



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary March 2003

Welcome to the 18th summary of NRT postings, I am sorry it's a little late! John Harrison started the month with an idea from the NRT Conference.

Masterclasses

John Harrison wrote, one of the ideas for local events that came out of the NRT conference in November was to organise some masterclasses. Quite a few people seemed to agree with this though we did not discuss it in any detail. To take the idea forward requires a clear idea of what exactly is needed.

Then it is a matter of finding places, dates and people to take part. What is a masterclass? I offer this definition as a starter for members to agree with or suggest a better one. 'A masterclass is an educational process where the audience learn about a skill by observing someone being tutored in the skill, and asking questions.' In the context of NRT, the skill we are trying to share is not ringing itself but teaching ringers, so there is an additional layer to consider. Whether a masterclass on teaching can still be based on the master and a pupil is something we would have to decide. Alternatively, it might need the master, a student instructor and a ringer being instructed by the student. In principle, the subject of a masterclass could be any aspect of teaching ringing, including bell control, rounds ringing, call changes or method ringing. Different aspects would need handling differently, for example some could use a single subject under instruction while others would require a team. We might also speculate on whether the 'audience' could overlap with the 'student'. I suspect that the

practical constraints for a masterclass on say teaching bell control would be considerably more than for one on say playing the cello, so we might need to bend some of the ground rules of the traditional masterclass format. If you have views on this topic, please let us know. In particular: 1 - Are you happy with the definition? (If not suggest improvements) 2 - Do you have any suggestions for making the idea workable? 3 - What factors would make you want to take part (in which role?)

Ron Warford replied, I am very much in favour of Master classes and of the definition. We need trainers with an accepted track record of the topic (teaching handling say) willing to make themselves available to take the class. We need to set up a circuit for the event in (say) 10 Regions of the country. We need to acquire "guinea pigs" for the topic. We need invited attendees. I think that a class of this nature probably needs a duration of 5 hours - which will be quite demanding on all concerned, but all the more worthwhile. We also need to charge for the class. Count me in, in any capacity.

Edward Mould replied, whilst agreeing that there may well be a need for Masterclasses in order to Improve Tuition Standards, etc, I feel that there may also be a need to, perhaps, review the activities AND results of the numerous Ringing Centres/Schools that have been set up all over the country in the last ten years or so. Full marks to the noble Company which is now financing such Centres BUT who ascertains whether Value for Money is being obtained? I know, for a fact, that one of

the very first Ringing Centres is very under-utilised and has not even got a regular band of ringers to ring for its weekly Church Services! -- This after at least 10 years. At the present rate of progress(or lack of it),in about twenty years time the `skeleton` of remaining ringers will be dashing round to at least half a dozen towers each Sunday, in both city and country areas. Drastic, urgent, action is needed to improve radically the Recruitment and Retention of Ringers everywhere.

Alan Foster asked, does the ODG still have the video of Steve Coleman doing something along these lines at Witney? Perhaps we could learn from this, or use it as a starting point.

Lynda Coles wrote, a quickie on retention. I had two unrelated conversations in as many weeks recently, both with red zone ringers. Both had moved area over 20 years ago. Both visited their local church on practice night. Neither was made to feel welcome/ invited to the pub/ encouraged to return next week. Both the following week went to the next nearest tower. Both are still there over 2 decades later.

Peter Dale wrote, I don't agree entirely with your definition John. As the term itself implies, a masterclass is a lesson presented by a master, often in the presence of an audience, to people of experience so that they can enhance skills they already possess. This introduces your additional layer automatically because a student in a masterclass is either a teacher, or is able and willing to become one. This would apply from say teaching method structure right up to teaching bell handling. I recall being a student of Mike Henshaw's on a course on conducting. The audience in this case were fellow students who had not done much conducting. One or two of us had called peals and were there to pick up tips on putting things right when people went wrong. It was in effect a masterclass although we didn't refer to it as such. In a

ringing context one would expect a fair amount of audience participation, but the distinction ought to be drawn between students and members of the audience. The former are the active participants; the latter learn passively by observing the teaching process. I am currently planning a masterclass for the more advanced ringers in our local band in how to splice methods. I'd be pleased to muck in with any initiatives along these lines. Edward's example of a failing centre touches upon a concern of mine. As a recipient of a Founders' grant we at Dover feel an enormous sense of responsibility in ensuring that we give "Value for Money". We have only just started operating as a centre but already we have been required to complete a report form on our activities. Our status as a Ringing Centre is conditional upon fulfilling certain conditions, and that is reassuring up to a point. However, no matter how much reporting and monitoring is carried out, there are bound to be differences in standards across the network depending upon the number, calibre, and enthusiasm of the people involved at each centre. This does raise questions about what measures can and should be taken to safeguard the investment of a Founders' grant should a centre cease to operate. Thankfully our centre seems to be on a rising star at present, but we have no illusions about how quickly the fortunes of a tower can change. With that in mind, we have made it clear to our PCC that the equipment purchased with the grant should pass to the Kent County Association to establish another centre in the event that we cease to function effectively.

Grandsire Doubles.

Clare McArdle wrote, Can anyone recommend a constructive way to teach Grandsire Doubles once a learner has achieved a plain course and is comfortable with an "observation" touch. I have a number of ringers at this stage

and it occurs to me that it would be really good to be able to call touches that make them concentrate on just one or two pieces of work - in the same way as the traditional observation touch works, before putting it all together. A number of people seem to really struggle with the transition from "observation" touches to "all the work". I suppose what I'm really asking is are there some touches that anyone could recommend that say put a bell in and out of the hunt only, or where a bell only makes long 3rds? I am relatively new to conducting and so am finding these sorts of things difficult to source.

Fred Bone replied, in and out of the hunt is easy: a bob every lead (for 2 or 4). It comes round in two leads so it's a bit boring, though it's fine for the learner's first "inside" touch. The learner does 3rds-and-in and double-dodge 4-5 down (*). You can repeat it as it is, or lengthen it a bit by calling singles when the learner is doing the 4-5 down: SBSB for 2 or BSBS for 4. Again, repeat until the rest of the band threaten mutiny. (*) Note that this is precisely the "observation" work backwards. Up to you whether you tell the learners beforehand, or let them notice it for themselves. For 3 or 5, you need to take a run at it, so to speak: start with two or one (respectively) plain leads, and then repeat BSBS until everyone's had enough, and finish with one or two plain leads. You can't "just" do long 3rds without something between, but that only has to be a plain lead: SPSP works for 4, PSPS for 3. The victim (sorry, learner) alternates between long 3rds at every single, and 4-5 down (single dodge) at the plain leads. For 2, call a bob and follow with SPSP (repeated if you like) and bring it round with another bob; for 5, a bob and follow with PSPS (repeated) and round with another bob. The best way to source touches is with pencil and paper! That helps you develop a feel for how it all fits together. And it's easier than you think. If you're having trouble getting Grandsire

Doubles to come round, call 2 or 3 into the hunt (whichever is convenient), then if it doesn't come round within three leads, call 3 or 2 in instead with a single and it will come round next lead end (at handstroke if 3 is in the hunt). (Exercise: work out why!)

Ian Broster wrote I always felt that the link between Grandsire Doubles and Plain Bob Minimus is under-used. If the learner learns where to pass the treble before each piece of work in bob minimus, then this transfers directly to Grandsire doubles. E.g. in PB4: pass the treble in 3rds place means 3-4 up. In Grandsire5, this becomes 4-5 up. Likewise for all other positions, making seconds, passing treble in 2nd place becomes thirds etc. The reason I say this is because people struggle to remember the passing the treble rules in Grandsire. If you can relate it to something more natural, then it helps them to memorise it. Also, this skill transfers to all stages, e.g. if you can ring bob minor by the treble then Grandsire triples follows directly.

Phil Gay replied, I introduce novices to Grandsire Doubles as follows (they can usually ring PB doubles already): 1) The plain course. 2) The "false 90" - this is the 3-course touch with the bobs called when the novice is making thirds, and is equivalent to the unaffected touch in PB. 3) With the novice on the third, call the 39 - into the hunt and stay there till it comes round. 4) Then call the third into the hunt, out at 2, and before i.e. the 5th obs 60. 5) Then introduce singles, and finally teach the observation touch. Note that each stage introduces only one novel thing.

Heather Peachey wrote, the salient point here, that learners don't tend to work out for themselves, is that Grandsire Doubles is quite simply Plain Bob Minimus with 2 hunt bells. The calls seem very different when first encountered, but are soon learned when understood. Explain that the hunt bell needs to change, and that this process needs a slightly extended set of

changes. The pair of bells that work on the front at a call are the two who have just dodged together at the back; one goes into the hunt if there's a bob, the other does if there's a single. While they're doing this, the other pair double dodge on the back, and carry on the work as if they had just done a single dodge in the plain course in that position (a good opportunity to explain place bells if not already introduced). An interesting challenge, a way of isolating and practising a Grandsire Single and a bit of variety is to ring April Day - ring Plain Bob Doubles, with 3 Grandsire Singles, called when the observation bell is making 2nds, and thus unaffected.

Peter Humphrey wrote, I've been puzzling recently over how to construct a device that would start by showing plain 4 or 6 (with, say, a strip of plastic representing the column of rows, with red and blue lines shown -- perhaps something like a slide rule) and then slide to a new position to accommodate the insertion of the second hunt bell. The effects would have to include moving the dodges up one blow and later ditto, thus simultaneously showing the upside-down dodging, but I can't see how to make a suitable model. In spite of having been accused more than once of having too theoretical an approach to many things, I'm certain that a clearer graphical depiction of some of the processes and relationships involved in ringing would considerably benefit a great many people, at whatever stage of development.

Ringling Centres

Gail Cater Chairman, CC Ringling Centres Committee wrote, Re. Peter Dale and Edward Mould's messages referring to standards in ringling centres - the CC Ringling Centres Committee is well aware of the issue. There is indeed one ringling centre which received one of the first grants and which is now inoperative. Where the ringling centre is

the brainchild of one person, the risks of it failing if that person is no longer able to manage it, for whatever reason, are high which is why we now almost always need to see that association support will be forthcoming before we agree the allocation of a grant.. Now that the Founders Scheme is drawing to a close, the Committee will turn its attention to what is actually happening in ringling centres. We already ask for an annual report on activities in order to maintain CC recognition, and will be open to ideas on how we can encourage high standards. We do wish to encourage the teaching of young people and the training of trainers but do not intend to impose any kind of inspection on the centres and have no wish to attempt to control the activities of centres. This would not be necessary or desirable because people who put in the effort required to set up and operate ringling centres are people who are interested in teaching ringling and improving ringling standards anyway - we not infrequently see valuable contributions from them on this list. Peter Dale's comment about the safeguarding of the Founders investment is to be welcomed. I don't know that anyone else has come up with a better idea than for it to be given to someone else for safekeeping and continued use.

This is a brief summary of March's postings. If you would like any greater details on any of the points raised, please contact me.

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