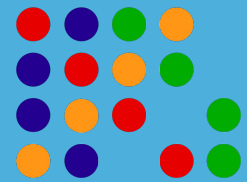
Yes! At Tulloch last year, we helpers were asked to ring very slowly, a single row of Plain Bob Minimus at a time, and stand immediately, whilst the students worked out the order in which we rang; most could spot this.

I was asked to work with those who couldn't. A lady who was just learning to handle a bell, was in that group, and she was the first to spot everything I asked ... the others had been taught by giving numbers or pointing, but using the simulator in the way I describe, they all could see the order of bells in each row, eventually.



Chris de Cordova

How do our Ringers Progress?



Age has no impact on ability to ring rounds, Call Changes and Kaleidoscope Changes (LtR Level 2), with around 30% of all recruits mastering this stage.

However, under 30s are twice as likely as older age groups to master plain hunt and covering (LtR Level 3).

Under 30s are four times as likely as older age groups to master method ringing (LtR Level 5).

Of course, as some recruits will only have joined the scheme more recently than others, the rates in the later levels should increase as more people have the time to work their way through the scheme.

Nevertheless the numbers of those reaching LtR Levels 3, 4 and 5 are lower than we would like to see. However, there is nothing wrong with aiming for well struck rounds and call changes. Obviously, some bands simply do not have the resources to progress people all the way to Level 5, and this issue may be more acute after the current COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Looking at quarters published on *BellBoard*, there also seems to be a tendency for some teachers not to register LtR Level 3, 4 and 5 passes. There are probably several reasons for this. For example, people may move to a new area.

My great, great, great, great grandfather James Bye learnt to ring. In fact, we know from a peal board that he conducted a local band peal of Grandsire Triples in 1829, aged 29. However, that's all we know. We don't know about the teaching techniques they used and how he got that far.

Nowadays in ART we are fortunate that each new recruit can be registered on SmART Ringer. This not only provides the new ringer with access to on-line learning resources, but over time also enables us to draw out some useful insights into how people learn.

For example, looking at the figures from 2015 till lockdown we can see that 25% - 30% of those who learn start to do so when aged 18 or less. The only exception seems to be around the period of *Ringing Remembers*, when it reduced to 21% and a greater proportion of those starting were aged 46 - 60. A lesson here perhaps about the focus for future mass recruitment campaigns.

What surprised us is that on average just under 10% who start to learn do so in the 18 - 30 age group.

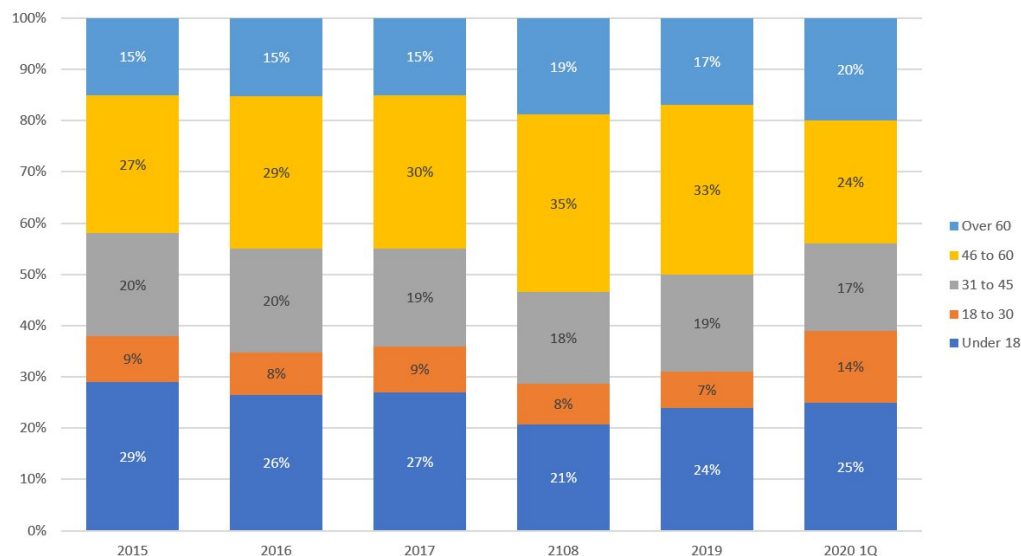
A survey carried out by the Central Council in 1988 showed that tower captains in the 20 - 40 age group were the most effective at finding and retaining recruits. It also found that the longer they were in service the harder this became. Those in post for four years or less being the most effective.

The conclusion is that you need to encourage fresh and energetic young leaders. Therefore, ART's work with university societies and plans to introduce a leadership training programme are extremely important for the future of ringing.

Turning to progression through Learning the Ropes:

Those successfully learning to handle (LtR Level 1) rises with age, with around 60% of all registered recruits reaching this stage.

Age of new ringer



To improve the accuracy of our data and help evidence the benefits of the Learning the Ropes scheme we encourage all teachers to register all their recruits and their passes at all levels - once the ringer has reached the required standard, of course.

James Bye and his local band were able to progress to ringing their peal without having the benefit of cars, mobile phones, e-mail, the internet, ART and Learning the Ropes. Are we aiming high enough? What can we do to remove the barriers to progression through Learning the Ropes? We must help those who wish to reach their true potential and replicate the success of our ancestors? Even better them!

No doubt a subject for further research.

Age	New	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Under 18	1107	53%	29%	10%	6%	4%
18 to 30	317	53%	26%	13%	7%	3%
31 to 45	625	59%	29%	7%	6%	2%
46 to 60	1105	60%	28%	7%	3%	1%
Over 60	534	62%	30%	4%	2%	1%

Progression of ringers through Learning the Ropes by age

Roger Booth

ART Websites - Designer Required



**Association of
Ringing
Teachers**

ART is looking to re-build and re-launch a number of its web properties, and is seeking someone with strong technical design expertise and branding flair to lead in the process of bringing a common look, feel and branding approach, to its present portfolio.

The ideal person will be able to help ART migrate content from several different legacy CMS platforms (including old versions of *WordPress* and *Concrete5*) to a new strategic CMS platform to be used across several web properties (decision on which platform is still to be finalised) as well as help introduce common branding and look-and-feel to existing sites developed in *Joomla* and *Moodle*.

You will have skills in delivering coherent web design, skins and themes for multiple CMS packages (*Joomla*, *Wordpress*, *Django CMS*, *Moodle*) and be able to maintain and support your designs, skins and themes in the longer term as the CMS packages are kept up-to-date. You will need to work effectively with three main groups of people:

- Developers and system managers who will be provisioning and supporting the platform.
- Customer-facing volunteer staff who author web content, and may have strong ideas but need help to articulate these and bring them to online life.
- End user groups, who may be asked to have input into ART's web properties.

You will be helping ART deliver a visually consistent look-and-feel and brand image across a number of web properties, so that users aren't aware of gaps as they transition from property to property.

You will need work out of your own location and liaise via *Skype* and *Zoom* with colleagues as needed. ART's IT platform is all cloud based.

For more information, or a discussion, please contact Lesley Belcher at lesley.belcher@bellringing.org

Lesley Belcher