



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary August 2005

Editor's Note

First of all we must thank Alison Barnett for her hard work in doing the summaries since the formation of NRT, she is going to be a difficult act to follow. I have volunteered to take over the summaries for the time being and would like to start with a few words about my modus operandi. I have followed Alison's lead and have tried to give a flavour of the threads which should be enough for readers to gain useful information and at the same time be reasonably brief. To this end, I have used direct quotations from the postings, but with varying amounts of editing. I have also tried to use the same headings as used in the original postings but occasionally added a short extra heading to make the topic clear. Occasionally a thread has produced discussions which are clearer when split into sub topics. Any heading I have added will be in italics.

Plain Hunt

Heather Peachey gave the following quotes from a discussion on Change Ringers and asked for comments

QUOTE 1

"...As Steve Coleman observes:-'Everyone says - "Don't learn it by the numbers" – but actually if you ask established ringers how they started learning an awful lot say - "Well, actually, I started by learning the numbers" '.

QUOTE 2

"...If you don't tell them the numbers they either pick them up for themselves or your other learners tell them what they are. The only real way round this is to ring a different obscure Doubles method every time.

QUOTE 3

"...Yeh, well I worked out how to treble to both Grandsire AND PBD by numbers, AND how to work the new numbers out for bobs and singles ... come to think of it ... isn't that what conductors do when the remember coursing orders ? But then of course I moved on to the 'Follow-the-

bell-that- follows-you' method for hunting out, and gave up using the numbers ... Mmm ... I wonder if that's why I'm only a bob-caller, and not a conductor ?"

This posting started two separate threads – 1. Plain Hunt – the numbers game, 2 Repeated Topics.

1 Plain Hunt – the numbers game

Peter Sotheran had had a similar experience and Raymond Kefford described an incident in detail-

.... we spent an afternoon with three learners who had all met a stumbling block between Plain Hunt and Plain Bob.

Once we got to the source of each problem we found some common factors. They all had misconceptions about 'ropesight' which originated from 'helpful' ringers who had 'assisted' them by telling them the order of the bells to follow. Whereas many make the transition from following bells to counting their place, these three clearly had not. Because they were still following bells two of them had not developed the timing to move in or out a place. Because they were still following bells one of them was not really listening to her bell. Because they were still following bells they found it very difficult to place their handstroke leads properly. Therefore, I think it may be reasonable to draw two conclusions:

- 1 if the learner can cope without following a coursing order it is probably better to continue that way
- 2 when the learner is under instruction in their tower the 'helpers' need to be very careful before 'adding' any 'useful' information.

Peter Sotheran agreed --

This is very true. Often there are a number of points that need correction or advice. It is essential to prioritise them and deal with the most important, leaving the rest for later. Otherwise the learner suffers from information overload.

I find it quite infuriating when other well-intentioned ringers intervene with advice on the points that I have chosen to set aside for the time being. On occasion, I have had to explain that I am 'concentrating on points A & B and would prefer to come back to points C & D shortly'.

In parallel with this, I try to be consistent in my choice of terminology and ringing vocabulary; this can be undermined when helpful ringers intervene with an explanation that does not follow the structured style that we try hard to follow in our tower.

2 Repeated Topics

Laura Dickerson asked if there was a consensus about how often topics should be repeated because ringing by the numbers had been discussed on several occasions. Some discussion followed and Laura suggested-

In the past I've advocated some sort of FAQ that would cover a number of the ringing lists, because topics seem to bounce around between lists from time to time, especially between this list and C-R

The practicalities were discussed and then John Harrison intervened- With my official hat on, may I correct a misimpression.

You don't just 'join the list'. We all joined NRT, which provides several services for its members, including the discussion list. NRT member services include:

- The option to join this list (about 60% do that)

- The option to receive regular summaries of the discussion. (Notification should be sent to all members, whether on the list or not, with the option of an automatic download. Summaries do not always come out regularly, but eventually they catch up, and there are several years worth available.)

- There is an index to the summaries, showing the dates when each topic was discussed. You can download the latest index, and the previous summaries from

<http://barnettfamily.demon.co.uk/NRT/> - You can obtain the contact details for other NRT members within a give distance of where you live. (To do that, email Alison Barnett alison@barnettfamily.demon.co.uk)

- You are invited to attend NRT conferences. (There have been two so far. I realise that this is mainly a UK benefit.)

There are full details on the CC Education Committee website

<http://www.cccbr.org.uk/edc/edc.php#nrt>

More discussion followed about ways of making previous topics available to

newcomers and questions were asked about services already available through Yahoo.

Valdene Brown wrote-

I believe that files can be posted that would be accessible by list members.

Also (later)

Adobe allows you to download a "Reader" version of Acrobat which does text-based searches within a PDF document in almost precisely the same way that Word et al allows. One of the benefits of the PDF route is that the file can be locked so that it cannot be modified. The Reader - which can be downloaded for free BTW - can not edit a PDF, so that is another layer.

Laura Dickerson –

One thing I'd like to reiterate, especially for people for whom this is their only Yahoo group, is that if you register as a group member with Yahoo, you can see an archive of all the posts, a list of members with email addresses, some files from a couple of years ago (this would be where we'd put the FAQ, I guess) and there is space for photos and other features. See the information in the footer to check it out, or go to the Yahoo home page and click on groups

One final thought from Peter Sotheran

.....there are topics in which thinking and technology move on as time passes. So please do not fall into the trap of relying on previous coverage to answer recent/repeated questions.

Tail End

Brian Cook asked

I have noticed that some experienced ringers catch the sally with the tail end in front of the sally (ie on the ringer's side) whereas others, including me, catch with the tail end behind. Does anyone know if this makes any difference and if so which is the best practice? A long discussion followed – I have tried to pick out the salient points.

First of all there were problems agreeing what exactly was being asked.

Laura Dickerson –

Do you mean you're catching the sally with the tail between your palm and the sally? . .

Otherwise, I can't picture what you mean.

Michael Schulte thought he did know-

When a ringer catches with the tail end on the away side of the sally (front and behind just get confusing to me, since some people mean one thing and others the exact opposite, so I shall use near and away), two things happen that are undesirable:

(1) The ringer's hands exert a significant force on the rope in a sideways direction. This can cause the rope to flare out to the side, even if all else is done properly. Thus you increase the risk of your neighbour catching your rope, and you also can create a significant visual disturbance.

(2) You lose some contact with the sally. This causes you to gain less feedback from the sally, and feedback is crucial in ringing. The more contact you have with the sally, the better you can feel what is going on.

John Harrison added a third reason

....., which is perhaps the most important. You should have the rope in the cruck of your thumb, as you open your hand to grip and release the sally. If it is in the right place, it stays there without any problem. Also, the tail end naturally goes between you and the sally. If you don't get the rope in the cruck of your thumb, but let it hang over the side of your hand, or over your fingers, then it might not stay there, and you will almost certainly feel the need to hold it in place with a couple of your fingers as you open your grip for the sally, leaving you rather awkwardly holding the sally with the remaining fingers. Also, the tail end will naturally go between the sally and your hand, ie away from you.

Although Brian Cook (the originator of the thread) felt that the position was not important, particularly in ringers who had been using this technique for many years, the majority felt that it was important to have the rope on the "near" side and to teach this from the start. John Harrison described the way it should be done.

The hands should come up in a smooth movement from the bottom of the stroke (hanging down in front of the body) rising with the fingers opening alongside the sally, so they can close round it. They certainly shouldn't go the other side of the rope.

Peter Dale added another aspect

This discussion seems to have missed an important factor, probably because it's easy to take for granted. I refer to a slight twist of the wrist of the hand holding the tail end as the grip is changed between strokes, although it's a little more complicated than that. A correct handstroke grip has the tail-end across the front of the sally and the thumb pointing diagonally upwards. After releasing the sally the hands "follow through" together and turn over so that the thumbs point downwards. At the same time the thumb and first three fingers of the hand holding the tail release their grip momentarily,

with only the little finger maintaining hold.

The tail should then fall forward naturally whence immediately it is gripped once more by the thumb and forefinger. At the same time the wrist is turned slightly, palm outwards which effectively "puts" the rope into the free hand, ready for the backstroke grip as the rope begins to rise.

Transferring from the backstroke hold to the handstroke grip is thus the reverse of this process. The transfer of tail end grip between strokes ought to be practised out of context, with a dummy tail end first and then with a real rope, preferably on a bell that is down. The practice transfers should be analytically slow to start with, gradually building up to operational speed.

John Harrison was not so sure

Don't like the sound of that! All fingers should open and close around the sally together. If the rope is in the correct place in the left hand, the tail end stays put, and won't fall out.

Peter Dale again-

but the rope doesn't end up in the correct place in the "left" hand by magic. Just how do you transfer the tail from a thumb and forefinger hold (backstroke) to lying in the crook of the thumb with all fingers open for the handstroke? It's quite a knack, involving the little finger and a slight turn of the wrist.

Doug Nichols explained how he did it-

A flick of the wrist at the last moment before coming up to catch. This is my solution, good or bad. But I don't need any special little finger "grip" - the natural position of the fingers as they begin to open up after the backstroke grip seems to be enough to prevent the rope from falling out while the hand (and tail) moves into the catching position.

Fred Bone went into detail

As I finish the backstroke pull, with both hands "throwing" the tail towards the floor and forearms pointing downwards, I:

- open the "top" hand and let go
- start to bring both hands up (towards meeting the sally)
- begin pointing my fingers upwards while they are still in the "across" position (tail falling across the forefinger)
- relax my grip with the "bottom" hand as the hand comes to about waist height
- the bight of the tail then naturally falls towards the back of my hand
- and thus the tail falls into the crook of my thumb as the hand continues to rise
- and my fingers rotate to point away from me and slightly up, ready to make contact with the sally.

The tail is now through the crook of the thumb

and ready to be caught between base of thumb and sally in the "orthodox" position.

Improving Handstroke Pull

Heather Peachey asked for ideas about one of her learners –

The problem is that she has a very good feel for the backstroke pull but has learned NOT to pull the sally as the tutor was always pulling it and had no idea about putting in any resistance when catching the sally in order to ease it onto the balance - she would place her hands on it and then simply remove them. She has very quickly learned to set the bell under full control or to hold it on the balance at handstroke. My remaining problem is that she is apparently doing everything right, but is not delivering an effective pull on the sally. What she does all looks good - there seems to be effort - but then the backstroke doesn't rise sufficiently showing there was not the effort there appeared to be.

Philip George had a few thoughts-

Try teaching her to ring up. This may help her understand how much effort is required. Try to break down the stroke to identify the weak point. Is she confidently letting go of the sally with both hands at the same time? If you ring the backstroke, can she pull off the handstroke with enough strength for the bell to rise at back?

Is she having any problems with holding the tail end correctly at handstroke? Some ringers lack confidence in this. Is the tail end long enough for her - does she need a box?

Joy Fitzpatrick said- . I find that letting them pull off at handstroke then taking over they can concentrate on just the pull and see how far up it goes.

Peter Sotheran described how he had worked with a similar problem using a dummy tail-end –

I controlled the backstroke (b-s) as usual. I explained that I was controlling only the b-s and acting as a 'safety brake' on the h-s. I explained that it was up to her to put the same amount of effort into pulling the sally as she would into the b-s.

Initially, I deliberately over-pulled the b-s very slightly to give her some resistance to pull against. I always made a specific point of catching below her hands so that my influence was not between her hands and the bell. It can be hard work but I think it's worth it.

The sessions continued with me gradually reducing the effort I put into the sally and relying more on her to keep the bell going. After four or five ten minute sessions, sufficient progress had been made to stop

using the dummy tail end and give her full control of the rope. I continued to intervene occasionally at h-s to keep the bell up until all was well.

Catherine Lewis - I find it helps to explain the difference in the effect of pulling before and after the balance - that for the most part it's only the pull after the balance that affects how far it goes next time.

Alan McBurnie- The usual reason for the bell not going up sufficiently at backstroke is quitting on the handstroke. I insist that every handstroke ends with a downward flick with both hands, and the hands touching the trousers or skirt.

Catching above or below (when assisting a learner)

Peter Sotheran's comment about catching the sally below the learner started another thread when John Harrison wrote –

Lots of people seem to believe that catching below the learner's hands is good, and catching above them is bad. The logic goes that if you are not between the learner's hands and the bell, then the learner will feel the bell as normal, which is clearly not true. In fact both are bad. Catching anywhere affects what the learner feels. Wherever you pull, you are affecting the bell, and therefore affecting what the learner feels. The only way not to affect what the learner feels is not to catch the rope. So don't catch the rope at all unless you have to. If you do have to intervene, for safety say, then do so wherever is most effective. You will mess up the feel anyway.

Heather Peachey - I agree with John here, but would say that when I need to intervene to prevent the stay being 'bashed', I always try to catch below the learner and apply a little resistance after which I let go again, giving them back control as the bell gets to the balance so that the feel of the balance is experienced and the whole stroke is not 'wasted'. Catching below rather than above reduces the risk of the learner catching the sally far too low to take the control back again properly.

John Harrison again - That depends on how tall you and the learner are. Being tall, it is easier for me to go above the hands (on the infrequent occasions when I need to). I think I would find it hard to get below the learner's hands, which in fact means reaching between his or her arms, and if things were going wrong, might cause problems.

Liverpool 2008 – Advice sought

Giles Blundell explained -, Liverpool is the European Capital of Culture in 2008. Over the last few months, ringers in the Liverpool area have been looking at how we can take part in marking this event, with the aims of raising the profile of ringing, and strengthening ringing....*preparation includes-*

- the provision of a website so that ringers and the general public can find out what is going on.

- preparing tower bell ringers to recruit and train new ringers in 2008.

The website is - <http://www.bell08.org.uk> He explained that the site was at an early stage of development and the plan was to make it an introduction to ringing - so that a casual visitor will come away illuminated and hopefully enthused.

He was looking for existing websites that would be suitable to be linked. He also asked for advice on further developments. They were hoping, also, to do work on training capacity -

One option might be to create a ringing centre, but a possible alternative might be a 'ringing centre in a box' - which could not include the knowledge of trainers, but could contain the hardware to allow videos in the bell chamber and the ringing chamber, to install temporarily in a tower, and then move on elsewhere.

Advice came from –

Roger Booth-

Seems like a lot of what you envisage is similar to a project which a group of Ringing Centres have been working on since last October and plan to launch at the Roadshow (Newbury Sept 2005)

We plan to set up a non-ringer friendly website at www.learn2ring.com and this will include a postcode or similar way of directing people to suitable towers. However, we feel it is important that non ringers are directed towards towers that are set up to teach people, and subscribe to a basic framework of good practice. For this reason we have been collaborating closely with the CCCBR Education Committee and their new Framework for Ringing Training
Of course, such a project will require a tremendous amount of work, so we are planning to launch the concept at Newbury, and invite interested people to sign up and join the project, and then work together and produce the material over the next couple of years.

Aidan Hopkins-

Wouldn't www.learn2ring.org or www.learn2ring.org.uk be more appropriate?

(.com implies a commercial site, and to those who have been around the Internet a while, often implies a US-based site).

Using a postcode-based search seems an excellent idea. It could be added to the Dove Online site too. That currently only uses the outward postcode, often leading to inaccurate results.

Doug Nichols-

I can vouch for the value of cameras in belfries and ringing rooms. But something effective that can be set up temporarily with little fuss might be quite difficult.

We have set up a good quality surveillance camera in the belfry (it had to be a relatively expensive one to get an adequately wide-angle lens for our particular situation, and a damp-proof housing) and another (less special) camera in the ringing room. These feed their pictures down to two television sets on the ground floor. The TVs fit in a purpose-built cabinet so that the bells are above the ringers. Cameras are on the same wall, about 4 metres above their respective subjects. Viewers can see all the bells swinging around in glorious colour and the whole band pulling on the ropes....

For communicating what goes on upstairs to the general public or potential recruits, it is unrivalled by anything other than a trip up into the belfry while ringing is in progress (not always a good idea!)

Peter Wenham-

Some of the shots in the video "Heard but not Seen" are also quite good for this.