



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary November 2002

Welcome to the 14th Summary for the NRT. May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas.

With the **Conference** taking place at the beginning of the month, (See a short write up at the end of this summary.) November was very quiet. *Heather Peachey* suggests that those of us who have input into local newsletters should write a short account of the day and thus promote NRT in this way too. It would be worth including a website reference as an easy way of giving people joining information.

<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/fred.bone/NRT/leaflet.html>

Lynda Coles has written a short piece for her local Guild newsletter, it has also appeared in the RW. If you would like a copy please ask.

One Handed Ringing

Alison Barnett asked for advice on how to teach a one handed learner? The learner has been managing the backstroke well and is starting to cope with the hand stroke, but how do you put the two together? Is ringing up and down out of the question or is there an easier way to do this.

John Preston replied, try contacting Robin Daw on robindaw@talkgas.net. (Not sure if he subscribes to NRT). He not infrequently rings two bells, including ringing two down in peal, so has to control each bell one handed. He should be able to tell you how it's done.

Roger Collins replied, I've no direct experience of teaching one handed but have seen it done successfully. Two tips for both strokes. If rung with the conventional hold then a rubber band round the wrist to hold the tail can build

confidence with transition back to hand stroke.

Have also seen it done holding the tail end on the loop, again this gives confidence of keeping hold of the tail. Both methods quite safe providing the wrist is not passed through the tail, mini ring style. This is a real No No. Now I know it may not be easy but can you do it yourself, that will be a huge plus for your novice. It's not much more difficult than being able to ring right and left handed, just takes a bit of practice.

Peter Wenham added, Further to Roger's comments. Take two lightweight rubber bands (as dropped in vast quantities by our post people) and 'figure 8' them together. Then figure 8 one of the bands to the tail end and slip the other band over the wrist. Your pupil can now hold the tail end 'naturally', the tail end is held if the rope is dropped and the rubber bands will snap easily should a stay be broken. I used this idea with a young learner who fractured his right wrist but wanted to keep ringing. Re lowering in peal, one has to take up coils with a flick of the wrist.

David Pope wrote, as a one-handed ringer of some years standing perhaps I can help. I learnt to ring 2.handed at age 14, lost the use of my right arm entirely and left arm partially at 21, gave up ringing for 15 years, started again for 5 years, had another 23 years off due to business commitments and have now been ringing again for 10 years. Fortunately I'm left-handed. When I first started one handed I used rubber bands, it helped tremendously but has the disadvantage that if the rope pulls out a little at a backstroke you cannot get it back. I had a wrist

strap made with a loop on it held with press-studs. I used this for my 5-year period but when I started again 10 years ago found I could not use it at all, due to my wrist and fingers not being as dextrous as they used to be; I now hold the rope conventionally and find I get on alright. I think I would suggest your learner perseveres this way but I still have my strap and would be pleased to give it to him/her or they could use it as a pattern to make a new one. I believe I have never lost the tail end but do occasionally miss the sally, as do most 2-handed ringers! Make sure there is 6-9" of free rope below the hand. Less increases the risk of losing it, more means you may get slapped painfully in the face and you haven't got a spare hand to rub it better. Especially to start with, it may help to be sure there is a closed loop either in or below the hand. As to ringing up and down, for along time I did not even try! I think I can now do it in peal reasonably creditably. Again age, general stiffening and the fact my arm is still weak makes coil making impossible when ringing down, also I cannot catch the sally while I still have a coil in hand. Attempting to catch the sally too early when rising, especially if the rope is a bit stiff, can lead to the sally going away from you and the rope whipping badly. You need space behind you - 2-3 feet, if the rope is close to a wall, stand sideways, if the ropes are very close together, leave it to someone else. Ringing up, I am very careful to follow the instruction shown on the Bell handling video, i.e. gather 3 loops, the second slightly smaller than the first, and flick out the tail a little sooner than they say, you can start guiding the sally before the bell is near the balance. Ringing down, because I cannot twist my wrist quickly enough to make a coil, I take in rope until there is maybe 2ft flapping, and then catch the loose end with my fingers, usually I can do this against my thigh at the lowest point, then it takes a couple of strokes to sort it out and start taking in again while still holding the tail end. Occasionally I

have to let the rope fall on the floor while chiming but try not to do so, its untidy and bad form in my opinion. *Peter Wenham* added, an easier way to take coils might be to catch the sally as normal, then just keep a loose hold of the rope as the sally goes up again. The rope trails through your hand and produces a coil when it gets to the bottom! Looks a bit of an agricultural style but it's a very easy way to make coils.

John Harrison wrote, I've not taught anyone to ring one handed from scratch, but when I once had elbow problems, I rang one handed for several weeks, rather than stop ringing. The main problems I found (apart from having less pull) was the continual need to adjust the rope length, which is harder with one hand than two. I would suggest teaching all the rope handling actions (gripping and releasing the sally as well as adjusting the length of the tail end) first using a static rope. That is worth doing with two-handed ringers anyway, but more important with someone who hasn't got a spare hand to help out. You probably need to be fussier about developing a good vertical movement without twitches and twists. One should always of course, but a one handed action will amplify any imperfections.

Alan McBurnie wrote, I have just taught a one handed ringer who is now ringing touches of plain bob minor. It took me a long time to pluck up courage and I spent a long time ringing one handed myself to work out the problems. It is obviously easier for a two handed ringer to become a one handed ringer than to start out one handed. We tried the elastic bands but they were unsuccessful. We then hit on the idea of Velcro. We put one strip round the wrist and attached another piece at right angle from the top of the wrist going forward, up through the tail and back over onto the wrist. This enabled Nigel to let go of the tail when catching the sally but have the tail follow his wrist and be in position for his hand to catch it at the end of the hand stroke.

This worked extremely well, the only down side being that the rope had to be exactly the right length for his arm to be fully extended at backstroke. We had to leave one rope permanently adjusted for Nigel and it tended to be short for other ringers as you can reach about 15cm higher with one arm than with both! Once Nigel was ringing confidently I took George Pipes advice and discarded the Velcro. We now put a knot in the tail wherever it suits Nigel. He now holds the tail immediately above the knot and holds the tail and sally at the same time. This is more preferable as it is easy to adjust the rope for him each time he rings. Nigel claims he is the only ringer to have a personal dresser! Whilst the knot in the tail is now very successful I would not recommend starting like this from scratch. The Velcro gives the ringer more confidence. He can't lose the tail. We haven't yet cracked raising and lowering. If you do please let me know.

Harry Nicholls added, At the Gwennap ringing centre I have had to find ways to teach one ringer who had restricted shoulder movement, having real difficulty if the arms were taken above head height, and another who is a little, frail, very old person, able to handle a fairly light bell but finding it impossible to ring up and down. In each case it was said that we should discourage the person on the grounds of personal safety and a poor likelihood of success. My feeling was that we should do everything we could to enable these people to achieve what they wanted. It required a great deal of patience and re-thinking at each stage of teaching. It was also most rewarding, not least in seeing the satisfaction in the ultimate achievement. (One also learns much oneself from analysing in detail what we normally do without thinking.) Following the example of David Pope's contribution to the Gwennap centre, well beyond the success of his one-handed ringing, I believe we should try our best to accommodate everyone whatever their special needs might be. I wonder if there is any guidance in this

area. Alternatively, is there provision via this Network for collecting such experiences and eventually producing some consolidated reference material?

Alan Frost added, I have frequently found it beneficial, in training 2-handed ringers, to get them to ring one-handed (left hand if right handed) as an aid to good bell handling, especially where there is a tendency for a learner to avoid grasping the sally with his/her left hand whilst also holding the rope end. It also leads to confidence in a learner being able to catch the sally with one hand.

Richard Pargeter Of course, it's not only one-handed ringers who are nervous about dropping the tail end - witness the number of ringers with what I call 'little finger trouble'. They are unwilling to open the lower hand completely, and keep the little finger (plus one or two) determinedly wrapped around the tail end. Like most things, more easily prevented than cured, but I have found that giving even the most hardened little finger culprits a spare tail end to carry around for a while can often cure the problem. The trick is to get thoroughly used to the FEEL of the tail end loosely, yet securely, hanging in the crook of the thumb. If this can cure an ingrained habit, I guess it might be useful for instilling confidence in a one handed ringer.

John Harrison, in reply to Harry Nicholls wrote, there are two ways to approach life. One approach is to ensure that the wrong thing cannot happen. The other is to ensure that the right thing does happen. Those were personal remarks. Can I now put on my official hat!

I don't know of any guidance in the area of teaching one-handed ringers. That is just the sort of thing we should be doing with NRT. Every month Alison prepares an abstract for people who can't take part in the e-mail discussion. The summaries are also put on the web. In principle it is a small step from that to compile the information into some sort of resource that can be searched by topic.

Alternatively we can extract information on particular topics and publish it in other ways. We had already identified this as something worth doing, but it has not yet happened. It will require some effort to explore how best to do it and then get it done.

Dummy Tail Ends

John Harrison, wrote in response to Richard Pargeter above, That is an interesting use for a dummy tail end. Would the circular variety be better or worse than the open ended variety I wonder?

Richard Pargeter responded, I can't say I was aware of more than one sort of dummy tail end - just a folded bit of rope, like the last foot or so of a tail end! What, please, are "circular" and "open ended" dummy tail ends?

John Harrison replied, had you been in one of the groups discussing bell handling techniques at the NRT Conference, you would have seen specimens of both types. The traditional version is what I call open ended, i.e. you have a length of tucked rope that goes nowhere, and so it has the 'real' end and the other 'chopped off' end. On the occasions when I have used a dummy tail end, I found that this extra end tended to complicate things. In fact, the ends don't actually achieve anything useful - what you are interested in is the bit that sits in the crook of the hand. Many years ago I struck on the idea of making it into a loop. It feels the same, but there are no ends to flap around or get in the way, and it can't fall out because it moves and makes one end heavier than the other.

NRT conference

Nearly 60 members had a stimulating day at Towcester on 9th November. John Harrison set the challenge of 'building a training community'. There were no 'tutors and students'; everyone was there to learn, and almost half were involved in running the 14 Topic Group sessions. These were:

- Tips and techniques for teaching bell handling
- Teaching aids for developing listening skills
- Introduction to simulators as training aids
- Using a simulator as a training aid
- Using handbells as part of a structured approach to teaching
- Teaching a whole new band
- Better ways to develop ringers
- Developing ringers with limited resources
- Practical ways to achieve good striking in a band
- Raising and lowering in peal

These and the final session on 'Better ways to support trainers' produced some lively discussion and much food for thought.

Food of a more substantial kind was provided by the local ringers who proved excellent hosts.

A summary will be circulated to all members in due course.

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

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