



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary October 2001

Welcome to the 5th newsletter for the NRT. Not a very busy month last month but if you hadn't noticed the countdown to Christmas has begun!!

Different physique

Alison Barnett kicked off the month with a request to solve a handling problem caused by a ringer who, being short and stout, put her hands up behind her head naturally when attempting back stroke. The only means of stopping this was to hold an arm up to prevent the arms going too far back otherwise the rope came down on top of her.

Richard Pargeter replied he didn't know the answer but had met the problem before and considered it to be one of the most dangerous faults as the rope can end up not coming down in the face but round the neck.

John Harrison, George Francis and Roger Collins suggested reverting to the hand ring exercise to try to re-establish the feel of vertical movement by placing his foot on the end of a rope (bell down) so that it is taught and vertical, then ask the learner to place their hands around the rope at full stretch and to run their hands down the rope for the full length of the stroke trying not cause the rope to wobble. John has had experience of a slightly different 'arms above head' problem from teaching a young boy who went through a phase of putting his head down between his arms at every backstroke, so his hands were above his head. He also tended to over pull and throw his arms forward so the risk of the rope landing on his head was small. Putting a hand in front of his head was met with the complaint, "I cant pull if you do that!" but he cant remember how he cured it.

John Preston sent in an idea that he has had some success with which is to concentrate on what it feels like to pull down straight. Without any guidance to the contrary, if you tell someone to pull down straight, their arms will pivot about their shoulders. The effect is that their hands will describe an arc of a circle, centred on their shoulder, rather than a straight line. This is somewhat magnified with someone of a portly shape. Their hands will naturally start, at least over their head, if not behind, and move out in an arc. The inevitable result is that the rope goes all over the place. Our solution is to stand them in front of a vertical wall, standing about 3 - 6 inches back, and tell them to keep their hands in contact with the wall while they move their hands down from full stretch up to full stretch down. They will usually tell you that it feels as if their hands are moving in anything but a straight line - more like an inwards curve. Get them used to the feel of that movement, possibly with a dummy rope in their hands, then put them back on a rope and tell them to make it feel the same. This exercise should also correct the issue of hands going behind the head at full stretch up. I guess you could try extending the idea with a vertical wood batten to guide the hands while ringing, but it might run a risk of tangling.

Peter Wenham suggested 1) Take a dummy tail end or a rope with the bell down. 2) Have the learner hold the rope end, hands relaxed, fully down. 3) Lift the rope with the learner's hands to the correct 'full stretch' position. 4) have the learner 'pull' downward (against your slight resistance) back to the start. 5) Correct and repeat as necessary.

Michael Henshaw had a thought about the position of her feet. People who stick their hands above their head at backstroke often have their feet together, by which I mean not with one slightly in front of the other. Generally, if one leans in any direction it should be slightly forward and feet correctly positioned assists this. Tell her to put her weight on the forward leg to encourage a better posture.

Dave McKenzie asked if it was asking the ringer to change an action that was natural. The only way to fix it is to 'coax' the ringer out of it, if possible, without making the ringer worried about what would feel unnatural. The answer he has found was the obvious one - take the guiding role. He did this by cupping his hands over theirs as the hands go up and gently guiding, and relaxing the stroke. Also asking them to stand a touch further back, until it starts to improve may help.

Alison Barnett concluded that she had eventually solved the problem by getting the learner to stop the pull just before full stretch with her arms going towards each other. Not ideal as it does create a slight arc on the pull down, but that is lesser of two evils.

Mirrors

Peter Humphrey began this thread with the comments, I think most of the style-improvement ideas I see on this list are perfectly good ones, but surely the simplest of all is to stand a tall, narrow mirror opposite the ringer, placing it carefully so that they have to be standing in the proper place if they're to see themselves in it, and *show* them the problem you want corrected, in real time. In the '60s, Wollaton had such a mirror where the fifth ringer could see himself in it (not actually directly opposite, but placed so that it gave a three-quarters front view), and I'm certain it improved my handling faster and further than anything else could have.

John Harrison replied, a mirror can be very useful, and before we had video cameras, it was considered an essential tool. It's main drawbacks are; a) you can't get a sideways view of yourself, b) you can't concentrate normally on ringing while looking at it (especially if it's off angle) c) you don't tend to see the unguarded moments, which is when the worst symptoms creep out.

For serious use he would always try to use a video camera, but the benefit of a mirror is that it is always there, and moving it to face someone might have some psychological value, since it draws attention to the fact that someone has seen something they think you ought to look at!

First Principle?

Pam Copson sent in an idea for those weeks when we are short of ringers and struggling with ropesite etc, she writes, at last weeks practice we initially met very short of strong ringers, but an occasional learner visitor turned up with a print-out of Bradbury Minimus, from the internet.

1234	1342	2341
2143	3142	3214
2413	3412	3124
4213	4321	1324
4123	4231	1234
1432	2431	

It's a principle so everyone has some fun; just 3rds and long 4ths; no dodging and a doddle for the tenor ringer if you have 5 ringers. Its short enough to have lots of goes. It comes recommended for a change and to introduce something just a bit more complex than plain hunting, giving new reasons for using counting, rhythm and ropesight. It certainly sent three of ours home with a feeling of new achievement, a barrier broken. If you meet short with too many learners, give it a try!

Silencing Bells

Michael Rose sent in a request for advice as they have just installed a simulator on all 8 bells but cannot use it until they have silenced the bells. They have 2 rather clumsy wooden silencers which hold the clappers fixed between opposite lips of the bells for which they were designed. Can anyone advise them on what sort of silencers would be easiest to use in a cramped bell chamber, and where could they get them from? Or could they make them themselves without too much trouble?

David Pope replied, they had theirs made by Nicholson Engineering of Lyme Regis at £25.00 ea plus VAT. They are easy and quick to fit provided you have reasonable space under the bells, if not then loops of rope are probably the easiest.

Fred Bone wrote, Richard Pargeter has kindly supplied a diagram of the 'Balsham Clapper Tie' on the internet. If anyone would like a copy, please contact me at the address at the bottom of the letter.

Lorna Smale replied, the tower handbook has a section about clapper ties. We have made one of these versions, which is quick and easy to fit. We also have a very confined space.

Catherine Lewis responded, for getting going quickly a piece of rope for each bell has to be best. It is possible to do it without climbing to both sides of the bell. There is again a sheet of instructions available on request. If you don't have any spare rope a tower near you may have, or you could ask your Guild bell restoration people if they have any.

John Harrison states, we have a mixture of ropes and wooden clapper stays. He reckons it takes about 40 seconds to tie a bell using a pre-prepared length of rope, with a loop already on 1 end, compared to about 20 seconds to put on a clapper stay. If we had a better design of clapper stay, that could be brought down to not much more than 10 seconds. NB These times assume I am already in the bell pit and can reach under it to the other side while squatting.

Pam Copson added, don't forget the taking off time too. Wooden clapper bars must be quicker than unknotted rope.

Fred Bone replied, unknotted? You have loops to throw off the clapper bolt, and a slip-knot round the clapper flight. You don't unknotted anything.

Peter Humphrey added, Depends, The ones he remembers from long ago had wing nuts to hold the gate shut. These could become very stiff during ringing and need some wrestling to remove!

Devon style ringing

John Harrison wrote, A few weeks ago, there was some discussion about the Devon call change style of handling. The original question was about the problems when trying to make the transition to

method ringing, because they don't change the rope length and so strike poorly because of inadequate backstroke control. Someone pointed out that the call change ringers were by general consent better strikers than method ringers, so how come their style is 'poor'?

It occurs to me that the key difference is changing place at backstroke.

In change ringing you have to, and the speed of the backstroke needs to be plus or minus two notches different from the speed of the preceding handstroke. With call change ringing though, the backstrokes are all rung at the same speed. So a better way to view the comparison would be that to execute a wider range of moves, you need to develop a different and more flexible style, one optimised for two stroke changing.

That still leaves a question though. When ringing in the 'normal' non-Devon style, uncontrolled backstrokes normally lead to poor striking, even in rounds. So what are we missing? The backstrokes must be controlled (or they would not be well struck) but the control mechanism must be different.

Maybe we need to understand how the Devon style ringers manage to achieve such good striking, so we can help explain the need for a change in terms that makes sense to them, and not just to us.

Unfortunately, most of us do not have the necessary experience of Devon style ringing!

Karl Grave replied, quite so but he can see no reason why the bell cannot be controlled equally at either stroke. It can be slowed just as much at backstroke as at hand without (in the case of Devon-style) ever going near the balance. The test would be to ask a Devon team to ring, changing only at backstroke. His theory is that, by keeping well below the balance point, they are safe from sudden, unexpected, slowings of the bell, especially if the bearings are indifferent and likely to allow the bell to 'jump' over in the case of inexperienced ringers who might misjudge the balance point.

Peter Wenham wrote, Having had admittedly limited experience of Devon call-changes I have two comments:

1. With their 'A' teams each ringer has 'his' own bell, e.g., Fred always rings the 4th.
2. Because of this, also that their call-change 'peals' are set pieces (like '60 on thirds') the experienced ringers (each on his own bell) know exactly what is coming next - just as much as the conductor does.

This is not decrying their ringing style - it is just as much an individual art style as is our own, and very demanding when the calls come so rapidly.

The best call-changes I have rung was with a very experienced band who were one short on a Sunday morning and I was allowed to take part. I treasure the TC's comment to me afterwards, 'Well, boy, you didn't do too bad for a Scientific'.

Help needed

Alison Barnett asked for help with a joint practice, taking place at Tutbury, Staffs (10cwt 8), for the towers in the area with the idea to decrease the learner/ringer ratio and move the learners on to the next step. This is on Nov 17, 7.30 – 9.00

I realise that the posted news letter reaches everyone sometimes a month after the email postings, but with enough notice it could still be used to advertise events in your area, see Johns' note below.

[NRT] Local Activity - John Harrison

It is now just 7 months since we launched NRT. During that time, numbers have grown steadily, and the discussion side of things seems to be working well. One of the aims of setting up NRT was to stimulate and support more local

activity involving trainers. One way to get the ball rolling is to encourage discussion about training events.

That could include information about events where we train other people:

- Telling the rest of us about interesting aspects of training courses, workshops, etc that you have organised. What worked well, what did not work as well as you expected, what did you learn from it that you could pass on to others.

- Asking questions about training events you are thinking of running.

Things you would like to try, things you are not sure of, how other people have overcome problems, and so on.

- Floating ideas about new ways to run training. (Hard to give examples of what might be 'new', but there must be lots of variations on the traditional sort of training courses and practices).

Information about 'events' for trainers themselves:

- 'Teaching the teachers' events. What you have done, what you would like to do, problems you have, what you would like help with.

- Get together to discuss training (eg between branches or ringing centres). What you hope to get out of it, practicalities about organising it, and so on.

- Other ways to develop trainers, eg mentoring and shadowing. How to make it work, problems to avoid, when it is most effective.

And remember, if you would like to try organising something in your area,

but don't know who else might be interested to help, NRT can put you in touch with people who share your commitment to training. If you want a list of people in your area, contact Alison Barnett at the address below.

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

Alison Barnett. (NRT Information Manager)
9 Galahad Drive, Stretton,
Burton on Trent, Staffs, DE13 0GY
Tel. 01283 515840