



# The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

## Education Committee

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### *Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary October 2002*

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Welcome to the 13th Summary of NRT Postings. *Roger Booth* sent in a copy of a letter he had sent to the Ringing World mostly about modernising the exercise. If anyone would like a copy if they haven't read it already in the RW, please ask.

*Alison Barnett* replied things will change but only where people want them to! And to no agenda I think though that towers where ringing stopped and is now being rejuvenated will lead the way eventually in 'the change' Towers/guilds following the 'old ways' will find themselves being over taken by a new breed of ringers and will either have to conform or lose out. Change is happening, it's just taking longer to reach some parts.

#### **Continuing on the TC'S Teaching Methods/Modernisation from last month,**

*Lynda Coles* writes, it seems to me that newcomers are the most likely people to be evangelising in the community. Learners are as aware as everybody else about the need to maintain/increase the numbers of ringers; if they know somebody who might be lured in, they are going to be reluctant to make encouraging noises if they know that the potential candidate is going to be subjected to a hard time. In response to *Roger Booth's* letter earlier today, I think the bit about smiling faces is highly pertinent - I saw loads at Hereford and Sparsholt, which certainly increases the desire to go again. We had our annual tower meeting this week, and a few days ago I told Victor, (our tower captain) that I was going to suggest a three year maximum in office for TC's after he has had 5 years. He hadn't been following NRT discussions due to pressure of work. After I scraped him off the ceiling, he set aside time at the weekend to read them, and could then understand 'where I was coming from'. It brought home to me, though, just how difficult the topic is for the incumbent. The suggestion was met with surprise at the meeting, and the decision was to discuss it next year (when Victor will have done 4 years). Someone commented on *Roger Booth's* letter this afternoon that change will happen from the bottom up; whilst this is undoubtedly true, a top-heavy structure makes it difficult for this to happen. I am very aware that in my district I need to persuade 13 men with decades of experience that it's worth trying something new, even for very minor changes. More topically, I was unaware until a few weeks ago that any towers existed where the TC was not there for life.

*Peter Humphrey* replies, Of course: simultaneous pressures from all sides are more likely to have the desired effect in any organisation. I'm trying to imagine which 13 you mean!

More of interest to the group, however, would be a short description of the kinds of change you find difficulty getting them to try. Care to expand a little?

#### **Assumptions**

*John Harrison* replying to *Lynda's* mail above, It would be tempting to put this down merely to the fact that *Lynda* has not been around as long as some of us have, but that would miss an important point. It is very easy to assume that everywhere is much like what we know, when in reality it almost certainly is not. The world is a very varied place. One of the good things about these discussions is that we have people who come from different backgrounds, so we can gain insights from each other, so long as we are all prepared to offer our different experiences.

#### **Plain Bob to Grandsire**

*Alison Barnett* asked, does anyone have a simple way of getting a learner to get over a hurdle about ringing grandsire? I think this is probably just a mental block on the learner's part but wondered if anyone has a simple practise piece to show both odd and even dodging? I have tried dodging practises odd and even. This learner picked up bob doubles with no problem at all, just cant get round grandsire and 'wont let go till they can'!

*Peter Hinton* replied, how about this, to practise the work a bit at a time? 1 and 4 always dodge 4-5 down; 2 and 5 always dodge 4-5 up; 3 makes 3rds every time. Then change bell to try a different bit of the work. You could always do it with treble as "hunt bell", but the version above has the same start as Grandsire. I'm not sure how useful it is to do a method with both odd and even dodging at the same time - that might get too confusing. Though there's always Ashford; treble hunts to 3rds, other bells dodge 3-4 up, dodge 4-5 up, 4 blows behind, 4-5 down, 3-4 down.

*Fred Bone* adds, have you determined just what the block is on? 4-5 v 3-4 dodging; dodging straight out of / into the lie; backstroke v hand stroke dodging; confusion in order-of-work; something I haven't thought of. You could try them on PB \*Minimus\* and then point out that G5 is PB4 with two trebles (and the work shifted to compensate). Or Ashford but this is not legitimate.

*Joan Kemp* adds, is it worth trying this - you'll need to discuss it in advance, clearly. Ring rounds on 6 At a call, (e.g. '4 5 Right dodge'), 4 & 5 dodge over at hand stroke, back at backstroke Do this as long as is useful. Then call them back to rounds Do this again several times if necessary. When this is working satisfactorily, call '4 5 dodge Wrong' & get 4 & 5 to dodge the other way round - over at backstroke, back at hand stroke You can alternate these & just use it as a technique to isolate part of the method which might be causing problems, then try ringing Grandsire again once the person is comfortable with the right & wrong 4/5 dodges.

*Ben Willetts* writes, what is not legitimate about Ashford Little Bob (or Alligator as it's sometimes known especially on 9 bells!) It's perfectly ok as far as the Central Council are concerned, and calling

three Homes produces an extent, with the treble fixed, of 72 changes - ideal for an interesting start to a QP of doubles when you don't want to ring yet another plain course of Stedman.

*Andy Parry* wrote in reply to Joan, Do the terms right & wrong have to be used in conjunction with the direction of travel; the above might get them used to dodging in 4/5 as opposed to 3/4, but is it truly right or wrong? Perhaps have them ringing the 4, explain the exercise is as if they were hunting in, and they dodge right with the 3 in 3/4 and wrong with the 5 in 4/5. Can you dodge right in 4/5? Getting back to the original question, the problem may be more one of dodging then lying as opposed to lying and dodging, perhaps bob minor would take away the problem of right or wrong dodging while they get used to dodging at the back.

*Joan Kemp* replies, I may well have been either wrong or slipshod in my use of 'Right' & 'Wrong' - the idea was simply to have the learner ringing the 4 or the 5 & to practise dodging forehand - backhand & then backhand - forehand. What this manoeuvre is called is secondary to the action of doing the dodging practise!

*Jane Lambert* adds, we ring a lot of Ashford LB in Purbeck, especially caters. It's good dodging practise of course, but we also find it helps with 10-bell striking, and good for experience for learners on the treble. We've rung several peals of it.

## Closer

*Catherine Lewis* I stood behind someone in a tower last night saying "Closer at back". The person in front suddenly got too close themselves. Result: things got much worse! It occurred to me that when we say "Closer"/"Wider" we actually mean "Sooner"/"Later". I always explain that good striking involves listening to the whole (average) rhythm and getting into the right place relative to that. So there is no way we should really ever say "Closer"/"Wider". All along we should use "Sooner"/"Later" - just so as not to imply an assumption that the one in front will always be right. How's that for an idea?

*Harry Nicholls* replied, "Closer/Wider" is surely better for learners at the early stages of ringing with others. Don't they need the solid reference point of the bell below them, whilst they are establishing the skills of hearing their own bell, listening to the gap, adjusting their own pulls relative to the other ringer's hand movements, etc? "Sooner/Later" implies ringing to the rhythm and, where necessary, ignoring other badly placed bells. It gives useful additional terminology and we should make the distinction clear. I think we should aim for our learners to ring in this way, eventually, but I wonder at what point in their development we should introduce it. Is Catherine saying we could teach them in this way from the outset? Incidentally, there is still too much sloppy terminology, such as "faster/slower" vaguely meaning one or other of the above. This can be a problem when ingrained in a fellow tutor!

*Peter Humphrey* wrote, no, it just means "ring a bit faster/slower until you get into the right place (then continue as before)". As such, it's useful shorthand. Too much hair-splitting is rarely a good thing, especially in teaching.

*Catherine Lewis* I sometimes explain that the "Faster"/"Slower" terminology is often used much the same way as one does with a clock that's "slow" and is actually probably going at very nearly the right speed - it's just a bit late.

## Young People - Request for Help.

*John Harrison* wrote, you are probably aware that a CC working group on Trends in Ringing reported earlier this year (report on CC website). Many of its recommendations were directed to appropriate CC committees. The CC Education Committee (jointly with other committees) had two specifically directed to it. One was about ways in which the Council and/or local societies may better support university guilds (something that we had already started to explore). The other was about the promotion of recruitment and effective training and retention of young ringers. So far, we have nominated three people to look at each aspect of the problem, i.e.: - How can we project an image of ringing to young people that will remove the barriers to them taking up or persisting with ringing? - How can we devise training that is more suited to young people, will retain their interest and foster progress? - What practical steps can be taken (and how can we support them) to enhance the experience of routine ringing in towers to make it stimulating to young people? We see these three aspects as all essential if we are to have a material impact on the situation. The first two are the more obvious, but given the traditionally high wastage rate in ringing, especially among youngsters, improvements in the third might deliver higher gains. There are plenty of examples of good practise, but to make a real difference in any area requires ideas that can be widely applied - in individual towers as well as by local associations, and from week to week as well as at special events. We would welcome any ideas and suggestions, especially ideas that could in practise be widely applied. If anyone would like to make a more active contribution to this process, please let me know. *Peter Humphrey* replied, one idea that's used in some districts of the Guildford guild is to have a youth coordinator (a better name would be welcome). This person is young enough to be in the circle of the youngsters, yet old enough to bring experience, good ideas and authority to bear. Unfortunately, that means someone who's likely to disappear to university any time now. Also, it's not always easy to identify and recruit a suitable person. On the other hand, if a recently returned university graduate could be found, that might be the ideal candidate. The idea of course is to bridge the gap between what the district committee discusses and the interests of the younger ringers; to that end, it's essential that the coordinator be co-opted onto the committee.

*Catherine Lewis* Wrote, One very basic thing one can do for youngsters is to use their spare time effectively. They have many pressures on them from school and ambitious parents. Largely brought about by coursework and excessive testing in school. People are talking about ringing courses for youngsters (plural) in the holidays. That is fine and obviously a great idea. However, in the real grass roots world, the odd interested youngster (singular) can pop up in parish at any time and something needs to be done quickly before something else grabs their attention. Initial handling lessons must be built around the youngster's own schedule i.e. probably the odd hour and a half at the weekend, or in the holidays - most likely not term time weekday evenings when, I guess, most teaching is done, but so is homework. However inconvenient this may be for your own schedule, at least you know they'll probably learn fast! It also helps if you can provide

assistance with transport (difficult as that may be with Child Protection). Parents are often very busy, and with the best will in the world cannot always taxi for ringing, as often as is necessary for the progress which is so vital at the beginning. Teach them well and then you'll very soon be able to get them out to ring with other ringers without embarrassment (to anyone), they'll make good progress and hopefully you'll get them hooked.

*Paul Wilkinson* replied, this is all well and good but there is another side to this and that is the social side. Children - anyone under 16 - enjoy being treated like adults and therefore enjoy being with those adults. If we relegate their early leaning to private sessions then they would probably lose the most important aspect of learning to ring, that is the pleasure of seeing other people seeing them develop. We have currently a 15 year old who is coming along in leaps and bounds and we welcomed a 10 year old last night. We stipulated that her mother should accompany her in the first instance but mother was soon gone and Alice was left with her new chums and she enjoyed every minute. Having extra sessions is a good idea but please don't make them into children only ghettos. If we are going to have extra sessions then why not invite everyone, including people from other towers. As long as it's made clear what the purpose is then everyone can benefit, just as we do from our younger learners.

*Alison Barnett* wrote, being the mother of 2 youngsters learning to ring, I find their biggest complaint is the demand on their time that I believe Catherine has already mentioned, (although you can ask them to ring for as many weddings as are available!) They want a hobby now a days that can be learnt in 1 go with as little or as much effort as they are willing to put into it. A problem that, by the very nature of the beast, is difficult to address. I don't know what the answers are other than being totally flexible in your approach. Try everything more than once, as, funnily enough, every teenager is different! (well almost!!) The biggest problem I have found is that when you have 1 interested you tend to get the 'friendship group' this boosts your numbers and complacency sets in. Suddenly these 12/13 year olds are off to university and your numbers are depleted in 1 fell swoop. I have learnt through this experience to start encouraging the parents of the youngsters to 'have a go!' This gives you a steady adult recruitment who don't get (hopefully) boy/girlfriends, have varying levels of commitment as the mood takes them and wont depart to uni just when you've got them onto surprise!!

*Ben Willetts* replied, yes, that can be very problematic and irritating for your band. But a plea to all ringers out there - if you know of any ringers who are off to university soon, PLEASE try to persuade them to keep ringing while they're there. It is an excellent hobby for university students as it lets them mix in immediately with a large group of local people, it gets them around the area so they learn where everything is, it gives them a good social life, it gives them a wide range of student contacts in other universities, it maintains an interesting hobby that will last their whole life, and it's very good fun! I know you will be losing a ringer yourself, but someone else, somewhere, will gain one if the student continues ringing at university and wherever he/she settles down afterwards. Eventually the favour might be returned to you.

*Bobby Fairclough* adds, the biggest 'turn-off' for my seventeen-year-old daughter is the mix of mainly old people with very few youngsters. We all know that parents are dinosaurs so apart from grandparents there are few members of the older generation who have a chance of being 'cool.' There are young-at-heart folks whose company and opinions she would seek out but there are also many old people whose minds have slowed down and who no longer have the sparkle that they once, no doubt, had. I think that any attempts at recruiting and retaining youngsters really must aim to keep the youngsters together. The obvious difficulties are transporting them all to one place and the need to, perhaps, have a separate practise night for them. Use of a simulator may help to solve this one. The idea of recruiting parents is a sure winner!

*Michael Henshaw* wrote, thanks for making the point about peer groups. You are definitely right - youngsters need the companionship of other youngsters in general. This was one important point behind the recommendations to which John Harrison referred in his original request. An important aspect of this companionship, that should not be underestimated, is support against peer pressure not to be involved with Church activities. Whilst we may feel that ringing does not necessarily have to be closely aligned with more general Church activities and we may promote the 'social' aspects ourselves, the perception among school children (with little or no contact with the church) may be very different. Whereas, when I was a teenager, involvement with the Church was perhaps considered a bit odd, but not something to worry about, it is clear that many youngsters who are involved with church activities nowadays can be subjected to bullying. This threat puts some off even trying ringing, and others, who do try, may feel there is pressure not to pursue it. If they have a group of friends who are also involved, this can help - there's safety in numbers. It is not easy for those of us who have been involved with ringing and the church to fully appreciate the significance of these pressures in an increasingly secular society. I think there are two important issues that should be addressed if we wish to attract, train and retain young people in greater numbers than we currently are: - Most activities, with which ringing competes for their time, offer instant gratification and reward. - A peer group is needed to provide companionship, competition and interest. I think we need to develop teaching opportunities that address these issues and this may require different approaches from those we traditionally use. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure compliance with the Children's' protection act and the resulting Diocesan guidelines and Parish implementations, and (as Catherine mentioned) the increased demands of school coursework. This is a tall order, but we must try to meet it, if we wish to get more young people into ringing. I do.

*John Harrison* replied re recruiting parents, this sounds like a contradiction. If kids want to get away from parents, then would not bringing them along too be a turn-off? Of course some kids get on well with their parents. And recruiting parents is a worthwhile thing to do in its own right.

*Caroline Birdsell* wrote, whether child ringers stay in the parish & belfry for the rest of their lives - or whether they move on through university, work, marriage etc - we should be training all age groups for the future of bell ringing. Of the seven 10-14year olds now ringing at Kirklington, I only

realistically expect 3 to continue thro till they leave the area for whatever reason - & that because they belong to ringing family groups - the others, I would expect to ease out of it by the time they are 16-ish - but would always hope that we have given them a good enough grounding to encourage them to return to a(any) tower at a later date - our team now has 4 adult members who were taught (at some undisclosed age) elsewhere & have moved to the area. How many of us are still ringing at the tower in which we were trained? - surely the important thing is to welcome & be prepared to teach children of all ages - & once the initial handling is learnt, they can be a part of the team, ringing as equals with whatever other ages are there. Yes, sure it's easier (transport, discipline etc) if parents are also ringers though we don't stipulate this as a 'must' - We encourage parents to bring & collect - the parental consent form signed before they come for the first lesson makes it clear that our responsibility ends when they leave the building at the end of their session. We also invite parents to come along when the child's first Sunday service ring is to happen. *Joan Kemp* wrote, the problem I hit with my daughter - who started to learn to ring & was a promising student - was that 'Ringing isn't cool!' She felt unable to confess to her friends that she'd started doing something as un-trendy as bell ringing. The tower captain where I learnt to ring got a 'youth band' together - youngsters all at roughly the same stage. This worked very well at one level, though they got bored quickly when it wasn't their turn to ring. Maybe there should have been a separate practise until they became proficient enough to join easily in general ringing.

*Matthew Tosh* wrote, I think I should mention the transport issue, as it was relevant to me when I leant to ring, particularly as I lived in a village away from the exciting world of city ringing. I say this because it was only when I started to go out to cathedral ringing in Coventry and helping out with wedding ringing in local towers with the late George Pluckrose that I began to see the wider picture of ringing. We were fortunate to have several ringers that didn't mind giving us (three or four youngsters) lifts to quarter peals, peals, outings and other towers in the area. These people invested their time in us and I think it paid off - at least two of us are still ringing! Without being shown other local ringing, I think my view of ringing would be very grey - in more ways than one. I am in no way having a dig at village ringing (just in case people start firing emails back at me). I simply think that it is crucial we demonstrate to young ringers that there is an exciting network of ringers across the whole age range outside their home tower. If you are considering taking youngsters to other towers, try and select ones where there are other young people. I appreciate that this may not always be easy, but it could lead to the joint ringing of quarters, mini-outings etc, which is exactly what we want. Another incentive would be to get youngsters involved in wedding ringing as soon as possible, maybe even giving them a lift to other churches if you are going yourself to ring. The point is to make them value their contribution to ringing and, in turn, make them want to continue ringing. If they have a large circle of ringing friends, they are much more likely to stay involved. As one person said in the past couple of days (I think it was Ben W.), we are all in this together. If someone makes the effort at a home tower before sending a new recruit off to university, then it is NOT a loss. It may

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seem a loss to the home tower, but it is a gain to the ringing community. Don't forget that university graduates move around the country and you may receive one or more in the future, when they settle. Without the continued efforts towards youngsters from all towers, we will end up with an even greater age skew, thus worsening the current situation. Hmm, I'm probably teaching you to suck eggs here. These are my personal views and I hope someone finds them useful.

*Astrid Fairclough* wrote, as the seventeen-year-old daughter mentioned in Bobbie Faircloughs email I would like to add how I feel as a recently recruited young ringer. My experience is that when I first started ringing I was happy seeing that there were other young ringers doing it and I wouldn't be alone. I was shown, by being taken to district practises and training days as soon as it was safe and practical. Then I found that to actually improve my ringing I didn't want to ring with just youngsters because we do not have the experience to learn and progress. At this point I think it is important to try and bring a balance between ringing with other youngsters and ringing with adults so that socially and mentally the young recruits are happy because they are not worried they are doing an un cool activity and they do not get bored ringing call changes and bob doubles when they could be ringing surprise and enjoying it much more. I think another way of recruiting youngsters is to promote it as an activity that can be recorded on CVs and UCAS forms, used for Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, or in other awards in which they may be taking part. It may mean that they do not carry on for longer than they must but if they are encouraged to meet other people and are ringing at a level where it becomes really interesting, I think many would stay. I'm in the sixth-form now and I have been told if I have nothing to put on my UCAS form then I will not get a university place or, later on, a job. And then the advice that follows is try to find an interesting unusual activity, to distinguish yourself from the crowd. I think bell-ringing fits this criterion very well and if this approach would encourage youngsters to ring why not use it? *Margaret Perrott* replied, Thank you, Astrid. Both my sons were able to put on their UCAS forms that they had qualified to be full members of the YACR and were regular Sunday Service ringers. They were never questioned about this at their interviews - but they did get their University offers.

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.

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