



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary June 2006 to April 2007

Calling call changes course

Laura Duncan asked - Does anyone know of any courses where you can learn to call call changes, and also get lots of practice at it? A friend has asked me and I don't know of anything myself. If not, does anyone have any suggestions for getting some concentrated practice other than at the home tower?

Phil Gay described a technique used at Keele.

We try to develop the ability to call call changes at an early stage. A common feature of all conducting is that it introduces yet another bit of multi-tasking, and this makes life particularly hard for less experienced ringers. One way round this is to introduce the learner to calling by doing it while not ringing - they can concentrate on looking at all the ropes without having to worry about their own bell.

We then introduce calling while ringing in a very incremental way. Each ringer calls their bell from lead to fifths place in turn, starting from rounds. This gets the learner used to calling loudly enough, which some find quite hard, and in the right place, without too much difficulty about what to call. Five people can practise this in the same touch. The next step is for each ringer (including the tenor) to make one call in turn, initially from rounds and then from Queens. This means that effectively each ringer is calling the whole touch, since they have to keep track of all the calls.

ABEL and BELTOWER programs were suggested. Raymond Kefford said it depended what you wanted to learn - If you want them to work things out for themselves they can practise on the called changes program by

Steve Scanlon at

www.ringbell.co.uk/software/callchg.htm

which can be downloaded for free. It is very useful with some learners as they can practise the calls on the computer before their bell handling is good enough to take part in the ringing, which saves time later but also gives them something to 'be good at'.

Heather Peachey - The Central Council Education Committee has, for some years now, offered a training course aimed at ringing teachers/leaders, called "Management, Training & Maintenance" (abbreviated to MTM). This is a modular course intended to be run over a whole weekend, tutored by CCCBR tutors, with a local organiser responsible for arranging for the venues and local students, helpers and assistant tutors who are encouraged to use what they have learned to run their own training subsequently. The students select 2 optional modules to attend together with the additional parts which all do. One of the modules is Call Changes. Students learn to call changes and how to use them effectively in their training of ringing recruits. Other modules include tower management, teaching bell control, teaching raising/lowering in peal, teaching method ringing and basic/intermediate conducting.

She said that she was in the process of updating the course material and at the same time the Education Committee were looking for a new name for their range of modular courses - to replace the badge of 'MTM'. Suggestions have included "Training the/for Trainers", "Teaching Teaching", "Teaching Skills" and others.

Any ideas from anyone else?? We want it to be such that the product "does what it says on the tin" and is encouraging, not offputting.

This prompted the next thread.

MTM (was call change courses)

Peter Wenham thought "Train the Trainers" and Peter Trotman - "Teach the Teachers" Both of these titles could be abbreviated to "T3". Alistair Donaldson thought either would be suitable but had a slight preference for "trainers".

Teaching bell handling (bell up or bell down)

Lynda Coles asked for advice on teaching bell handling starting from bell Up or bell Down. Has anyone out there tried teaching by both methods? If so, do they have any comment to make on the relative benefits/drawbacks? Is one method perceived to be better for different groups, eg teenage boys/mature women?

Peter Dale - I have taught both methods. It's many years ago since I last taught from down, but I seem to recall that the problem was a tendency for the learner to over-pull, often for a long time afterwards. In the long term this made hunting down particularly difficult for them.

Dr Val Brown and Mike Henshaw preferred the bell Down start. Mike Henshaw - I think it is the best way to develop confidence in learners and to get them pulling with the correct strength (unlike Peter's experience). Norman Chaddock's book "A manual of bell control" covers this in some detail and is worth a read.

John Harrison - 'Both' is an over-simplification. There is more to it than the state of the bell at the start of lesson 1. You will find a brief comparison of different bell-up and bell-down methods in the section on teaching handling and bell control in The Tower Handbook (section 11.3). I was taught, and taught several other people, by the

accelerated bell-down method, before I knew there was any other way. It worked with no problems. When I first saw bell-up teaching, it looked incredibly unsafe! I now use a hybrid method, and more importantly, I adapt the method to the needs of the individual pupil.

He did not feel that it would depend on the type of group suggested by Lynda. It is more to do with their natural co-ordination, and to a lesser extent strength. It also depends on the bells used for teaching. Light, easy going bells, with a short draught and well behaved ropes, are ideal for the accelerated method. I always start bell down. I consider the accelerated method ideal, but it is not always possible, so I combine some bell down with some bell up. Bell up teaching forces you to use single strokes, which is undesirable because the action then has to be unlearned, so it is a compromise. I aim to give the experience of the two stroke action as early as possible, ideally, but not always, by the end of the first lesson.

Clapper stays

Heather Peachey wrote -

There are many 'Heath Robinson' devices in use, some more effective than others, and some easier to use than others. I have an idea for a design which would fit almost any average sized bell, have no nuts or other bits to lose and would be quick and easy to fit/remove. The problem is I don't have the technical ability or facilities to consider the feasibility of construction or to make a prototype. Is there anyone out there who does and fancies a challenge?

Two offers of help were posted but also a discussion started about existing clapper stay designs.

Nick Smith - You may want to take a look at the clapper stays designed by Richard Pargeter. These are very quick and easy to fit and work well.

<http://www.ely.anglican.org/bells/> This is a wooden clapper stay which is fitted inside the bell and clipped in place to hold the clapper in the centre of the bell.

And **Karl Grave** - You might be interested in the simple but effective design from the Gordon Halls Centre. See my web site: <http://www.geocities.com/yacrwbm/Clappertes.html> This is a system with hooks for the lip of the bell and "bungee" round the clapper.

Michael Barnicott suggested - a rope and bungee solution. Our contraption has a rope "eye" at either end with some bungee in the middle. One eye hooks over the flight of the clapper, holding that against the side of the bell (with some carpet between the two to damp any vibration) and the eye hooks over the crown nut. The tension in the bungee keeps it all steady and it takes seconds to fit and remove - it works very well.

Mike Neale - I made a set of clapper restrainers taking an old bell rope and splicing a short length parallel to the main rope, to form a loop which fitted over the clapper flight. The rope was cut to fit across the mouth of the bell and up to the headstock. Two rubber bands cut from an old inner tube connected the ends of the rope to the clapper bolt. Easy to fit and using redundant materials.

John Harrison felt that it was important that the device could be fitted from one side of the bell since it halves the amount of climbing in and out of pits.

Frank Lewis - We use an old bike inner tube and a couple of bits of rope. The bits of rope are knotted to opposite sides of the tube and the other ends have a loop (noose if you like). To install, you simply chuck one bit of rope over the headstock, collect the noose below the soundbow and attach it round the clapper flight. You then grab the noose on your side of the bell and loop this round the flight below the other one. This takes about 30 seconds to do, and it's even quicker to undo. When setting up the bits of rope you'll need to experiment to see how much tension you need to keep the thing in place. If slippage of the tube is a problem you can always put a couple of knots in it so that it's secured centrally over

the clapper bolt. (It then looks like three sausages.)

Peter Sotheran asked - Has anyone tried securing the clapper in the centre of the bell, perhaps with a bungee hook either side? With small bells like ours, securing the clapper to one side affects the balance, making the bells tricky to set when the clapper is on the 'wrong' side.

Gail Cater - I think the position of the clapper can be quite important. Various ways of fixing the clapper at the side of the bell work OK but upset the balance of the bell. Fixing them centrally with a clapper bar is better from that point of view, but can be fiddly to fit and woe betide you if you drop the wingnut into the pit. Fixing with bungee devices is probably easier than a clapper bar. What we at The Yorkshire Dales Ringing Centre at Settle are looking for is ideally a free swinging clapper but silenced. So far tyres seem the quickest easiest option but we are struggling to get them not to move when ringing.

Cyril Crouch - We are using 2 or 3 layers on our clappers at Shiplake and linking them together with cable ties. If the odd one does tend to turn we have reverted to putting a jubilee clip on the flight hard against the ball with the muffles on top. That is effective.

Peter Dale was also in favour of a tyre solution and went into detail about his system of manufacture. Instead of cutting a round hole in the tread I now make three straight cuts in the shape of an "H". When the flight is forced through, the upper and lower parts of the "H" form two flaps that grip quite tightly. This has cured any problem with slipping.

I mark off the sectors on the rim of the tyre, and use a mini angle-grinder to cut through the steel wires at each point. Wear a mask for goodness sake. Then, pulling the walls apart as far as is possible I cut across the tyre at each point with a Stanley knife. Wetting the knife and the tyre helps considerably. This gives me the set of "blanks". To make the "H"

cut I take each piece and hold it open in a truncated oval shape. I cut into the inside of the tyre. The two long cuts are parallel to the long axis and closer together than the diameter of the flight, so that the sides of the "H" will be forced apart when fitted.

He felt that the type of tyre used was very important. All car tyres now have steel bracing in the treads but motor bike tyres still use nylon, and they have a better profile. I keep a piece of "ideal" tyre from way back, to use as a pattern when I go making a nuisance of myself at motorcycle shops searching for replacements.

Finally Peter Wenham posted - I have made a prototype adjustable clapper stay in wood, cost about £5 at DIY shop prices. This one is adjustable in length from 20 inches to 26½ inches and will accept a clapper shank up to 1½ inches diameter. (Packing pieces would be needed for smaller shanks.) Dimensions (overall length and clapper shank) can be modified to meet individual's requirements.

Hands not on tail end

John Harrison described teaching his latest student - On lesson 2, about half the time, his right hand didn't go down onto the tail end after leaving the sally, but went down and out with a fingers-out action So I reminded him to get his hand on the tail end, and when I did, his hand more or less did what it should. He could feel tension in his hand between what he wanted it to do and what it was doing. *Other techniques tried were ghosting the handstroke, (limited success), pretending there was a £5 note gripped between his wrists (made action clumsy). More success was achieved by using a mirror but he regressed once it was taken away. The best approach seemed to be to encourage him to ring the bell just below the balance which appeared to help him relax. One possible further factor was that he was very tall and had big hands. He asked if anyone else had experienced similar problems.*

Heather Peachey described her experiences with a man in his 70s. She had tried various solutions but nothing seemed to work until one day she noticed that he was handling correctly. When she noticed the improvement he said - "Well I was at another practice, and I noticed that the good ringers all do what you do and get their hand straight on the tail end and the not so good ringers do what I was doing. So I decided it wasn't going to beat me.....!"

John Harrison - In my case, when it was really bad, he was trying very hard to do it correctly, and his subsequent comment about his hands not feeling tired when he did it properly suggest that he was fighting something in himself.

Steps in teaching handling

Gregory Russell - I was recently asked to look over the sequence of steps to be used in teaching new recruits. The basic outline was taken from the Tower Handbook. There were several places where I would now take some exception with the sequence, so I'm wondering if there is a more recent or broader consensus on how handling should be taught.

John Harrison - The list of steps in The Tower Handbook was mainly intended as a basis for the comparison of different approaches, which accompanied it. There is a lot more to successful teaching than a list of steps (and one of the 'steps' was marked not recommended, but included in the list because it is widely used). Several different schemes have been published, each of which has its merits. CC Education Committee is currently working on a new book about these aspects of teaching, which draws on the results of research into how people learn physical skills, but it is not yet available.

Ring up

Andrew Harper asked - How much of a role does strength play in ringing a bell up? The reason I ask is that I have two learners, both young girls aged 10 and both slightly built. I have tried to teach them to ring up, but they

can only get the bell so far and then seem to lack the strength to get the bell the rest of the way. It could be technique, but even though they seem to be pulling to the limit of their strength and pulling all the way down, the bell does not raise any further. A small amount of assistance by me obviously makes a difference and allows them to carry on raising, but I would like to get them to raise it on their own.

Neil Donovan - I almost always end up giving a bit of assistance on the first few occasions. I'm certain that strength is important, but so is the weight of the bell being raised, in my case about 3cwt. I also think that there is a technique to be learned. I don't object to giving assistance.

Phil Gay agreed - The other thing to remember is that however hard the pull, the bell will go up only as fast as it is allowed to by letting out rope. Also I have found that learners in their keenness to get a good backstroke pull are inclined to start the pull fractionally early, which of course is counter-productive. The balance between pulling too early and preventing the bell from rising, and pulling too late and missing the best bit when the bell is moving relatively slowly is a very fine one, and I think letting the learner pull only the backstroke gives them a bit more time to get this right without having to worry about the sally.

Peter Wenham agreed with Phil but also thought there was a mechanical element involved - when a bell is halfway up its axis is horizontal at the end of each swing. This is where the bell's weight exerts the greatest "fall back" force thus greater effort is needed at this point to raise the bell further. Once past this point less effort is needed to complete the raise.

John Grainger - I have had some success by asking the ringer to focus effort only on the first part of the stroke, i.e. above their head. I believe this is the most efficient part of the stroke. Later in the pull, particularly at the

bottom of the stroke, one is having no effect on the bell, merely managing the rope in a straight line (hopefully). Further, I ask the ringers to focus on the muscles they are using to pull the bell. Initially this would be the biceps and then shoulders (sorry my physiology isn't great) and then I think there should be no 'pull' as this is wasted effort.

Philip Dunn thought - to maximise the backstroke pull, one needs to finish with a good flick of the wrist. At this point, the bell is approaching its maximum velocity, and speed of movement is of the essence.

John Harrison - The stronger you are, the more likely you will be able to do it with poor technique. Also, of course with a very heavy bell, strength plays a role even with good technique. *He felt that the two 10 year olds were at a better starting point than a hefty man, because they will have to learn to do it correctly, and therefore in due course be able to tackle any bell without problems.* It is common for inexperienced ringers (of any size) to get stuck half way up. The reason lies in their technique, and not any built in energy barrier to do with the way the bell swings. Left to itself (and neglecting friction) the bell neither rises nor falls, at any stage of the raise. If the ringer is injecting net energy into the bell at every stroke, then however slowly, it will continue to progress upwards, and eventually get there. The reason the middle stage is more difficult is that the faster rope movement aggravates the effects of poor technique. The key is the ability to 'switch the force on and off' at the right times during the stroke, rather than just vaguely heaving. They also need to realise that letting the bell rise is just as important as pulling.

Nick Smith - The amount of energy input is governed by the equation: $Work = Force \times Distance$, where Force is how hard you pull the rope and Distance is the length of the pull. As the bell rises the length of pull available increases and so, with good technique that uses the full length of pull available, the force of the pull does not need to. Hence, if a

learner is getting stuck half way up the solution is to get them to improve their technique rather than pull harder. A tell tale sign that the learner is not pulling effectively is the sally "misbehaving". The primary causes being, in my experience, the start of the pull being snatched and stopping the hands before the end of the stroke.

Ringing up and down in peal

Nick Smith wrote - I am due to run a training session on ringing up and down in peal. Key points that I intend to include in the training session (apart from lots of practice) are:

For the raise:

The tenor sets the pace Each bell should aim to stay in the middle of the gap between the bell in front and the bell after rather than maintaining a "standard" spacing. If the front bells go up too quickly the change should concertina rather than have bells overtaking each other

For the lower:

The tenor sets the pace The tenors need to close in first to make room for the treble. Each bell should aim to stay in the middle of the gap between the bell in front and the bell after rather than maintaining a "standard" spacing. If the front bells go down too quickly the middle bells should bridge the gap rather than leave the back bells behind

General:

If you get out of place the easiest way back is often to identify the bell that you are actually following and work your way back around the circle one bell at a time.

Different bells have different periods of swing and so the only way to get them in time is for each to be at a different height – most noticeable at the bottom when the trebles are swinging and the tenor is almost stationary.

Listening to each change is vital.

I am sure that there are other points that I need to cover and the above may need modifying.

John Harrison - You covered most of the key points. I do find it important to spend 5 - 10 minutes at the start getting over the fundamentals. The key point is that it is a collective effort, and it is dynamic. Everyone should aim upwards (or downwards) together, and everyone should continually move apart (or together). Everyone should aim for continual change, not just drift until something doesn't fit. Encourage them to be aware of bells either side of them, not just the one in front.

To say the tenor ringer sets the pace is a bit over simplified, and can encourage tenor ringers to drift off on their own and not do their bit to fit in. It should be enough to remind people that the rate of rise or fall is limited by the back bells. Then if everyone is sensitive to what the bells around them are doing, and providing the treble locks onto the tenor's tail a natural rate of rise or fall should emerge.

Listening to each change is vital - Yes, but there will be some times when it gets too confused and hard to hear. The advice then should be to try to see the overall pattern of ropes around them, to help stay on an even keel in roughly the right place, amidst the confusion. One point you didn't mention, is how well the students will have been matched to the course. I have often had students on raising and lowering in peal courses, who had problems getting the bell up and down, with no margin of control for trying to synchronise it.

Strength and timing of pulls

Richard Major – The discussion on raising and lowering contained several references to the timing and strength of the force applied to the bell rope. Although this is important during raising and lowering it is equally important when ringing at a steady pace and more so when bell speed needs to be varied.

It occurs to me that it might be useful to have real time measurement and feedback of the force being applied to a bell rope. If nothing

else this would enable a learner to compare his/her efforts with their instructors and perhaps thereby improve their style. Has anyone produced such a device?

The device was discussed in the following thread – ‘pullometer’ but some lower tech solutions were also discussed.

Phil Gay - A fairly simple way of demonstrating how little pull is required at backstroke is to get the learner to ring the bell by pulling only the backstroke. Initially the teacher will have to catch the sally to make sure the stay doesn't get broken, but with discouragement from pulling the learner will get to the stage where the bell rises almost to the balance at hand. There is no corresponding exercise for the handstroke, but that needs to be pulled harder, so if you can get the backstroke right, the handstroke shouldn't be too much of a problem. Another thing I do is set the bell at back and then, with everyone standing well clear, pull the rope just enough to pull it off. With many bells, the weight of the rope is sufficient to set the bell at hand. No doubt some people will say the both of the above are dangerous and irresponsible, but if done carefully they are safe and provide very powerful demonstrations of an important point.

Catherine Lewis pointed out - This bell is coming from the balance at back. On many occasions the bell doesn't get there in the first place and so more effort is actually needed to get it up at hand.

It was suggested that there was little advice on correcting the problem of over pulling and the problem was not well understood.

John Harrison disagreed – he felt - the problem is communicating that understanding to people who have the problem.

He uses three approaches to cure over pulling-

1 - At the foundation stage, we do a lot of lifting to the balance. We also do a lot of

practice setting at backstroke. Most of our bells are light set, and with long ropes, there is no way you can set them without a fairly gentle touch.

2 - I use the rope tension exercise (The Tower Handbook p 167).

3 - Having given the learner the experience of what rope movement with a light tension feels like, I then coach them while ringing to reduce tension, ie stand with them and tell them to reduce the force gradually, while still controlling the bell. It is pretty easy to see whether they are doing so, and certainly when they revert. Being told that they have just increased force and to reduce it, not only helps keep them on the straight and narrow, but helps them learn what the symptoms of escalating force feel like.

Pullometer

Although it was agreed that this was an old topic it received a good airing

John Harrison said that he had looked into the idea in the 1990s and had suggested a fairly high-tech solution which he tried to get developed by university engineering departments. Later it was suggested that standing on bathroom scales might give some data. I did some experiments, and confirmed that there were indeed quite large observable differences between the excursions of the dial with different people ringing the same bell in rounds. From memory, I could keep the swing under about 2-3 stones, while less experienced ringers had it swinging up to 10 stones.

He felt the development of a device which could record information would be very useful.

Nick Smith - The ability to record the readings is very important. In addition to pulling too hard many learners also pull for a very short distance. As a consequence if you succeed in getting them to reduce the level of heave the bell then drops because the short pull results in too little energy being input to the bell. A recording would show up the learner's pull as a spike whereas the

experienced ringers would be a long low effort.

John Harrison - I like the phrase 'level of heave'. It is pretty descriptive of how some people ring. In fact the reason the bell drops in this situation is probably that the 'heave' (albeit a light heave) almost certainly includes an element of checking, as well as pulling.

Handling instructions starting from bell down

Greg Russell wrote - I've heard a number of people (I think off this list) mention that they are now teaching handling by starting with the bell down, and working first on chiming, then on raising, and finally on ringing. They seem to like this approach a lot, so I'm wondering what other experience people have had with it.

*The answers were (predictably?) rather polarised one way or the other. The proponents of "bell down" were **John Harrison, Ron Warford and Val Brown**. The "Bell Up" enthusiasts were **Catherine Lewis, Barbara Le Gallez and Doug Nichols***

Ron Warford - I was taught from bell down. I can remember the hard work in the early stages, and I remember it taught me to pull hard initially. It is probably safer than starting from bell up and I think is worth considering, but great care needs to be taken as the learner is approaching the balance and set stage.

Catherine Lewis - In the past 15 years I have been heavily involved in starting 4 new bands. In that time I have taught handling with many people with various ringing backgrounds - none have even dreamt of teaching without, at an early point, using the stages where backstroke and pulling off at handstroke are practised on an up bell. Once, some years ago, I saw a demonstration of teaching a real learner as Greg describes. This did "work" in that, after a reasonable length of time, this young man was indeed able to ring a bell on his own. However I was confirmed in the view that the operation of ringing a bell up with a raw learner on the end of the rope is a

potentially scary process. This is because it is a process which has to move through many stages before it is complete and because it cannot be stopped at will. The process of ringing a bell up is quite hard work until one has some of the necessary skills in place and therefore much intervention must be necessary with such groups.

***John Harrison** was taught with the bell down and I never saw a raw beginner on the end of the rope with a bell up until I was 20, and when I did, it seemed extremely scary, compared with my previous teaching experience. I now use a combination of approaches, and I quite often vary to suit the needs of the pupil. I always start with the bell down, but how far we rise on that occasion, and how many times we return to it, varies. Likewise, at the end of the first lesson (during which in almost all cases the pupil has experienced some sort of two-stroke ringing) the pupil always lowers the bell (backstroke only and no coils, since I manage the spare rope).*

***John** agreed that the process was quite hard work but by building in the idea that it is a natural part of the process from the start, and returning to it regularly throughout training, you can develop and monitor the growth of those skills. You avoid people 'learning to ring' but 'not being able to get a bell up because it is too difficult (so they won't try)'.*

Many discussions on this topic start by assuming that there are two complete, water-tight 'methods' called 'bell down' and 'bell up'. That is an unhelpful over simplification. There are many exercises one can do to help develop bell control skills. Some use a bell down or part down. Some teachers use them, some don't. Good teaching is flexible and responsive. Bell down exercises play a useful role as part of the overall mix, and there is a strong case for using them early, and regularly in the teaching process with all learners.

He felt that learners should not be expected to fit a mould. Respond to what they can do and adapt accordingly.

Learning part courses

***Peter Wenham** quoted from a posting on "Ringing Chat" . The correspondent felt that the use of half or part courses of Surprise as a learning tool was a backward step.*

Peter felt - To my mind, the advantage of this approach, properly supervised, is that a method is learnt BY PLACE BELLS, a facet of learning a method that is too often overlooked We used this approach successfully when teaching London Minor at Branch training days last year.

***John Harrison** - I would never advocate someone learning only part of a method. It seems slipshod and half hearted. Maybe it is in line with the current fashion of dumbing everything down. Place bells are important, but you don't have to learn them in penny numbers as completely isolated fragments to learn them. I think that loses awareness of the overall structure and symmetries of the method. I encourage people to learn place bells as an integral part of the overall method - which does mean learning all of it.*

***Fred Bone** - I'm in a couple of (overlapping) bands that are ringing quarter peals of spliced Surprise Major, gradually extending the repertoire. Several people learn only the leads they will be ringing (they also insist on ringing particular bells). There is a strong temptation to do likewise, especially as I'm invariably put on the tenor.*

***Simon Linford** - The advantage of only having to learn half a line, i.e. to the pivot, cannot be underestimated. The more you ring with people who ring lots of methods, the rarer it is to find anyone who learns a whole line of anything. So I think learning half a course of Surprise Major is exactly the right thing to do, provided the learner then learns to go back up the line rather than wasting memory on learning the other leads. It is just*

far more efficient on memory, and memory is often the scarce resource. This should be separated from just learning a single lead or two of a method in order to start ringing it. There is a place for doing that but it's not ideal.

A guide to running a practice

***Martyn Owen** had had to write a guide for running a practice. He felt it might be useful to others and posted it in full. This is a detailed document and can be made available on request.*

Counting places

***Phaedra Sawbridge** - It recently (and quite blindingly!) struck me that the only time I seriously started to count by place was when I was put in a position of having no choice but to count my place.... and this ONLY began to happen when learning to treble to Triples methods!*

***Peter Wenham** - Two suggestions which may help in teaching this. Start by clearly identifying the meanings of the bell number (which never changes) and the place number (which will change) I have found this to be a source of confusion which must be eliminated. Use call changes (or kaleidoscope) as a first step in counting places. We use the "Round the Clock" sequence of call changes for starters:*

1 - 2

1 - 3

1 - 4

1 - 5

2 - 3

2 - 4

etc back to rounds. Each bell in turn has to move from lead to 5th place and at other times move a place up or down as each other bell "passes through". This makes place counting relatively simple. I only wish I could see inside heads to find out what they are really thinking!

Ringing for youngsters

***Michael Barnicott** - I am hoping to organise a half-day's training aimed at the youngsters in*

our district (up to 18 years old) This is in response to our tower's one and only young ringer seeing a write up of one such event in *The Ringing World* and asking "why can't we do something like this so I can meet up with some people my own age?" The gauntlet has been thrown and I'd like to meet the challenge.

Andrew Harper - Firstly, variation is important to stop the children becoming bored. We split the day into 2 and we had a break in the middle of each session, complete with drinks and biscuits. The morning session revolved around ringing steady rounds and striking with a bit of handling thrown in when necessary. We also used an instructor per student to help with the key points of the lesson. Other students that were at a higher level were also used to fill in on other bells. The second session was a big hit and I believe it would be a valuable part of any children's practice, especially for the younger ringers. In this session, the lead instructor took the children away for 10 minutes and talked to them about the preferred ringing style (ie stance, long straight pulls, straight arms when above head, hand straight from sally to end of rope after pulling handstroke etc) and then asked each one of them to mark a nominated adult helper when they rang a touch of something as a demonstration. I will point out that the adult helpers had no knowledge of this beforehand and so didn't know what the children were doing. The lead instructor then repeated the exercise but this time asked the children to mark a nominated ringer's ability to strike his/her bell in the right place (having asked each nominated ringer to deliberately ring in a particular way (quick or late) beforehand). The children really enjoyed the opportunity to, effectively, turn the tables on grown up ringers in this way.

Penny Coghill - Just be careful that you have adults who have been police-vetted - the County Council organises this; because we found even my 20 year old son had to have clearance in order to take part in activities

with younger teenagers on a music week where he was a participant.

Roger Booth explained that the CC Ringing Centres committee was keen to support young ringers' groups

For this reason the Ringing Centres Committee have produced a booklet with examples of best practice. I have placed a copy of this in .PDF format in the shared files section of this e-group at <http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/NetworkForRingingTraining/files/> My second piece of advice is that a 'one-off' event is likely to have very limited benefit. Even the token Association 'once a year' young persons' event can seem like a lifetime away for most young people. I think you need to be aiming for something like once a month, as a minimum.

Music lessons for youngsters

Peter Wenham described teaching a small group of youngsters (Year 6) and expected them to be ringing within a month. **David Horrocks** was surprised it would take so long. Most youngsters can ring a Saxilby Simulator unaided in minutes.

This started a thread about the difference between a simulator and a dumbbell.

John Harrison tried to clarify the issue.

Pedantically, you could claim that using some weights on a wheel instead of a real bell is 'simulating' its action, just as much as using an electronic box to generate bell sounds at appropriate times is simulating a ring of bells. But in the practical world, the term 'ringing simulator' has been used since the late 1970s to refer to a box that simulates the sounds of ringing, and the term dumbbell has been used since the late 1700s to describe mechanical equipment that seeks to replicate the action of ringing on the end of a rope. It would cause less confusion if we stuck to those terms. In this discussion, the issue wasn't just about replicating the mechanical action with something other than a bell, it was about the

merits of teaching handling with a dumbbell that in several respects is different from a real bell.

Model bell

Tony Furnivall asked about the availability of model bells to buy.

Catherine Lewis - Whitechapel offer one that looks really good, but it's £3000

Phil Gay

roandphilgay@woodlandskeele.fsnet.co.uk offered to help and later described several models he had made. Some of these were possible to ring and were full working models

Doug Nichols described a 2D model he had made.

Ring software for Apple Mac

David Baker - Before I changed to my current iMac G5 OSX computer I regularly used applications like Abel and Methodmaster on Windows 98SE. Is there any way I can run these or similar programs on my Mac? Both are great training aids.

Andrew Brown - if your G5 is Intel based then go to:
<http://www.apple.com/macosx/bootcamp/> you will then be able to use your Mac to run Windows as if it was a native...

Alan Bentley - I can confirm that having installed Abel on my iMac the program works fine. I used Apple's Bootcamp to create the PC partition on the hard drive where Abel has to reside. However, I am only using the keyboard as the interface and I can imagine a number of technical issues that would need to be thoroughly investigated and resolved if other external devices were required; the iMac does not have any serial or parallel ports. Although Bootcamp is free, will automatically partition the drive and is easy to use the disadvantages are that Bootcamp is only limited to Windows XP2 and you have to re-start the computer to switch between the two operating systems. However, I have never

been particularly inconvenienced at these limitations. Another option for an Intel based Mac is to run Parallels Desktop by Purple Rage (www.purplerage.com) which costs about £30 (considerably cheaper than Windows XP2). Apparently it will run many different versions of Windows, Linux, etc. simultaneously within the OSX environment. The reported disadvantages are no accelerated 3D graphics, "spotty" hardware device support and is memory hungry (shouldn't be a problem for the G5). I have no first or even any hand experience of Parallels Desktop.

Practice night politics

A question was asked about the politics of practice night. I want to add St. Clement's and Double Oxford Minor (individually or spliced) to our Sunday repertoire to get us out of a bit of a rut, but our practice band invariably includes a particular individual who flatly refuses, despite being keen to learn new Surprise Minor methods. These refusals not only thwart my immediate plans, but also encourage negativity from other members of the band. We end up stuck with our regular few methods because Fred won't ring this, Jim turns his nose up at that, and so on. Is there something inherently boring about St. Clement's and Double Oxford Minor (and inherently exciting about Surprise Minor)? Is it reasonable for a capable ringer to refuse to ring a common method that the TC is trying to introduce into the repertoire, thereby denying the band an opportunity?

Sue Scotter - Isn't the problem that magic word "Surprise"? In many people's eyes the be all and end all is to ring Surprise; no matter whether you can strike it well or not.

Further correspondence elicited the fact that the problem was "all those boring dodges on the front".

Fred Bone - That's an excuse, not a reason. No one can genuinely believe that and still want to ring, say, Norwich or Bourne S Minor.

Barry Peachey - the problem is not one of politics, but of the basic philosophy of teaching ringing. As Master of the local Ringing Centre Society I do things in a certain way. That certain way is agreed with my band, not the least because we taught nearly all of them to ring, and they are the beneficiaries of the way that we do things. They know that the methods that I call for on practice night are part of a sequence of teaching which takes the learner from handling all the way up to advanced Surprise, if they are good enough. Along the way both I and they will ring methods of no particular intrinsic appeal. However, that method may be a useful training tool. For example, Double Oxford's chief merit is that it teaches the moderately able ringer to listen to the treble at the back so that they know without counting when they have finished dodging on the front, vice versa. This is a skill which will later prove invaluable in Lincolnshire and Superlative S. Major. In addition it has a perfectly regular coursing order.

I noted with interest the comment that someone could not be bothered to learn her 'starts'. In other words, she doesn't know the method, she just knows the line. I would not have allowed her to learn it like this, in ignorance of the place-bells. This speaks volumes to me of the seeming lack of a basic philosophy of who is in charge, why they do what they do, and what support they have for their training scheme. I well understand that running a band can be a nightmare for the inexperienced, or the Tower Captain who is not personally a very able ringer, but I would suggest that the time has come for a sit-down discussion between the protagonists about what is sought to be achieved at practices, and how that end is to be met.

Fred Bone - Bet her a modest sum that she can't ring Bala B Minor or Loch Lomond B Minor right first time. Better still, persuade (bribe?) one or two other members of the band to request one of them. Depending on when your practice night is, you may just have time

to do Loch Lomond as a special method for Burns Night ... or for the "Sunday within the Octave".

Michael Barnicott - One thought might be to have a rota for looking after the weekly practice. That would also give you more chance of ringing something different on "your" practice night. Suppose your turn comes round once every 4 weeks, at the end of your practice you could hand out a line to be learnt for the next one.

Christine Richardson - I occasionally delegate running the practice to my deputy and to one or two others in the band. It's always announced in advance who will be in charge that week. Once you get used to sitting on your hands and zipping your mouth as things proceed differently, it's a good exercise to see where others put the priorities, and can make you aware of any ruts that you may have inadvertently fallen into. It also gives you a rare chance to chat, especially to anyone who doesn't come to the pub afterwards!

Continuous dodging practice

Lynda Coles asked for details of a method to help practising dodging.

Nick Smith - The details for the Doubles and Minor versions are on the Cambridge District website at <http://www.cambridgeringing.info/> click on "Doubles" on the left hand side and then scroll to the bottom of the page for the link to the method.

Lynda forwarded an email from **Martin Mansley** giving his experience of it.

We tried it last Tuesday for the first time and it worked really well with our learner who has just started the transition from plain hunt to Plain Bob. After two goes at Bayles - one on 3 and one on 4 he was able to ring two courses of Bob Doubles with minimal help. I'm sure that it was vastly eased by having had the concentrated practice at dodging that the Bayles allows.

Pullometer – Old thread revived

Doug Nichols – Back in September last year John Harrison commented that a pullometer would be a very valuable tool and wanted to know if anyone would be interested in developing one. Someone replied "working on it!", but nothing further was heard on NRT. Has any progress been made?

I am fairly certain I have figured out how to do it and would be able to produce the goods given sufficient time and reasonable confidence that I wasn't going to be beaten to the post (the amount of work involved would constitute real work rather than after-hours tinkering, so I would want to profit from it)

Is anyone working on any sort of pullometer gadget currently?

Andrew Chin - To begin with, I'm working on two versions. One version is based on a modified digital bathroom scale. The other version is based on an S- type load cell "spliced" into the rope just above the sally. My thinking is that there will be situations where the bathroom scale will register and the load cell won't (such as when a ringer tries to push the rope up) and hence the scales do not exactly reflect the amount of tension in the rope. The scales (or the software the scales are connected to) need the smarts to be able to distinguish between genuine rope tension and body movement, whereas the load cell measures tension in the rope only. The load-cell-in-rope however cannot be the "pullometer" instrument of choice itself because it is not portable (you can't move it from bell to bell easily), and the load cell prevents the rope going through the ceiling boss in most towers (we have a very high ceiling and long rope draught here so it's not a problem)

Richard Major - Concerning the note from Andrew Chin and bathroom scales, I do not think this is a useful approach. I have spent a lifetime monitoring people walking and standing on force plates and am well aware of the forces body movement can produce. I

have also seen so many ringing combinations of arms bend, knees bend, arched back, heel rise etc. to know that producing an algorithm to filter these outputs would be a thankless task. The force gauge seems the right way forward but I am concerned about the size - we have a low ceiling! Although it would be nice to have a portable device I think the full value would only be revealed if the force output is linked to bell position. Hence I suspect a more permanent solution in "teaching" towers might be the easiest way forward.

Andrew then explained the load cell he was using

http://achin_ringing.fastmail.com.au/1182_1.jpg I'm using it simply because I found it on eBay. Ideally I'd want to use something like the cylindrical one with a threaded hole at each end on the left of this page: <http://www.transducertechniques.com/TLL-Load-Cell.cfm>

A different story about a simulator

Alan Gould - In Settle tower, when we use the simulator, we have segments of motorbike tyre on the clapper which allow the clapper to swing but deaden the sound considerably but do not silence the bell completely. When the bells are rung on the simulator with the tyre segments in place, if you are outside the church underneath the tower, you hear a gentle hum. If you're more than 30 yards away, you can't hear a great deal unless there is absolutely no wind.

I've just been talking to someone who lives near the church. She said that she loves the bells open, but hates it when we ring the simulator as she can hear this very strange sound akin to 'nails on blackboard'. In talking about it, we can only conclude that she is one of those (un)lucky people who can hear frequencies that the rest of us can't hear. I was never much good at physics, but I wonder if the tyre segments are filtering or shutting out certain frequencies allowing other frequencies that would normally be drowned out (that's the technical term!) to get through. A tale

about how a tool (simulator) that we thought would make life easier on the community has altered things adversely for another person. The lady wasn't complaining at all.

Let go survey

Recently there had been a much publicised case of a young ringer at Loughton in Essex who had been pulled up by the rope after a stay / slider failure. He had sustained relatively minor injuries but paramedics had been called and had had problems getting him out of the tower – hence the publicity.

Laura Dickerson - In the Boston, Massachusetts, towers, before any learner has a pull, there is a serious discussion about how important it is to let go the rope instantly when told to do so. It's a safety rule, and we feel that it's necessary to teach it first. So, the question: does everybody else teach this?

There was general agreement that a safety drill should be taught at the first lesson.

John Harrison - I teach two safety drills before the first lesson. One is what to do if the rope goes all floppy and out of control (ie hold the tail end, step back, don't try to grab the sally). The other is what to do if you feel the rope about to lift you off the floor (ie let go). The biggest risk from a broken stay comes when the learner is no longer under close supervision. The time to let go is before anyone else is likely to spot what is about to happen. Once you are even a few inches off the floor, the urge to hang on must be quite powerful, so it is better to build in self-recognition rather than rely on commands.

Alastair Stracey - Rather than an instruction to let go, I always tell a new learner that if they get into trouble I shall instruct them "step back" (or step away) and I shall take over the rope. I also advise them that the command may be somewhat peremptory, but this will be because things may be moving very quickly. By using the instruction "step back" I ensure that the learner is out of the way of any loose rope and I can concentrate on controlling the

bell. I usually repeat this message several times during the first few lessons.

Arb – (*slightly tongue in cheek?*) There are other dangers from a broken stay and the ringer not reacting quickly enough. Many years ago whilst on a university ringing outing I was standing behind a rather petite female student ringing a heavier bell than she was generally used to. The stay broke and she was lifted quite a few feet above the ground before letting go of the tail end. In those days my reactions were somewhat quicker than they are now and I was able to catch her under the elbows and slow her descent sufficiently that she came to no harm. We were married a few years later!