



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary No 27 March/ June 2004

Ringling First Aid

Jon Beale started a discussion about what first aid materials should be on hand in a bell tower. Here is a compilation of the suggestions:

Micropore tape (to patch up sore blistered hands)
blister plasters
Paracetamol - for the noisy towers!
various sizes and types of plaster
a couple of types of tape, plus actual bandage padding
Bacitracin ointment
Ibuprofen
latex gloves
disposable mask for CPR - This isn't much use if you don't have a trained person.
cleaning wipes
a couple of tampons
eyewash (for people who keep looking up)
chemical instant cold packs? Bruises and sprains don't happen much.
mobile phone to call emergency personnel?

If phoning the emergency services if at all possible station someone in an obvious place outside to lead them to the incident. Also give them an idea of what they could be dealing with ie. chest pain, breathing difficulty, unconscious.

Clare McArdle

Appreciating that mobile phones are not quite universally used, is it worth having a note on the first aid box list as to where the nearest always available landline is? And don't assume that it's the phone box that's always been on the corner of the street - BT are stripping quite a lot of them out. It may have gone.

A label giving the tower's name, street address and postcode might go down quite well with the emergency services too. You know where you are - but does (a) a visiting band (b) an ambulance control room at the far end of the county?

Frank Seabright noted: I believe there is a legal reason why drugs should not be available within a first aid kit and that includes Paracetamol and Ibuprofen.

“JMITCH” added: I am a first aider at work and been on a first aid course, was told no medication tablet or ointment to be given or used at any time. And to be in first aid box, gloves, cleaning wipes, eye wash in sealed container, plaster, bandage, pads all wrapped

up, any open package take out. ANY thing more than this without training will open one to prosecution.

And Laura Dickerson added:

What if the person who got a rope burn/popped a blister/sprained a wrist takes the stuff out of the box for him or her self? We don't have a dedicated first aider, although two of us have some simple training.

The US, a hugely litigious society, also has what is called a good Samaritan law. If for example someone has a heart attack in the tower, we start CPR, and s/he dies anyway, we can't be sued for incompetence or whatever the amateur equivalent of medical malpractice would be. We don't have a portable defibrillator (three thousand dollars apiece, I think). All the police cars in Boston are supposed to have them, but fortunately we haven't had to check to see if they're completely equipped. It would probably be good for the church to have one (in addition to being a house of worship, Old North is a tourist attraction) but I don't think they do.

Simulators and AbelSim

A new thread on simulators started with this note on April 14 from Peter Robson, following John's "excellent article in the Ringing World."

John mentioned that there are difficulties associated with pressing buttons whilst ringing/training beginners with the simulator. I have experience using Abel and have made two foot switches which I place next to me on the floor.

When working with a beginner the left switch is set to Auto, and the right is set to escape -[one press = rounds, a press during rounds = stand].

The construction of the switches was easy requiring two resistors, 2 switches and a computer plug. The circuit diagram can be found on the Abel website under footswitches. If I can build it then anyone can.

I recommend giving it a go as it has made teaching/ ringing much easier - mine is attached by a long wire to the computer. I can stand next to the learner and control the computer at the same time. I also never hit the wrong key by mistake.

Getting used to using the switches for bob/single [when ringing touches] is a little more taxing - my feet don't want to do it at the right time!

A simulator is invaluable - go and get one!

Mark Banner wrote about AbelSim on Linux:

I too thought that John's review was excellent and well balanced.

I have had Abel and other ringing programs on my computer for a long time.

I have found a way of getting the Windows programs to run on Linux and have therefore set up a web page detailing how I have done this and what success I have had with various programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.standard8.co.uk/bells/linux.html>

The details are a little sketchy, but I'll try and improve them over time.

Forming a society (April 19 - 27)

Margaret Perrott, April 19

One of the ringers at my tower wants to form a society with a written constitution and membership qualifications. He argues this is essential to know who is entitled to attend the AGM and vote. I think this is overkill in a band of 16 members and feel that if some people are now 'in', others must obviously be 'out'. The vicar seems bemused. What do ringers feel? Is this a sign of modern times? What are the financial implications?

Derek Eastell:

We started as a new band just 6 years ago. There were some old rules which we had inherited but we wrote a simple new set just to put ourselves on a proper footing. In all societies and organisations the rules are not needed for most of the time. However, something will go awry eventually and that is when the rules are needed. If wanted I will happily provide a copy of our rules.

Jenny Cornwell:

I was for many years a member of a band whose rules were deliberately simple and kept to less than 10. The idea was that they could not become too complicated.

We had an annual meeting chaired by the vicar, as I understand it still does. That tower has had a fairly regular change of tower captain and other officers. The only church appointment is/was the steeple keeper.

Michael B-W:

Your member is clearly in need of personal reassurance that he is "in" (as opposed to "out"). My advice is to give them a particularly "important" task within the auspices of the tower and then congratulate them for performing better than any previous holder of the post.

I would suggest "keeper of the attendance register" or "sweeper of the pigeon poo" should keep them busy for a while... and leave you free to ring in peace.

Lynda Coles:

I would suggest "keeper of the attendance register" or "sweeper of the pigeon poo" should keep them busy for a while... and leave you free to ring in peace.

This feels rather harsh to me, I reacted more favourably to Derek Eastell's response.

With 16 people in the band there are inevitably 16 different reasons to be there, the main common factor being a love of ringing. It is unlikely that all 16 are 100% happy all the time. It seems possible that the proposer of the new scheme has some thoughts on how things could be done differently, and maybe feels that the way to voice these thoughts is in a relatively structured debate annually. Perhaps he/she sees the alternative as furtive sub groups plotting in secret, or leaving the tower in sheer frustration. I was on the Hereford Ringing Course last weekend (Highly Recommended) and someone made the point that there are lots of ex ringers around. Why do we never see them in towers? There are undoubtedly several explanations, but tower politics could well be one. Making sure that everyone involved in a tower has an opportunity to have their say can surely only make them feel more involved and included? I am on the reticent side of the line from timid mouse to raging lion, but I would feel incensed if I felt the need to make a point and got fobbed off with being given the position of pooper scooper for having dared to squeak!

Ian Broster

It can be quite a good idea. If a problem exists, if tension is brewing somewhere in the band, then one can consider why the problem is not yet resolved. One possibility is that there is no framework to discuss and solve the problem.

From experience, problems can be anything from regular ringers not being invited to AGMs, or there never being any committee changes, or people wanting to change the way something is done but not being able to discuss it without risking offence.

While a constitution won't solve these, it will go some way towards creating a framework where issues can be discussed: having a regular general meeting where any topic should be open for discussion is more easily managed if there is a written constitution that demands it.

Peter Robson

There are many tower where there is no democracy: this on occasions works well but as the years move on the previously respected and active individual often slowly becomes entrenched and inflexible.

Even worse is the situation where the tower captain sees it as his world and no-one else's, what right does anyone else have to even ask why he does things. I know of a tower like this [when contemplating

maintenance work he even asked why the PCC had to know about work on his bells]. Unfortunately members of the band have, through visiting others, discovered that he does not know everything. Suddenly they are in the position of knowing he is wrong but not having any way of expressing this without offending.

One of the band has quietly taken over the steeple keeper's role (as it was not being done!!) another has taken the accounts. This has been done as delicately as possible but he still feels threatened by them.

What should they do. If their tower had some form of democracy then at least they would have some forum for discussion. At present if they try to discuss anything in the tower they are told 'this is not the place to discuss things in front of the others' - what better place? It's not as if the problem will go away in a number of years - he is in his 50's. They need to resolve this now.

Perhaps those who want people who wish to avoid constitutions/AGM's feel threatened by the implication. I don't see the need to feel threatened as all it does is provide some place where views can be expressed. We all know that it is lack of control that causes stress and disagreement. People are much happier if they have had a chance to make their views known - they may even be persuaded to change their view (or at least consider an alternative) once they have all the facts.

So in summary, do not be afraid of this change - if you are worried that it will be a lot of work then set the person who suggested it the project of getting it up and running - much more useful than shovelling muck.

John Walton

Even worse is the situation where the tower captain sees it as his world and no one else's, what right does anyone else have to even ask why he does things.

A set of tower rules can work in reverse too. I am Ringing Master at a tower in which I am by far the most experienced ringer. This can make it easy for other ringers to expect me to manage the tower, run the ringing, deal with correspondence, maintain the installation, etc. Whilst I may be capable of doing those things, I have no desire to do them all and nor would it advance the cause of the tower in the longer term. What if I were to leave?

Involving those who want to be involved in managing the tower, and have the right skills for doing so, brings benefits to the individuals and also to the tower. Ensure your tower constitution meets the needs of your tower - it may only be very simple. However, if you undergo a European Union type expansion you may find it needs re-drafting!

If it appropriate to do so, please let the list know how your ringers decide to proceed.

Jon Beale

I would concentrate on the ringing, socialising and keeping things fun! All this constitution stuff seems way too serious to me - there is far too much 'politics' within ringing without adding more...
Need I go on ???!!!!

Derek Eastell

Our rules are simple too and our rector chairs our annual meeting, which takes about an hour. All officers are up for election and are TC and vice TC, Secretary/Treasurer (that's me), Steeple-keeper and assistant. We also discuss ideas for outings, social events and recruitment.

Lucy Dawson

We had to amend our Constitution 2 years ago to gently remove our Tower Captain. I am by no means an expert (I'm stuck with the job now!) but we could all see that it wasn't a good idea to ring Bob Doubles on a Sunday morning with 5 ringers who could each just about manage it with a good band around them! But with the previous captain he would just insist on it! So we amended the constitution to have a fixed term of 4 years maximum for each post - to give more people experience, we suggested, and made him deputy for 2 years, then steeplekeeper. I make sure to ask him things frequently! This way he still has an important role, and he must still feel valued as he still attends, but we have some hope of producing passable quality ringing on a Sunday.

Tony Buttle

One issue that does not seem to have been addressed in response to Margaret Perrot's original message is one of insurance.

Many individuals may find that third party liability, and personal injury benefit, are offered as part of their standard household insurance. But traditionally low-level cover has been provided by guilds and parishes for participating ringers.

Guilds are beginning to examine the cost and therefore the affordability of liability insurance with the increase of premiums since 9/11. Eligibility usually follows from being a guild member, duly elected at a meeting of the local district or branch.

The only consistently available cover for personal injury seems to be through your home tower as "employees" of the parish.

I know of a case where an injury claim against a church's standard EIG policy resulted in a request to prove that the ringer was in fact a member of the band. Fortunately, it could be proved that the ringer was an elected member of the tower by providing a copy of the minutes of the annual tower meeting, duly signed by the vicar. Arguably, the annual guild report could be used to indicate who were paid up members of the guild, and by inference, of the parish. But pressure by insurers to assure themselves of legitimate claims may force a more formal approach to membership, and the

minuted AGM/formal election route may prove to be the only watertight solution.

The position on parish-provided insurance is of particular interest to me. As an "unattached" member of a Guild, the potential afforded by being attached to a parish is lost.

Video clips of bells ringing

Frank Seabright inquired in late April about videos that might be used in presentations. We had the following responses:

Ruth Cooper

I don't know about a website but I do know that the BBC included footage of a band ringing in a Teletubbies programme 3 or 4 years ago. It might be worth enquiring if you have no luck anywhere else.

John Thorp

I've used parts of the Central Council video tape 'Bellhandling - a tutor's companion' for a similar purpose (specifically the stretch from 4 minutes 28 secs to 5 minutes 43, which shows a - silenced - bell turning, and the ringer below, and the stretch from 37 mins 46 to 38 mins 28, which shows the whole band ringing, this time with the bells untied). The video is available through the same route as CC paper publications - see occasional adverts in the RW or the CCCBR website.

Laura Dickerson

<http://web.mit.edu/bellringers/www/groton/>
15 second quick-time movies Choose one of the stills with ringing

Gregory Russell

There is very high quality clip at <http://www.cathedral.org/wrs/opot/opot-aboutthebells.htm> about the Old Post Office tower in Washington D.C.

Listening skills

Ian Wells May 6

Has anyone any useful exercises that can be used on a practice night to help people with their listening? Given the tower in question, I don't think facing-outwards style exercises are a very good idea; there's not enough experienced ringers to form a steady band for that sort of thing. I was wondering more if there might be suggestions for people to try while they're sitting out.

Ian Broster May 6

Here's some things we've done with reasonable success.

- don't forget that only one ringer at a time needs to face out.
- emphasis on the idea that someone else's error should not affect the rhythm of the rest of the band, relate this to one person facing out, and get the band to listen (or, look around) to all the ringers so that if eg the 3 is in the wrong place, the 4 should be right with respect to the 1 and 2.
- from bell handling stages onwards, emphasise that you use your ears to place the bell, but you can use your eyes as a rough guide to help at first.
- in call changes: ask someone to tell you what position they are in. If they can't say, then you can count the bells aloud in time, emphasising which bell is theirs.
- do the above when sitting out and looking away: "what position is the treble in?"
- also (sitting out and of course during ringing) ask "Which bells are clipping?" "Which stroke?"
- don't tell a person how to correct their striking straight away, e.g. rather than "3, close the handstrokes" say at first "3, be careful with the handstrokes" etc.
- sit one person out and ask them to comment on the ringing, and let the rest of the band hear their comments.
- get the person sitting out to have a pen and paper, and to work like a judge at a striking comp: have 120 boxes and put a dot/tick or cross/slash for each row.
- use a small number of bells, eg 4. Slow 4 bell ringing is quite hard, but easy to hear and builds the listening skills.
- the first CC listening CD is v. good. Although, you need to be careful to allocate time (to avoid the thoughts of "why are we wasting time? We could be ringing!")
- get good rounds before any method. If the method is badly struck, go to plain hunt for a bit
- spend half an hour each week explicitly working on striking, use the exercises above and any more. For example ring nothing but excellent plain hunt or called changes every week for the first 30 mins.

Christine Baldock May 6

I have had one session, with another arranged for June, at my home with the Listening CD.

The session started with a discussion on reasons for poor striking. We then did a good number of the exercises on the CD and went through the mistakes picking up, in the nicest possible way, on reasons why a question had been answered differently. Then we listened to some perfect ringing.

This was followed by home made cake and tea which sugared the pill!! Six members of the tower took part and found it most helpful and have been able to put some points into practice.

It was helpful being in a relaxed atmosphere and did not interfere with ringing time. It also makes the point that developing listening skills is a very important part of ringing and needs extra time.

Peter Wenham May 7

Firstly, while learners are sitting out, have them count the bells ringing in rounds, 1-2-3-4-5-6-GAP-1-2-3-etc, fitting GAP to the open lead, counting out loud at first. This develops rhythmic counting. Next, have them emphasise the count of a particular bell, I suggest 3. This starts them listening for the chosen bell. Next, continue counting the bells as they sound while ringing rounds, emphasising their own bell. This relates sound to hands position as their bell strikes. In time, continue the exercises into call changes, plain hunt, etc.

!Methods

Jenny Cornwell May 6

David and Kate were at the Wakefield show. They are doing some more work to their !Methods. So far they have introduced a new alternative screen with ringers arranged on an ellipse with one ringer, the one nearest to you, with only his/her hands showing. This represents your hands as you catch and ringing hand and backstroke. (This is an excellent demonstration of the right way to catch a sally)

They are looking into ways for indicating to a learner which bell they should look for and ring after next.

They are willing to show and discuss with others what they are doing.

Kaleidoscope Ringing

Peter Wenham May 9

At the Conference I was very interested to learn about Kaleidoscope ringing as I consider we should always take note of any suggested improvements in how we teach. Having learnt, I intend to give it a try at the earliest opportunity and test its practical value. However, with every respect to Gordon, may I suggest that a simpler title such as 'Mix and Match' might be more appropriate from a marketing aspect.

Recruiting and retaining children

Lynda Coles May 11

One of my three sessions at Warwick (an excellent day - thank you organisers) was on this topic, and I wonder if anyone else out there could add to my personal mini survey as to what makes them stick. The comment is often made that youngsters prefer to be in a group with others, but my personal experience is 100% opposite to this. A teen at our tower started learning amongst all over 40's when she was 13. She continued, never missing a practice or service ring without good cause and prior apology, for well over 5 years, and university commitments claimed her.

Victor and I both think that had we encountered ringing as teens we would not have been influenced or put off by the fact that we were 'on our own'. Teenagers are often extremely unpleasant to each other

in school, and a bit of light relief in the evenings among unabrasive adults must, in some cases at least, be quite relaxing.

Someone else made the point that where his own family was concerned, friends were from a very narrow age range - anyone a couple of years away from their own age was as much of an outsider as adults. It also seems to me to be too much of a generalisation to suppose that 'all' teenagers want the same thing, any more than all 55 year olds do.

My personal experience is obviously very narrow - I would be really interested to know what others think.

Cyril Crouch May 12

Most of our experience at Shiplake has, until recently, been from starting youngsters at age 10, that is, before they move on to secondary school. The odd one has not fitted with the group, but in general the peer group principle has prevailed. At that age they appear to feel more comfortable in a group.

Recently we have started teaching boys in the age range 13 to 16 from the adjacent private college. They seem comfortable both as a group and as individuals, perhaps as they are more mature and are required to be more self reliant.

Catherine Lewis May 12

I quite agree with Lynda that youngsters don't need ghettos.

We have three teenagers in our immediate area at the moment, both in bands that have only been around since 2000.

One is now 18 and started ringing 4 years or so ago. She seems to have been hooked from an early stage and has always said that she enjoys good ringing and therefore she prefers ringing with experienced people, most of whom are older. She's been an active member of the District Committee for a couple of years, rings peals, Her local band has a large proportion of quite elderly ladies, though her mother (not elderly) is now tower captain..

Two more, brothers, are around 14 and 16 now and have been ringing around a year. They attend a local public school which takes a lot of their time, but are pretty regular at their home tower and take opportunities to get out when they can. I haven't discussed it with the younger one, but the older one, who seems to be getting hooked, says it's so good to get away from everything else he does and do something quite different with a completely different set of people. Their local band is mainly middle-aged ladies - a very jolly crowd, but middle-aged ladies none-the-less.

It is probably key that all these youngsters have been taught to handle reasonably well (though I say it myself!) and have been introduced to the wider world of ringing as early as possible. Therefore they have an

idea what ringing has to offer. They also all have supportive parents.

Perhaps it is also worth noting that in all cases we have had to plan training programmes round their timetables and accept that their attendance at service/practice has to be a little bit subservient to other things in their lives.

Raymond Kefford May 12

In reply to your question, our band is mostly over 40. We have one teenager and two slightly younger who were very friendly with each other. At least, we did. These two have now gone their separate ways and we are at risk of losing one of them. Amongst adults this wouldn't happen as they would still meet at the tower. However, children seem to want to avoid situations in which they then meet each other and may choose to give up ringing for that reason.

We are still hoping she will come back to us (and will do what we can to stay in touch) but it seems unlikely now.

Peter Wenham May 12

In reply to Lynda's missive, whilst my experience in this area is also limited I would comment that my most successful young (11 y.o.) student was a 'loner' who fitted in well in adult company. Others have drifted away before becoming Sunday ringers. Whether this has been due to peer pressure or whether they were just trying ringing for kicks I cannot say. (It may be relevant that I also was a loner!)

Caroline Birdsell May 12

We have 6 youngsters in our united parish team (4 x 6 bell towers) - 2 pairs have parents and the other 2 come independently from different directions, aged between 11 and 15.

The most experienced (aged 14) girl was encouraged to gather a youth team for our branch striking contest - 3 home team, 1 from cathedral, 1 other school friend from next tower and 1 from further distant who is brought by ringing father and brother to monthly practices with us - (aged as above) and they won the Fun section (6 entered), coming 4th overall of the 12 teams which entered both Fun and Sunday Service.

last year 4 of them attended YACR Whirlow course - this year 5 of them are hoping to go

3 of them are attending confirmation classes and as they have 3 ringing parents between them - guess who'll be ringing the post-service touch? what's more it's ground floor open to the church ringing

It helps having ringing parents there as well - I'm reluctant to teach (and transport) without parental attendance - but I am keen to get them involved in other church activities and keep the congregations and community informed of who we/they are and what we have all been doing -

As far as the age thing is concerned - they came in singly and were each totally taken to heart by all members of the team - we treat them as equals not as children - they have to understand from the start that discipline and safety are the most important aspects of time in the tower and they are now beginning to get ahead of many of the team in skill (comes from having active brains) and are admired and respected by us all. It perhaps helps that the team is young in terms of formation (5 years) and therefore are all learning together.

Recruitment awards?

Martin Mansley May 23

I was wondering if anyone has any experience with running an award to encourage recruitment. Our branch run a shield for progress in method ringing but we are considering one to reward towers for recruitment. How can we measure recruitment and/or retention? We would be looking at an annual award.

Lynda Coles This idea has occurred to me in the past. I've never pursued it on the basis that all towers would like to recruit, and it feels as though 'lucky' ones would gain twice over - with not only extra members but a prize to boot. I'll be interested to see if any areas do run such a scheme.

I would personally say that recruitment is successful if a newcomer shows up in the tower more than once. Retention has happened if after a year they consider themselves to be a part of the tower, and have been present during their first year for at least half of the practices/Sunday services available to them.

Learning to look

Peter Robson asks how to help someone who rings entirely by rhythm to develop ropesight (June 14)

She rings at a tower that rings by following numbers, however she very quickly found that "the rope became an extension of herself" and started to ring by rhythm. She attended a branch meeting and discovered regular striking/ringing, she has rapidly progressed so that she can ring well with good striking on 5 or 6. She has started to move onto 8 but has become hopelessly confused. On talking to her it seems that she has learnt entirely by rhythm...

... She is being encouraged to start looking - she probably needs to do this very slowly, just concentrating on course/after bells at the lead and lie, then start looking for the treble. At the moment she is not ready for more.

I wonder how you all think we should proceed from here. It is wonderful that someone has managed to develop this skill so well without ropesight.

There was a general consensus that listening is more valuable than looking, and harder to learn, so her accomplishment is noteworthy. There were a number of different views on how to proceed, though!

Laura Dickerson: The next thing to do to help her ring on 8 is to work on counting her place and relating it to the blue line. In terms of looking, what you've told her is plenty, or maybe more than enough. Looking for the course and after bell is the best way to start. I'd suggest that if she's having trouble seeing, she start working on *listening* to the treble, and then learn to relate what she sees to what she is hearing. She could also do this while standing out - following the treble or choosing one bell and trying to see its course and after bell come to lead.

My claim has always been that ropesight is acquired, rather than learned deliberately. ... Seeing the ropes worked this way for me, and I was hunting for a long time before I had any idea of which bell to follow, just by counting my place and listening.

Raymond Kefford expressed the opinion that new skills might need to be developed using non-visual strategies, whereas the blue-line is often learned visually.

Laura later responded: One of the hardest things as a tutor is to try to discern someone's learning style. ...

A good thing to go along with the auditorium explanation of down to the front, up to the back is regular stairs. Hunting up is walking up, hunting down is walking down, pausing at the landings at each end is lying behind or leading full. For a dodge, one literally takes a step back and then goes on hunting up or down. Not a visual representation but a very physical one.

It was suggested to use ear muffs to "put her back to the stage of a learner." Several people expressed some alarm at this, as it would deprive her of the most important cues, and likely "prevent development, not encourage it".

Barbara Le Gallez has been ringing a year and a half, and finds ropesight difficult. She writes:

Earmuffs do help!

... While standing out this morning, I covered my ears, and found that I could follow the ropes with a little more confidence.

I suppose that it helps because, once you know sight's all you've got, then you make sure you use it to the maximum. Perhaps it's analogous to forcing yourself not to look at the translation when reading a foreign language.

Laura Dickerson wrote: The part about depriving one sense to focus on another is true, of course - it's why we sometimes ring with our backs to the centre of the circle to force people to listen. (As an aside I think everyone should be able to ring in the dark, in case of a sudden power outage, so practising a few strokes at a time with eyes shut is good too.) It's just so shocking to deny someone the option of listening, which is the most important sense we have for bellringing. I still think that ropesight will come gradually and that you shouldn't pressure the learner into abandoning other good skills in order to try to speed up the acquisition of ropesight.

Peter Robson (the original poster): The learner in question at present has no vision aspect to her ringing at all. I wonder whether going back to looking on 5 with a cover would be the best start.

At present she can't even begin to look as she is too busy thinking about the method and how it extends to more bells - I agree that call changes on 6 [with her telling us who she is following] - perhaps just watching at first prior to ringing it herself.

The real question, once she has started to develop a little seeing in this manner, is how next to proceed.

Phil Dunn writes: I think there is a lot to be gained from ringing call changes, and gradually introducing "The Spanish Inquisition", ie asking the learner progressively who they are following, who is following them, which bell is 2 places in front of them etc, until they can describe the full order of the bells.

Another possibility is to ring plain hunt with only 2, 3 or 4 bells with multiple cover bells, so that there are initially fewer ropes to look at and fewer places to see.

John Harrison had a number of useful thoughts:

Alternatively, is it that on 6 there is a reasonable rhythm around her, but on 8 it is too shaky to hear a decent rhythm? That makes ringing by rhythm a lot harder, whereas it is possible to hack your way around more or less by ropesight when the ringing is in a heap.

On talking to her it seems that she has learnt entirely by rhythm

That shouldn't be a problem providing:

- a - she knows what she is doing,
- b - the other bells ring in the right place.

Her local helpers are trying to help but of course with her background she doesn't even understand the words that are being used.

I am mystified to know what the words are. Are they trying to help her do what she is trying to do - ring rhythmically on 8, or are they trying to make her ring like them, looking for bells to follow. Maybe it is not the words but the messages that are the problem.

... just concentrating on course/after bells at the lead and lie, then start looking for the treble.

I don't think I would start there for someone with no ropesight.

Start her looking for first and last bells while standing out (stand next to her and get her to tell you them as they come). Then put her on a cover (which she can ring by rhythm with her eyes shut) and get her to look for the bells coming up in front of her. That should get her to start co-ordinating her looking with what her own arms are doing. Get her (standing out) to follow an individual bell and say when it is at the front and at the back. Get her to spot and tell you every time two bells pass each other. These all encourage taking in the pattern of the moving ropes and extracting useful information.

I suspect though that lack of ropesight is not the cause of her problem, merely the cure that other people expect her to use, but which she can't.

The problem is presumably that she has difficulty ringing 8 bell methods. Why not help her to ring 8 bell methods by rhythm?

Make sure she understands how the methods generalise from 6 to 8 and that she thoroughly knows 'what' she is doing. Then find a simulator and give her a decent chance to ring it (by rhythm) with the other bells not striking badly or making mistakes. That should give her some confidence back, and she will then be in a much better position to tackle ringing 8 bell methods with imperfect striking around her - and to think about tackling a new skill - ropesight

Explain that she needs to develop ropesight as a means of seeing what is happening round her, in order to:

- a) provide signposts about what to do next (if she is unsure) and to correct her mistakes (if she goes wrong);
- b) be able better to allow for other people going wrong (and possibly being able to help them correct their mistakes);
- c) be able to get into the 'right ball park' if the ringing is such a mess that it is impossible to hear what is happening.

Do not try to persuade her that she needs ropesight as an alternative to ringing by rhythm (and listening).

For more on teaching and learning ropesight, see The Tower Handbook, pages 193 and 225 respectively.

Peter responded: Firstly, thank you for your useful advice John. It is always helpful to know how far back to go when starting to teach something that you see as easy and obvious.

With respect to the words... 'in and out' made sense to her but 'up and down' it turned out to her meant the opposite! I explained it by using the rope analogy - holding up over bells to go up to the back.

The comment about making her change to ring like them is very apt. People saw her ringing as a problem, whereas in reality it will stand her in great stead.

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The tower where we were ringing probably has the steadiest rhythm she has rung with. She just didn't 'see' the extra bells and when there was no cover could not clearly pick out the rows, despite the clear rhythm.

I will try out your ideas next time we meet and keep encouraging her.

Chinsta00 commented: Developing ropesight is probably the wrong way of improving striking, after all you don't judge a striking competition by looking at the ropes!

Your ringer has a well developed 6 bell rhythm and needs to develop 8 bell rhythm. I would suggest that ringing 8 bells as much as possible would be the way to go, whether with a band or on a simulator.

If possible she should ring the tenor (or at least around the back) so the preceding bells can set a rhythm and inter-bell gap to follow.

John adds: These and similar terms cause problems for many learners. There is a leaflet aimed at learners called 'Ringing Jargon Explained', from CC Publications. (There is also the much more comprehensive glossary in The Tower Handbook.)

... you are talking about her listening skills ... being stretched on uncovered Major. Getting her up to speed on an 8 bell rhythm ringing Triples would be an obvious stepping stone. Practising listening to higher numbers using the CD 'Listening to Ringing - Live' could also help - also from CC Publications.

Do you have e-mail? *John Harrison, Chairman CC Education Committee writes:*

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