

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning™
the Ropes

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

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Welcome to the Second Issue!

Having produced the first issue back in September/October, we are pleased to announce that the interest has been strong enough for us to now plan to issue Tower Talk every three months.

We thought that you might like to know a little about the team that produces Tower Talk for you, so here we are:

The editor is **Ruth Suggett**. Ruth is a mentor and teacher at Bardwell, Suffolk, and is a full Member of ART. She can be contacted by e-mail on towertalk@learningtheropes.org.

The layout is by **Mike Rigby**. Mike is Tower Captain and teacher at Lighthorne, Warwickshire, and also helps out at the Edgehill Ringing Centre. He is also a full Member of ART.



Ruth Suggett



Mike Rigby

We've made a few small changes as a result of the feedback we received from the first issue, including adding a contents list to this front page. If you have any suggestions of your own, or if you'd like to contribute an article, please get in touch with Ruth. So, until the next issue, may we wish all our readers a very Happy New Year!

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Two Young Learners at Dover

Janik Friend might be one of the youngest ringers to embark upon the Learning the Ropes Scheme. Recently turned nine, he has completed Level 1 and was presented with his certificate at the Cinque Ports Ringing Centre in Dover, Kent, on 26 August.

In his own words:

Hello, my name is Janik. I was introduced to bell ringing by my brother, Jonah, who is six years old. He started ringing last December and I joined in with his lessons straight away. I can now ring Bell Number 2 in St Mary's (Dover) on my own and I have started to ring rounds. I enjoy ringing with other people and they are always friendly and patient. This has been a great experience for me, and my teacher Mr Dale taught me very well. In the future I am hoping to be ringing bobs and other things, but I don't know much about them yet.

Janik's brother, Jonah, was only three years old when he first came to see the ringing at St Mary's, Dover, but he had to wait two years before we purchased a Saxilby simulator and could start teaching him. In fact the two brothers were so eager to learn that we gave them their first few lessons while the simulator was still standing on the ringing gallery, awaiting installation in the roof space. We let down the rope through the hole for the tolling rope and taught the boys in the church porch.

Being much taller than his brother, Janik graduated very quickly on to the trebles at Dover. If he is, in fact, the youngest ringer to earn an LtR certificate, then he won't have that distinction for much longer. Jonah is on the point of moving on to real bells, but at a tower with lighter ring than Dover's; he'll be completing his Level 1 very soon!

By Peter Dale
Instructor at St Mary's, Dover



Janik Friend

Recent Successes

In the fourth quarter of 2016, 167 certificates were awarded to new ringers at various stages of Learning the Ropes, broken down thus:

Level 1 - Bell Handling	94
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing skills	41
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	10
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	13
Level 5 - Change Ringer	9

In all, 598 certificates were awarded during 2016 to 341 ringers.

Claire Allen, a ringer at Offenham, Worcestershire, recently achieved Level 4, and we'll hear from her in the next issue. Why not tell us about your journey, too?



Wedding Day Nerves

I felt both joy and fear in equal measure when I was asked if I was available to ring for a wedding. Joy because I really felt part of the team, but fear for my ability to do it!

When the day arrived it was exciting but, even so, very daunting; so to boost my confidence I gave myself a good talking to. We were ringing on six rather than all eight, and ringing call changes to keep novices like me in line. I'm fairly confident with call changes, although moving down can cause me a little anxiety if I am not sure who to follow. Bell five became my default bell to follow if in doubt, and it seemed to work well a lot of the time! Then it started to sound better when I was called quickly to follow three! My concentration had to improve.

This was the first wedding that I have been to without actually seeing the Bride and Groom. It was such an honour to be part of their special day.

Learning later in life (in retirement) does seem to make me slower on the uptake and less confident than the youngsters. I worry more when I make a mistake! Of course I know that it is part of learning and I do so love ringing! Along the way, I have met some really lovely and understanding people, too.

I have just rung for my second wedding and we have a 'vows renewal' ceremony coming up soon. Good times!

By Annie Cunningham, a new ringer from Hertfordshire



“ It was such an honour to be part of their special day.”

A Grand Day Out: Maids Moreton Ringing Outing

Eleven trainees joined the band in February 2016, ranging in age from 12 years to ... well one or two of us could quite easily be his grandparents ... enough said.

So, after spending the last eight months learning the rudiments of bell ringing we, the trainees, were treated to a day's outing with the band from Maids Moreton, Stowe and Buckingham. These very, very patient and experienced ringers had given their all in an effort to get us to an acceptable standard in the art of bell ringing. We were all able to ring at least rounds and call changes.

When a day of bell ringing was first mentioned our first thoughts were "Oh no, we're still learners! How could we possibly go to completely strange churches and ring their bells?" However, with a little more encouragement from our experts we put our names down to go.

It was with trepidation that we all met at the first church, in the Oxfordshire village of Bodicote, for our first 8-bell ring. It was at

By Veronica Baker, Sharon Crawford and Janet Hodgson, three trainee bell ringers from Maids Moreton, Buckinghamshire

Have you recently been on an outing, or have you organised one? We would love to hear all about it, especially if it comes with some photos!

that point when the nerves really kicked in: "What were we doing here? Could we possibly ring strange bells ... could we?" No time to think about it, though - suddenly we were ringing. It was not perfect by any means, but we got through to the end of the session without any ropes flying around the chamber. To settle the nerves, we descended on The Bell Inn, Adderbury, for a well-earned drink, food and chat about the first hurdle of the day. Phew!

Next, on to the village of Wiggington and up a narrow spiral staircase and then, surprise, surprise, backwards down a ladder onto the bell platform - that was our first challenge! Another set of fairly easy bells. Over to Tadmarton and another lovely church in the middle of the Oxfordshire countryside, where all went smoothly again.

We were not prepared for just how different each set of bells would feel and behave. They all had their individual weight, sound and character. This, of course, is what we had been told, but it was quite a revelation to experience it for ourselves. Once we had settled into our stride, our confidence soared and we stopped worrying about how the poor villagers were suffering.

However, the day was not yet over. After a quick home visit, to pick up partners and friends, we joined the local Branch for a fish and chip supper in the village hall, followed by a not too serious quiz. Great fun and an excellent way to finish off a super day.

What a very satisfying day we all had. Relaxing over lunch with our bell-ringing friends and enjoying new experiences and enthusiasm for our newly found pastime, we all agreed that taking up bell ringing has meant meeting new people, all from different backgrounds and various ages, brought together by their common interest in this great activity. We are now all strengthened in our resolve to 'keep calm and carry on'! And to think at the beginning of the year we had never experienced anything remotely like bell ringing. With all the help, patience and time our expert ringers had given us, we were now in a position to ring our own bells and start our own record of ringing. We suspect an even greater challenge is waiting for us in the New Year, but we survived the first year, so why not the second?

The picture below (c/o Lesley Belcher) is of some of the 22 ringers who took part in the outing.



Ringling Master Class

After completing Learning the Ropes Level 5 last year, I was lucky enough to be invited to a ringing master class in Birmingham in September 2016. Organised by Stephanie Warboys and the Birmingham School of Ringing, this was an opportunity for us to ring with a group of experienced ringers to try something we may not normally get the opportunity to do at our home towers.

The day started with some listening practice (harder than it appeared)! We moved on to ring at three towers in Birmingham city centre: St Philip's Cathedral, St Paul's in the Jewellery Quarter, and St Martin's in the Bullring. Each participant was paired with a tutor who helped us to work towards our own individual goals throughout the day, as well as providing helpful hints and tips. Everyone was given numerous opportunities for method ringing, as well as opportunities for rounds, call changes and plain hunt on 10, 12 and 16 for those interested.

Before the day, I had been nervous about what standard of ringing would be expected. I needn't have worried, as everyone was very welcoming and the whole experience was personalised to allow us to work on our own goals.

My personal highlight was ringing call changes on 12 bells at St Philip's Cathedral. Not only was this the first time I had ever rung on more than 6 bells, the sound of those particular bells was simply magnificent. It reminded me that, whilst bell ringing is an interesting, sociable and mentally stretching hobby, it is also worship – something which is easily forgotten in the day-to-day bustle of life.

My personal achievement was learning Stedman Doubles, and then going on to ring Stedman Triples! This shows how much can be achieved when given the opportunity to ring with an experienced band and focus on something of your own choosing. Along the way, I was also offered lots of tips to improve my ringing technique, which I will be practising now.

This was a fantastic day, put together with a great deal of thought, which I feel lucky to have been part of. It has given me the opportunity to try new things, the confidence to try ringing at different towers, and an appetite to ring on more than 6 bells. It was also great to meet other ringers, and to feel part of a wider group. The number of young people amongst both participants and tutors was extremely encouraging for the future of ringing.

The day was clearly only possible due to the time and efforts of a very large number of people (far larger than the number of participants) including organisers, tutors and other experienced ringers who supported throughout the day; so thank you to everyone!

By Rosie Storrar
All Saints, Marsworth,
Buckinghamshire

Don't forget ...

The opportunity to take part in the annual Master Class is offered to everyone who has achieved Level 5 during the year. If you are nearing Level 5, make sure you complete it by the end of 2017 to get your chance to take part in 2018!

“ The whole experience was personalised to allow us to work on our own goals.”



One of these mugs was given to each of the day's participants.

Free to Explore - Heritage Open Days

For as long as I can remember I have always enjoyed listening to the ringing of church bells, and I was intrigued to read in the local papers that among the Heritage Open Days' events this year was a tour entitled - Heavy Metal Music at Bardwell Church on Friday, 9 September. The tour gave a brief history of bell ringing, a chance to see it in action and the opportunity to have a go. I signed up!

'Heritage Open Days' are a national event in the UK, focusing on history and culture. Every year, over four days in September, thousands of events across the country invite members of the public to explore local treasures on their doorstep, offering the chance to see hidden places and try new experiences. The bellringers at Bardwell Church had organised an event to introduce the mysterious art of change ringing and had set up a mini belfry in the church as well as allowing visitors to climb the spiral staircase to see the real thing.

As I parked the car near the church, I was excited to have the chance to see bell ringing in action and hopefully to 'have a go'. I was given a warm welcome in the church by the friendly team of bell ringers and we were joined by another couple. We were given a brief talk about bell ringing, its history and how it has developed into what we know today as change ringing.

We then had the chance to hear the bells being rung and it was fascinating to watch the rope handling skills required by the members of the band. I was then asked if I wanted to try ringing and I willingly accepted. And then I was asked if I would like to come for lessons - to which the answer was definitely "Yes please".

Since then, I have enjoyed every minute of my lessons, both instructive and fun. My teachers have been so encouraging and have explained and demonstrated exactly what I should be doing and how to do it - if only it was that simple! My next goals are to achieve my Level 1 and join the band for practice night ringing!

And so my journey to Learning the Ropes began.



By Sonya Smart
Bardwell, Suffolk



Next year's Heritage Open Days will be 7-10 September 2017.

Visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk for more information.

“ And so my journey to Learning the Ropes began.”

The mini-ring set up for the day.

The Two of Us

With every successful new ringer comes a successful teacher. Sometimes this teacher is a ringer who has taught lots of ringers over many years, but sometimes they too are novices in the art of teaching. This time we meet a double act from Norfolk who have both been on a steep learning curve!

The Pupil: Jan Churchill, Level 1, Necton, Norfolk

Earlier this year my best buddy supported me through a difficult time. As with all give, there is always a degree of take. So when Ian asked me to help him in his quest for accreditation with ART, we embarked on the process of overcoming the trials and tribulations of bell ringing. Previously possessed of both courage and physical ability, I quickly realised that the ropes would try and attack me and the sally would like nothing better than to beat me up. After much heartache and voracious physical activity, not to mention Ian's careful coaching, I mastered the technique of 'all the way up and all the way down' - nine words indelibly printed on my mind and the back of my eyelids. In a relatively short space of time, the forthright yet patient Ian had reduced my fears and increased my confidence to enable me to achieve Level 1 in bell handling. My relationship with the rope and sally has improved, although I have also learnt that relaxation of concentration still allows a certain degree of bite back. What Ian and his mentor, Mark, have demonstrated to me is that the methodology they have employed is one of learner centred environment, and one I would highly recommend to all those who are embarking on the journey I have undertaken. My thanks go to Ian for giving me a new skill.

The Teacher: Ian Dalglish, Necton, Norfolk

I am an inexperienced ringer. My tower, Necton in Norfolk, restarted ringing just a few short years ago. It became obvious that, should any new ringer appear, we would not have anyone 'in-house' who could teach them. This, then, was the reason to embark on my journey through Module 1. After completing the day course and the theory test, I had to find a pupil. Needing a 'volunteer' who had never rung before, I told my pal, Jan, that he was that man! Together with my mentor, Mark Hibbard from nearby Gressenhall, we started the process. After, at times, great hilarity, and some observed lessons, it was decided that I was ready for the final assessment. Along came Ruth Suggett from Bardwell, Suffolk, and at the end of the session announced that I was fit for accreditation. Jan has now rung for service and is still a best buddy! And I am ready to take on my next pupil!



Jan (on the left) and Ian discuss ringing, with a model built by Jan.

StartRinging ... I'm Glad I Did!

In September, Stretham Ringing Education Centre in Cambridgeshire (see www.elyda.org.uk/strethamREC) ran a four week course, 'StartRinging', which aimed to teach complete novices up to Level 1 of Learning the Ropes. Tim Millward, one of the recruits, writes:

When my wife, Sara, and I moved to Cambridgeshire from Kent, the church of St James, Stretham, became our home church, and we immediately became part of the community there. The sound of English church bells has always been special to me, and now we find ourselves in a church that has a splendid set of bells. I was on the lookout for possible new activities that would challenge my ageing brain (I am a fit 72). As a committed Christian, I see it as part of my service to the church. So I signed up for the 'StartRinging' course!

Little did I know when the course started, and having never previously been near a band of ringers in action, what I was letting myself in for! It is all a great deal harder to learn than I had conceived. It is every bit as difficult as learning any musical instrument in the skill needed and the time and practice it takes. Indeed, in the early stages, I wondered whether this would be for me. However, as time has gone on, I have come to enjoy the challenge and want to continue to practise and improve. So much of this is down to the quality of the patient and ongoing teaching we have from the team; it is impressive (and another novel experience to be the pupil rather than the teacher at my age!).

And my brain? Well, it is pretty clear that it does not function quite as it might have done fifty years ago, so I am indeed on the slow side - but it works well enough to understand what is going on and why, I just need practice, practice, practice. The bells do not hang around while you work out the next bit!

From my perspective, Tim has been a model student. He has now passed Learning the Ropes Level 1, has started to ring for services, signed up for our Level 2 course next year and will join our local Association in January. We hope the REC has given him and his classmates a good start to their ringing careers.

By Barbara Le Gallez
Stretham REC Manager

The 'StartRinging' course offered four weeks of Saturday morning group sessions, plus four extra smaller sessions during the week.

“ I have come to enjoy the challenge and want to continue to practise and improve.”

Left: A group of StartRingers and tutors.

Right: John teaching Duncan about call changes.



New DVD and Book from ART

DVD: Raising and Lowering

Containing almost an hour of specially commissioned footage exploring all aspects of raising and lowering, this second Learning the Ropes® DVD is an invaluable aid to learning. Separated into convenient chapters, the DVD includes sections on chiming, raising a bell, lowering a bell, raising in peal, lowering in peal, trebling up and trebling down. Useful techniques are fully described, and a number of ideas to allow effective practice are demonstrated.

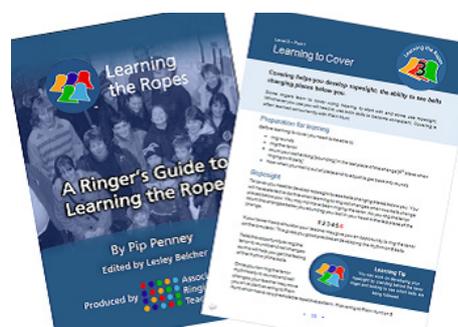
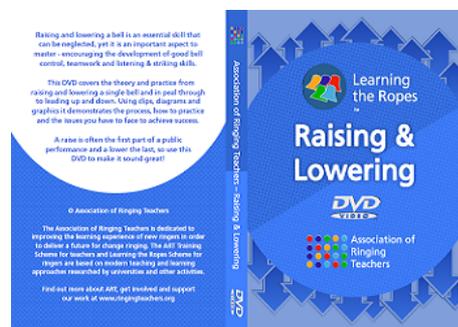
Book: A Ringer's Guide to Learning the Ropes®

Illustrated throughout with colourful photographs, diagrams and interactive activities to help the reader consolidate and check what they have discovered, this book provides a step-by-step guide for ringers from bell handling through to ringing Plain Bob Minor inside. The fundamentals of ringing are explained in an easy to read, uncomplicated style which will appeal to all age groups. Learning tips are provided to highlight important information and guidance is given on skills building at every stage, with emphasis placed on the importance of developing all the foundation ringing skills.

The book is easy to dip into to find information about each stage of learning. It follows all the Levels of the Learning the Ropes Scheme provided by the Association of Ringing Teachers [ART] and will help ringers progress from handling right up to ringing their first methods and calling their first touches. Nicki Stuchbury, of Lillingstone Lovell, Buckinghamshire, said "I absolutely love the layout with the colours and diagrams; it is just the sort of resource that I would choose to learn from." And Veronica Baker of Maids Moreton, also in Buckinghamshire, added "Proficient ringing will not be obtainable without the basics and your chapters have captured this fact."

The on-line resources that complement Learning the Ropes have been comprehensively reviewed and updated to coincide with the publication of the New Ringer's Guide. Each key skill is supported by its own web page with appropriate video and audio links in addition to further information and resources for you to print and use in your tower. There are new resources for leading and covering (Level 2), peals & quarter peals (Level 3) and successful dodging and stepping-stone methods (Level 4). Why not have a look at www.smartringer.org/ringing?

By Ruth Suggett
Editor



Don't forget ...

There's lots more to see in the ART Shop which is at www.ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop - from books and DVDs to clothing. Why not have a browse?

And ART Members can get a discount by following the link to the SmART Ringer web site.

Fascinating Fact!

Each Sunday, at around 11:00am Eastern Standard Time (USA), Trinity Wall St, New York, broadcasts the ringers in action as part of their Sunday service which starts at 11.15. It's a live broadcast, and represents an attempt to make the exercise of ringing visible world-wide. You can view the webcast at www.trinitywallstreet.org, either 'live' or on-demand.

Learning Tips No.2: Calling Changes

So you think you've got the idea of how to ring call changes! But what about you calling some changes?

It's true that, for many, adding another activity to ringing a bell causes problems with handling or striking or even both. A ringing medic has said that bell-ringing causes intense activity in the brain which has to co-ordinate arm movements, seeing the ropes and hearing the sounds in addition to what it normally controls. You even have to remember to breathe! Now add to that the need to speak and call some changes, then it's not surprising that things can go to pot.

One place at a time

Start simply: call yourself down or up just one place and back again. Remember that you need to be heard by your fellow ringers above the sound of the bells. You could always practise this bit in front of a mirror at home! When you're confident with that, increase the scope by calling yourself two or three places from the starting place and back again.

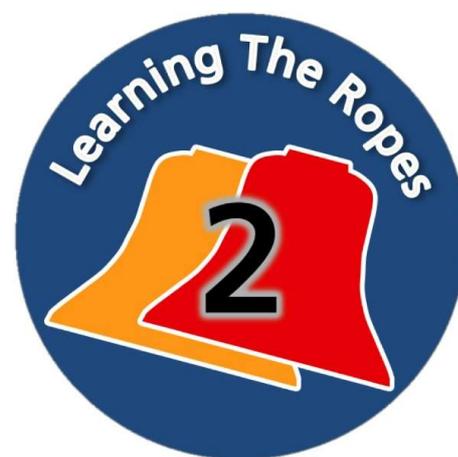
So far you've involved your bell in the changes, but what about calling another bell to move? Could you call the bell in fifths place down to the lead position? You could use pencil and paper and write down the calls, either calling up, down or by places - whichever method is preferred in your tower. However, this visual device (*illustrated right*), which was invented by a ringer at my home tower, might help because it shows which bells are in which places as you call the changes. The inner set of numbers represent the bell places and the outer numbered door knobs represent the bells which can change places. You could replicate this model on a sheet of A4 paper with numbers 1 - 8 as fixed places and cut out some bell shapes and number them 1 - 8.

So, start your plan by working out the call to swap bells 4 and 5. Your model should now show bell 5 in 4th place and bell 4 in 5th place. Completing your plan should not be too difficult, but ask your tutor if you need help. Once you are confident of the calls to make, try it on the bells. No need to get the bells back to rounds, just call stand and cheekily ask each ringer if they know which place they are in!

Once you feel confident about moving other bells, then try calling the bells to some of these changes:

Queens	135246	Hagdyke	341256
Tittums	142536	Burdette	213546
Kings / Whittingtons	531246	Reverse Tittums	352416
Priory / The Intermediate	132546	Weasels	14235(6)

By Roger Coley,
an accredited teacher at
St Margaret's, Ipswich



There is a collection of named changes on the web at www.campaniles.co.uk/maw/callchanges.html