



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary Sept to Nov 2005

Knuckle Pain

Laura Dickerson asked - One of our ringers rang her first quarter a couple of weeks ago (tenoring behind to Doubles). She has a history of overpulling, to the point of harming the skin on her hands, but ringing non-stop for 45 minutes seems to have resulted in knuckle pain, more in the middle fingers but some in all. Does this mean that in addition to pulling too hard she is grasping the rope too tightly? We have been working on her handling, but this is quite worrisome - her blisters heal, but I don't want her to develop longterm joint damage. *John Harrison felt that grasping the rope too tightly was the cause. He suggested trying the rope tension exercise in The Tower Handbook p167.*

Quoting Advice

Laura Dickerson wrote I am planning to write up a section on how to teach blind people to ring for the new bellringers' wiki. <http://www.bellringers.org/wiki/>. The easiest way to begin would be to compile the advice already posted to these lists and expand upon that. I'm checking here to see whether people would prefer that I quote directly, with attribution, or paraphrase and not give the name of the original poster.

Only one reply was posted but Giles Blundell was happy to have his contributions quoted. As I understand it, wikis are meant to be free for anyone to edit. So in practice, I don't think that attributing everything will be particularly viable - or articles will end up unreadably structured as 'x says this, but y says that while on another occasion x has said the other'.

Printing Methods

Freda Cleaver - I wish to print off various methods for learners and slightly more advanced ringers in our tower rather than me always having to write them out by hand. I have an iMac OS X and have Virtual PC on it so I can load Abel. This is not very successful as the striking sounds dreadful and I cannot print off any method longer than one lead before it messes up. *She also asked if the Ely DA site still had method sheets.*

Caroline Stevens advised - The teaching and learning documents are still available on the Ely DAs website: www.elyda.org. Click on education on the menu bar on the left.

<http://methods.ringing.org/> was suggested as it used Martin Bright's method formatting program to make a PDF.

Martin Bright's Boojum site was also suggested by John Harrison

<http://www.boojum.org.uk/cgi-bin/line.pl>

It offers three different styles of printing ('diary', line and grid) and you can customise each to your needs in terms of what you do or don't want shown, and how. Different styles of presentation suit different styles of learning, and can help to bring out different aspects of a method.

Joan Kemp- I find Adam Beer's 'Visual Method Archive' brilliant for printing out methods, but it doesn't do touches. For printing touches, I've recently discovered 'Method Workshop' - a very nice free program by Steve Scanlon <http://www.ringbell.co.uk/software/workshop.htm>

Late release of sally

A question was asked about suggestions for curing a long held habit of keeping hold of the sally too long. In a right handed ringer the right hand was being held on the sally after it started to rise. The ringer in question had been ringing for several years and had reached the Surprise Major level. Other characteristics included – hands not going fully down: they stopped at waist level. Also some overpulling.

Replies

Heather Peachey-

1. Does the problem disappear when the bell is being raised/lowered? If so keep the bell at an intermediate height for a short while and focus on when and why a change happens.
2. Enlist a helper to ring the backstroke and ring just the handstroke with both hands, and with each hand independently, concentrating on a technique of 'throwing the sally to the floor' in one smooth movement.

Peter Sotheran was not sure if No. 2 would help in this case but advocated talking in terms of 'pushing the sally down towards the floor, rather than pulling it down from the ceiling'. This tends to focus the mind on a smoother steadier movement with the hands ending up, extended downwards, below the waist. He advocated the use of a dummy tailend when ringing the handstroke only.

Two respondents questioned Peter's use of the phrase 'pushing the sally' They both felt it gave the wrong message as this could lead to people having a secondary movement to push their hands down after the sally has gone.

Peter's reply - The 'pushing' thing is only one part of the overall package that is aimed at getting a long smooth pull from maximum over head extension to down to lowest point of the stroke. Led to a new thread –

Vocabulary

John Harrison –

I believe the actual words we use have an effect, thus in this case I don't want to use the word 'push' at all (with or without explanations of what I really mean by it) because I don't want the pupil to do any 'pushing' (applying force directed away from oneself).

Those who know me will be aware that for the same reason, I avoid talk of 'catching the sally' because that conjures up an image of a cat crouching in wait and then pouncing on its prey to catch it - a good description of how some people approach the sally. Since we are trying to encourage the hands to rise in a smooth, steady movement to meet the sally (at the same speed it is going) I try to use those sort of words. I am sure there are other words that we use, knowing what we mean by them, but where a layman's reaction would be counter to what we really want to encourage.

Laura Dickerson - Do you say 'meet the sally higher' when someone lets the stay bump the slider, or just 'reach higher' or what?

John Harrison- I don't tell people to catch the sally higher or lower, I tell them to bring their hands up earlier or later, since that is what determines how high on the sally they are when they meet it. I also demonstrate doing it perfectly with my eyes closed to show that it really is done by timing and not looking.

How Many Beginners

The question- What is the ideal number of learners at any one time? What is the best way of coping with them – in the regular practice or at a separate time?

Peter Wenham- Ideally two, for mutual support, three at most. (Unless one is teaching an entire band from scratch.) Separate sessions until they can ring simulator-assisted rounds, although a look-in at regular practices will show them what it's all leading towards.

Steve Hunter - about one and a half hours of tied bell, handling work is great before the main ringers turn up for the general practice on open bells.

He also mentioned the problems of teaching a band from scratch using the practice at another tower. Tolerance levels of other members of the band can be stretched but he felt it was important to see the wider picture, although - The new challenge I'm doing is a scratch band in an existing tower. We are teaching them there, and recruiting helpers as required; it works a lot better than encroaching learners on another tower.

Peter Sotheran - I have never had a beginners' class of more than eight. It raised the interesting problem of trying to keep track of who was able to do what, as they progressed at differing speeds. I made up a chart, very similar to the achievement tick-boxes in the front of Pam Copson's One per Learner Book.....

One thing I have found is that it is important not to push them too quickly. I have seen other tutors wanting a pupil to move on to the next step before they have completely mastered the current stage. Frustration and tears (!) can often follow.

Nick Smith related a bad experience of trying to teach nine Year six age children and eventually losing them all. I have resolved not to take on more than two learners at any one time henceforward.

Alistair Donaldson felt that the ideal group for teenagers was six. They are fiercely competitive and yet supportive to each other, but need to feel comfortable in a peer group.

Pip Penney gave a professional's perspective - with regard to intensive training, as a physiotherapist I would say 'yes' but every day rather than half a day or a whole day. The reason for intensive training is that the brain retains more of what is learned between sessions. However, if it is too concentrated fatigue and neurological overload reduce performance. Also in between sessions the brain goes on working behind the scenes making sense out of what it has been learning and joining it all up together so it can reproduce it reliably when it wants to.

She also related her experiences of teaching four 10-year olds. We taught two and put the other two on a waiting list until the first two could ring (wobbly) rounds. We taught them every day for a week and then twice a week for a little while.

Best Software for Young Ringers

Peter Sotheran had a young ringer moving to the Orkneys and asked for advice on suitable software to maintain her interest in ringing. Two replies suggested ABEL.

Fingers

Catherine Lewis asked about pain in the fingers- We have several youngsters around nine or ten. Most of them from time to time complain about their fingers hurting after a while. Adults learning under much the same regime don't complain of this. *She wondered if the fatness of the sally could be a factor.*

Peter Humphries remembered having similar pain when he was learning as a mature learner (39). The problem had disappeared as he became more relaxed.

Several people felt the size of the sally was a problem.

Thick Sallies-

Anne Willis - I feel it is one reason for not letting youngsters learn to ring until they can comfortably put their hands round the sally.

Raymond Kefford - It was made worse by the need to hold the Yorkshire ends as well as the main sally.

Thin sallies / ropes –

Richard Pargeter - I find that trying to grip a skinny tailend puts more strain on the hands, particularly if they are dry and slippery.

Heather Peachey - it is really to be expected that until the muscles are trained in ringing and excessive tension turns into a relaxed grip, there will be some aching. Frequent short bursts of ringing during practice seem to be better tolerated than fewer longer goes.

John Harrison - I suspect that an over-sustained grip is at least part of the problem, but there's more to it than relaxing the grip during the very brief transfer between tailend and sally. I encourage people to relax their grip all the time they are not actively applying force to the rope . . . because even with a good long follow-through, very little force is needed to keep the rope moving down smoothly.

This also ties in with solving the other common problem of having the wrong rope length. People seem to find it harder to adjust the length, and to know when to adjust, if they are clinging on all the time, whereas if their grip relaxes before each stroke, it is an easier and natural action.

It was felt that both younger and older learners suffered but perhaps children these days are more likely to complain while adults are more stoical?

Late Hand on Tailend.

Richard Pargeter described a fault and his solution - The hand that takes a tour of the belfry between leaving the sally and joining the tailend. I've got a learner who was developing this tendency, but had pretty good control overall. Encouraging him to get his hand straight onto the tailend had limited effect, so I taught him how to take in rope during the slack period between getting the upper hand onto the tailend and the hands rising for the backstroke (which, after all, is the main reason for eliminating the delay). This gave him something positive to aim for, and has largely cured the problem during ordinary handling as well as when taking in rope.

Asked - Is that while ringing down, or do you tell them to let the rope out again at the next stroke? *He replied-* No - they're nearly but not quite at the ringing down stage - taking in rope does have to be interspersed with letting it out again!