

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning™
the Ropes

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

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BIRMINGHAM
SCHOOL OF
BELL
RINGING
FOUNDED 2013

Did you know there was a School of Bell Ringing? Founded in 2013 by ringers in Birmingham who wanted to offer high quality teaching across the city, this is an inspiring success story which has awarded over 100 Learning the Ropes certificates and has had a positive effect on ringing in the Birmingham area. In this issue of Tower Talk we meet some of the School's founders, teachers and students, all of whom have contributed in some way to making this innovative approach really work for the benefit of everyone. To seal their success, the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing won an award last year for innovation in recruitment or retention. Well done Birmingham and here's to the next 100 LtR certificates!

In the last edition of Tower Talk, I asked for your stories about your ringing journey - and I'm delighted to include a contribution from a ringer in Devon who has done exactly that! Thank you John Waite! And we also have a 'Learning to Ring' diary from new ringer Karen Adamson in Maldon, Australia. Hopefully we will share her highs - and perhaps the occasional low - over the coming months.

Our Learning Tip addresses the tricky issue of odd-struckness, while our roaming ringers this time are the Marsworth band from Buckinghamshire who had a 'Grand Day Out' in Bedfordshire. There's plenty more to read about in here as well, but I don't want to give it all away on page one!

Next time I hope we can include some of your stories about ringing for Christmas and New Year - please post on the LtR page on Facebook [[facebook.com/groups/learningtheropes](https://www.facebook.com/groups/learningtheropes)] or email me.

50/50 Club Draw News

The September draw for the 50/50 Club was made during the Tulloch Teaching Week at the new Tulloch Ringing Centre in the highlands of Scotland. *[If you want to know more about Tulloch, have a look at Tower Talk no.3 which features some of the exciting things going on there.]*

This time the lucky prizewinners were Sally Nicols of Cockermouth, Cumbria, who won £62, and Diane Biggs from Devizes, Wiltshire, and Bob Purnell from Melksham, Wiltshire, who each won £31. Congratulations to all and thanks to everyone who has joined the Club!

Have you joined yet? It's open to everyone who is registered on SmART Ringer (that's everyone who is on the Learning the Ropes scheme). All you have to do is make contact with the Club Organiser, Chris de Cordova (35 Thornton Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 6UW or email 5050club@learningtheropes.org) OR download a form from www.learningtheropes.org/5050club.

It costs only £12 for an annual subscription and all the money collected is divided equally between prize money and essential funding for running Learning the Ropes. The more people who join, the bigger the cash pot for prizes! We have several thousand people registered on SmART Ringer, but nowhere near that number in the Club, so please join!

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



“ The more people who join, the bigger the cash pot for prizes!”

Recent Successes

In the third quarter of 2017, 212 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	123 (70)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	58 (37)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	18 (17)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	8 (14)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	5 (5)



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/.

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.

A Golden Opportunity



Image credit: Network Rail

Did you know that when you pass your Level 5 in Learning the Ropes, you are automatically invited to take part in a unique Masterclass held every September in Birmingham? This is a golden opportunity to ring with and learn from some of the most inspirational ringers in the country, in towers steeped in ringing history. It's an opportunity which could only have been dreamed of a few years ago but thanks to the Association of Ringing Teachers and the LtR scheme, it's a real chance for any Level 5 achievers to experience a day they will never forget.

Organiser Stephanie Warboys says:

"I am really looking forward to the 2017 Masterclass in Birmingham. Ten of the 20 students who reached LtR Level 5 during 2016 have enrolled. We will build on the firm foundations that participants have established locally to Level 5, and will tailor their Masterclass experience to build confidence and provide practice opportunities that are not readily available elsewhere, giving them a taste of Birmingham's very unique ringing history, culture and philosophy. The emphasis is on quality of ringing, rather than method advancement for its own sake."

Here is the feedback from one of the 2016 Students, Rosie Storrar:

"My personal achievement was learning Stedman Doubles, and going on to also ring Stedman Triples, something which I had not anticipated doing at the start of the day. This shows I think how much can be achieved when given the opportunity to ring with such an experienced band and focus on something of your own choosing. I was also offered a number of tips to help improve my ringing technique, which I will be practising now."

If you want to know what it might be like to take part in a Masterclass, you can read about the experiences of Rosie, one of the participants from last year's Masterclass in Tower Talk no.2, available online at the Learning the Ropes website. Or if you have specific questions, you can contact Stephanie and the ART team directly at artawards@ringingteachers.org.

And look out for the January edition of Tower Talk where we will be featuring a report from the 2017 Masterclass.

The Story of The School

It all began because of an imbalance in Birmingham between people wanting to learn to ring and teachers who were either inundated with learners or not teaching at all.

My tower was one of the lucky ones, with lots of learners. But I didn't feel lucky - we had 15 learners, as well as around 15 other experienced ringers, so that was a lot of people cramming up the tower. I used to go home every week feeling despondent, knowing that people were not getting a good experience of learning to ring and that it was unsustainable. At the other end of the spectrum I knew that there were some good teachers out there, but their towers just weren't attracting learners.

In the wider Birmingham area, served by the St Martin's Guild, we realised that towers were struggling to teach people well. Ringers were not making progress and there were poor standards at basic levels. There was a huge divide between the expert ringers in the city centre and the grass roots ringers at the suburban towers.

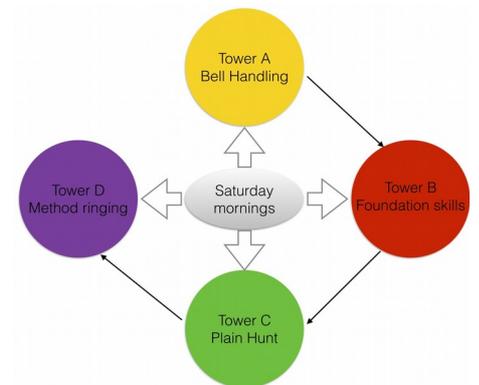
We came up with the idea of centralising all the resources available, and using the Learning the Ropes teaching programme to offer a high quality, consistent and enjoyable route for people to learn to ring. The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing was born!

This is how it works:

- Four towers run every Saturday morning following the LtR programme;
- Sessions are concurrent and don't clash with other tower practices;
- Group sizes are limited to ensure focused teaching sessions with progression built in;
- An experienced tutor runs each session with five experienced helpers to ensure a strong band around each student;
- Students progress from one tower to the next at their own pace, moving up at appropriate points in the programme.

We took the decision to charge students, so the weekly fee is £5 with a concessionary rate of £3. We wanted people to value the training and show commitment, and we wanted those delivering the training to be committed too. In addition we need to cover costs!

By Clare McArdle, one of the founders of the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing



Does it work?

Yes!

The table shows our recruitment and retention figures since the School opened in September 2013. (Figures include students currently working towards each level.)

August 2017	Students starting	Students finishing	% finishing
Level 1	59	46	78
Level 2	39	26	67
Level 3	30	17	57
Level 4	16	9	56
Level 5	9	5	56

What have we achieved?

Students have benefited from skilled teaching with support from skilled helpers, but more than anything from peer support. Our Facebook page has regular posts of congratulation and support from the students. From the start, friendships developed between students from different towers, and often they visit each others' practices.

Helpers have benefited by giving something back. Not only that, they are taking skills and ideas back to their own towers. Exposure to good teaching is good too. Quite a few of our helpers have told us that they feel their own ringing has improved.

Tutors have benefited from sharing the load. Practice makes perfect. Teaching on a regular basis really makes a difference to your skills because of the different challenges that different individuals present.

It hasn't all been plain sailing ... and we have had to modify what we offer so we now have a three-week tower rotation plan. The bell-handling tower runs every week and the other three towers run two weeks out of every three. And it works.

The plan included using the more advanced students as helpers in the Level 1 and 2 groups. This has worked, and has had spin-off benefits. It builds confidence, inspires other students, promotes peer support and helps the School. The students think it's great and get a lot out of helping. For those that have graduated and stayed on as helpers they get hours of consolidated practice at those basic methods that are the building blocks for progression.

And they have other talents. Just because someone is a tutor doesn't mean they will remember to bring milk for coffee every week, or notice that supplies are running low, or remember to take money for sessions. But some of the students will ...

Students are our future

They are the helpers, tutors and Tower Captains of the future. It's happening already. All five of our graduates have returned as helpers. Three students have gone on to join the ART Training Scheme and have attended ART day courses. Three of our students have been taught bell handling by students who have graduated from the school. (*See [It Started with a Tweet!](#) on page 8, below.*)

We are lucky to be based in an area of high population density with lots of towers close together. We know it's very different in more isolated or rural areas, but what we have learnt will work for everyone in every area. Working together creates a great social network and improves local ringing.

“ Students have benefited ... more than anything from peer support.”

“ friendships developed between students from different towers, and often they visit each others' practices”



Four happy BSoBR ringers with their Ltr Level 2 certificates.

“ Working together creates a great social network and improves local ringing.”

Exceeding All Expectations

I ventured into the world of campanology relatively late in life when, at the age of 40, I was persuaded to go along to the practice night of the Castle Bromwich Bell Ringers. I was introduced to the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing five months later and, over the past two years, the School has helped me immensely to progress and achieve my personal goals.

The Level 1 programme was invaluable in instilling in me the importance of correct bell handling. During this time I developed the skills of ringing up and down, and recognised that skilful bell control is essential if one is to strike and ring methods effectively. Upon graduation from St Paul's, I felt confident that I could manage my own bell and eventually reached the milestone of not requiring someone to stand next to me at all times!

The next step was a move to Handsworth, where I began to learn the art of ringing evenly-struck rounds and on to call changes. This led to the fulfilment of one of my ambitions: to be able to ring at Christmas. I joined the Castle Bromwich Bell Ringers on Christmas Eve 2016, and began to feel like a full member of the band and someone who had progressed beyond the 'new learner' stage.

It has, however, been my attendance at the Harborne tower where I feel that I have made the most rapid progress. After weeks spent attempting to learn the numerical combinations of Plain Hunt on five bells, the Level 3 course has taught me to think differently and thereby gain a deeper understanding of Plain Hunt. Admittedly, I found the first few weeks tough, and faced obstacles such as failing to alter my ringing speed and needing to develop my rope sight. Nevertheless, I persevered, and after each session I left the tower having learnt something new from the encouraging tutors. Once I had grasped the concept of counting places, ringing Plain Hunt on five suddenly became more straightforward. This new-found understanding has now enabled me to feel confident about ringing the treble to both Grandsire and Plain Bob Doubles. Rather than feeling nervous and apprehensive, I am now looking forward to the challenge of ringing my first Quarter Peal.

So, what has my involvement with the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing brought me? An excellent grounding in bell handling, a deeper insight into method ringing, and the opportunity to meet and collaborate with some highly skilled ringers. However, and more importantly, the School has shown me that, with perseverance, you can exceed your expectations. I am looking ahead with a sense of optimism, and very much hope to progress to Level 4 in the near future.

By Emma Clewlow, Birmingham
School of Bell Ringing



Emma receiving her LtR Level 2
certificate from Arthur Reeves of
BSoBR

“ Once I had grasped the concept of counting places, ringing Plain Hunt on five suddenly became more straightforward.”

“ the School has shown me that, with perseverance, you can exceed your expectations”

Bell Ringing School Hits the Right Note for Christine

When I retired from bassoon playing, I thought it was the perfect time to take up bell ringing. A friend recommended a tower and along I went every week. Everyone was friendly and helpful but I soon realised my old brain needed more time than a short weekly practice could provide. I thought “by the time I get the hang of this I’ll be too decrepit to climb the stairs”. With regret, I gave up.

Six months later the same friend casually mentioned that a School of Bell Ringing had started in Birmingham, where I live. One Saturday morning I found myself waiting nervously outside St. Paul’s church with a group of other learners. This was the first of the four towers which take students through the Learning the Ropes scheme. Bell handling was the first stage. This way of learning suited me much better this time around because there was one-to-one tuition by expert ringers and plenty of opportunities to practise within the two hour session. The camaraderie of being in a group of fellow students, all at a similar stage of learning, was very important for me. It helped me to feel less nervous. There’s nothing like a good whinge in the tea break to make everyone feel better about their particular problems.

After a few months I started to attend the weekly practice at my local tower in Harborne. I soon realised that many towers in Birmingham have teams whose members are involved with the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, and so I could easily put what I had learnt in the School into practice. Clare McArdle, the tower captain at Harborne, was instrumental in the founding of BSoBR.

It took me two years to work through the school programme which included six quarter peals. There were quite a few times I thought I wouldn’t make it. It was the commitment, patience, good humour and cajoling of the many tutors, helpers and fellow students which got me through.

Now I ring regularly at three towers and I am a helper at BSoBR, which is just as much a help to me as to the students.

By Christine Barnell,
ringer from Harborne

“ The camaraderie of being in a group of fellow students, all at a similar stage of learning, was very important for me. It helped me to feel less nervous.”



Christine (left, holding her graduation certificate) with Clare McArdle

It Started with a Tweet!

A tweet asking why my local tower's bells were never rung started me and my husband Tim on a journey to restarting the ringing there, with Tim as Tower Captain and working towards becoming an ART accredited Teacher, all with absolutely no prior experience!

While investigating the training of ringers, up popped the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing (BSoBR). Tim and I signed up, thinking that perhaps this could be a fun new hobby, as well as addressing our more serious long term aim to support St Michael and All Angels in Brierley Hill, Birmingham.

Quick as a flash we were up the tower at St Paul's in the Jewellery Quarter, firstly in front of a model bell and then a tutor who explained some bewildering stuff about tail ends and sallies. I'd like to say I caught on really quickly, but it was rather a nervous start.

Our Saturday mornings became bell ringing. In mid-week we went to Old Church, Smethwick, for practice, and we still ring there now.

Through the School we became members of St Martin's Guild of Ringers and also the Worcester & Districts Change Ringing Association. We went on outings, attended monthly practice nights and visited other towers. We went on St Martin's Adult Learning Experiences (ALEs), tower tours, walking tours and then just did some visiting on our own. This widened our network of ringers, in addition to challenging us as learners. We rang at weddings and events, which was invaluable experience. Participating in and supporting both Guild and Association events has become very important to us, helping us to build supportive networks.

All this was helping us to be ready to to make a difference at St Michael's. We have an excellent relationship with the church and they are, and always have been, very supportive. In September 2016 we were offered the tower keys! Ready or not, we embarked on running the tower.

We didn't have a band but we had a lot of friends and goodwill. A valuable piece of advice gave me pause for thought: "decide what sort of tower you want to be". So, in choosing Friday as our practice night, we went for 'a ring and a beer' approach (as the area is famous for Batham's beer, brewed on our patch).

We used Facebook and email to invite ringers. We bought a noticeboard, stocked up on chocolates, booked a tower inspection with Taylor's, and spring-cleaned the tower. I should say at this point that the church has an amazing history of ringing under Clifford Skidmore. We value that heritage and hope eventually to restore some of the older peal boards. By the same token, though, we knew we couldn't dwell on the past but must make a fresh start.

We opened the door to a flood of support. Fortunately our School tutors had planned ahead and I had been afforded some experience in running a practice. Despite this, it remained daunting to be politely running a practice for very, very experienced ringers.

By Jenny Sunter,
St Michael and All Angels,
Brierley Hill, Birmingham



The tweet that started it all



The church of St Michael and All
Angels, Brierley Hill, Birmingham

We progressed through the School. Tim completed Level 5 this January and then started on the ART Training Scheme. Tim's ability to teach new ringers enabled us to welcome brand new ringers to the tower.

Although we have shamelessly been relying on friends (especially to ring for our special events) we have gradually been collecting new ringers. Nothing reaches these better than the sound of the bells. We have received great feedback through social media. We recruited our first new ringer because she heard the bells and was able to contact us on our designated email, just at the point when Tim was ready to teach. In close succession we had another starter from the community who already knew Tim, my son (a returner from uni') has started to ring (with very little persuasion), and we have collected another friend. Three out of four new ringers are attending the BSoBR. We have funded the first term's tuition for our new ringers through some wedding fees and a recently emptied piggy bank! The School is crucial in providing intensive tuition to accelerate new ringers both in skill and confidence.

Just as we were getting into our stride, the summer heatwave caused the nylon clapper bushes to swell. I had no idea! We had a wedding scheduled and practically immovable clappers! Fortunately the weather cooled just enough to ring for the wedding, but we knew we had to take action. Luckily Taylor's had done a tower inspection, so they knew what to do and we had money in the tower fund. Along with Simon Adams from Taylor's, I have spent more time standing on the bell frame than I ever anticipated. I might not know much but I have managed to oil the dinglers, swept up a disgusting layer of detritus from underneath the bells, and generally got in the way with a giant spanner.

In July the clappers were sorted. If I said this to anyone other than a member of the ringing world I'd be thought at best eccentric, at worst suggestive! Good job you'll know how relieved we are to get our own bells back up and running after a hiatus of about six weeks? However, while the clappers were out of action we were not. We went to other towers, which everyone seemed to enjoy.

Practices are settling down with much emphasis on getting the newest ringers into rounds and call changes and having a core band in place. The ringing itself still seems to be speaking the loudest. We haven't advertised in any other way, but we probably will soon.

We are open for business, come visit us when you can!

Post Script

Last week a combination of holidays, work commitments and traffic jams left us short of our fantastic experienced ringers. But for the first time we had enough local ringers ourselves to run a practice. It was a special moment for us and an important step.

Interestingly, of the seven people at the practice, six were graduates or students of the BSoBR. The seventh was taught by a graduate of BSoBR. If ever evidence was needed of the difference the School is making, surely this was it.



Tim Sunter, graduate of BSoBR and Tower Captain of St Michael's Brierley Hill, presents an LTR Level 1 certificate to his first student, Shona Gilsenan. A wonderful achievement for both of them!

“ while the clappers were out of action we ... went to other towers”

“ for the first time we had enough local ringers ... to run a practice”

A New Approach to an Old Problem

Arguably the most important role of a Guild Ringing Master is the recruitment and retention of new ringers; without argument, it also must be the most challenging!

Recently there has been a shift in focus within the St Martin's Guild towards the recruitment, retention and training of ringers, rather than the historic emphasis on bell restoration. Consequently we have adopted one simple shared aim: to train enough ringers to ring every one of the 300 or so bells within the Guild's area.

We have tried many different approaches over the years. Despite everything, we could not seem to get real buy-in from any of the groups we targeted with courses, publicity campaigns and even a summer camp.

The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing is different. I don't think I'm wrong in saying that a few of us were not entirely sure it would work. But we are four years in, it has doubled in size, and we have a waiting list for places.

The School is both independent of the Guild and intrinsically a part of it. On the one hand, it is a separate entity, though current Guild Officers play very active roles within it. But the School has become such an integral part of the Guild I could not imagine the St Martin's Guild being able to properly function and meet its aims without it.

The School works because it neatly fits within an established routine. Tutors and volunteers know that Saturday mornings are "school time". Graduates of the school now volunteer and some have trained as tutors themselves.

The Learning the Ropes scheme, which all tutors consistently follow, provides clear progression for learners. Furthermore, tutors are given additional and regular training, with opportunities to discuss teaching strategies they find effective. We thus find the support networks between tutors and students, and between the students themselves, are well established. Students want to support one another and encourage each other on to make progress. And perhaps most importantly, the two hour focus on specific teaching skills, crafted specifically to meet those students' needs each week, mean that progress is incredibly quick for students: gains are made almost without exception rapidly.

The Guild has existed since 1755, the BSoBR since 2013. Yet Birmingham hasn't been the same since the school was introduced, and we couldn't imagine the Guild flourishing and progressing without it.

By Arthur Reeves, St Martin's
Guild Ringing Master and Teacher
at BSoBR



A happy BSoBR graduate

“Tutors and volunteers know that Saturday mornings are ‘school time’.”

“Students want to support one another and encourage each other on to make progress.”

Quirky Foibles

Ringling is a fabulous hobby. Not only does it provide you with a great social circle but it keeps your brain cells on their toes and can even be fairly entertaining. We are all different, and thus people's ringing styles come in a suitable range of weird, wacky and wonderful. So every now and then why not take a good look around the ringing chamber? Even if you are new to ringing and can't follow the method being rung, just watching other ringers can teach you a lot, and can even put a smile on your face. I have been a ringer now for 10 years and over that time I have observed several categories of ringer. Here goes ...

The Nodders: These ringers nod their head, to varying degrees, as a way of keeping their rhythm. The first time I rang with a 'nodder' I thought they were approving of my striking until I realised that it was a constant occurrence. What a disappointment!

The Dancers: My favourite! These ringers appear to be having a wonderful time. My father falls in this category and there seems to be a correlation between his dancing and how much he's enjoying the ringing; however, for others I suspect this is also a way of keeping their rhythm.

The Chewers and the Mutterers keep a rhythm using their mouths, either by muttering numbers under their breath or wiggling their jaw from side to side. Could this be a throwback to counting their places out loud while learning?

The Worriers are ringers whose intense concentration shows clearly on their faces. Disconcertingly, they always look like they are about to (or already have) gone wrong, although I'm sure none of us look the way we think we do when we are ringing.

"Don't look up!" We've all heard this refrain many times when learning, but despite constant instructions to the contrary, some ringers still continue to look up. Maybe they find it easier (or indeed less unpleasant) to look at the tops of the sallies rather than the ringers, but they do risk slow backstrokes as a result.

The Sleepers: Not actually asleep of course, they just appear that way. They constantly stare at the floor refusing to make eye contact, unless they think someone needs help. Then they wake suddenly for a confirmatory eyebrow lift, to then return to their own world and that apparently fascinating section of carpet just in front of them.

Finally, **the Tutterers** will make disapproving noises or grimace as a self-defence mechanism. I'm one of these! Frequently my grimaces try to say "I know I can do better" or more often "I know I just dropped a backstroke, I promise I didn't do it on purpose!"

So let us embrace our wonderfully quirky foibles - after all, they are what make us individuals and you could be putting a smile on somebody's face without even knowing it.

By Lucy Williamson, a ringer from Ipswich who is also a student at York University and an enthusiastic member of York Colleges Guild

“ there seems to be a correlation between his dancing and how much he's enjoying the ringing”



“ they ... return to their own world and that apparently fascinating section of carpet just in front of them.”

We've No bells!

The bells of St. Margaret's, Ipswich are being refurbished. With no bells to ring, but with some new and enthusiastic ringers in the band, we seemed to have a problem on our hands. How could we keep our band together and still maintain our teaching programme using the Learning the Ropes scheme? Traditionally, we would solicit the help of neighbouring bands and visit their practices, but that would mean suspending our teaching programme. We decided to turn the problem to our ringers' advantage by offering them the chance to develop their listening skills and ropesight – something which is not easy to achieve on a regular practice night.

So to start with, we ordered the Whiting Society's book/DVD *Come on! Listen to It!* from the ART shop (www.ringingteachers.org/-resource-centre/shop). Once received, a cursory glance suggested that they would be eminently suitable for our needs and relatively straightforward to use. How wrong we were! The material is excellent, but using it to teach a band in group sessions as opposed to individual tuition is rather more complicated. All our teaching skills learnt from ART were needed! A very careful teaching approach was adopted and this often involved quite a lot of exercises being repeated several times. Hand bells were used to give variety to the teaching and to foster a sense of rhythm which is essential to good ringing. Similarly, supplementary exercises were developed to enhance the "hand sight" exercises of the DVD. These involved individual ringers simulating ringing with arm movements for hand and back strokes. Initially this was regarded as a "comic act" and caused much amusement [shouldn't ringing be fun?] but later deemed very useful.

So how was it for the ringers? In reality, the first couple of weeks were 'tolerated' by the band – they were a bit bemused by the new approach. However, as the weeks progressed they became more familiar with the material and their enthusiasm increased. In parallel, each band member began to find success – those who said they could never "hear my bell" or "see who's leading" were becoming able to do just such things, and more.

The newest member of the band, Carrie, who hasn't touched a rope yet, said:

I have been learning about bell ringing using the DVD for two months and it is proving to be an amazing experience. I am learning to watch the ropes and become familiar with many aspects of ringing which will help me enormously when I am actually ringing in the tower, and it is something I look forward to immensely. Prior to joining the ringing classes I had never been to anything like this before but I have been welcomed and made to feel so at home. Every Tuesday is a day of excitement with the knowledge there will be ringing practice to come.

By John Girt, Teacher at Ipswich



Studying the DVD



Using handbells as a teaching aid



Moving on to two handbells

Martin learnt to ring many years ago but gave up because he never felt he was properly taught – only shouted at when things went wrong. Second time around, and using Learning the Ropes, he says:

This is a vast improvement on my previous experience, and using the DVD adds another dimension to my learning. Everything is broken down into small steps which is a great way to learn.

The most experienced learner in the band, Carina, writes:

I have been learning now for almost three years. I entered into the fascinating world of bell ringing with no prior experience or understanding of what would be involved. I was to be one of the first ringers to be taught using Learning the Ropes at St Margaret's – and my teachers have adopted it with exuberance and patience. I am now learning to ring inside to Plain Bob Minor and have rung several quarter peals. I am confident that no matter what stage I am at in my ringing, both my tutors and Learning the Ropes will continue to support me.

“ This is a vast improvement on my previous experience”

“ I am confident that no matter what stage I am at in my ringing, both my tutors and Learning the Ropes will continue to support me.”

Australian Diary

G'day from Australia down under!

My name is Karen and I have been fortunate enough to find another passion in my life... Yes, it's bell ringing!

While visiting my best friend in England who is a ringer, I noticed such a spark in her when ringing was mentioned that I felt I needed to investigate further and see what it was all about. I wanted to surprise my friend, so once back home in Maldon in Victoria, I set about finding a teacher.

And here I am writing in this newsletter about my passion for ringing!

I live in a town about two hours outside of Melbourne and opportunities for bell ringing are few and far between. A trip to ring involves a minimum of two hours travelling. But I've found an awesome teacher, and apart from the constant travel I love it. I have just recently achieved my Level 1 which I am really thrilled about.

We have an association here called the Australian and New Zealand Association of Bellringers, which I am now a member of and would love to update everyone with down under happenings. Here's a picture of me with their President, David Smith.

Cheers for now and happy ringing.

By Karen Adamson, Maldon, Australia

“ I have just recently achieved my Level 1 which I am really thrilled about.”



A Grand Day Out: Marsworth Bell Ringers

Sunday 20th August saw the Marsworth bell ringers set off on their fourth annual tower outing to four Bedfordshire churches. After Sunday morning service ringing, eleven of us (some from All Saint's Marsworth, but joined also by our ringing friends who regularly join us for practices and quarter peals) set off in the sunshine for Stanbridge church where we found an easy going ring of 6 bells to ease us nicely into the day's ringing. Those eager eyed amongst us were also pleased to eye up the pub in Stanbridge which was to be our lunch venue later in the day! Ringing at Stanbridge included everything from rounds for one of our very new learners who rang just the backstrokes, to Stedman and Oxford Treble Bob.

Next stop was All Saints, Tilsworth, just down the road, where some of us found we were a bit rusty with London Surprise Minor (more revision needed!) but our newer ringers were more successful with ringing the treble to Grandsire Doubles and ringing inside to St Simons Doubles. The youngest member of the group was pleased he could pull off and ring the light set tenor too.

A delicious lunch was enjoyed at The Five Bells back in Stanbridge, where they had our lunch on the table on our arrival. There was the inevitable sorting out of the bill at the end (why do the numbers never quite add up?!), but then we were off to the ring of six at St Mary Magdalene, Whipsnade, where the tenor weighs just three hundred weight. No-one seemed that keen to ring the treble, but we managed some Cambridge Minor here and could hear the train at Whipsnade Zoo whilst we were ringing.

Last tower of the day was Studham, where we found a font decorated with dragons as well as another very easy to ring peal of six bells. Some of us rang touches of Little Bob here, as well as Plain Hunt minor and more Stedman, the latter of which had got better and better as the day had progressed – ready for touches of this method next then. All in all, a grand day out!

By Ruth Monks, ART accredited teacher at Marsworth and mum to three LtR students.

“The youngest member of the group was pleased he could pull off and ring the light set tenor.”

St Mary Magdalene, Whipsnade (below)



Eight Of Us!

If you're lucky, you have a dedicated teacher all to yourself. But for a couple of teachers in Devon, they found they had eight new recruits all at once! This is their story.

John Waite - new ringer

The bells in Cadbury were last rung in the 1960s as far as I can remember. Two of our bells are over 500 years old and they are full of character – and not the easiest to handle! My dad was one of the ringers and I always wanted to learn to ring the bells. I have been living in Australia but I used to oil and grease the bells when I was back here on my trips to see my Mum over the last 30 years. As an aside, I have now rung with the ringers of the Swan Bells in Perth, Western Australia, where they have a peal of 16(+2) as you may know – the back 12 from St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, given to WA by the Queen. To put it mildly I was nervous, but they were very welcoming and to the untrained ear sounded perfect as we approached the tower from the landing stage of the Swan river ferry.

So, a group of eight friends all started about four years ago and most of us are still ringing every Tuesday evening, although one of our members rings at Stoke Canon as Tuesday evenings aren't so convenient for her, though she still makes a guest appearance with us on important days. Our teacher Lynette from Cowley, Exeter, wanted to teach a couple of beginners but ended up with eight of us, so she enlisted the help of Lynne from Dawlish. At that time we all were happily unaware of the difficulties that lay ahead for us and our teachers !!! It was very hard for us all to be learning together, with everyone throwing each other out of time, trying to all slow down while one of us caught up. No wonder the husband of one of our members, who lives beside the Church, asked (rather unkindly we thought) for "the best pair of ear defenders money can buy" for Christmas! I did make the error of going outside once during our practice and I have to admit it was an unpleasant racket! However, after a lot of patient teaching we are now vastly better and our friends in the village speak to us again.

So, wishing all bell ringers all the best from the band of eight in Cadbury.

Lynne Hughes - teacher

It was in April 2013 that ART teacher Lynette Costello asked if anyone in Cadbury was interested in forming a new band, and unexpectedly found herself with eight recruits. I have been told this was about 10% of the population of this small Devon village! Lynette asked me to help her with the task, and there followed a very happy and rewarding six months of teaching bell handling and rounds. The initial teaching took place at Thorverton, as Cadbury bells were very difficult indeed. As the recruits progressed to rounds they tackled their own bells in Cadbury, and after six months all could ring individual bells up and down safely, so Lynette took over the teaching on her own, and I no longer had to do the 40 mile round trip from Dawlish in the winter months. Gordon Leigh has since become tower captain, and the band continues. I am still impressed they all passed their LtR Level 1 in that initial time, and most their Level 2 not too long after. I still keep in touch with the band, who have had summer outings to Dawlish for a go on our bells, preceded by fish and chips on the sea front!

[New Cadbury Learners:
First Practice at Thorverton](#)

[L to R standing: Gordon Leigh,
Jacqui Channon, Roger Gowing, Alice,
Andrew Green, Libby Price, Malcolm Price;
and kneeling: John Waite.](#)



Learning Tips No.5: Odd One IN!

Why is it that some bells are harder to strike well than others? It is probably because they are odd-struck.

So, what is odd-struckness?

'a different delay between handstroke and backstroke of the same bell'. (From the Ringing World 5/11/2004).

This could happen for a variety of mechanical reasons – rarely are the bells we ring all part of a perfect set! Sometimes the odd-struckness is very pronounced and ringing needs to be adjusted to compensate for this.

The effect of odd-struckness is that you need to leave either bigger or smaller visual gaps. The bell you are ringing could be odd struck at either handstroke or backstroke – or both, and the odd-struckness could mean the bell is either quick or slow at either of the strokes. The situation can be compounded if the bell that you are following is also odd-struck. If you always ring the same bell, you may get used to how you need to ring to strike in the right place. However, when asked to ring a different bell or if visiting a different tower, how can you sort out the odd-struck bells?

Here are some tips:

- Listen to any advice that you are given before you catch hold.
 - This will particularly be the case if the bell is notoriously odd-struck.
- Listen out before you ring to see what instructions other people are being given.
 - If someone else is being told continually to “keep their back-strokes in”, then there is clearly an issue and you can learn from this.
- Don't forget that you should be holding up slightly at handstroke on any bell.
 - This is for the handstroke gap. Everyone needs to do this, not just the treble.
- Count your place in the row when you are ringing rounds so that you can identify the sound your bell is making.
- Are the gaps between your bell and the ones before and after the same? If not, is it because you are ringing too soon or too late? This can be confusing, as you may be leaving a perfectly nice ‘visual’ gap but to overcome the odd-struckness, you have to leave a much bigger gap, or ring almost at the same time of the bell you are following!
- Having identified that you are not striking your bell evenly, you need to identify how to correct this. Is it the same at both strokes? If it is not the same, the bell you are ringing is probably odd-struck. If you find that you need to hold the handstroke up, you will have to make the opposite alteration to your backstroke and vice versa.
- Sometimes it is useful to NOT look at the bell you are following for a few blows so that you do not get confused by any potential odd-struckness in that bell. This allows you to concentrate on listening.
- It is always fine to ask for advice and help!

By Janet Horton, Teacher at the
Birmingham School of Bell
Ringing

