

Welcome to the second of a series of regular updates for postal subscribers. It contains a summary of the topics discussed on the e-mail list. If you would like to add any comments, please send them to the address at the end of the bulletin.

Silencing Bells

The month started with a request about ways to tie clappers. *Heather* asked for ideas for silencing her bells rather than using ropes, which she found very time consuming. Dealing with 2 towers, 1 with 4-5 foot clearance under the frame, the other with no clearance so bells have to be 'up'. She asked if anyone had heard of using horses overreach boots which can apparently sit over the ball and be flipped into/out of use. Or for how wooden tie bars should fit.

K & C Quinn replied that as they frequently silence their bells they use a section of a motorbike tyre with a small hole cut in the centre of the tread to fit the piece over the clapper. These are left in place and turned into position when required.

Andy Parry Said he also used this method but had problems with the tyre spinning. He got round this by cutting a hole big enough to go over the clapper ball then tying and cutting the pieces to fit each bell. A small car tyre worked for his 8 – 25cwt ring. He added that you must make sure you get tyres with metal only in the bead.

Peter Dale Never had the problem of the tyres slipping when the clapper flights had the flat surfaces on them but with the trend nowadays for round flights, the trick is to make the hole in the tread a tad smaller than the smallest dia. Of the flight, i.e. where it meets the ball. Running out from the hole make some short radial cuts in the tread. With Stanley knife to hand, force the tyre section over the flight opening up the sections of the tread which grip the flight. The length of cut is critical, too short, it wont go on, too long it wont grip.

Timothy Mann We have pieces of wood approx 3 by 2 which are chamfered to fit across the sound bows and the ends are leathered for a tight fit. There is a U shape cut out of the centre to accommodate the clapper. This has to be cut fairly accurately. We then use a proprietary steel garden gate sort of latch that swings down and is held in place by a wing nut. The inside edge of the fitting is leathered, thick rubber will do just as well, to make a good fit with the clapper. Almost any suitable garden gate hinge or similar fitting will do. The important thing though is to enable the fitting to swing vertically in the plane of the clapper shank. This enables the latch or similar fitting to be swung up and down by only loosening the wing retaining nut and not actually having to unscrew it all, drop the end on the belfry floor, and do it all up again. This greatly speeds up the fitting and unfitting of the clamps. Our frame is virtually on the floor and we climb down into the bell pits to fit the clapper clamps when the bells are down. We can also easily fit six clamps in five minutes, they certainly come off a

lot quicker than that. We never attempt to fit the clamps with the bells up.

Peter Wenham My diagrams haven't copied as an attachment so here goes for a description.

Our silencers are made of 3"x2" wood, each one cut to fit inside its own bell just above the soundbow. In the centre of the 3" wide face drill a hole only just smaller than the clapper shank where the wood will fit. Mark out 5" each side of this hole, on the centre line and mark square to and down the 2" face at each end of the line. This will be the swinging 'gate' that clamps on to the clapper shank. Before cutting it out, position a hinge at one end and drill a 10mm hole for a clamping bolt about an inch in from the other end. Cut out this gate, fit the hinge and a 10mm coach bolt with a wing nut. If the gate won't close, rasp out the centre hole until it does.

If you can't follow this diagrams are available by request!

Two of us can fit or remove our six silencers in less than 5 minutes. (I have heard of someone who has gone one better by using over-centre clamps instead of wing nuts.)

John Harrison There are pictures and a bit more in the Tower Handbook Pgs 77 – 78

Plain Hunt an alternative approach

A thread was then copied from the REN list describing different ways of teaching plain hunt. *Peter Wenham* uses the row at a time method. Placing the band then ringing 1 row then adding another and so on. *Paul Sharples & Peter Harrison* Use the rapid called changes method, calling the bells through the pattern of plain hunt at each hand stroke.

Peter Dale uses what he calls stepping-stones, the treble makes places to 6th's and back. Once this has been achieved he then gets the treble to 'hunt over the other bells to 6th's and back, this he calls quick step. It keeps the other ringers on their toes as they remain stationary except when the treble comes to them.

John Preston Noted that he had found concentrating on the learners ability to change speed was very helpful. He achieves this by getting the learner to follow him closely and constantly whilst he changes speed. Once mastered he moves the learner on to plain hunt with someone standing behind.

John Harrison Backs this up by saying that the essence of hunting is speed change and points out that the problem with the 1 step at a time approach does not show the learner and change of speed so losing the rhythm. Teaching the rhythm is easily done by getting the student(s) to ring with you whilst all counting out the rhythm together i.e. slow – slow- etc normal – quick – quick etc.

Heather Peachey Teaches speed change by ringing rounds the on command either speeding up or slowing down and holds a discussion with the learners as to what is involved in both.

Bad Handling

Alison Barnett requested ideas for curing the bad habit of taking the left hand off the sally before the end of the handstroke. She had tried the paper trick to no avail. *Catherine Lewis* asked if the tail end was coming in under the thumb

or in the fingers on to the handstroke, thus preventing the proper grasp and use of the sally.

Jude Quinn suggested an alternative to the paper trick was to use a hair scrunchie to keep both wrists together.

Heather Peachey Had a similar problem but cured it through use of a video recorder but pointed out that the learner must want to correct it. She also had another problem with a lady using only her right hand, this was cured by making the lady ring using only her left hand with Heather in close attendance with remarkable results.

John Harrison Had no idea what a scrunchie is but assumed it was just a way of tying the wrists together. He made the point that the 'traditional' way is to make a pair of rope 'handcuffs', the length is critical as you don't want the wrists touching, but moving together. Forcing the wrists too close, does in fact make handling more untidy as your wrists have to bend unnaturally! Some people also recommend a strong, suitable elastic band. The normal approach is to take the exercise back to practising on a static rope, until, hopefully the problem is solved.

David Baker Backed up the tying wrists theory but he uses a length of power cable loosely wrapped about 1 ¼ times round the wrists so that it can easily be pulled apart in an emergency. He also mentioned the need for the tail end to be held correctly with the sally as he feels this is linked to how the tail is released by the right hand in preparation to catch the sally. If the right hand is simply drawn away from the left hand towards the pupil's right side, the fingers of the right hand tend to draw the rope away from the joint between thumb and left hand and the tail-end then automatically finishes up between the fingers and the sally. "I use a 'static' rope and make sure the pupil 'turns the wrists over' at the end of the back-stroke pull as though directing the rope towards a spot on the floor just in front of the feet. Then the right thumb is used to 'smooth'

the rope across the back of the left hand as the right hand performs a half circle around the left before finally releasing the rope and joining the left hand in the upward movement to catch the sally. This action is difficult to describe in words but I think if you follow it in slow motion yourself, you will see what I mean and will probably find you carry out some similar action."

Paul Loxston sent in a request for any ideas on how to cure from being very late in opening his left hand to catch the sally so consequentially the tail is moving round to his fingers. He is going to try working on a static bell.

John Harrison replied that the effect may be the cause as if you hold the rope in your fingers rather than the gap next to your thumb, the rope is more likely to fall out so you delay opening your hand, The missing link is to get the rope into the right place as the hands start to rise for the handstroke. Practising where the rope hangs whilst moving the hands up and down is the key. Delayed action often indicates a lack of confidence.

Richard Pargeter Neatly summarised this thread by saying, a clear instruction to do something rather than NOT to do something invariably yields better results. He finds it helps to make the learner aware of what your aiming for 'feels like' i.e. using a dummy tail end or static rope. On the problem of the tail end not being 'under the thumb' he gives learners a dummy tail end to carry

around in the right position whilst they are not ringing, stressing that it is knowing and in this case being comfortable with the feel of, the required action that is important. He also warned of moving learners on too soon. Probably the mistake I made with my learners!

David Pope has made a request for squared paper for flip charts!! Can anyone help?

Teaching Called Changes

Rodney Stevenson Has 3 'mature' learners struggling to get to grips with called changes. The main problem seems to be, getting them to work out who the bell they are following is following! With someone prompting they do it right, just cant make the decision for themselves.

Patricia Newton says they have flowerpots on the table in the middle of the ringing chamber which they have numbered 1-6. At first the learners watch a good band, moving the flowerpots at each call. The next stage is for the learners to ring and to check they are right by looking at the flowerpots. It keeps the young learners occupied and helps the more mature sort themselves out.

Richard Pargeter walks around the church yard in a line numbered down with no 1 at the front so the learners get the idea of changing speed as well as who to follow at each call.

John Harrison suggests ringing with someone standing behind, constantly asking questions like who am I following, who are they following.

Timothy Mann Gets the learners to start calling the changes themselves, this seems to make them work it out for themselves.

Hearing Loops for the Deaf.

Peter Rivot sent in an attachment about how to install such a loop. Due to its size, if you would like a copy please contact me.

Braunston Ringing Centre (6 bells 15 cwt) is available for monthly 1 day training courses using the simulator for silent practice. You must bring 1 helper per student. Tuition (written or practical) is available from called changes to Cambridge Minor or you can bring your own tutor. 5 student per course recommended individual enquiries will be grouped. Braunston near Rugby is ideally situated for South Midlands ringers. Local B&B available. For more info contact Peter Wenham 01788 891935.