



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary Autumn 2004

Welcome to the NRT Summary of Autumn postings. *Andrew Harper* asked if anyone knew where to get a 3D model of a bell from for training purposes? The only reply was that the speed of a 3D model was too great so for training purposes a 2D model was best.

Attracting children *Andrew Harper* wanted ideas for a talk to children about ringing, would it be advisable to include some history etc? The reply back was, keep it simple. Use plenty of pictures and visual aids. Try to simplify terms i.e. don't give the weight in tons give it in teachers tied together or bags of sugar. Check with your church's insurance policy to find out whether you can actually teach the children of the age you are talking to. This led to a reply by *Aidan Hopkins* that what they usually say is that there is Personal Accident cover for persons within a particular age range, typically 16-65, 16-70 or 12-70. This is because this type of insurance was (historically) intended to replace earnings, and people outside the age range concerned would not be working. By implication younger and older folk are not covered for this type of insurance. Therefore if they have an accident they cannot claim. IIRC the default age limit in Ecclesiastical Church policy was 16-70, but one could arrange for it to be endorsed to 12-70. How many older ringers stop at 65 or 70 because of this? None, I would hope; What is very important is Public Liability insurance. Church and similar policies do NOT put any age restrictions on this class of insurance (to my fairly recent knowledge – I stopped working as an insurance broker early in 2002). *Andrew replied*, I thought it prudent to check on the cover afforded to bellringers at my tower. In brief: Your public liability insurance protects the interests of the PCC should they be held legally liable for any third party sustaining accidental bodily injury or accidental property damage in connection with Church activities. This cover includes an indemnity to authorised volunteers (including bellringers) if they are in fact found legally liable for an incident. Accident cover applies where bodily injury occurs. Junior ringers must be at least 8 years old. Written consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian for each child to ring or to be taught to ring. Children must be in good health, and of suitable height, build and temperament. Children must be suitably experienced or be in the process of being taught to ring. It should be at the discretion of the Ringing Master as to whether or not a child is suitable. At least one responsible adult other than

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the Ringing Master (e.g. the parent of one of the children present, or an experienced adult ringer) must be present when children are in the bell tower. A record should be maintained of each junior ringer's instruction and training and their level of competence. *Andrew* made a presentation to two different schools covering various topics then let the children have a go on some handbells and got 4 recruits out of it. The reason they came was apparently the handbell ringing.

Recovering lost skills *Raymond Kefford* asked for advice on a problem he had where a ringer had attended a different practice regularly and had actually got worse in his ability to strike and to see greater bell number methods as a result. He asked how he could redress this problem sensitively. The answers came back: Taking the whole band step by step through the parts of a method with decent rounds rung on the other bells, swapping people in and out. Ringing a quarter peal. Taking it 'back to basics' but involving the whole band. Visiting other towers with greater numbers of bells and asking for some plain hunt.

Handstroke gap A question was forwarded from the change ringers list about ringers only managing the handstroke gap with an equal, or slightly less, backstroke gap. Somehow their body rhythm won't allow asymmetrical pulls. Ask them to vary one and the other is automatically adjusted the same amount. Perhaps we have to change the early handling rhythm so they never start with even pulling with the teacher on one stroke, where it feels natural to keep pulling evenly. One ringer controls the bell by getting it right up at backstroke because he is unsure of catching the sally and skimps on the backstroke pull to get ready to catch. This habit has become impossible to change. This seems to be a common problem with lots of postings saying they have seen the same thing. Answers came back: Keep on reminding about how to pull. Put the learners into short bursts of rounds before they are independent to get used to the rhythm. Ensuring learners focus on both strokes not just letting the one naturally follow on from the first. Don't ring independently for too long. Try teaching following another bell right from the start (especially helpful with older learners!). Teach each stroke with equal amounts of attention. Make the learner aware of the effects of over/under pulling, and how to adjust their ringing to compensate for it. Ensure the learner has the correct length of rope and knows how to adjust it.

A discussion followed on from the previous thread about length of rope versus weight of rope and how it might affect the backstroke, open handstroke or wheel sizes. I have tried to abbreviate what followed down to a sensible size, if you would like a copy of the full postings please ask. This was started by a posting from *Peter Humphrey*. A few months ago I wrote a letter to the RW advocating an unequal timing of bells to give a natural handstroke gap without the ringer having to depart from a strictly regular rhythm. Unfortunately I worded it rather obscurely, and it didn't provoke any comment. In other words, all bells should be adjusted to ring slow at handstroke, by an amount determined by the number of bells normally rung together – the offset would be less on a 12 than an 8, etc. A discussion followed about whether the length of rope affected the pull of the handstroke or just the size of the wheel. Does the length of draft affect the pull; wouldn't it be better just to slightly adjust the clapper, or the position of the garter hole? Most seemed to agree that the rope contributed to the open handstroke but not the reason why. Reasons like: the slightly harder pull at backstroke (which is what the rope does for you) certainly affects the timing: because the bell picks up more speed on the way down, it rises higher on the way up, and this delays the following strike because of the extra time needed both to rise to that height and to fall from it. The closer the bell is to reaching the balance (where it can teeter), the more the delay. And because the small bells rise further than the big ones, and are more affected by the rope weight, the effect should be more pronounced for them. The basis of full circle ringing is that timing varies with the height to which the bell swings. If it is evenly struck and it is made to swing higher at one stroke than the other, then the timing of the two strokes will be different. If the bell is so adjusted that the weight of the rope naturally produces the desired open handstroke rhythm, then the ringer will not need to apply any differential force between strokes to make it do so. (S)he can apply the same small force to both strokes, in order to keep the rope taut, overcome friction, and have a little in hand for errors. In that sense, the pulling is even – even forces. What will not be even though, is the rhythm of the two strokes, one will be higher and slower, the other will be less high and quicker. The ringer on the end of the rope will feel this, and must match it in order to ring correctly. That is possibly why Peter says he still feels the need to open the handstrokes. So if the bells and ropes were adjusted to give 'self opening leads' the ringers would still need to be taught about open leads, they would still need to learn the asymmetric rhythm, and move their arms in accordance with it. The difference is that instead of having to force the bell to ring that way against its natural inclination, all that is needed is to respond sympathetically to the bell's natural behaviour. The point was then made that if different numbers of bells were rung in a tower, say the front 6 of 8 or if muffles were put on,

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wouldn't this then affect the settings. Isn't it just easier to teach open handstrokes! The point was then made that it might be a good idea to just help the bigger bells to ring a little more easily. The reply came back that as the biggest problem of most bells to strike evenly was the fact they were odd struck in the first place, shouldn't this be the first thing for everyone to tackle? It was then suggested we should weight the ropes. Given that an extra half second of pull from a few kilos of rope already gets you some of the way, clipping weights to the rope ought to do the rest. You would need a high enough ceiling, or a middle chamber, but it would at least be a quick way to test whether the idea has any merit. If it has, it might be possible to persuade a rope maker to load the sally in some way to make it heavier (use wool from the Lake District, perhaps, where the sheep drink heavy water?) The reply came back: attaching a weight to the rope would do more than increase the downward force. It would alter the lateral dynamic behaviour as well. Most ropes undergo some lateral movement. They might be slightly drawn, the sally will nudge one side or the other of the rope guide as it goes through, and even good handling is not geometrically perfect. Adding a significant extra mass at one point will reflect the tiny waves that normally pass harmlessly up and down the rope, and potentially cause exaggerated movement, which will then cause similar problems to bad handling. But some towers had found increased handling benefits by altering the weight of the top end of the rope. Adding weights to the wheels was then suggested, or altering the size but this was deemed not to have any effect on the handling. After discussing the science involved, it is still down to the ringer to get the bell to strike where he/she wants it to strike.

This is a brief roundup of the Autumn postings. If you would like any greater detail, please contact me at the address below.

Alison Barnett
76 Summerfields Way
Shipley View
Ilkeston
Derby
DE7 9HF