

# Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning <sup>TM</sup>  
the Ropes

Association of Ringing Teachers / Learning the Ropes - [www.learningtheropes.org](http://www.learningtheropes.org)

## Number 4 - July 2017

The summer months see ringers getting out and about on ringing trips and outings, so we have a few stories about some of their experiences. Going on a ringing trip or organising one is one of the '50 Ringing Things' you can tick off, so let's hope lots of you manage to enjoy an outing or two this summer - and maybe write about it for Tower Talk? In this issue we are also looking at some of the ways technology can help ringers learn and develop; by using simulators in the tower, software on a pc or various apps for smartphones. It's all out there, waiting to be used for your benefit, so why not give it a try?

By Ruth Suggett,  
Editor

[towertalk@learningtheropes.org](mailto:towertalk@learningtheropes.org)

### In this Issue:

50/50 Club Draw News.....	2
Recent Successes.....	2
The Wombelles of Warwickshire.....	3
'Raising and Lowering' DVD Reviewed.....	4
It's a Family Affair.....	5
A Grand Day Out.....	6
Learning Tips No.4: Looking After Number One.....	7
A Bungling Beginner's Bell-Ringing Benison.....	8
Let's Get Social.....	9
Simulators - the Key to Success?.....	10
Here, There, and Everywhere: The joys of visiting other towers.....	12
Fascinating Fact.....	12

# 50/50 Club Draw News

The ART Ltr 50/50 club June draw was done on a “Codgers” bell ringing outing in Cumbria on a ‘lovely’ wet day.

The group of eager ringers who are free to ring in the daytime midweek (i.e. retired) held their breath in anticipation of their own number being drawn, or at least that of someone they knew. And indeed, a few knew two of them, despite them living about as far from Cumbria as you could get, in opposite directions!

The lucky prizewinners this time were Les Boyce who won £62 and Mandy Burnett and Judith Frye who each won £31.

For those who don’t know about the 50/50 club yet, it’s a subscription club where half the money paid in goes to ART towards the costs of supporting teachers and learners of bell ringing, and the other half is given out in prizes over the year.

We would love to have more members – for bigger prizes and more money for ART! – so please consider joining. You can get all the information and forms at [www.learningtheropes.org/5050club](http://www.learningtheropes.org/5050club).

And I would ask you to consider setting up a standing order as it needs less work to administer – and they can be cancelled very easily by yourselves when you want to leave. It costs £12 per number per year. Some people have four numbers each!

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By Chris de Cordova,  
50/50 Club Administrator and  
ringer at Whitehaven, Cumbria



**“** We would love to have more members”

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## Recent Successes

In the second quarter of 2017, 173 certificates were awarded to ringers at the various stages of Learning the Ropes (Ltr) as below (last year’s numbers shown for comparison):

Level 1 – Bell Handling	102 (66)
Level 2 – Foundation Ringing Skills	37 (24)
Level 3 – Introduction to Change Ringing	20 (17)
Level 4 – Novice Change Ringer	8 (12)
Level 5 – Change Ringer	6 (4)



If you’d like to see more of these and other similar statistics, they can all be found on the SmART Ringer website at [smartringer.org/public/records/](http://smartringer.org/public/records/).

If you have a story to tell of your own success, or that of one of your pupils, please send it to the editor and we’ll help you to share it.

# The Wombelles of Warwickshire

I have just returned from ringing at “Shakespeare’s Church”, Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon, a wonderful 10-bell tower. I rang with a group who call themselves the Wombelles, and I have been so impressed with the way the group is run, and how much fun everyone has, that I felt it was time to tell others.

Years ago, after a simulator was installed in the tower at Whitnash, regular Monday morning practice sessions were started, and I joined them. One member of the group started to call us the Wombelles, a contraction of “Whitnash on Monday bell(e)s”, and the name stuck.

As more people joined, the session was divided in two, with beginner and intermediate sessions one week, and intermediate and advanced the next. But, as time went by, the more advanced ringers started to feel that they wanted more rope time and then, when the tower was due to be closed for several months for roof repairs, they went off to ring somewhere else (and took many of the helpers with them). So what were the rest of us to do?

One of the learners, Keith Archer, had the bright idea that if we went to a different tower each week we could ring on open bells without causing too much disturbance, and there were quite a few rarely-rung towers where visitors of even our relatively early ability would be welcomed. So he booked some towers and persuaded a couple of more advanced ringers to join us. We kept the name, too, but changed the meaning to *Wandering* on Monday bell(e)s.

Earlier this year Keith organised a third anniversary tour of four towers in the Cotswolds. We started at St Nicholas, Saintbury, a wonderful but now redundant mediæval church in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Then on to St Eadburgha, Broadway; St Michael & All Angels, Stanton (grade I listed); and St Peter, Stanway (adjacent to the manor with its famous water gardens).

Over the three years since Keith had the idea, the group have rung at over a hundred different towers in Warwickshire and beyond. That has given us a bit of a reputation in our local Guild as tower-grabbers, but that belies the fact that ringing on different bells each week is tremendously helpful in acquiring good bell control. It also gets new ringers over the fear of ringing in ‘strange’ towers, and we all get to see beautiful historic churches in new places.

We never miss a week unless the Monday is a public holiday or it’s Holy Week. Wombelles is popular because nobody is turned away, and no pressure is applied in any way. It’s remarkable how people have progressed, too. Only occasionally do we ring anything harder than Plain Hunt, because that’s not what we’re about. We aim for good striking (of course!) but the group is just as much about the social side as it is about the ringing. People only come to a tower if they want to, but we are never short of ringers.

And Holy Trinity actually asked us to go back again.

Would a group like this work where you are?

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By Mike Rigby,  
ART Member and Teacher at  
Lighthorne, Warwickshire



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Two views of St Nicholas church,  
Saintbury, and members of the  
Wombelles in a pub for lunch.  
[All images © Mike Rigby]

# 'Raising and Lowering' DVD Reviewed

This DVD, which is of benefit to both teachers and new ringers alike, highlights the importance of practising the skills, technique and teamwork necessary to raise and lower individual bells or in peal. The point is clearly made that raising and lowering bells is a performance piece which must be completed safely while maintaining musicality and rhythm.

Demonstrations start at beginner's level, showing instructor and student breaking each sequence into specific moves to raise/lower a bell in an effective and efficient manner. Technique progression occurs in stages culminating in a group demonstration of raising/lowering in peal. Specific instruction for trebling up and down are provided in the final chapters - offering an instructional DVD that addresses skills from beginner to experienced bell ringer.

A multitude of on-screen teaching techniques are used to illustrate specific skills, thereby accommodating a range of learning styles. Written instructions on-screen, filmed footage, pictorial and numerical images all help to explain each technique. Practical advice is given throughout, switching between pupil demonstration, an instructor's direct address and detailed explanations.

Demonstration footage varies between close-ups, stills, slow motion and split screen camera images - a varied combination which helps to maintain interest. At times the narration and instructions cease, providing a silent demonstration - enabling the audience to watch without distraction. Footage of poor technique and common mistakes made by students are also demonstrated - providing the audience with a self-reflection of their current technique. Large colourful symbols appear on screen to remind the viewer whether the technique shown is best practice or poor handling.

The DVD is organised into short sections, with each section focusing on a specific technique broken down into stages and concluding with the full demonstration sequence from beginning to end - helping to reinforce the correct technique. This approach enables the viewer to watch for the duration of time available to them and makes this a very user-friendly product.

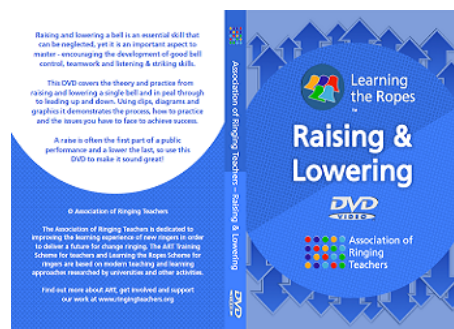
Summary of features:

- Pictorial and numerical diagrams
- Clear explanations with demonstration footage
- Handling techniques broken into practical sequences
- Alternative methods provided for some techniques
- Practical help correcting common mistakes
- Practical tests to ensure success

A valuable resource for any student or experienced bell ringer who wishes to fully appreciate and understand the necessary skills required to master the art of raising and lowering a bell in peal. Highly recommended viewing for any bell ringer, whether a beginner or experienced instructor.

By Bernadette O'Dwyer,  
ringer from Atherstone,  
Warwickshire

Bernadette and her husband Leo began ringing at the Birmingham School of Bellringing in April 2016. Bernadette is currently working towards Level 3 - and she may be soon attempting her first quarter peal. Here she reviews the recently produced 'Raising and Lowering' DVD.



## Don't forget ...

You can buy this DVD from the ART Shop which is online at [www.ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop](http://www.ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/shop). There's lots to see, from books and DVDs to clothing. Why not have a look around?

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

“Highly recommended viewing for any bell ringer, whether a beginner or experienced instructor.”



# It's a Family Affair

My children and I started ringing following a chance conversation I had with Trisha Hawkins, the bell ringing teacher at St Mary's, Barnes. She had recently got back from a ringing trip and was recounting the details, and it all sounded very interesting. She then asked me if I would like to have a go, and I thought why not? I would try anything once ...! I asked if my children could come and watch, and they were invited to ring too, and so began our bell ringing adventure.

The three of us – my daughter Isabelle (aged 13), my son Dominic (aged 11), and me – all started learning the ropes on a Saturday morning in mid-November. We were all pretty much hooked from day one, and I in particular was pleased to be asked back again after having knocked the teacher's glasses off in the first lesson! Isabelle and Dominic have also enjoyed using a laptop when they are having a break from ringing to practise ringing as the tenor using Abel, even though they aren't ready to do that yet on a real bell. It is a real pleasure to see my children developing in confidence each week and progressing so well. It is also great for all of us to develop bonds with the other ringers from across the generations.

When we are not ringing the three of us are often discussing the ins and outs of the bell ringing process. My children enjoy doing something so completely different and outside of their comfort zone and they like the thought that one day they could be ringing for an important occasion. It is as much a mental as it is a physical activity and after a busy week of work, school and everything else, it is good to have a completely different focus. Bell ringing is so much a part of British life and it is great that we can be part of this ancient tradition.

Isabelle says that it is "interesting and unusual, and a physical activity that I really enjoy".

Dominic took part in the 'Eggstravaganza' Easter egg competition at his school, which involves the children making models with real eggs. He chose the ringing theme and was over the moon when he won! He says "I like learning about the sounds of the different bells and the techniques and really like the people who come and ring the bells".

Their teacher, Trisha, commented:

*We love having Louise and her family learning to ring with us. They are all doing really well and we hope to see some Level 1 passes very soon!*

*We are aiming to train enough new ringers so that we can ring for the extra Informal / Baptism services which are held about twice a month without having to rely on the regular band who ring for the 10am service. A family of three will make quite a difference!*

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By Louise Johnson,  
ringer at St Mary's, Barnes, south  
west London

“ It is a real pleasure to see my children developing in confidence each week and progressing so well.”



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Isabelle and Dominic practising to cover using Abel on a laptop



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Dominic's 'Eggstravaganza' school Easter egg competition winning entry

# A Grand Day Out

The sign over the entrance to the Whitechapel Foundry tells us that it has been making church bells since 1570, and before then under another name. This makes it the oldest manufacturing business in Great Britain. Sadly, it has just announced it will be closing later this year so our recent Bardwell Bellringers visit there in early March was extra special.



In the unbelievably small confines of the site, we were taken through the whole process of bell manufacture. We learned how they make the moulds and then cast them in bronze, a mixture of tin and copper, with a high proportion of tin to make the bronze harder which gives the bells a better sound. Every bell is tuned to several frequencies, usually five, on a tuning lathe. It is clearly a skilled job and takes about a day of trial and error to get it right. Next door was the area where the bells are finished and fitted with their clappers and hanging accessories. There was a good collection of bells on view ready for despatch – three were bound for Bangkok! To overcome space problems, a large pit has been dug to enable large bells to be cast. The largest and most famous of these must be Big Ben in 1858. The tour concluded with a look at handbells, which accounts for 25% of Whitechapel's business. It was altogether an entertaining and fascinating tour.



After this cracking start to the day, we headed to the Mayflower pub in Rotherhithe on the south side of the River Thames for lunch. This was a great choice of pub: the excellent food and a nice pint of IPA made for a great atmosphere in historic surroundings. This was where the Mayflower ship started its journey to the New World in 1620.

After lunch we had arranged to ring at St Mary's church, Rotherhithe – a nice ring of eight similar to our own ring at Bardwell. The ringing room was roomy and light. To me, as a beginner, the bells seemed easy to ring and it felt really good that I could ring as part of a group in a different bell tower.

Next we went to St Mary's in Bermondsey. Again it was a nice big ringing room with room for the several non-ringers who came to watch the fun. We had to enter the ringing room through a trap door which had to be closed so the ringer on the tenor bell could stand on it, which explained why it was so heavy. I didn't find these bells so easy to ring initially but everyone else seemed to get the hang of them straight away so it was clearly just me! As a new ringer I found the whole

experience a real buzz and gained lots of confidence from the fact that I could ring in a strange tower and make a good fist of it.

Our day concluded with a good laugh when we were accosted by a group of young women on a hen party. They demanded that one of us proposed to one of the bridesmaids (purely as a joke, we all hoped!) – and so one of our eligible ringers, Nick, obliged. We don't know if he got her phone number!

A really fantastic day organised to perfection! When's the next one?

Tim Cavell – Rookie Bell Ringer

# Learning Tips No.4: Looking After Number One

It's often the case that many novice ringers are never told how to lead, just told to do it. OK ... so, how *do* you lead?

The first thing to get to grips with is the rhythm. You pull off on a handstroke and when you pull the next stroke – backstroke, there's no pause. However when you get to the next stroke – handstroke again – you have a tiny pause. If, say, you're ringing on six bells, it's like this:

123456123456(*pause*)123456123456(*pause*)123456123456(*pause*)

– and so on.

The pause is as long as the 'dings' that make the rest. It's as if you had a 7<sup>th</sup> bell popping in every other stroke – like this:

123456123456(7)123456123456(7)123456123456(7)

Right-oh then, to get a feel of what it sounds like, clap your hands together 12 times, say to yourself "pause", and then clap again 12 more times. The time it takes to say "pause" to yourself should be the same as the time it takes to clap once. Keep doing it until you feel confident about it. Next, try it for real.

We all know the lines we have to say before pulling off, but it's worth getting this right too:

"Look to." Look around and check that everyone is ready to ring. Then bring your bell to the balance.

"Treble's going." Start pulling the bell off.

Then, "She's gone," just as the bell starts its swing.

This first bit is crucial. Practise pulling the bell gently from the set position to the balance. If you aren't sure how to do this, ask someone to show you so you can feel what it's like. It will feel very different to when the bell is set.

So, why bother? Reason is: it's very easy not to start pulling until you've said "she's gone". Even if the bells are not deep set or heavy, there can still be too much of a delay while you *heeeeeave* the bell off.

So now you're actually ringing. You pull off at handstroke, and the backstroke follows. That's OK – but how do you stay in the right place and lead correctly? It's a combination of looking and listening.

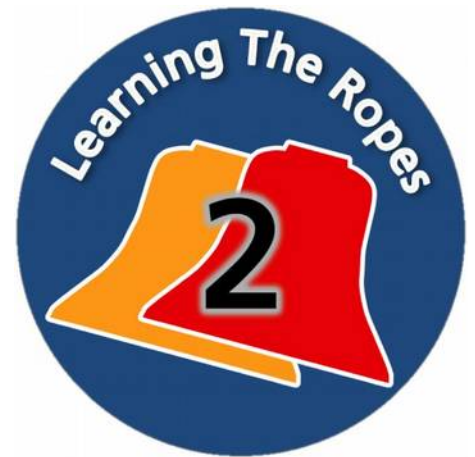
LOOK for the last bell down; in rounds of course this is the tenor. You've just completed your backstroke and have caught the sally. As the last bell down completes the backstroke and has caught the sally, you pull off your handstroke lead. The timing will be nearly right, and there will be a gap between the last bell's 'dong' and your 'ding'.

But now you really need to LISTEN. Can you hear that rhythm with the gap – what I call that imaginary bell? If not, watch the last bell down at backstroke and pull off a bit earlier or later, as need be. You may well need some help from your Ringing Teacher or a sympathetic person to help you here, until you get it right.

As with everything in bell ringing, it's all about practice. Don't worry if you have bad times when it just doesn't seem to go well. This happens! Remember a famous sportsman was once interviewed on TV and the interviewer said, "yes, but isn't your success just luck, really?" The famous sportsman replied "Oh yes, it is luck. But, you know, the more I practise, the luckier I get".

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Martin Kitson, Teacher at Bottisham, Cambridgeshire, shares some tips for getting to grips with leading.





# A Bungling Beginner's Bell-Ringing Benison

Linda and I decided "What the heck, we'll give it a go ..." which is pretty much our approach to life really, so we did just that, and here we are ringing bells ...

However, I should begin at the beginning.

Life, as it is wont to do, turned several corners recently, leaving us with time on our hands and new routines to cope with; Linda more so than me. So I set about looking for new challenges at which we could, as Wilfred Pickles used to cry, "Have a Go!"

Anyway, suffice it to say that of the many interests we considered, and after considerable internet trawling and YouTube browsing, church bell ringing won out, or maybe lost out as only time will tell; and so I emailed the ART in November of 2016 expressing our interest, sat back with bated breath and awaited a reply.

Because I had revealed my age I only half expected a response, so imagine my surprise and delight when my 'in-box' pinged at me to announce the arrival of a mail, telling me we were to report to St Michael's church, Thorpe-on-the-Hill, where we had been assigned a 'Teacher' no less! Well, I felt like one of those Hollywood Stars who pay thousands for the services of Buddhist Gurus, or Hindu Mahatmas; it was very up-lifting.

Anyway, in December we met our Teachers, Sandra and Colin to whom we instantly warmed, recognising they knew their craft, but I did wonder whether they knew what they were taking on in trying to teach me, but I knew that Linda, of course, would take to it like the proverbial duck ...

Well, I need have had no doubts. What Linda and I could not have known in December, was the range of experience and endless paternal patience with which Sandra and Colin approach their lessons. Never an impatient "tut;" never a withering 'look,' not even a cross word when my rope broke and the sally disintegrated! Thank you both for your patient kindness.

These early days for Linda and me have been very successful from our point of view. Our confidence is building as we learn new skills and we consolidate our progress due to the structured way that Sandra and Colin impart new knowledge and introduce new exercises, and we are confident that we shall reach the dizzy heights of the bottom rung on the ladder of progress. But it must be said, our Teachers are a ringing success!

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By Jim Johnson, a ringer at  
Thorpe on the Hill, Lincolnshire

“ I set about looking for  
new challenges”



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The church of St Michael at  
Thorpe on the Hill.

“ Not even a cross word  
when my rope broke and  
the sally disintegrated!”

“ Our Teachers are a  
ringing success!”



# Let's Get Social

Do you like chatting about ringing? If so, you might enjoy the company of other ringers worldwide, in the various bell ringing facebook groups.

There are many such groups but one has been set up specially for you. (Yes, YOU!!)

There is a Learning the Ropes facebook group which is only for new ringers learning to ring and being taught by teachers who have been trained to use the Learning the Ropes scheme. It's there for you to chat, moan, ask, sympathise, share, advise and generally get to know others who will be struggling with the same problems you might have or might have overcome. You can even moan about your teacher if you like, because they are not allowed in!!! (Not that you would have anything to moan about, of course ... !!!)

Why not join and give it a go? It's at [facebook.com/groups/learningtheropes](https://facebook.com/groups/learningtheropes).

There are other facebook groups for bell ringers, too. You may find there is one for your local area you could join. If you want a national group for all ringers, I'd recommend one called Bell Ringing, which you will find at [facebook.com/groups/2222006287](https://facebook.com/groups/2222006287). (It is described as 'gentle'; some of the others get a bit boisterous or technical at times.) Why not search for ringing groups and see what you can find?

Twitter is slightly less good for new ringers because it is less chatty and often will be incomprehensible until you know lots about ringing and loads of ringers. Give it a try, though, if you are on Twitter. Once you find one bell ringing tweeter, you find loads.

There are a number of email lists which many people join - and leave if they wish! Ringing-Chat is one which can be found at [lists.ringingworld.co.uk/mailman/listinfo/ringing-chat](https://lists.ringingworld.co.uk/mailman/listinfo/ringing-chat). Topics range very widely and can get very involved. Some more of interest than others, to most people.

One site which lists all these and much more is [ringing.info](https://ringing.info) - the link will take you directly to the 'People, Places, Communication' section of the page. That site is worth bookmarking and exploring, as there is so much to find, all in one place.

By Chris de Cordova, ringing  
Teacher at Whitehaven, Cumbria



Learning  
the Ropes

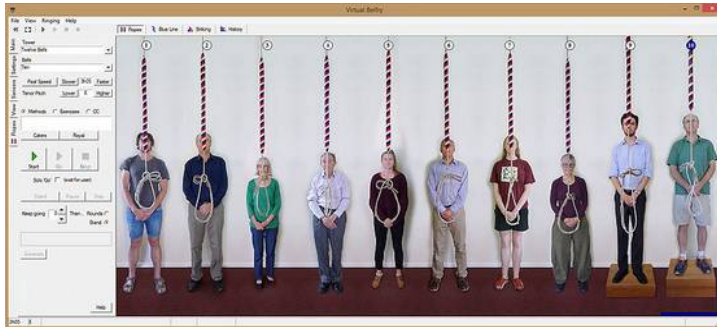


And to close, here is a photo from one of our favourite recent postings on facebook. It was posted by Nikki Thomas, a ringer at South Walsham, Norfolk, at a recent ringers' tea, with the question, "Now, honestly, why would you not want to become a bell ringer?"

# Simulators - the Key to Success?

When you are new to ringing there are many skills that you need to master in order to move on to method ringing. Of course, you can only practise bell control on the end of a rope, but simulators are a useful tool to help improve your listening skills, develop ropesight and rhythm. Simulator software is available for use on PCs, laptops and tablets, as well as smart-phones. Not only can you use the applications in a tower with a sensor connected to a bell, but you can also use them out of the tower to practise your skills at any time.

By Roger Booth, a Tutor at the Docklands Ringing Centre



Virtual belfry main screen

There are four programs you can use, and I have summarised their features in the table, below.

All have a feature where you press a key to make one of the bells sound, and the computer rings the other bells. You can choose how many bells will be ringing - usually it's best to start with what you're already familiar with. If you are completely new to this, it might be easiest if you ring the tenor which probably gives you the best chance of picking out the sound of that bell. As you get used to it, you can try other bells and see if you can pick out your

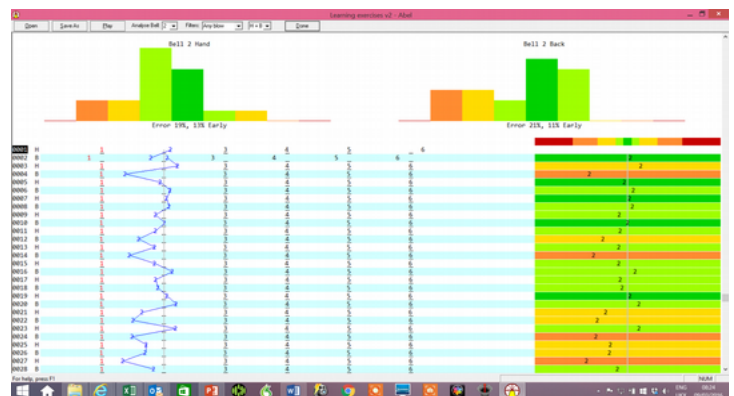
bell to hear how accurate your striking is. Most of the software packages have the ability to show the results graphically afterwards. Some even show the results graphically as you ring each row.

Many new ringers also find adjusting to the speed of ringing is challenging. However, most of the applications allow you to slow the ringing right down, and as you improve you can speed the ringing up. Another way is to start by counting along on three and four bells first, and then gradually increasing the number of bells.

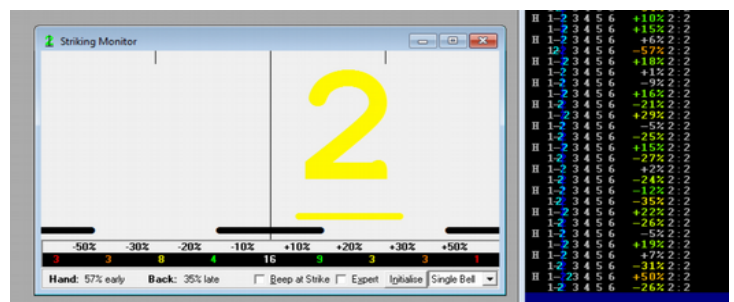
When ringing with real ringers in the tower they will often wait for you, but computers will carry on regardless. However, Beltower also includes the Cooperative Timing feature where the computer can wait until you have pressed your key before ringing the other bells. There is also a Cooperative Speed feature which will dynamically change the speed of the other bells to fit with the ringer

Besides the graphic displays which can be viewed afterwards to see well how well you have done, Abel and Beltower also include the facility to record your ringing and to play it back afterwards. Abel does this as it generates the graphic display and it is quite a powerful feature to help you understand how accurately you have rung. Beltower has a window to provide feedback as you ring and there is also a graphic display when you play back.

The packages also include accuracy statistics, so that you can measure how your accuracy improves over time. There are usually two statistics. One measures the overall error at each stroke. This can be useful in a tower situation to tell whether you are consistently quick on one stroke or another. As errors can be positive and negative and cancel each other out, a second statistic - 'average error' or 'standard deviation' - is usually provided, which measures how variable the striking is overall.



Striking graphic in Abel



Striking window in Beltower

Simulators are very useful in the early stages of ringing as you don't need a band of experienced ringers around you to practise ringing rounds. A mixture of ringing with real people and practice on a simulator is an ideal combination to get you up and running quickly. You can perfect your rounds and leading with an open handstroke lead without feeling self-conscious of making mistakes.

You can then move on to practising call changes. At home or on your smart-phone you can use the software to help understand the theory, and in the tower, with an instructor, you can reinforce what you have learnt by practising the technique required to change speed to move either up or down a place at handstroke. Kaleidoscope exercises then allow you to practise changing at backstroke as well, and increasing the frequency of the changes. These exercises are pre-programmed into some of the packages, as are most of the exercises for Learning the Ropes Levels 2 to 5.

All of the packages have video clips of moving ringers, so that when ringing a bell with a sensor you can practise your ropesight. Virtual Belfry also includes ropesight flashes to help you spot which bell you should be following. Beltower has a feature where ringers' faces wink at you, as you may see in real life.

All of the packages have huge amounts of functionality which allows you to practise many things, but the key features which newer ringers will be interested in are summarised below:

Feature	Abel	Beltower	Beltutor	Virtual Belfry
Press a key	'J' key	Any	Any	Space
Slow ringing down	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cooperative timing	✗	✓	✓	✗
Record & play back	✓	✓	✓	✗
Graphic review of striking	✓	✓	✓	✓
Listening challenge quiz	✗	✓	✓	✗
Accuracy statistics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Moving ringers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ropesight flashes/winks	✗	✓	✓	✓
Call changes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kaleidoscope	✓	✓	✓	✗
Other LtR exercises	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cost	£20.00	£30.00	£2.50	£39.95

There are over 350 simulator installations in towers up and down the country, so there should be a tower near you which has one. However, many people have not been trained to operate them, and as a result they are not used as frequently as they could be. The Association of Ringing Teachers has therefore developed a half day Simulator Awareness Workshop to give teachers a better understanding of the key features. If there are people in your area who might benefit from this course, please ask them to contact the ART administrator ([admin@ringingteachers.org](mailto:admin@ringingteachers.org)).

In addition, there is a series of YouTube videos to help people understand the key features, and help you use the software at home:

Abel to practice striking: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hhpvAJDOcY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hhpvAJDOcY)

Virtual belfry ropesight flashes: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZY23ckXwn4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZY23ckXwn4)

For further details and to purchase the software, visit the following websites:

Abel: [www.abelsim.co.uk](http://www.abelsim.co.uk)

Beltower/Beltutor: [www.beltower.co.uk](http://www.beltower.co.uk)

Virtual Belfry: [www.belfryware.com](http://www.belfryware.com)

If you have an Apple device which runs iOS, there is a version of Abel for it called Mobil. It is available for £5.95 and you can find it in the Apple Store.

# Here, There, and Everywhere: The joys of visiting other towers

Inspired by a dear friend of mine who has been a ringer for many years, I decided to start bell ringing two years ago. With much encouragement, and a lot of time spent on techniques and bell control, ringing rounds and call changes I have slowly made progress and have achieved level two in Learning the Ropes and I'm now ringing for weddings and feeling part of my local band. In addition, and thanks to my ringing friend's interest in visiting as many towers as possible, I have also managed to achieve something I never thought I'd be good enough to do, which is to ring further afield in other towers near and far.

For a new ringer, going to a different tower can be very daunting and I have certainly felt that way! But now I have been going out and about more and more and it has improved my confidence and my understanding so much. I have now rung in 54 different towers, all over the country, including Somerset, Northern Ireland and London. I have learnt that bells can handle very differently in different towers, and every bell is different. One tower I visited in Northern Ireland, Bangor, was one of my favourites because of the easy way the bells went, and I felt very comfortable there. I have also felt the opposite - there are one or two towers where I felt one visit was probably enough!

Since I have been visiting here, there and everywhere, I have had to confront a some of my fears, such as high spiral staircases, long draughts and ladders and balconies. My desire to ring is far greater than my fear, so I have overcome these worries. I have also met lots of other ringers and many of them have offered me encouragement and advice which I wouldn't have had if I hadn't been brave enough to explore the world beyond my home tower. I now can't wait to go on the next ringing tour!

Here I am pictured with the remains of a bell at Stoke Ash, Suffolk. Just the Crown and clapper remain. My friend suggested the caption 'It wasn't me, honest!'.

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By Sara Bullock,  
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## Fascinating Fact

As we have described a visit to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, we thought these facts about Big Ben, which was cast at Whitechapel, would be suitably fascinating!

The name Big Ben is often used to describe the tower, clock and bell, but the name was first given to the Great Bell, cast in April 1858.

The Elizabeth Tower, which stands at the north end of the Houses of Parliament, was completed in 1859. The Great Clock started on 31 May, with the Great Bell's strikes heard for the first time on 11 July and the quarter bells first chimed on 7 September, all in 1859.