

What happens after an ART course?

by Lesley Belcher

The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) has run almost 40 day courses this year for 400 delegates, but what happens after the courses? Here are some stories from ringers and teachers about how ART has helped them and their bands progress and enjoy ringing. They are stories posted on our blog or sent in to our ringing magazines (one for ringers and one for teachers). I've had to shorten the articles to fit them in, but hopefully you'll hear the sound of ringing flourishing.



Left to right: Ginette Pardoe and the new band at Broseley; Zoe and Carmen with their specially made chocolate certificates (teacher Sylvie Fawcett is in the middle); Abingdon young ringers; Dominic's winning entry for the 'Eggstravaganza' Easter egg competition

All Saints' Roos is in the enviable position of having a waiting list of children wanting to learn to ring.

It all started with the interest and enthusiasm generated by the augmentation of our bells. Encouraged, I attended an ART Module 1 course and recruited a young guinea pig to practise on. The deal was that I would teach Lloyd to handle a bell and if he decided that ringing was not for him, he didn't have to carry on. Lloyd is now taller than me and is a stalwart Sunday service ringer, along with his brother Isaac.

More learners followed and the local primary school were approached. We took years 5 and 6 to Taylor's to watch the new trebles being cast and the entire school came to the church to see them being hoisted up into the tower – history in the making.

We work hard to maintain and strengthen the links between the school and the church. The young ringers get very excited on school church service days as they come down to the church ahead of their peers to ring the bells as the rest of the school arrives. We ring from an open gallery, so everyone can see the children giving their best.

None of this would be possible without the support of parents, one of whom installed a web cam for us so that visitors can watch 'Bellyvision' on TV downstairs.

The first hour of our practice night is dedicated to the junior band. The day I looked around and realised that our front six were being rung by a band of Roo's under-16s was a moment of great pride.

HELEN AUDLEY
Roos, East Yorkshire

Mini-Ringers Bell Foundry

The Kildwick Mini-Ringers comprise eight children from our local primary school. We do a lot of ringing-related things but can't learn to ring our own bells as they aren't suitable – yet! This term's project has been to cast bells using the traditional process, but in aluminium.



The six cast bells. The two still to be cast show the 'cope' made from flowerpots

It has taken a long time to do. But we now have something to show for it! Quite a lot of parents came to see the casting – and they were volubly impressed. I think that the kids were, too – but they tend to be less voluble.

Last night, a band was born. Last night was the best evening's ringing that I can remember.

At the beginning of April we had no ringers. Just me ringing the Ellacombe chimes. A small, bemused group gathered in response to a lot of leaflets in the village and we've progressed from there.

Last night there were eight of us, joined by a visitor. We started with rounds on four or five. Four of the band took turns to ring while I stood by. Last night, four ringers rang "proper rounds" for the first time. Last night, young Ben rang a bell down for the first time. Last night, we all laughed a lot. Last night we agreed that we'll start Sunday Service ringing. Last night we all saw clearly that we'll shortly be ringing acceptable rounds on six with no external help. Last night, a band was born.

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT
Kildwick, Yorkshire

After completing the *LtR* scheme, Sophie has moved on to ringing on higher numbers. The confidence has now spurred her on to attending service ringing at Birmingham Cathedral.

Sophie started learning to ring during the school summer holidays in 2014. She was enrolled on to the ART *Learning the Ropes* scheme for new ringers and completed it just two years later and has become an integral part of our local band at Harborne.

Since then, achievements have come thick and fast. One of the high points of 2016 came when Sophie called her first quarter peal – Grandsire Doubles. It was a confident and faultless performance by Sophie. Although she called herself observation bell throughout, she had planned what she would call – rotating the single and noting how this affected the order.

The confidence that Sophie has gained has benefited our band on Sundays, as she now regularly calls call changes and Grandsire Doubles for the service touch. Now that Sophie has called her first quarter peal she is beginning to look at calling the same 120s from different bells. She is currently working towards calling a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles.

CLARE MCARDLE
Birmingham School of Bell Ringing



Sophie being presented with an ART Award by Pip Penney

Beginning to despair of ringing Plain Hunt, the ‘50 Ringing Things’ challenge has made all the difference.

Annie has been learning to ring for three years and is a keen collector of coins. So when I saw the ‘50 Ringing Things’ booklet, I knew it was just the sort of thing she would enjoy. What I didn’t realise was quite how much doing the challenges would develop Annie’s ringing.

Annie’s progress has been quite steady and she reached a plateau with Plain Hunt, having somehow got hooked on numbers. Annie would panic if the bells weren’t in the expected order and became quite disheartened and self-critical – an obstacle to learning in itself.

However, Annie amazed us all as she started ticking off challenges in the ‘50 Things’ booklet. Realising that many of the challenges such as ‘call a quarter peal’ or ‘ring a themed method’ weren’t going to be achieved in the near future, Annie wrote out a list of all the challenges she could do.

Within a few months she’d organised an outing (taking us to a 4-bell tower to tick off another challenge), rung on half muffled bells, gone on a bell maintenance course, changed a stay, rung for a wedding, rung a bell heavier than 16cwt, helped clean the ringing chamber, rung for a special occasion, rung at a Cathedral – then driven to a nearby village to ‘grab’ a mini-ring, visited a practice whilst on holiday, spliced a rope, helped at an open day and is collecting money for a sponsored quarter peal.

Earlier this month, Annie had her light bulb moment and got the hang of Plain Hunt rung by place. There were big smiles all round as she trebled to different methods and then touches as her confidence grew. She even stayed steady whilst someone made a method trip, a very desirable quality in a treble ringer!

Annie put down her success to ‘50 Ringing Things’: “I told myself to look at all the things I could achieve. Once I stopped worrying about Plain Hunt and started to relax, suddenly I could do it.”

ROSE NIGHINGALE
Marsworth, Bucks

Linda and I decided “What the heck, we’ll give it a go”, 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 “Have a Go!” After considerable internet trawling and YouTube browsing, bellringing won, or maybe lost, as only time will tell; and so I emailed ART, 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 ‘inbox’ pinged telling me we were to report to a nearby church where we had been assigned a teacher! Well, I felt like one of those Hollywood Stars who pay thousands for the services of Buddhist Gurus, or Hindu Mahatmas; it was very uplifting.

In December we met our teachers, 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; 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 was the range of experience and endless patience with which our teachers approached our 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 have been very successful and we are confident that we will reach the dizzy heights of the bottom rung on the ladder of progress. But it must be said: it is our teachers who are the real ringing success!

JAMES JOHNSON
Thorpe-on-the-hill, Lincs

Yesterday we rang a peal with five of our young ringers, including three first peals at the first attempt.



The Abingdon peal band with Susan and Brian Read

The five youngsters in the peal are our most experienced youngsters out of the thirteen young ringers and around two dozen adults currently in the Abingdon band.

We run a very lively practice for young ringers each week, in addition to our

normal practice, and a separate after-school ringing club. Two of the youngsters are now very experienced ringers aged 16 and 18, who help to run the young learner practices (and rang in the peal). Four other members of our band have attended ART courses and the 18-year-old is a fully accredited ART teacher. It helps to have several teachers in the band!

In the Easter holidays we ran our most successful ringing course yet – a two-week ringing course for one hour each morning, with up to six youngsters learning to ring from scratch. Two of them managed to set their bells for ten handstrokes on the trot before the end of the course. One of them managed ten backstrokes too and earned his Level 1 certificate! We have run a branch mini-outing for young ringers in each school holiday for over four years.

I think we in Abingdon, with the help of ART and Learning the Ropes, are bucking the trend of decline we see in so many towers.

SUSAN READ
Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Our confidence is building as we learn new skills and we consolidate our progress due to the structured way that our teachers impart new knowledge and introduce new exercises.

I can't believe how easy it is to write out a method using place notation.

The LtR scheme with its excellent syllabus is a good way of structuring our practices.



Left to right: Kathy McCarthy & Gill Hosking splicing & whipping for 50 Ringing Things; Bell Maintenance Workshop led by Jennie Higson; Sophie and Lesley Boyle at the ART Masterclass; Sara Bullock learning to ring in Suffolk