

Tower Talk

The newsletter for ringers using



Learning™
the Ropes

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RINGING REMEMBERS

Ringling for Peace
Armistice 100



Special edition for the run up to the 100th anniversary of the Armistice

11 November is always a poignant day for ringers, but this year it is particularly special because it is the 100th anniversary of the Armistice and, on top of that, ringers all around the country are being recruited in the 'Ringing Remembers' campaign to honour the 1400 ringers known to have been lost in the Great War. We have taken this opportunity to introduce you to some of our newest ringers who have got involved through Ringing Remembers. There is plenty to read in here, but it's only a flavour of all the hard work which is going on everywhere to get ready to 'ring for peace'.

If you want to find out more, check out the Ringing Remembers facebook page, or their page on the Big Ideas website at www.big-ideas.org/project/ringing-remembers/.

By Ruth Suggett

towertalk@learningtheropes.org

Taking Up the Big Idea

Before I started my role as Campaign Coordinator for Ringing Remembers, I knew very little about ringing. I have never lived near a tower or come across anything to do with ringing, beyond occasionally hearing bells where I grew up and live. They just seemed a natural and pleasant part of the sound-scape in some parts of the city. I'm a very open minded person and always willing to give something a go, so I started learning to feel connected to the other Ringing Remembers recruits. I also wanted to have hands-on knowledge of ringing so that I could be properly informed on the things I post about, and I thought it would be a great way to meet other ringers throughout the year to generate campaign ideas. I felt very drawn to the WW1 centenary ringing as a way to celebrate the end of the war and to remember all those from across the world whose lives it touched, often tragically.

But since then, I have been ringing almost every week, including on a bank holiday Monday. Even when I had a day off sick, I managed to find enough energy to attend the tower in the evening. I think the prospect of keeping up my learning and not losing momentum helped me feel better! I think I must therefore be hooked! Ringing gives me an opportunity to both 'switch on' and 'switch off' at the same time - 'on' to the ringing and 'off' from the stresses of the day. I believe it is great for my mental health, I love switching off from the deluge of messaging and hyper-connectivity in this digital world, which I often find genuinely overwhelming and very stressful, and instead connecting in real life to other humans through ringing. It's a unique skill, with just the right level of physical and mental demands to keep it both accessible and challenging. I also like how it can be intergenerational, instead of being specifically aimed at either children, young people or older people - it is something that families can do together, which seems quite rare to me, and can

By Jamie Singleton,
Ringing Remembers Campaign
Coordinator for Big Ideas



“ My goal is to be able to ring on 11 November ... ringing bells with everyone else across the country”

strengthen these bonds. My learning has indeed informed the way I think about ringing. For example, I now understand how big the commitment is, and see how this can be both a draw and a barrier to finding new ringers.

I am learning with Tom Lawrance at St Vedast, Foster Lane in London. I enjoy learning with Tom. He has spent a lot of time inculcating the techniques so that they are now second nature for me. He is patient but he also clearly lets you know when you are going wrong, which is an environment I learn well in. The feeling of getting better, of developing, is very powerful and addictive – it’s like I am back at school and I realise how much I have missed the feeling. Even overcoming the embarrassment of making a mistake in front of others, of completely messing it up, is a great feeling – often you feel like you are not allowed to fail in life, for example when at work or in doing qualifications, but I believe that having the opportunity to fail is very important and helps us to develop.

Tom has trained hundreds of learners before and is very able to give constructive and precise feedback. It is also a wonder to see him ring his own bell, but know where everyone else should be, hear when they are not there, and tell them how to get there in real time. We used handbells once and I found it immediately helpful in understanding how change ringing worked. Tom teaches at another tower, and I believe the level is more advanced there, whereas at St Vedast the ringers are a mixed level of experience and they are very welcoming to new learners. There are two other Ringing Remembers learners at St Vedast, and I know of more at other London towers.

My goal is to be able to ring on 11 November. I don’t know what level I will be at but, if possible, I would like to take part in more complex ringing than rounds. However, even a few of those would make me happy (I am very nearly there) – to be honest, just ringing bells with everyone else across the country for a bit would satisfy me! But I do want to get better, I am really looking forward to being in full control of the bell so that I can focus on ringing methods. This is why I am keen to go every Monday – I am enjoying learning the skill but it can also be frustrating at times because I am impatient. I would also like to visit other towers. I have heard about Morpeth Tower in Northumberland which I have been strangely drawn to when researching for the campaign. Perhaps thinking about where you will next visit based on local bell towers is an experience that ringers know well?

“ The feeling of getting better, of developing, is very powerful and addictive”

“ There are two other Ringing Remembers learners at St Vedast, and I know of more at other London towers.”

“ Perhaps thinking about where you will next visit based on local bell towers is an experience that ringers know well?”

Fascinating Fact

ART Treasurer John Cater is one ringer with his own YouTube channel, which can be found at www.youtube.com/user/JohnCater5. It presently has 60 videos uploaded, many of those feature handbell ringing, and there are also tower-bell clips from as far afield as Liverpool Cathedral, St Paul’s Cathedral, Perth (WA) and Washington Cathedral. More unusual clips include Edvard Grieg’s *Morning* played on a pianola, and *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* rung full-circle at Church Gresley, Derbyshire.

Dragon Slayer!

For a few years now, my school has run a “Dragon’s Den” style competition, in which students can bid for money from local businesses to fund their hobbies. After having four ropes break within about two months back in November, I decided to apply for some money to buy new ropes for my local towers of St Martin’s Church, Exning, and St Mary’s Church, Newmarket. My entry consisted of a carefully planned computer-based presentation and a speech to try and win the “Dragons” round. It was fairly nerve racking to begin with as I had never stood up in front of anyone before and delivered a speech, but as time passed I realised that they weren’t as scary as they appeared. During the presentation, one of the Dragons asked me where I would most like to ring and I immediately answered “York Minster”. I never gave it a second thought at the time.

After the presentation I was thrilled to find out that they were happy to offer £1800 between the two churches. Obviously, the other ringers and I were over the moon. As far as I was concerned, this was the end of it. Little did I know that a further surprise was in store! A few months later, I was called into my headteacher’s office and to my surprise, two of the Dragons and my Mum were there. They gave me an envelope which I opened and read to find that they had secretly organised for me to ring at York Minster! I was amazed and so unbelievably excited at this. I am certainly looking forward to my trip!

And meanwhile, our new ropes are making a huge difference to our ringing so I’m very glad I took on the Dragons!

By Jimmy Yeoman, ringer from Newmarket



Jimmy with the “Dragons” and his mum, Vanda. [Image courtesy of Newmarket Journal.]

Recent Successes

In the second quarter of 2018, 248 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	144 (102)
Level 2 - Foundation Ringing Skills	63 (44)
Level 3 - Introduction to Change Ringing	23 (20)
Level 4 - Novice Change Ringer	15 (8)
Level 5 - Change Ringer	3 (6)



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.

Learning To Listen

Walking into a training event entitled 'Listen and Strike', I'll admit that I, rather arrogantly, supposed my listening skills to be fairly decent, and anticipated a fairly straightforward day of sitting with pad and pen at the ready. The reality, however, was far more engaging than I had ever expected. Stripping everything right back to basics, a practical session kicked off with a number of exciting exercises to not only get us listening, but giggling too! Attempting coherent rounds whilst ringing on the opposite stroke to those either side of you proved particularly interesting, and ringing facing outwards made for some great photos (as well as helping us to appreciate the importance of listening of course)! This, in addition to some theory-based listening exercises labelling various levels of inaccuracy, promoted much discussion and thought, and has certainly encouraged me to stop and listen more carefully to any bells I hear when out and about ... so watch out for my critical ear!

A solo simulator session encouraged some (very welcome!) constructive comments from peers as well as helpers, and the handy idea to film this meant we were able not only to receive advice, but watch our own ringing to visualise these corrections before having another attempt if we wished to: a particularly helpful approach for visual learners.

The final session of the day saw us attempting some enjoyable kaleidoscope ringing – even partially succeeding in the notorious Mexican Wave as we put our new-found listening and striking skills to the test!

This was an enjoyable and inspiring training event and better still, it coincided beautifully with one of the finest cake sales I have ever laid eyes on; a true feast for hungry ringers!

By Naomi Smart, ringer from Barnes, London



Naomi (bottom left) concentrating hard on listening!

50/50 Club Draw News

The June draw was made in the sunshine, to the background of superb ringing, in Cambridge, where the final of the 12-bell striking contest was held. The top three bands from each of the three regional heats make the finals, together with the band of the tower chosen for the competition. Ringing tends to be extremely good (and can be heard on youtube) and it's a very festive gathering, with several hundred more attending than the 120 competitors, enjoying meeting up with old and new friends, morning bacon butties, lunchtime baguettes, ice-cream, and beer!

Three children in the audience of some 600 ringers drew the tickets:

1st prize of £68, won by Michael Penney, Derby

2nd prize of £34, won by Mike Rigby, Warwick

3rd prize of £34, won by Jane Craddock, Cardiff

Information about how to join can be found at www.learningtheropes.org/5050club and it supports the running costs of ART. Please do think about joining up. It's £12 per year for one number in the draw and there's no restriction on how many numbers you can hold; quite a few have four!

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



Ringling to Remember

Monica, Esme and Ellis Hollows are learning to ring at St Anne's Parish Church, in St Annes on Sea, which is part of the Fylde branch of the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers. They were inspired to take up ringing thanks to the Ringing Remembers campaign and started learning in November 2017. With the help of their teachers, Stuart Newton, Stacey Ashfield and James Wormleighton, they have recently completed Learning the Ropes Level 2. They are now ringing for services and have started working towards earning their Level 3 award.

The family are all enjoying learning to ring and really appreciate all the support and encouragement they have received, both from their teachers and also from all the other ringers they have met. They think that the great thing about bell ringing is that it brings together people from all different ages and walks of life to work together as a team.



Ellis (10) is the youngest ringer at St Anne's at the moment, over 60 years younger than their oldest ringer! Esme (12) thinks it's a really cool hobby. Monica is so keen to make up for lost time that she has even persuaded her husband to make a simulator for her to use at home (using John Norris' design available from his website, www.jnorris.co.uk/dumbbell.html) which means she can practise whenever she wants!

Monica has written a much longer article all about the reasons for getting involved and her family story which you can read on the Ringing Remembers case studies page at www.big-ideas.org/hollowsfamily.

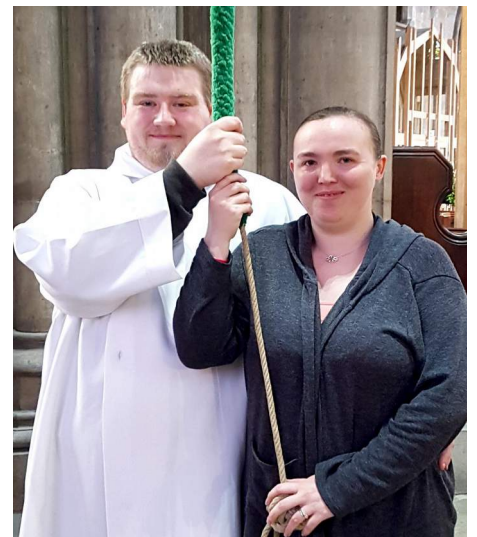
Healthy Competition!

We first got into bell ringing around four years ago, but it never really took off. We then started going to Doncaster Minster regularly and met a lovely chap called Jay Doves who invited us to come back to bell ringing.

Bell ringing has always intrigued both of us, and being part of a team where everyone is so supportive and forthcoming with tips and advice is amazing, like a big family! We have both had family who have served in the forces and so to be part of the 1400 new ringers to remember the fallen soldiers is a great honour.

Learning as a couple is great as we both encourage each other to do better, and to have the support from the other person is a massive help. We have found we both have our own learning style, but this helps us to feel more motivated. We love learning a skill that is less well-known and out of the ordinary. We have met some great people through bell ringing and we find that everyone is so friendly. To say we are competitive is a bit of an understatement, but this is helping us to progress quicker; after all - a bit of healthy competition is always good!

By Ross and Katie Havenhand,
ringers at Doncaster Minster



Re-Learning the Ropes for Ringing Remembers

I first tried to learn to ring as a teenager in rural Suffolk, mainly as an excuse to meet boys in church at night. Then the Ringing Remembers campaign popped up on social media calling for new bell ringers to honour those that were lost in World War One. I asked my parents, who still live in the village, whether the bells I learnt on would be rung to mark the centenary of Armistice Day, and sadly learnt the village no longer has their own bell ringers. This was one of the reasons I decided to give bell ringing another go and enthusiastically signed up as a Ringing Remembers recruit.

When mentioning to a friend that I was considering taking ringing up again they remarked, "Don't worry about it, it will come back to you, it'll be just like riding a bike." This hardly filled me with confidence given that I failed my cycling proficiency at school.

I can't remember much about my teenage ringing experience apart from feeling slightly alarmed that one of ringers didn't have all of their fingers, and that this might be an occupational hazard. The bell ringers were wonderfully welcoming but I struggled to make sense of what I was doing or feel I was making progress. My juvenile ringing career didn't last long.

Thinking that it may be the case of just getting back 'into the saddle' again, I turned up at the first session and found we were going to be following the Learning the Ropes scheme. My first surprise was the amount of lessons required. When learning before I'd fetch up at practice once a week and not spend that much time in the tower. However, here some of my fellow recruits are having up to three or four lessons a week. Apparently intensive training is needed at first in order to acquire 'muscle memory'. It turns out that my muscles are retaining some clearly bad memories from my past ringing and I face an additional challenge of correcting bad habits. The Learning the Ropes scheme requires us not only to learn to ring, but to do so with style and technique!

Another pleasant surprise is the structured process, complete with levels, tick lists and certificates. If these had been in place when I was younger I probably would have tried harder and been less distracted by the local talent. Friends and colleagues wrongly assume that bell ringing is easy and express surprise that I am not yet ringing full peals. It helps to tell them I've passed Level 1 and am now working towards Level 2.

I love the Learning the Ropes record book, the website and my certificate, but the thing that has really transformed my learning experience is the supportive Facebook group. The opportunity to share things with people on the same level as you and outside your tower is such a motivator. When I tried learning the first time it was hard that everyone else knew what they were doing apart from me. However, the support of knowing that it's not just me who has found it impossible to set a bell, tied a knot in the bell rope when ringing up, or live permanently in fear of breaking a stay is priceless. Also invaluable is the fact that I can go online, buzzing with excitement after practice and regale my triumphant performance playing "Twinkle, twinkle little star" to an appreciative audience when my spouse is heartily sick to death of hearing about it.

Although I never managed a bike-riding accolade, I am now the very proud recipient of a Learning the Ropes Level 1 bell handling certificate. (I may possibly have mentioned this before.) I suspect that some of the seasoned bell ringers are secretly envious of my laminated award, although they would never admit it.

Some things are much better the second time around and, thanks to Learning the Ropes, bell ringing has been for me.

By Anne Tansley Thomas, Norwich



Anne shows off her certificate

What Shall We Ring to Remember?

If you are one of the 1400 new ringers that are being trained, ready to ring for the Armistice Day Centenary Commemorations, you may be wondering what you will be expected to do. Normally there is half-muffled ringing in many churches for Armistice Day services and parades, but this year it is hoped there will be much more. Ringing that day will be organised on a local basis but there'll be plenty of it, lots of it featured in the press, radio and TV.

This might be the first time you have rung with muffles. *[Have a look at the learning tip on page 18 to find out more about this.]* Some towers set the unmuffled stroke at handstroke followed by the softer echo sound of the muffled backstroke, while others prefer the muffled stroke first followed by the louder backstroke. Either way, the sound is beautiful and moving, especially as the bells tend to be rung more slowly than usual. This sounds especially nice in Called Changes.

You might ring 'whole pull and stand', with the bells muffled, where all the bells except the tenor stand after each backstroke and the tenor does another two bongs *[see the diagram to the right]*. The challenges with this are:

1. good control - everyone has to set their bell each handstroke, and
2. timing - the treble ringer has to start each row at exactly the right time, allowing the tenor ringer to maintain a constant rhythm.

Sometimes people choose to ring 'diminishing rounds', when they are told to set their bells, one at a time and one each handstroke, until only the tenor is left ringing on its own. This also needs good control, though mistakes are not so obvious as in the above!

In St Bees, Cumbria, a ringer tolls the tenor bell very slowly, standing it at each stroke, while the names, ages and dates of all those in the parish who lost their lives in the war are read out, one between each dong.

Each group of ringers will work with their church and their community to make the day special in their area. There is an opportunity to ring as part of the large-scale British project, "Battle's Over - A Nation's Tribute". Pipers will be piping in the morning, bugles sounding and 1000 beacons lit across the UK in the evening; this organisation (fully backed by all the key military) would like to encourage 1000 towers to ring at 7:05pm on the day, if this fits with local arrangements (towers do not need to be aligned with the beacons).

If you are ready to ring a quarter peal, you could be part of the plan to ring 1400 quarter peals (one for each of the fallen). These will be recorded on Bellboard^[1] and there will be certificates for each. Whatever is on offer, do join in, and maybe surprise your teacher with one or two of these suggestions!

By Chris de Cordova and the
Moresby Teaching Hub

1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6
6
6
1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6
6
6
1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6
6
6

Whole pull and stand

[1] Bellboard is an online notice board where all notable ringing can be recorded. You can find it at bb.ringingworld.co.uk.

Sign up for Ringing Remembers!

Don't forget that if you started to learn to ring since September 2017 you can still sign up as one of the 1400 Ringing Remembers ringers and receive a special commemorative badge for participating in this national campaign. So far over 850 people have signed up, and the number is growing.

All you need to do is visit the page at www.big-ideas.org/project/ringing-remembers/ and follow the links to the registration form. If you have any questions or problems with this, then contact Jamie Singleton, the Campaign Coordinator at Big Ideas, by e-mailing bells@big-ideas.org, and he will be able to help you.

If you don't register you won't be counted!

ART and You - looking after your data


Many of you reading this article will, no doubt, have been bombarded recently with emails prompted by the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from 25 May this year. The new Regulation extends the rights of individuals to control what happens to the information organisations hold about them. At ART we are keen to look after your data carefully and to meet the requirements of the new regulation.


As someone learning to ring under the Learning the Ropes scheme you will notice that there are some one-off changes to how you access SmART Ringer. We need to actively seek your consent to provide access to SmART Ringer and to send emails. We will do this in our initial email contact with new ringers following registration by their teacher. As an existing user, you will be asked to confirm your consent when you next log-in at SmART Ringer. When you have done this just once, you can continue to access SmART Ringer as usual. And of course, if you need to change any of your details at any time, all you need to do is log in to SmART Ringer, choose 'account' then 'edit' and make your changes.

A special requirement under the GDPR is that for children we get their parents' consent to use their personal details. We will therefore contact all our young ringers and their parents to ask for this consent. We already use a parent's email for our under-16 ringers.

Over the next few weeks and months ART will be introducing these minor changes to ensure that we are compliant with the GDPR. We will also be offering training to all our staff and volunteers to ensure that they are aware of the importance of data protection and follow good practice guidelines. ART is proud to say that we take your privacy seriously!

By Les Boyce, ART Trustee

 At ART we are keen to look after your data carefully and to meet the requirements of the new regulation."

 ART is proud to say that we take your privacy seriously!"

More than a Grand Day Out

G'day!

Well, it didn't take long for the Tower Talk editor to pick up that I was travelling from Australia and ringing in the UK, then approach me for a write up ... good on you Ruth!

Life for me in Australia is a 2 hour drive to the nearest bells ... and soon to be 7 hours when I (with Adam Beer) move to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia - imagine that? My teaching is now somewhat limited ...

We were recently in the UK for a short time visiting relatives and catching up with some friends - and of course a bit of ringing! Our first 'grab' was Headcorn in Kent for a Sunday service ring with a cousin in tow ... unfortunately he could not be persuaded to join the local band. Then off down to Devon and Cornwall for a ringing tour organised by Adam - called 'The Black Cygnet Tour 2018' - we normally do one of these in Australia every year, but decided to switch continents this time!

The tour band included true blue Australians, some previous Perth (Western Australia) ringers who were back in the UK, and local Devon and Cornish ringers who all know Adam (I had met most of them on a previous visit). We had themed days - firstly a mini ring day in West Devon and East Cornwall followed by 10/12 bell day in Cornwall and a day ringing around West Cornwall. The tour culminated in a visit to the Isles of Scilly to ring at the tower in Hugh Town on St Mary's. There were 15 quarter peals rung on the tour (100% success rate - amazingly!) - I rang in 7 of them trying to keep the amount of ringing down due to ongoing shoulder issues.

What did we notice? Wow - the country felt like it was bursting at the seams with cars, people ... and the parking ... and pot holes I guess we are so used to wide roads and little traffic in comparison that it was a bit of a shock how extreme it was, that neither of us really remembered from our last visit a few years ago. On the positive side, it had been an absolute pleasure visiting towers and being met by happy, friendly people who were pleased to see us - we love this aspect of this amazing hobby we all share, followed by a visit to the good old English pub that we do miss in Oz.

After the organised tour, we also rang in Gwennap, Cornwall, Uffington in Oxfordshire, and Middlesmore, Pateley Bridge and Knaresborough in North Yorkshire. And who did we bump into? Graham Nabb and Sue Marshall - two of the main drivers behind ART and Learning the Ropes - how appropriate!

Our final visit was to Kingsthorpe, Northants ... where we met up with yet another Perth ringer ... and I rang my slowest quarter on 6 of the trip at 49 minutes - lovely bells.

I left a little Koala hanging on ropes in towers we had visited - a little token of the friendship of ringing which goes around the world! It was cold weather while we were there but we had some sunshine in places and I reckon I returned to Australia with an English tan - ha - my mates home are not going to believe it!!

By Corinne Rule,
an ART tutor in Australia



Dinner at The Tiger, near Knaresborough, with locals John Leech and Melanie Betts, our North Yorkshire organisers, and William Todd, John Burnup, myself and Adam Beer with Graham Nabb and Sue Marshall

“ I left a little Koala hanging on ropes in towers we had visited - a little token of the friendship of ringing which goes around the world!”

Bitten by the Ringing Bug

Judy and Martin Farrimond took up ringing just under three years ago when they moved to rural Norfolk, having lived in Sydney, Australia for many years. This is their story.

A few years ago our local church, Fleggburgh St Margaret, had a derelict ring of three bells restored to full operation through the efforts of the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers (NDA) and the labours of a number of local experienced ringers. As a result, a local parishioner and “dormant ringer”, Nick Dawes, volunteered to establish a band of ringers. We read about this in the benefice newsletter and both joined up. We were soon bitten by the ringing bug and attended weekly practices. However, after a few months, it became apparent that ringing on three bells and not having sufficient experienced ringing instructors was limiting our progress.

We concluded that we had to get out to other towers where there were more bells and more experienced instructors. At that time we also joined the NDA, where we met other ringers from the district, and as a result we started to attend other practices where, without exception, we were made to feel very welcome. We soon saw an improvement and within 18 months had completed our first quarter peal together. It was an exciting moment and a stand-out achievement for us. It was the same feeling we had when we got our driving licences!

We noticed, though, that our somewhat unstructured introduction to ringing had left some gaps, such as some bad handling habits and variable striking. When we discussed this with Nikki Thomas from South Walsham, who is an ART instructor, she suggested we go through the Learning the Ropes training. Nikki reassured us that we would be able to focus on areas for improvement and also build our confidence. Going through the levels step by step, even if some of them felt like a “step back”, helped us dramatically! This process certainly emphasised that as a learner getting the basics right is, in some ways, more important than learning the next method. In other words, you’re never too experienced to just ring rounds and call changes nicely! Without a doubt, this has led to a deeper appreciation and understanding of ringing. We have now passed Level 4 and are working on Level 5. It was definitely worth putting in all the hours training even though there were times when you seem to take one step forward and two steps back!

Having moved to Norfolk from living overseas, ringing has helped us engage with local life and make new friends. It has given us an added dimension to our holidays, and we have visited many towers while on holiday in the UK, Ireland and Australia. It’s truly amazing to be able to ring methods with people you have never met before, sometimes in another country, and to meet people who have the same love of ringing as we do. We have always been made to feel very welcome wherever we rang in the world and we have found that there is a common bond enjoyed by all ringers.

It is the first pastime we started together and, in fact, we would say it is an ideal activity for a couple as you can never spend too much time studying blue lines and talking bells and not be afraid of boring the other person! We also help each other along the way with our different strengths and weaknesses.

On more than one occasion we have been thanked by members of the congregation, or even by friends who happen to hear bells ringing and remark that there is something about hearing bells ringing that goes deep down inside. We have also become active in the NDA, which gives us a chance to give something back to ringing and help to maintain and develop ringing in our region. I am the Secretary of the Eastern Branch while Martin is the Subscriptions Officer and Webmaster for the NDA. We are also involved with the Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre’s School Outreach Workshop which was developed as a response to the need to interest children in the art of bell ringing in their own school. We are also planning to become ART instructors through completing the teacher training Module 1 (Teaching Bell Handling) so that we can start to help new ringers develop basic handling skills. So many things to do! We both believe that ART is a great thing for ringing and has, without doubt, enhanced our proficiency and our enjoyment of ringing.



Martin and Judy enjoy the ‘après ring’ with Nikki Thomas (centre)

Dedicated to Learning

Yuka Jones was born in Japan and has lived in England for the past nine years. Having completed Level 5 last year, she was presented with the 2018 Learning The Ropes Achievement Award in March.

When asked to write about my ringing journey with my teacher, my first thought was why I had decided to learn to ring. Well, actually this was my second thought. My first was how bad is my English? Can I actually write an article that will compare to the works of Shakespeare? The answer is no, so please take that into account!

I had just moved to Taunton and the church next door was installing a completely new set of bells. I watched as ringers put a huge amount of time and effort, over several months, digging holes in walls, hauling up pieces of steel frame and removing the many bags of rubbish produced by the work. I was very surprised by the knowledge that these people had about this work. This made me really appreciate the bells in the tower. When I heard that there were towers where the bells could not be rung because there were not enough ringers, I decided to learn to ring, and the church next door became my church.

At that time, my tower was not teaching anyone to ring because previously the bells were just too difficult. So I went to learn with my teacher at Bishops Lydeard, where there was a learners' practice every week. With my teacher I then went to some other practices where one of the teachers pointed out another ringer's handling for me to see what it should look like. Since then, I have tried to copy my teacher's handling and make my rope behave like hers does. I tried different small things to get closer to her rope's behaviour. I have been ringing for two years now, but I still watch and learn.

One of the most interesting things for me about ringing is going on outings. I really enjoy ringing bells that I have not rung before and seeing new places, sometimes those quintessential English villages that otherwise I would be very unlikely to visit. One of my favourite places has been Pershore Abbey which was a unique experience. I stick to my Japanese way of living and behaviour, but having learnt this very English art I feel how important it is to keep ringing going to preserve this English tradition.

English is my second language and sometimes I struggle to understand what people are saying to me. In bell ringing my teachers explain things again and again until I understand. I appreciate this very much. My teacher also draws things to help explain them. So that I always have this information when I need it, I started my own ringing notebook (I am now on my third notebook!).

The most fun thing I have done in ringing was ringing in the cage at Pershore Abbey. To walk into that ringing chamber was a unique experience, as was being able to look over the edge and down to the floor of the church many feet below. When we rang the bells up I stood on a box. I would love to ring there again one day.



ART Tutor, Les Boyce, presents the LTR Level 5 Achievement Award to Yuka Jones at the Bath & Wells Association AGM in Chard.

“ I have been ringing for two years now, but I still watch and learn.”

“ The most fun thing I have done in ringing was ringing in the cage at Pershore Abbey.”

My teacher teaches methods using a diagram. I find that these diagrams keep my learning simple and tidy. I can see clearly what I need to focus on and remember. As English is my second language, and I find reading in English difficult, just being able to look at my diagrams to refresh my memory is much quicker and easier for me than reading lots of words. Once I have drawn the diagram for a method in my notebook I can look at this regularly and it helps me to learn the method quickly. I use colour to help me learn – red to draw the lines for what happens when a bob is called and pink for the lines when a single is called. I think the diagrams have helped me to progress quickly. I have been ringing for two years now and I can ring nine Doubles methods, five Minor methods, and three Triples methods very well.

The most exciting thing that I have done in ringing was to take part last year in a quarter peal at Wells Cathedral. It was such a privilege to walk into the ringing chamber here, especially because it was a Cathedral, where many people do not get the chance to ring let alone to ring a quarter peal. It was a special thing to do in a special place for me.

I have been able to progress well because my learning has been structured. I have understood and been able to do what I am learning before moving on to the next task. The next task also follows on from the previous one so there is not too much new information to learn.

Some people have said to me that I have a good memory or that I have a young brain. I wish I did. I know that I do not have a brilliant memory. I go to three practices a week as well as special Branch practices, and I practise a lot even if I'm not in a tower. At home I count out loud the places for the method I'm learning (I still count up in English and down in Japanese!). I also write out, on squared paper, what all the bells do. I can then look at the construction of the method. It is interesting to see how all the bells are working together. I like to do this for touches especially and then I often have an "Ah-ha" moment.

There are things that I want to do in the future. I particularly enjoy ringing with good bands when the ringing is well struck. When I hear some very good striking that moment stays in my memory, and occasionally I look back and remember that ringing. These small, but often, experiences make me very satisfied and cheer me up! This is also why I would like to help other people in the future to learn to ring. Then I think that we can all taste these delicious moments.

I am in a very fortunate position. My teacher organises quarter peals and peals for me with fantastic ringers. So I have been able to take part in, and listen to, very good ringing. The Tower Captains at the practices I go to also give me lots of opportunities to practise. I am most grateful for all the chances that I have to grow as a ringer.

I now know it takes a very long time to become a good ringer. I started bell-ringing at forty-one and my dream is to become competent enough to conduct a band like my teachers before I die!

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“ The most exciting thing that I have done in ringing was to take part last year in a quarter peal at Wells Cathedral.”

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“ My dream is to become competent enough to conduct a band”

Recording History

I live in the North Norfolk countryside, an area rich in medieval churches, and the sound of church bells has always evoked my curiosity. With my lifelong interest in local history – along with my passion for recording film and audio – it seemed natural that one day I would end up visiting a local church with the intention of recording the sound of church bells.

The church of St Martin in the tiny village of Glandford, not far from where I grew up, boasts a 12-bell carillon – something of a rarity in Norfolk. At the strike of every third hour the bells play the melody of one of the hymns programmed into its large barrel, which turns slowly whilst wedge-shaped protrusions make contact with a number of ‘keys’ linked to the bells above by cables operating individual hammers.

While this instrument fascinated me, it actually has very little in common with the art of bell ringing, and so, naturally, I wanted to see whether I could capture some recordings of ‘proper’ church bell ringing.

I stumbled across the website of NDAR – the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers. They are responsible for the majority of ringing towers in Norfolk and list the names of every tower along with their practice evenings – perfect!

I decided to venture out one Friday night and attempt to record the bells of St Andrew’s Church in the small market town of Holt. As I arrived there was a service being held in the church – something I hadn’t anticipated, and it overran by about fifteen minutes. I felt a bit awkward standing about in the churchyard in the pitch black, but decided to wait so as not to waste a trip out. As the church emptied, I caught the attention of a tall gentleman as he walked towards me.

“No ringing tonight?” I asked.

It turned out he was a ringer and he put me in touch with the other ringers, who were waiting at the bottom of the stairs for the tower captain, Sue Morton, to arrive. Before I knew it, I was up in the ringing chamber. The ringers were the most welcoming people – despite me not (yet) being a ringer myself.

I watched with fascination as they started to raise the bells in peal – the ropes bobbing as they went higher and higher. What struck me was all the noise heard inside the ringing chamber – the ropes all clattered as they slipped up the holes into the ceiling, almost masking the sound of the bells – not ideal for recording purposes!

Once the bells were rung up, the real ringing began. Watching the ringers, I felt I learnt an awful lot – there was so much more to ringing church bells than I first thought!

A couple of weeks later, my partner Rosie and I decided to attend the practice night at our ‘home’ tower of St Nicholas, Wells-next-

By Chris Richmond, ringer at Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk



Chris at Holkham, St Withburga [Credit: Rosie Richmond-Smith]



St. Withburga’s Church, Holkham

“ there was so much more to ringing church bells than I first thought!”

the-Sea. Although I was more enthusiastic about learning than she was, it was nevertheless a nice weekly activity we could do together.

Our instructor, Peter Terrington, was lovely and had the patience of a saint! By the end of the evening we could just about competently do both strokes together. Apparently, us youngsters (well, I am thirty) pick the technique up much quicker than some of the older folk who take up the hobby later in life.

The following night, I decided to visit the Minster at Kings Lynn – a large town in West Norfolk. The Minster has a ring of ten bells and so I initially went along to record the sound of those. However, one of the ringers, David Moore, had spotted me lurking about outside and invited me up into the ringing chamber.

It wasn't long before I was put on the end of a rope and had to recall everything I learnt the previous night. A few pulls of each stroke individually soon led to having to pull both strokes together, to the satisfaction of the instructor there, David Truman, until I made a slight misjudgement and grabbed the sally a touch too early, causing it to hover for a split second before the rope was forced up out of my hand.

“Let go! Let go!” David shouted, as I quickly released the rope from my hand – including the tail end which began to swing wildly around the belfry, causing a brief panic in the ringing chamber.

The result of that handling error made me very nervous of the bell rope for weeks afterwards.

“If you fall off a bike, the best way to get over it is to jump straight back on the bike and carry on again” was the advice given to me by one ringer, and he was right.

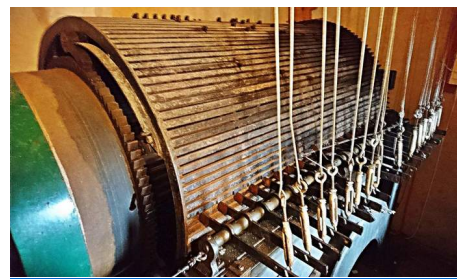
It was then that I learnt that, if that happens again, I can safely keep hold of the tail end of the rope, and knowing that gave me a lot more confidence.

A few weeks on and I was beginning to ring in rounds with the other ringers at Wells.

Having now been acquainted with the ringers at Kings Lynn Minster, I was on their mailing list when I heard about the Ringing Remembers project – what a timely coincidence and a great opportunity to become part of it.

Having an interest in both local military history and now bell ringing, it seemed right to sign up straight away, registering myself as one of the 1400 recruits and doing my bit to keep this wonderful tradition alive.

At the time of writing, I have rung at eight different towers and am just starting to progress into ringing call changes. I just hope I'm ready to ring in time for Armistice Day later this year!



The chime barrel at Glandford



Ringers at Holt, St. Andrew, with Tower Captain Sue Morton (centre, facing)



Kings Lynn Minster of St. Margaret

“ it seemed right to sign up straight away, registering myself as one of the 1400 recruits and doing my bit to keep this wonderful tradition alive.”

Bringing A New Band To Life

When my daughter got married in the beautiful and ancient church of St Edeyrn's in Cardiff in 2016, we had to ask around to get ringers as there hadn't been a band at St Edeyrn's for quite a while. Not being a ringer myself, the generosity of the team who turned up to ring impressed me.

Learning to ring had been on my wish list of things to do when I retire in 10 years' time, but when I read an article about recruiting 1400 ringers to commemorate those who had given their lives in World War 1, I thought - 'Why wait?' And having been in the Army, it seemed that now was the right time to see if I could get a band going in time for the 100th anniversary of the Armistice later on this year.

It is one thing having the enthusiasm to start something new, but getting started is quite another, and we have been fortunate to have several experienced local ringers who are devoting many hours to teaching us using Learning the Ropes. Matthew Turner from St Augustine's, Rumney, put the whole training plan together for us, for which we are extremely grateful. One of our teachers is Pip Penney who wrote 'The Ringer's Guide to Learning the Ropes'. Pip is a magnificent teacher and her book is good night-time read, especially after we have been to practice. Four of us are already most of the way through Level 1. Level 2 will take a lot longer, but our aim is to do all levels.

Having up to 12 people in the bell tower you can lose concentration and make mistakes, but when you are in the zone it seems to come together. Nick Jones from Trevechin comes twice a week to teach us and is an excellent instructor. Recently, he brought a student of his along - young Connor who is 18 years of age. It is a pleasure to learn from someone who is so young and patient. I have found already that the youngest of ringers can sometimes explain things to me more effectively than some of the more experienced ringers!

We plan to join up with some of the other local bands when we have gained more experience and confidence but already I have started going to the St Augustine's practice nearby and each week I take a different member of our band with me. It is a pleasure to listen to their ringing and to listen to their valuable tips and advice. To see another practice night band ringing together gives us something to aim towards.

When our vicar (who used to be a ringer himself) retires it is our goal to ring for his last service, with an experienced band then ringing a quarter peal. And of course, by 11 November we hope to be ringing on our own - hopefully rounds and call changes, and maybe even plain hunt - to remember our ringing forbears who sacrificed their lives.

By Martin Gilbert, Cardiff



This is our beautiful ancient church of St Edeyrn's in Cardiff. No water, no toilet, no kitchen, but the bells are fantastic!



The band (L to R): John Smith
David Weston, Amanda Gilbert,
Martin Gilbert, Nick Jones -
Instructor, Alan & Wendy Church.

“ By 11 November we hope to be ringing on our own ... to remember our ringing forbears who sacrificed their lives.”

Ring Something Simple

Sometimes you see a practice advertised and you'd love to go but you just don't know what they will be ringing and that can be a bit daunting if you're still getting to grips with plain hunt or call changes.

The Wisbech and District Teaching Hub have come up with a great idea for a welcoming practice aimed at Level 2 ringers who are working on call changes and plain hunt. 'Ring Something Simple' is a regular practice being held at different churches in the Wisbech area and is reaching out to new ringers for whom a more general practice may not meet their needs.

Organiser Bob Cox said, "I well remember the mixed feelings I had about stepping out of the tower where I learned to ring into the wider ringing world. I'm convinced that this transition, and it is a brave step, is made easier knowing that you will only be asked to ring what you are already working on or working towards Level 2".

The practices will be held monthly at various towers within the area and aim to create opportunities for social networking as well as focused Level 2 ringing. Maybe this idea could take off in other hubs and areas?



No matter what your ringing ability you are cordially invited to the Wisbech Ringing District's pre-method ringing event.

At this event only rounds, call changes and plain hunt will be rung – no methods!

To be held at Watlington Church (PE33 0HE) on the 2nd June 2018 from 3pm to 5pm

If you are just learning or would just like to ring at a different tower with other people please do support this event – All are welcome to ring!



Refreshments, a Quiz, a Raffle, and Ringing Help will be available

For more information phone/text: 07921 244646

An Acrostic Quiz

This quiz is fairly simple and kid friendly, but with perhaps one or two slightly more challenging questions!

1. What the bearing of a bell sits in.
2. What we ring when we first pull off.
3. "That's ... " at the end of a touch.
4. Complete the phrase for our favourite bit of the week! "Practice ... ".
5. When a bell changes direction for one blow before continuing on its path.
6. That fluffy coloured thing on the rope.
7. When you've got the hang of ringing Plain Bob on the treble, where will you ring next?
8. The name of the campaign to recruit 1400 new ringers in 2018?
9. What we call the number of changes which can be rung on a given number of bells.

If you take the first letter of each answer, which popular method do you come up with?

Learning Tips No.8: Muffling

The sound of half-muffled tower bells is unmistakable. In Rounds it's like a normal descending scale followed by an eerie echo of that sound. This is why bells are usually rung half-muffled in mourning: for funerals and other solemn occasions such as on Remembrance Day, or to mourn the old year before the New Year is rung in. Some churches ring half-muffled during Lent.

To make this sound, a 'muffle' is fitted to each bell. A muffle is simply a pad of resilient material attached to the ball of the clapper in such a way that the impact of the clapper against the sound bow is greatly reduced. This has the effect that, instead of hearing the 'strike note' of the bell, we hear the 'hum note' instead. Complicated? Well, all you need to know is that the sound of a tower bell is actually composed of five (or more) different notes which are all tunable by a skilled lathe operator in a bell foundry so as to produce a pleasant tone. The muffle simply causes these notes to be heard in a different ratio and volume.

Muffles are traditionally made of leather. Leather has always been a widely available material which is easily worked and will survive the repeated impacts it receives and which provides a suitable degree of damping to make an appropriate sound. It will give many years of service if kept supple with the sparing use of dubbin.

A muffle can be anything from a simple square of thick leather tied on at the corners with leather boot-laces threaded through punched holes, to a carefully shaped, multi-layer pad that can be rapidly positioned with straps and industrial Velcro. I've even heard of gardening knee-pads being used in an emergency!

Because Called Changes take effect at handstroke, a muffle is usually placed so that the handstroke sounds 'open' and the backstroke sounds the muffled echo. This means that the muffle has to be placed on the side of the clapper away from the rope and the ground-pulley. Once fitted, check that the muffle cannot rotate, and that the muffle ties cannot come between the clapper and the bell - otherwise you will have a bell muffled on both strokes until the tie breaks under the repeated impacts and the muffle falls off completely! Also be aware that if a bell goes up 'wrong' the handstroke will be muffled instead of the backstroke and you will have to correct that before ringing. Don't leave it until the last minute if you've not fitted them before. Practise it now!

Fitting a muffle to just one side of the clapper is what we mean by half-muffled. Fully muffled bells (on both sides, except for the tenor) are considered reserved for the death of the Monarch, the Bishop of the diocese, or the incumbent Vicar.

For safety reasons, muffles should always be fitted and removed with the bells down. Work in pairs, and take precautions to ensure that no-one in the ringing room will try to pull on a rope while you're working underneath the bells.

By Mike Rigby, ART-Accredited
Teacher and Tower Captain at
Lighthorne, Warwickshire



Image Credit: Alan Masters