

Network for Ringing Training (NRT)

Newsletter 2 - Summer 2002

A year on

It is now over a year since we launched NRT at the Ringing RoadShow in spring 2001, and it is a year since the first newsletter. Since last year, quite a lot has happened. Numbers continue to grow, and the discussion list has been quite active (see page 2).

Although the discussion list has been the most visible aspect, NRT was always intended to be much more than this. The hope is that NRT will grow into a genuine community of trainers within the world of ringing, with strong local as well as distant links between people committed to providing the best training for the next generation of ringers.

The highlight of this year should be NRT's first conference to be held at Towcester (see page 3). We hope those who attend it will find it a useful day, and that more events will follow.

I hope you will continue to find NRT useful, and that you will also try to find ways to contribute something yourself, however small. Even if you are not very experienced, you might have an insight or a suggestion that could help someone else.

John Harrison - Chairman, CC Education Committee

Keeping you informed

One of the key principles when NRT was set up was not to discriminate against anyone, notably those without e-mail. We also wanted NRT to be free, and in practice, that meant relying to a large extent on e-mail for communication. By limiting the postal mailings to those without e-mail, we could keep the cost to an acceptable level of subsidy.

When we found that 80% of the people signing up had e-mail, everything seemed to be going according to plan. We set up a mailing list using an external provider (YahooGroups) that offered a free service. The fact that this needed people to sign up separately, after they had already joined NRT, caused a lot of confusion, but after sending out clarifications, we hoped the teething problems would settle down.

Use of the list for discussion grew rapidly (see page 2) and it was also used for all announcements, both about NRT, and by members announcing events or requesting help.

Many months later, it became clear that half of the people with e-mail addresses were not signed up to the discussion list, so a lot of members were not getting information either electronically or by post. Obviously we want to correct this situation, but to do that we needed to understand why people had not subscribed. Had they tried, but met problems and given up? Did they realise they needed to sign up separately to the list? Perhaps they were worried about YahooGroups, thinking they might receive junk mail 'spam' (we take great care that they don't). Perhaps their e-mail is at work, and receiving regular messages could be distracting. Perhaps they just did not want to take part in discussion.

If people have problems we can help, if they can't or don't want to use the discussion list, then we need to get important announcements to them some other way. To find out their real situation, we sent messages direct to all 70 of these people. Of the 13 who replied, most said they would like the monthly summary by e-mail, a few had decided that NRT was not for them, and a couple were hoping to get home e-mail shortly so they could join in. A few messages were returned undeliverable.

That still leaves over 50 people who are not using all the services, but we don't know why, and therefore cannot help them. If you do not receive messages from the discussion list, and have e-mail, please let us know why, and in particular, whether you would like to receive an e-mail copy of the monthly summary of the discussion.

Facts and figures

What have we got to show for 15 months in operation? 170 people signed up in the first month, including over 100 at the RoadShow itself. Since then, membership has grown steadily and currently stands at over 270 (see Figure 1). That is a sizeable number, but we still have some way to go to get most of the training community on board. For example it represents about 4 NRT members for every CC affiliated society, or about one for every 20 towers.

Perhaps more important is what these people have been doing. Many have been organising training events, six of which were publicised via NRT. Undoubtedly much more has been done that we have not heard about.

The most conspicuous activity has been use of the NRT discussion list. 160 members subscribe to the list by e-mail, and a further 50 without e-mail get a monthly summary. 80 members currently do not subscribe to the list (see 'Keeping you informed' on page 1).

Over 350 messages have been posted, which works out at nearly one a day, though they generally come in bunches with intervals between. Looking more closely, the level of activity has varied enormously from over 50 a month to just 3 (see Figure 2). Even a three month rolling average (also in Figure 2) shows a 4:1 variation in activity, which rose during the Summer, fell to a minimum around Christmas and then picked up in the Spring. It is too early to say whether this is a seasonal pattern.

Some 55 topics have been discussed, just over 4 per month on average. New topics seem to emerge erratically, with little relationship to the overall number of messages. One might speculate that more new topics would appear when more new members join, but there is little evidence to support this (Figure 4).

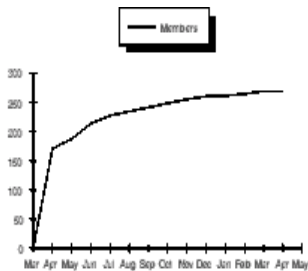


Figure 1: NRT members

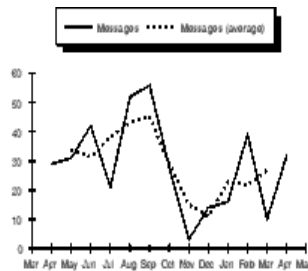


Figure 2: Discussion list messages

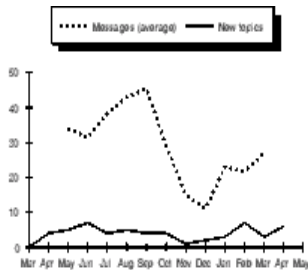


Figure 3: Messages and topics

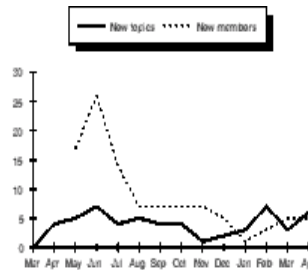


Figure 4: New topics and new members

The statistics don't prove anything of course, but looking at patterns can often provide insights.

NRT Conference - November 9th 2002

Arrangements for the conference are well advanced. You should already have received details, with an invitation to attend. If for any reason you haven't, then please contact Catherine Lewis (details on back page).

The conference is the first step in developing NRT beyond what has so far been its most visible focus, ie the discussion list. Training is about people, and even in this electronic age, there are many good reasons for meeting people face to face. At the conference, you will be able to meet other people who train ringers, with plenty of opportunities to discuss things as well as seeing practical demonstrations and presentations. We hope everyone will find the day rewarding, but above all we are hoping that ideas will emerge from the conference that we - and you the members in your own areas - can take forward to help improve the way we train ringers, and the lot of those who do the training.

As you will have seen from the conference information, participants have quite a lot of choice about which sessions to attend. The aim is to run more or less of each session, according to the preferences of the participants. This should ensure that the overall balance of the conference will reflect the needs of the participants. The corollary to this is that until all the applications are in, we won't know how many of which sessions are needed, so the selection of people to lead the sessions can't be done too far in advance!

We hope the conference will not only be the first of many, but that it will help us all to see what else we can do to support and encourage ringing trainers better.

Local events

Still on the topic of face to face contact, it has always been the intention that NRT would help ringing trainers to join together locally to help each other. There are many ways in which this could happen, and which is most appropriate is best judged by the people on the ground, not by someone central. We are hoping that ideas from the conference might help to stimulate more local initiatives focused on trainers, especially in areas where nothing has been done before. If you have ideas, but are not quite sure how to make them work, raise them at the conference, or use the discussion list to tap into the collective experience of other members. If you are not sure whether there would be enough of you to make an event viable, we can tell you where the nearest members are to you, possibly in a different local society.

Distant members

When talking about local events, it is easy for those of us in the more populous parts of the UK to forget that ringers are much more thinly spread in some parts of the world. Those who teach other ringers are even more thinly spread, for example only sixteen NRT members give an address outside of mainland England (7 USA, 3 Australia, 3 Wales, 1 Africa, 1 Isle of Man, 1 Scotland). These people will naturally rely rather more on those things from which they can benefit at a distance. In several of the areas mentioned, there are in fact many more ringers engaged in training, so perhaps the answer is to encourage more of them to join NRT.

Education committee

The Central Council Education Committee, which set up and manages NRT, has recently seen significant change. At the Central Council Meeting in June, several long serving members stood down, so we expected an influx of new blood. That wasn't quite what happened. In the wake of the more dramatic events related to other business, competition for committee places was less than in recent years, and many of the people interested in serving on the Education Committee found their services needed elsewhere. As a result the Committee now has six members to fill its nominal 12 places - so we must all work twice as hard!

We will be looking for support from outside the committee. If you think you might be able to help in any way, please contact the chairman, John Harrison (contact details at the end)

Feedback

Please let us know what you think of NRT, and how you would like it to develop. Do you have any specific suggestions for ways things could be improved? Don't keep your thoughts to yourself. Let us have your views. The more feedback we get, the better we can respond to your needs. Send ideas for discussion to the Network (by E-mail) or to the Information manager (if you don't have e-mail). (See contact details below). If there is something specific you wish to suggest, contact the appropriate person below.

Previous discussion summaries

Copies of the monthly summaries are posted to the NRT web site (see below for details).

Contact information

- **Information manager:** Alison Barnett has moved. Her e-mail is still:
Alison@barnettfamily.demon.co.uk
Her new address is:
76 Summerfields Way, Shipley View, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 9HF
Tel: 0115 944 7503 (ex directory)
- **NRT list:** NetworkForRinginTraining@yahoogroups.com
- **NRT web site:** <http://ds.dial.pipex.com/fred.bone/NRT/>
- **Learners' help line:** RingingEducationNet@yahoogroups.com
- **Queries about membership details:** Fred Bone,
NRT-DBA@fredbone.waitrose.com
Tel: 01279 726159
- Going away?
Before you go - send a message to: NetworkForRinginTraining-NoMail@yahoogroups.com
On return - send a message to: NetworkForRinginTraining-Normal@yahoogroups.com
- Education Committee:
Chairman - John Harrison, harrison@eurobell.co.uk
2 Murdoch Road, Wokingham, Berks RG40 2DA
Tel: 0118 978 5520
Secretary - Catherine Lewis, CMLewis@btopenworld.com
Mallans, Main Road, Sundridge, Sevenoaks, TN14 6EF
Tel: 01959 563767

Membership leaflets

Please continue to spread the word about NRT. We can supply you with leaflets to distribute locally if you let us know how many you need. Contact the secretary, as above.

If your local association or guild has not already distributed NRT leaflets, why not mention the possibility to your association secretary. We can provide leaflets to include with the next mailing, if we are told how many to send.