

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



**Learning
the Ropes™**

Association of Ringing Teachers / Learning the Ropes – www.learningtheropes.org

Number 20 – July 2021

Editor

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*Getting the belfry ringing-ready
Lesley Barrell in Falkenham, Suffolk*

The much-anticipated – in the UK – date of 21 June has come and gone, yet ringing still remains restricted in most places around the world. Many ringers have made a tentative return to the tower and many more are thinking about what it will be like for them after such a long absence. As well as sharing some thoughts and feelings about this, we are also including some useful tips and suggestions for how to approach a return to ringing, and where in the Learning the Ropes scheme you could pick up again. For many who were only just starting out when ringing stopped, returning might possibly be a daunting prospect with mixed emotions, but getting back together with your band, in the tower, in the pub (or outside it) is a great feeling, even with limitations. As young ringer Jayden Newton tells us on pages 18 and 19, the best way to get back to ringing is just do it – you won't have forgotten. So don't worry or anticipate problems. It is great to see how many people have just started ringing again and have found it actually comes back almost immediately. And often, better!

A new venture: Devon Call Changes

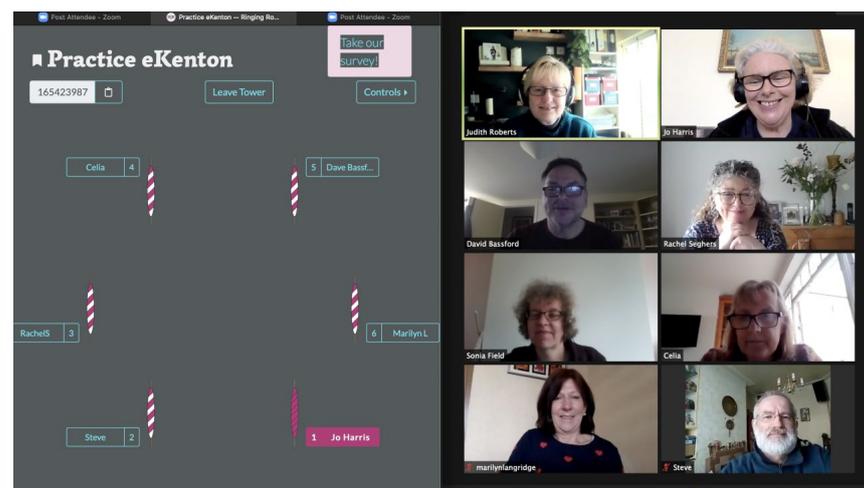
Sonia Field and Jo Harris, eKenton, Middlesex

Jo Harris and Sonia Field were the captains of the eKenton Aleph and Alpha teams competing in the Virtual Call Change Ringing Festival held in April.

When the Virtual Call Change Ringing Festival was publicised earlier this year, there was sufficient interest among our online band (known as eKenton) to enter two bands. The more experienced ringers were mixed in with the less experienced in order to maximize learning for all. We are, after all, a virtual training band. Members who had barely mastered plain hunting pre-lockdown have progressed to confident virtual method ringing, while recent recruits can now ring Call Changes and Plain Hunt competently. So bands eKenton Alpha and eKenton Aleph were formed; we were both A-teams!



We operated as one unit right up to the competition itself. Initially we considered how Devon Call Changes worked and traced the path of each bell. We all tried ringing from different bells and many had a go at calling. Next we created band line-ups using our stronger ringers as support, encouraging others to take a step forward. Our practices improved our ringing; they were fun and sociable, and allowed us to get to know each other better. During our practices, ringers switched bands if a deputy was needed for an absent counterpart.



Some of the eKenton team members practising

Saturday 3rd of April 2021 dawned. Alpha band was ringing in heat A, Aleph in heat B. There were eight bands in each heat, including bands from the South West who are inherently familiar with Devon Call Changes – pretty stiff competition! The plan for judging was well thought out: a judge for each heat, operating in parallel time slots; stewards and judges visited each ‘home’ tower in Ringing Room and communicated via the chat function; we communicated via Zoom. The main Zoom meeting was open to all contestants; the judges also had their own Zoom call to confer in private.

Alpha, placed fifth in their heat, received some very positive comments. Aleph won their heat! This produced a flurry of WhatsApp messages as the realisation hit that another performance was required for the final. Sadly, internet gremlins surfaced ... Jo’s heart fell through the floor as she hit the key and nothing happened. Knowing that the use of internet presented this possibility, we were relieved it hadn’t happened in the heat itself. So Aleph ended the day in fourth place, extremely happy to have achieved this, with first place going to Beverley and District Online.

It’s a pity that we weren’t able to hold the competition in person, in a beautiful church, with mellow sounding bells, or meet and chat with our fellow ringers over cups of tea and cake, or enjoy a well earned meal in the local pub; we have that to look forward to in the future! Meanwhile this new venture provided an opportunity to spend virtual time with our ringing chums, and progress our ringing too.

For the full results of the competition, see:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/virtual-call-change-ringing-festival/>

and for details of the test piece that each team had to ring, see:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/virtual-call-change-ringing-festival/call-change-competition-test-piece/>

'Sixty on thirds' - What does it mean?

Jon Bint and Les Boyce, Devon

This is the most well known Devon Call Change peal – yes, it's a peal but not a '5040 changes' kind of peal. It's how these set patterns of call changes are described.

This one is 66 changes, six of which are to get the bells in and out of Queens, with sixty changes in between.

To start, call the bells into Queens (135246).

The sixty changes comprise the treble hunting up and down between leading and 5th place, with a change of place for the one other particular bell (which is the three to start with) made whenever the treble is leading or in 5ths. This has the effect of taking that bell one place towards the back each time until it gets to 5th place. So, from Queen's:

1. Call the treble up to 5th place. (1-3; 1-5; 1-2; 1-4)
2. **Start moving the three.** Call the **three** into 2nd place. (3-5)
3. Call the treble down to lead. (4-1; 2-1; 3-1; 5-1)
4. Call the **three** into 4th place. (3-2)
5. Call the treble up to 5th place. (1-5; 1-2; 1-3; 1-4)
6. Call the **three** back into 4th place. (3-4)
7. Call the treble down to lead **which puts the three into 5ths** (3-1; 4-1; 2-1; 5-1)
8. Call the **five**, then the **two**, then the **four** out to 5th place in the same way, moving them one place when the treble is either leading or in 5th place.
9. Queens is regained after sixty calls.
10. Call the bells back to rounds.

If this sounds complicated, the best way to understand it is to sit down with a piece of paper and write it out. And if you want to try and tackle it in the tower (or in Ringing Room), it is a good idea to break it down into smaller sections and just practise those until you feel comfortable with the pattern which you will soon begin to see.

In a competition the conductor would make the calls, calling either up or down according to the preference of the band. In a traditional Devon competition on real bells, the bells start and finish in the down position, and the judging of the striking includes marking the raising of the bells before the 'Sixty on thirds' and the lowering afterwards.

As Jon says, *'Of course in real life you would also have the rise and lower, which are every bit as important as the peal of changes, indeed more so as this will generally be what sorts the teams in a competition!'*

As Wikipedia notes, the Devon Association of Ringers represents call change church bell ringers in Devon and was founded in 1925. The association has 160 affiliated towers and arranges training events, social events and ringing festivals. The call change tradition emphasises rhythmic ringing in simple musical sequences, and there are many noted compositions.

A video of a Devon Call Change practice session, including raising and lowering in peal, can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYDGncj9BBk>



John Barnes presenting the George Facey Shield to Bob Robinson from Down St Mary

Understanding Call Changes

Julie Hartridge, Lilleshall, Shropshire

Julie writes this brief review of an online course:

As a new-ish, relatively inexperienced bell ringer I have always struggled to fully understand call changes. We've tried many things to improve my understanding and sometimes it all makes sense, but in the midst of ringing when I'm concentrating on my technique and listening for my bell, I still find it all too easy to get lost.

I've really missed ringing during lockdown. The return to the tower is a great opportunity to do some homework to refresh our skills. The *Understanding Call Changes* online course was recommended to me as something that I should give a go.

You'll find this course on the Bellringing Online Learning Portal at

<https://onlinelearning.bellringing.org/>

along with several other online courses which anyone can sign up for and just do in your own time. You'll need to set up a username and password but once that's done you're in, and off you go!

The course takes you through ten interactive chapters with a mixture of video clips and exercises that deal with the theory of call changes and how they work, and give you the chance to test your understanding. Everything is very well explained and the visual animations are so helpful. The interactive videos are really good and get you thinking. I love snippets like this one (from Chapter 7 - *Calling Call Changes*) - it makes the whole interactive learning experience more 'human' and made me smile!



Julie (with a teaching aid)



If the ringing gets to the state where it ought to be stopped, either because what you are inflicting on the audience is too awful, or (in a practice) because no-one is gaining any benefit, then you are the person to call it round or stand.



Overall, I found this learning module very helpful. For a visual learner like me, to 'see' rather than 'hear' it explained makes it so much easier to understand. The interactive format, which I found fun to engage with, will be great if it is used to recruit and teach youngsters, who have come to expect such things in this digital era.

I would recommend this way of expanding a bell ringer's knowledge, so why not take a look and enrol on the course? Nothing ventured, nothing gained!

Back to the Tower

Ginette Pardoe, Broseley, Shropshire

On the week ringing was due to start again I had arranged a holiday in Skye.

As the Tower Captain at Broseley in Shropshire, I did consider postponing ringing for another week, but instead decided to leave everything in the capable hands of our Deputy Tower Captain Jan and let them have a relaxed return to ringing.

Steeple Keeper Darren was also available in case there were any issues with the bells. Our bells have had more maintenance in the last year than they had in the previous decade and we'd checked them over before I went on holiday, so I didn't foresee any problems.

Here's how some of our ringers felt on returning to the tower:



Back in the Broseley tower

Other than the normally reliable clock stopping on the Thursday before practice, everything went smoothly.

I felt a bit excited and nervous as I went up to the ringing room, but felt more confident when I started to ring up. It will be interesting to see if my method ringing has improved with Ringing Room but that's for later! At the moment I'm just happy to ring rounds and call changes.

For me, Bamboozled of Broseley, using Ringing Room has made me focus on the places and not the actual bells when ringing so I am feeling more confident in method ringing. The proof will be in the tower but I am hopeful and thanks for all the patience. I think the virtual practice has helped us all to feel part of a team.

As for me, I'm looking forward to being able to ring myself when I get back from holiday. I've got two new recruits who haven't had a chance to learn bell handling yet, so I'll continue organising Ringing Room practices in addition to tower ringing for the time being.

I can't wait until I can get the whole team up the tower together!



Puzzle Corner

Rose Nightingale and Denise Tremain, ART Administrators



Interesting bell towers

Crossword

Clues Across

2. 14 bells at this New Zealand tower
5. The Waterloo tower near Birchington
7. Kenyan ring of 6, dedicated to St Thomas
9. Glass tower dedicated to St Martin
11. Heavy 5, rung by hand at ground level
12. First bells to be broadcast on radio in 1924
14. 10 bells, the most northern tower in the UK
16. Free standing tower at Chester Cathedral
17. Famous carillon with a chocolate connection

Clues Down

1. St Margaret's 8, most easterly tower in the UK
3. St James looks after the Jubilee bells here
4. Recently installed light 6 in County Down
6. Fancy ringing in a cage? Try this tower
8. Scottish tower with a fyne view
10. Area of Northern Italy with full circle ringing
13. 8 bells in the curfew tower at this royal castle
15. Island state in SE Asia has a ring of 12

(Solution on page 19)

Princesses are not Quitters!

Dee Smith, Burwell, Cambridgeshire

It was all Ruth's idea! In August 2020, Ruth rang her first quarter peal on handbells. This was quite a challenge as most of her practice had been undertaken on Ringing Room and not with real bells.

Inspired by this achievement, Ruth was keen to get together with some of her ringing friends to meet up online regularly and so our band was formed. We are all tower bell ringers with home towers in Cambridgeshire, Dorset and Suffolk, but all inexperienced handbell ringers.

We started off ringing Plain Hunt and progressed to Plain Bob Major, with each of us perfecting every pair. We all found it incredibly difficult, requiring a huge amount of concentration and *'I can't do this'* was frequently uttered by all of us as we despaired we'd ever be able to make progress. But practices were held for about an hour several days a week, and after a while we ventured into touches, scoring our first long touch in February 2021. This coincided with Ruth seeing a peal board commemorating the first ever peal with an all-ladies band. The footnote read *'Success is the Reward of Perseverance'* (*Grandsire Triples at Cubitt Town, Isle of Dogs, London in 1912*), which we adopted as our motto, but we still needed a name. Sylvie - mum of four daughters - told us about a favourite book of theirs - *Princesses are Not Quitters* by Kate Lum, and so 'Princesses' was decided as the name of our band. The emphasis clearly on not quitting, rather than Princesses!

During our practices, we had many discussions about how to remember the various positions in Plain Bob, and we tried to think of ways to remember these and recall them at the critical moments. Sylvie used her very visual 'colour co-ordinated' way to show the different positions of each bell, and how they change during the course, revealing some interesting patterns not necessarily obvious when looking at rows of numbers. In the photo (Kent Treble Bob Major) you can see this ingenious idea: green is coursing, blue is 2-3, purple is 3-4 and pink is opposites.

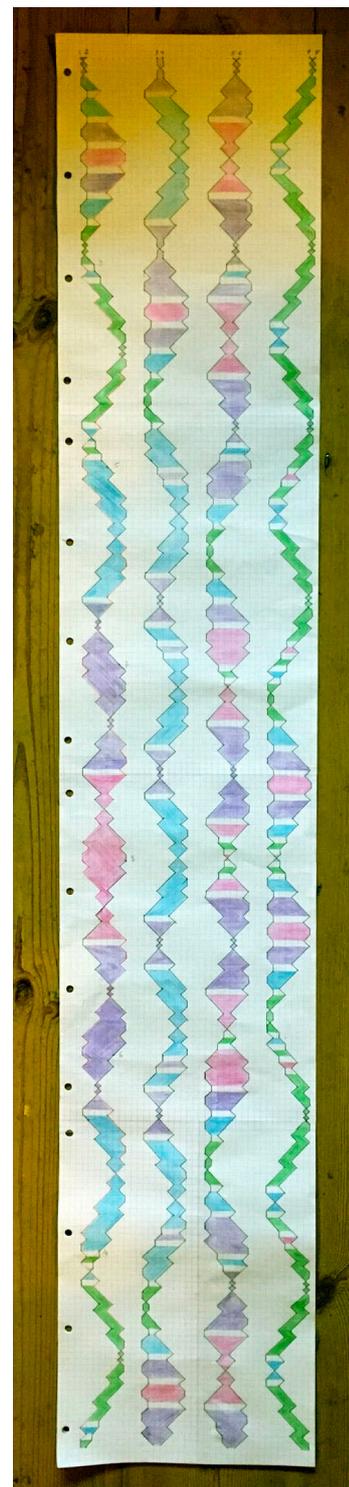
Quite often we would get so far and then the ringing would fall apart and come to a halt. This would be followed up sometimes by despondency, but sometimes by discussion about what had happened and how to avoid the mistake the next time.

More practices were held with the touches getting longer and on 31st March 2021 everything went according to plan. The ringing, the calls and of course the internet connection. It was with much relief and jubilation we rang our first handbell quarter peal. We realised each of us had achieved a first and we were immensely proud to be Featured Performance on BellBoard and get a mention in the Ringing World.

We have all gained so much from ringing together, as I am sure many other bands have. We are all mums and throughout these challenging times we have had happy and sad events and have shared many milestones; the support and empathy have been tremendous.

So, what next for the Princesses? We have begun to widen our method repertoire and following on from Little Bob Major we are ringing Kent Treble Bob Major. With lockdown restrictions lifting, we are finding ourselves with other commitments, but we are still able to regularly meet to continue our progress and keep in touch. We hope another quarter peal will be achieved and of course the ultimate goal is to meet up and ring real handbells together!

Dee, Flick, Ruth and Sylvie - The Princesses who don't quit!



Kent in colour!

How was it for you?

Introduced and compiled by Quilla Roth

Some thoughts from returning ringers in North America:

Ringling in North America is at different stages in different locations. In Canada, the tower in Calgary was able to keep ringling going throughout the pandemic, but ringers at other Canadian towers are still waiting to be back. In the US, a few towers were able to ring occasionally, with limitations, starting in the summer/fall of 2020, but as people got vaccinated and new case counts decreased, more of us have been able to resume ringling this spring, whether with limited, socially distanced numbers, or in full bands, and everyone agrees it's great to be back.

Here are some comments and thoughts from people who are ringling again in Washington, Alexandria in Virginia (special events only), and Hendersonville, North Carolina:

It is hard to ring with a mask on.

I learned to rely on counting in Ringling Room. Incorporating counting with rope sight in the tower was not as easy as I had assumed it would be.

After ringling a QP, I don't think I'd last for a peal, yet. My ringling stamina isn't what it used to be. [This from someone who often rang in several peal attempts a year before 2020.]

I thought that soft hands and noodle arms would be a problem but so far the body has held up well.

For a beginner handbell ringer: my ears were deafened by bells ringling. Where's the volume control?

How do/did you feel about resuming?
I was worried about blisters.

What was it like the first time back on a rope? A mix of huge joy and happy anticipation mixed with trepidation followed by creaky brain and muscles.

What it's like starting back?
Superb!

It is completely amazing (and weird) to see people in person - but weirdness I'm quickly getting used to.

Have you forgotten skills? Yes, especially listening skills for correcting striking. It was easier to correct quickly on Ringling Room and we often rang more slowly.

My legs aren't liking standing pretty much immobile for an hour.

I was really tired after ringling only a few times during practice.

What surprised you on being back? I was surprised by how different rope sight felt after looking at the Ringling Room screen for so long.

After 13 months, even the first time being in the tower and then ringling felt surprisingly 'normal.'

My fingers are sore! The ropes feel slippery. [No, there's nothing different about our ropes.]

My shoulder was hurting after our first QP.

What kind of things would you like to ring?
Anything!

It is weird and fabulous to be back in the tower.

Do you need extra tuition on being back?
Yes, for striking.

My old fear (long forgotten) of dropping the tail end came back.



Ringers at Shreveport, LA, who said "We were able to begin ringing again with restrictions back in April, but this photo is from a May 15th practice. No masks! Everyone is vaccinated."

I was expecting to get blisters because all my callouses were gone, but I didn't (though my hands were red)!

I think it was super-helpful to have rung on Ringing Room in the interim to keep the brain part of the game going.

Some of the Ringers in Houston, Texas reported that they started ringing with strict social distance measures and mask requirements in their 8 bell tower, with no more than 4 people ringing at a time. Handling the bell after a long pause had its exciting moments for a few of them... With only 3 or 4 ringers present, they were fairly creative with their ringing to keep things fresh and challenging.

Memorable creative moments included a session where calls alternated between changes and dodges. On the days where only 3 ringers were present, they learned how to chime two bells and do fast rounds with the bells down (just chiming) and tried a few called changes with 'two in hand' like this as well (bells down and chiming only). They found that it takes a long time to change the order of chimed bells... and it's quite a wrist work-out.

They also enjoyed varying which three or four bells to ring. At first, the priority was just that the bells weren't next to each other in order to maximize social distancing, but as this relaxed a little bit and as ringers got vaccinated, the selection of which bells to ring became more flexible and often involved considering what type of chord would be created with certain bells or what the tune might sound like.

As most of the band got fully vaccinated, they were able to expand to six people ringing, and Easter marked the first time in over a year that they rang on six bells [in an eight-bell tower] while still masking up and spreading out. They did called changes to Queens and Kings... and it felt wonderful. It did sound a little non-traditional though as the six bells weren't rung in scale order. Instead they rang the treble, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

And finally in Chicago, three first-year University of Chicago students learned to ring completely online. On May 8th, the Chicago ringers met in person for outside handbells. Two of the online-only ringers were able to be there. It was interesting to see them looking a little tentative since they didn't know exactly what/who they were looking for. They had only seen faces and now even the faces were masked. Everyone identified each other pretty quickly and had a lovely afternoon.

Something to focus on

Rose Nightingale, ART Administrator

Rose Nightingale, one of the ART Administrators, explains how following the Learning the Ropes scheme might be a great way of getting back into ringing.

Hopefully by the time this edition of Tower Talk is published, there will be a significant return to normality in ringing. Perhaps some of us are a bit rusty after such a long break, maybe physically ringing for a while practice makes our previously strong muscles complain, or maybe we've learned all kinds of ringing theory on handbells or methods via virtual ringing that we're keen to put into practice in the tower.

If you're enrolled on the Learning the Ropes scheme, or progressing through Learning the Ropes Plus, this could be a good opportunity to think about what goals we can set ourselves for the next few months. Having something to aspire to is a great way to start anew. If you're not already on the LtR scheme, you can always ask your teacher to sign you up on SmART Ringer, or contact us:

rose.nightingale@bellringing.org

So here is a summary of each level and what you can expect to achieve as you progress through the scheme.

Level 1 introduces a good, basic handling technique. You'll learn about ringing safety, develop skills for handling a bell, including raising and lowering, ringing at different speeds, setting a bell, holding a bell on the balance, ringing in rounds on 3 or 4 bells with others, understanding how a bell works and being able to identify the various parts of a bell. As bell control improves, listening skills can begin to develop, starting with picking out which bell sound is yours.

Even ringers who have already learned to ring before they enrol on the LtR scheme can benefit from just making sure they're able to do everything in the Level 1 chapter of the ringers' progress logbook, and there are certainly plenty of ringers who find it a handy way of improving their handling style and ironing out any unhelpful habits.

If you've been ringing for a while but are worried that you might have forgotten how to ring during lockdown, or you'd like to improve your handling style to make your ringing technique even more efficient, a few refresher sessions with the LtR Level 1 curriculum could be exactly what's needed to restore confidence.

Level 2 builds up core foundation skills, putting everything into practice while making sure handling style stays good. From learning how to dodge, make places, ring call changes, lead steadily and enjoy kaleidoscope ringing exercises. These all help to develop ropesight and listening and accurate striking. Expect to learn new concepts such as ringing by place, ringing jargon and named call changes. You'll be encouraged to move around the tower, or even start to join in with other practices, even if it's just to ring rounds. Completing Level 2 can take quite a while as it's such an important stage, but if you can achieve Level 2, ringers are able to progress much more easily with change ringing, without hitting a stumbling block or being let down by poor bell control.

If you're returning to ringing after lockdown and would like to consolidate basic skills without embarking on anything too complicated, spend some time enjoying Level 2, and ring something simple to boost confidence.

Level 3 marks the progression to the start of change ringing. Ringers will learn to steadily cover to doubles methods and to ring plain hunt on any bell. The ultimate aim in Level 3 is to ring a quarter peal on the treble and one on the tenor. (Any ringers who are not able to ring for a full 45 minutes because of a physical limitation or disability can contact ART to discuss an alternative way of achieving Level 3).



Level 3 includes plenty of theory, such as counting places, understanding the concepts of course / after bell, listening, ropesight and more advanced bell control ringing skills such as raising and lowering in peal.

If you've had a long break from method ringing and want to keep it simple, the Level 3 curriculum provides a gentle introduction back to change ringing.

Level 4 reinforces the skills learned in Level 3, with further progression into method ringing. There are two routes to achieving Level 4, doubles or minor. Whichever route you take, the goal is to achieve a quarter peal but expect to ring all kinds of other methods and activities to help your progression. You might ring Bastow, Cloisters, Original or Funny Bob Doubles (ha ha!)

If you're feeling a bit rusty about method ringing, this is the perfect LtR level to revisit and help jog your memory for the basic methods. Organising a practice to ring touches of basic methods might be a good refresher, even if your muscles aren't quite up to a quarter peal just yet.

Level 5 is the final stage in the LtR scheme, with ringers confidently ringing basic methods and learning to ring the treble to more complex methods. Like Level 4, there are two routes, doubles and minor. With the doubles approach, ringers will learn a second doubles method and ring a quarter peal of this on an inside bell. They will also ring the treble to a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor, ring touches and then a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor on an inside bell and call 120 changes of any chosen doubles method. Ringers taking the minor pathway don't ring a second doubles method, but instead they'll ring a touch and then a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor, as well as touches of Little Bob Minor, treble to a quarter peal of a different minor method and treble to a quarter peal of a treble bob or surprise method. Through both routes, theory, conducting, listening and ropesight skills will continue to develop and other fun methods, such as Original, Bastow Minor, and variations on doubles methods might be introduced - all of which are great fun and help to build mental agility.

If you have developed your method ringing knowledge doing virtual ringing in lockdown, aiming for Level 5 could be a really good goal for your return to ringing. Or if you're an experienced method ringer who wants to ease back into ringing with basic practices where you can focus on striking, meeting up with a band to ring the Level 5 curriculum could provide a gentle return to ringing before launching yourself into anything more ambitious.

More advanced ringers who fancy a new challenge once ringing resumes might like to look at the Learning the Ropes Plus options, or maybe aim for one of the Ringing World Pathways. Wherever we all are on our ringing journeys, having an achievable goal to focus on is a good way to start back after such a long break ... and if you have some fun experiences or personal achievements in your pursuit of whatever goal you've picked, please do write in to tell Tower Talk about how you get on so that we can share stories of your successes with other ringers.



Dorset ringers Maureen Kirkham and Don McQueen working through their LtR logbooks

Return To Ringing Challenges - some ideas

- Level 1** Can you set your bell 10 times at handstroke and 10 times at backstroke?
- Level 2** Can you call the bells into Queens and get them back into rounds afterwards?
- Level 3** Can you circle the tower, ringing plain hunt starting on every bell?
- Level 4** Can you ring a touch of a basic doubles method from any bell without looking up how your bell starts? Or can you ring a plain course of Bob Minor without checking the diagram?
- Level 5** Can you learn and ring a touch of a method you haven't rung before?

Hello, my name is Rachel

Rachel Milner, Inverness

Hello, my name is Rachel, and I'm a bell-a-holic!

The last year or so has been difficult for those of us that are relatively new to ringing. I am a ringer at Inverness Cathedral and started ringing about four years ago. I was just beginning to progress past Plain Bob Doubles to some Grandsire and Kent when we went into lockdown. Ringing Room practices have been great, and I soon found I was ringing three times a week with bands from Inverness, Tulloch and Alderney! I had also just started ringing some handbells, and so joined a Ringing Room handbell practice too. Some of us were fortunate to be able to meet up for a handbell training day last August at Roy Bridge, outside and with social distancing. Like learning anything new, the amount of time practising always pays off, and it always increases your enthusiasm practising and socialising with others.

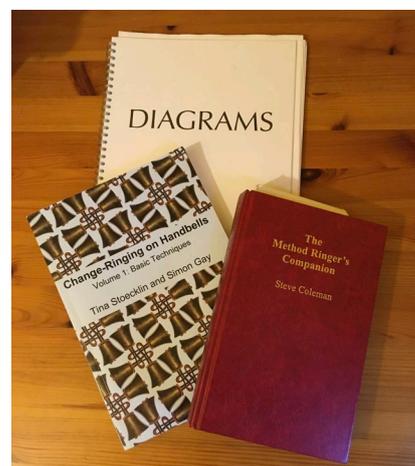
I treated myself to an A4 'Diagrams' book published by the Yorkshire Association of Change Ringers and 'The Method Ringer's Companion' by Steve Coleman. These have been invaluable as I started learning many more tower bell methods online, for example Little Bob, Stedman and Cambridge Surprise. I found it quite handy to have the blue line to look at in the early stages of learning a new method, especially to see where my bell was in relation to the treble. It was great to get some tips from Steve's book and I also highly recommend 'Change Ringing on Handbells Volume 1: Basic Techniques' by Tina Stoecklin and Simon Gay for anyone starting to learn handbells.



Rachel (right) with handbell friends Ian (centre) and Peter (left) at the Highland Handbells Training Day at Larchwood, August 2020

As we think about re-starting ringing as Covid restrictions are lifted, I must admit I am a little scared that I will have lost some bell handling skills. I am encouraged to hear from those who have been fortunate enough to ring that they have been fine. The ringing room at Inverness has no ventilation, so I think it will be a while before we can ring there again. I think it is more likely that we will re-start ringing at the fantastic Ringing Centre at Tulloch Farm, Roy Bridge. Although the towers in Scotland tend to be very spread out, we are very fortunate to have the Ringing Centre at Tulloch to attend courses, and some of us even drove 60 miles each way to join the occasional weekly practice.

The Scottish Association of Change Ringers has worked hard to keep us all motivated with online meetings with a mixture of Ringing Room practices, talks, quizzes and business. Ringers are also made welcome to join other groups for tower bell and handbell practices. I am very grateful to the patient and tireless teachers that run our local practices and the SACR online ringing. My hope is that most of what I have learnt online will translate to the tower again.



Some of Rachel's bedside reading

When ringing tower bells or handbells, there are great advantages to physically being with other ringers. This is partly due to rope/bell sight, but also the various subtle (or not so subtle sometimes!) physical/verbal gestures that you do not get in Ringing Room.

I am sure that we will continue to use Ringing Room as a teaching aid in some form or another. It has been a fantastic way to enable practice linking many different geographical locations. I think it is a good platform to learn new methods, without the added pressure of bell control. That being said, I am hugely excited to think that it may not be too long until we can physically ring again, with the magical sound of 'real' bells in our ears.

Bi-Centenary Chimes

Judith Frye, Dunblane

This year marks the two hundredth anniversary of the invention of the Ellacombe Chimes.

The Ellacombe apparatus is a device that enables one person to ring all the bells in a church. It was invented by the Rev. Henry Thomas Ellacombe and installed in the Parish of Bitton (between Bristol and Bath). Each of the bells is struck while the bell is static instead of swinging through 360°.

It is said that Rev. Ellacombe devised the mechanism so that the bells could be rung by one trusted person without involving a band of unruly and perhaps drunken ringers!



Judith Frye using the Ellacombe chiming apparatus at Dunblane Cathedral

Ellacombe Chimes Bicentenary

SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2021

Bells to chime around the World from New Zealand to Canada

On the 26 June 2021 a worldwide celebration is planned for the 200th anniversary of Rev Henry Thomas Ellacombe's invention of ringing chimes, focused on St Mary's Church, Bitton, where the 'Ellacombe Chiming Apparatus' was invented and first installed.

Originally devised as a means to outwit a wayward team of bellringers, the chimes allow the ringing of church bells by a single person.

The apparatus was used widely during the nineteenth and early twentieth century and installed in churches throughout the world. Many of these churches have been invited to join in a world wide chiming of bells that is planned to begin in New Zealand and end on the Pacific coast of Canada.



The Bells of St Mary's Church Bitton shown "up". They would be in a "down" position to be chimed.

Starting at noon in New Zealand, over the next 17 hours, working their way across the world, bells will be chimed at noon local time in each of the major time zones, arriving at their birthplace at Bitton, in South Gloucestershire, U.K. at 12:00 BST on Saturday 26th June. The event will then cross the Atlantic and be heard across the Americas finishing in Vancouver, British Columbia.

All forms of chiming, with carillons or full-circle towers will also be participating in this celebration of Rev. Ellacombe's contribution to the world's bellringing heritage, but centered on St Mary's Church, Bitton, where a live streaming of the festivities will be shown as well as a special performance based on the Ellacombe Chimes.

It is a date not to be missed.

A poster about the bicentenary event

Although many church towers have had Ellacombe Chimes in the past, countless have either been completely removed (leaving just the holes in the ceiling) or have not been maintained so can no longer be played. We are fortunate to have a fully working apparatus in Dunblane Cathedral and it is used regularly, ringing both changes and hymn tunes.

On 26 June 2021, there was a worldwide celebration of the bicentenary of Ellacombe's invention. Bells throughout the world were chimed, starting in New Zealand and heard in each of the major time zones at noon local time in each location. They made their way to the UK, then across the Americas, finishing in Vancouver, Canada, 17 hours later. Along with many others, Dunblane's Ellacombe was chimed at midday in celebration of this event.

The poster shown above can be found at:

<https://anzab.org.au/news/images/EllacombeLeaflet.pdf>

A commemorative book has been published; Ellacombe Chimes: Two Hundred Years, (ISBN 978-1-304-70761-1) can be purchased from the publisher Lulu (hopefully through Amazon in due course):

<https://lulu.com/en/gb/shop/mike-gates/ellacombe-chimes-two-hundred-years/paperback/product-me5dpw.html>

Look! No ropes

Jonathan Crouchman, Wensleydale

What is it like for a bellringing novice to learn how to ring online? We decided to find out. The end of the story is that it is extremely successful, and here is how it happened.

I am lucky that I live in Wensleydale which has the good fortune to have a few bellringing enthusiasts, even though half-decent plain hunting remains an aspiration for many. The dale has six towers with bands, and these loosely cooperate as the 'Wensleydale Cluster'. Last year, two of the six towers decided to replace their real world practices with virtual practices which were greatly enhanced with that fantastic tool Ringing Room, and these morphed into cluster practices.

Early this year, we decided to undertake a recruitment campaign by means of an introductory online bellringing course. We were greatly helped in our preparation by Ruth, the editor of Tower Talk, who sent us a lesson plan for an introduction to virtual ringing devised by Australian ringer Laura Goodin. Wensleydale's David Scrutton adapted Laura's lessons for our use.

We promoted the course through personal contacts, social media, shop posters and similar, and attracted twenty new trainees, mostly local but a few from further afield, one as far away as Kent. Two of our long distance students had some experience of tower ringing.

Our online course consisted of five lessons that introduced Ringing Room and the elements of change ringing, focussing particularly on plain hunting, but on the way looking at call changes, making places, dodging and blue lines. Of course, we have explained to them something about ringing bells with ropes: handstroke, backstroke, getting up to the balance, standing. Understanding gained in the virtual world will necessarily be limited but may help accelerate learning in the tower. By the end of the five lessons our trainees could plain hunt on five with a cover, and we were delighted that our trainees all elected to continue ringing online with us. As some of our trainees were becoming reliant on their "crib sheet", we threw them in at the deep end with plain hunting on eleven, in the hope that they would better grasp the underlying principles of hunting. And they didn't drown, they swam! That was such a good evening.

The trainees expressed enthusiasm and gratitude, and lived out their positive attitudes by staying online with us. So, what do they say?

The feedback on the course was all delightfully positive for us. Perhaps our students are all too polite! The following comments are representative:

I think your team that's running this is just excellent, I enjoyed the course, and I learnt a lot.

It's really something that's completely different from what I do day to day. I look forward to it.

A good laugh as much as being educational.

You have put on an excellent course, not frightened me, have demystified me. Thank you.

I've looked on this as an opportunity to learn a new skill during lockdown, because I think it's good to turn something that's negative into a positive. So that was my thinking about doing it at the start and I've really enjoyed it.

You do meet some very interesting people from all over the country. Very sociable.

You've shown a lot of patience actually. My tower doesn't. *(This from one of our long-distance students with some experience in the tower).*

Wensleydale Ringers



wensleydaleringers@gmail.com

What's on this week?

- Places are still available on our free online 'Introduction to Ringing' course, starting in early March
- Wednesday, 7.30 pm: online ringing practice in the Middleham ringing chamber
- Thursday, 7.30 pm: online ringing practice in the Masham ringing chamber

Want to know more? Email wensleydaleringers@gmail.com or via Messenger or reply to a Facebookpost.

Learn about Bell Ringing during Lockdown!



Join a free online introductory course to bell ringing run by the Wensleydale bell ringers

The Wensleydale ringers are offering a series of short interactive on-line presentations on the joy, techniques, and benefits of bell ringing. We invite everyone to join us in these sessions, from those who have simply wondered about how the bells are rung through to those interested in whether bell ringing is for them. Use your lockdown to learn about a new potential hobby!

If you are interested in finding out more please email wensleydaleringers@gmail.com, or contact us via Facebook at Wensleydale Ringers, or via twitter at [#Wensleydaleringers](https://twitter.com/Wensleydaleringers).

A poster for the Wensleydale course

A common theme was how useful virtual ringing was to learn theory. Our few students with ringing experience offered useful insights, for example that online practices will give those who haven't been in the tower a big advantage. One said:

Counting your places and all of that is more difficult in a tower when you've everything else to do, so ringing in Ringing Room has helped me to focus on counting places.

Our students were apprehensive about ringing real bells but there were positive feelings as well. Here is a flavour of the views expressed:

We won't know until we get there.

I don't like the idea of turning up at a practice and messing it up for everyone else.

I'm going to make an awful lot of mistakes when I get into the tower.

It's useful for us to hear such fears. It particularly helps us to know which individuals seem to be most anxious or lacking in self-confidence, so that we can adjust our interactions with them accordingly. We hope to hold a social event once this is allowed – soon we hope!

In conclusion, our online course has been very successful in recruiting new ringers and in teaching them ringing theory up to plain hunting. Our students have enjoyed it and seem to value having learned a new skill. Those who had ringing experience considered that the course was a good opportunity to learn theory and would provide new trainees with a springboard in the tower. The course has allowed students and existing ringers to get to know each other, giving a few useful insights as to individual personalities and concerns before students arrive in the tower.

Perhaps some tower captains and ringing masters are reading this article. If you are, please carefully consider our students' comments, especially:

>>>>> You've shown a lot of patience actually. My tower doesn't. <<<<<<

When in the tower, we are all trying to do our best whilst seeking an enjoyable and rewarding experience. So, please, please, be patient, be kind, be amiable, be understanding, be humorous, be helpful.

If you want to contact us, please send an email to wensleydaleringers@gmail.com

The Poacher turned Gamekeeper

Mary Jones, Norfolk

There comes a point in one's learning when it is time to give rather than receive. If you are lucky, you will reach a stage when you realise that in some particular area you actually know more than many others and, if you feel ready, you can now try to share some of this hard-won knowledge – pass it on, as it were. But beware. You may be biting off a little more than you can comfortably chew.

We are not all destined to teach. We may be skilled in one particular area or with one particular age group, but rather indifferent, if not downright dangerous, in another.

Take me. I can teach a child to enjoy learning, to relish school to the point that they are disappointed when it is the weekend. I can teach them to read and to love stories, rather than merely decode squiggles on a page. I can make sure that they always rematch pen lids, never put their feet on the seats in public places, dispose of tissues in the bin, and wash their hands after using the loo. But does that mean, despite my good intentions, that I can teach someone to ring methods?

No, it does not.

This does not mean that I don't start out with certain advantages:

- I am trained as a teacher and am aware of how people learn in different ways.
- I have no crowd management issues. After herding 30 small children, sometimes single handedly, managing a few interested adults is not hard.
- I am confident in sharing what I know.
- I am still close enough to the (bell-related) learning process itself to remember what it feels like. I understand the areas in which more experienced ringers assume knowledge that learners do not yet have, and can help to fill in the gaps.
- I am all too aware of how damaging to one's self esteem it can be when you don't understand and you feel like an idiot. It is uncomfortable, because as adults many of us are not used to being in this diminished position. I get it because I am still often there myself.



*Who is teaching?
Who is learning?*

But then there are disadvantages:

The main one is that actually I do not yet know enough. I can mislead, I don't use the proper code, and although I am developing some skills in the theoretical department, I fear that they are not the sort of skills that are universally recognised by other ringers. They are my own personal strategies that work for me.

Thus although I may lead a practice for other learners and attempt to share with them the few things that I do know, I am beginning to doubt how useful I am being. Might I be doing more harm than good? Leading them off the accepted way of doing things and setting them up for confusion?

I don't know the answer to the question '*just because you sort of know/understand something, should you then attempt to pass on this knowledge, or should you keep quiet and let more experienced people take up the challenge?*'. Is it enough to have enthusiasm and a desire to help, or should relative newcomers bow out and let the experienced get on with it? But some of them may lack the skills that I have to offer. Being an experienced ringer does not necessarily make someone a suitable teacher, any more than being an experienced teacher makes someone a suitable ringer.

Tricky!

Covering

The ART team

Covering, ringing behind or tenoring, are all terms that mean the same thing – which is continually ringing a bell – the tenor – steadily in the same position, at the end of every row, usually while the other bells ring a method on an odd number of bells.

Although you might hear ringers saying self-deprecatingly ‘I can only ring the tenor to methods’ or ‘I just tenor behind’, having an accurately rung tenor provides stability, rhythm and a point of reference for the other working bells as they come into lead. A steady tenor can save a piece of ringing from totally falling apart if there are multiple errors or if the striking becomes choppy. In addition, when you are ringing the tenor you can start to develop your observation skills in a non critical way so that you can start to notice, for example, the order in which bells come up to the back, if they dodge or lie or both, and when the treble is there. Getting into the habit of observing what is happening at the back can really help the conductor, too.

On the flipside, a tenor ringer who can’t strike their bell accurately and who rings at variable speeds can also cause great difficulty for the other members of the band, so covering is a very important skill to practise and develop. In fact, some might argue that the tenor is the most important bell. Good bell control, ringing steadily, listening skills, ropesight and the ability to handle a larger bell are all skills which can be honed to perfection by regularly ringing the tenor behind to methods.



The motto for covering?



Julia Cater – presenter of the video on ringing heavier bells

As we contemplate a return to ringing, it’s a great way to ease yourself back in.

ART have produced a handy toolbox about covering on their website here:

<http://ringingteachers.org/resources/Method-Toolboxes/covering-toolbox>

The toolbox includes

- videos on how to develop the skill with a real band or with a simulator,
- a jargon buster,
- advice on listening and bell control,
- and a fantastic video full of advice on ringing heavier bells presented by Julia Cater from the St Martin’s Guild. It’s not really about physical strength, of course, but it’s all about technique.

For teachers there are tips on how to help ringers learn to cover, and advice on how to teach using a simulator if your tower has one.

Roos Ringers Road to Recovery

Helen Audley, Roos, East Yorkshire

Roos is a rural East Riding village 15 miles east of Hull. Even within the Beverley and District Ringing Society we are referred to as 'the Far East'. Our location has definite pros and cons. Travelling time and distance makes attendance at ringing events a major undertaking, especially for children who are reliant on parents to transport them. However, Roos has a strong identity and sense of community. Children are able to 'play out' and most of our young ringers can get to the church under their own steam.

The restoration and augmentation of our bells from five to six in 2012 proved to be the catalyst for a major programme of teaching. A further augmentation to eight in 2014 saw the older children from Roos C of E Primary School taken to Loughborough to watch the new bells being cast. The whole school came to the church to watch the new bells being hoisted up into the tower. It gave them a sense of ownership and involvement.

Building this strong link between the church and the primary school through ringing has been crucial to the success of our band. Our young ringers feel very special when they leave school early to get to the church ahead of their peers so that the bells are ringing as everyone arrives for an end of term or special service. We have the benefit of ringing from a mezzanine gallery, clearly visible to the congregation so ringing is an inclusive part of worship. This tangible evidence of church and community team work never fails to impress.

In 2018 our work was recognised with the ART *Innovation in Recruitment or Retention Award* and Roos was Highly Commended in the Schools Group category which put us in the spotlight. This year, Jayden Newton was joint winner of the *Outstanding Contribution Award* – presented to him on his 11th birthday. TV and radio appearances and press interest have been exciting. The profile of ringing has been raised in our area and Roos is proud of our young band.

Jayden nearly didn't log in to the online Awards Ceremony on Zoom back in March because he thought he would just be watching other people win things. He was very pleased to be nominated but didn't think he stood a chance as he was only 11. Being a joint winner made him so happy. When asked what he likes about ringing, Jayden's reply was that he likes seeing his friends and being able to ring with them in a team. He particularly likes ringing call changes because he likes the ones with different names such as Queens or Kings. In fact, out of all our ringers, Jayden is very interested in the sounds of different bells – which is why he loves to visit other towers.

Jayden was then asked whether he thinks ringing helps him with other things in life. He says ringers have to adapt to how other ringers are thinking and try to help them. (Jayden is very good at encouraging new learners.) It has made him more safety conscious and can now tune his guitar unaided because he is used to hearing different notes.

Ringing Room and video conferencing has kept us going through the pandemic. We have continued to meet every week on our practice night. I'm afraid to say the adult ringers dropped quickly by the wayside. Flaky internet connections didn't help, but the youngsters have stuck with it. They are now far more advanced in theory than they are going to be in practice when we get back in the tower. The assistance of Wheatley has been a mixed blessing. I've discovered they have got very proficient at gap filling and can ring all sorts of things when it is just one learner and a strong band. More than one learner and they both try to fill any hesitation, thinking it is them that must be wrong.



Jayden – joint winner of the 2021 ART Outstanding Contribution award

Every week the cry is 'When can we get back to proper ringing'? At Roos it's not that straightforward - for the best of reasons. The long awaited extension of our tiny ringing gallery is well underway - as is the installation of a toilet and kitchenette on the ground floor. This means we will have space outside of the rope circle for seating, teaching and the storage of Haribos. Parents will be able to watch their children without the risk of being lassoed with a rope and we can welcome interested visitors to see what goes on.



The Roos Ringers

Now we are emerging from lockdown, the intention is to visit other towers until we can access our own bells. I anticipate several sessions of individual practice with adults as well as children - some of whom are worried they will have forgotten how to ring.

Towards the end of last year, 13-year-old Abigail took over the teaching of her 10-year-old brother Daniel. Covid restrictions meant I had to maintain social distance and bell handling lessons had to stop, but Daniel was keen to continue. They did this under my careful supervision and with their mother also in attendance (mainly with her camera!). The nervous energy I used up was far greater than if I were doing the teaching myself - but not once did I have to rush over and intervene. They did amazingly well. I hope this will resume in the near future.

Jayden's award was richly deserved. He has a passion for and commitment to anything to do with ringing. As such, he is an excellent ambassador both for Roos and for ringing in general. Our young band, plus the ever-patient supporting adults, are what grass roots ringing is all about.

Jayden's top tip for anyone anxious about returning to ringing:

Don't worry - just do it - you won't have forgotten!

??? **Answers to Puzzles** ???

Here's the solution to the puzzle on page 6.

- | Across | Down |
|------------------|---------------|
| 2 Wellington, | 1 Lowestoft |
| 5 Quex | 3 Garlickythe |
| 7 Kilifi | 4 Kilmoor |
| 9 Basildon | 6 Pershore |
| 11 East Bergholt | 8 Inverary |
| 12 Crowland | 10 Verona |
| 14 Inverness | 13 Windsor |
| 16 Addleshaw | 15 Singapore |
| 17 Bournville | |

