



# Training Times

## News from the Ringing Centres – taken from their Annual Reports

It is a requirement of all Ringing Centres recognised by the Central Council that each submits a report to the Ringing Centre Committee every 1 to 2 years that includes a description of the activities undertaken during the previous year. It is evident from the reports submitted for 2010 that there is still much good work being carried out by the majority of those Centres accredited to the CCCBR; the following summarises what has been reported to date:

The active Centres tend to maintain regular practices, which no doubt provides the momentum for their continuing success. As well as the obvious benefits of the regular practice to the novice ringers it is also easier to arrange helpers if they know in advance what the commitment will be. Some Centres reported using more than one tower for training events due to over subscription as well as a means of attracting a wider area of participation. In addition to running courses on basic bell handling and method ringing on six bells a number of Centres also arrange practices for the more advanced ringer on higher numbers of bells; this not only raises the profile of the Centre within the local ringing community but will help to retain regular helpers and attract new ones. Indeed, one Centre organises “Friends” nights to encourage the helpers to meet and ring the more advanced methods.

In addition to regular practices many Centres arrange training events on specific subjects such as bell handling, ropesight, listening skills, raising/lowering, particular methods, conducting/calling, maintenance, etc. One Centre reported having dedicated theory sessions ‘with tea’. These events are usually part of a programme advertised in advance to which ringers will subscribe although in a couple of instances individual towers have been invited to the Centre and their specific requirements have been catered for accordingly. Part of the service some Centres provide are peals and quarter peals as a follow up to method training events to help students to consolidate what they have recently practised.

One Centre has started offering ten week courses via an adult community college although there had been no take up during 2010. Another Centre has ambitions to provide a week long course for beginners and it will be interesting to see if this initiative proves to be worthwhile. Only one Centre has reported providing residential courses.

A number of Centres arrange events specifically for young people such as training days and outings for ringers (usually

with a social/food element) and tower visits by schools (normally Year 6) and youth groups such as scouts and guides. In one instance these events have evolved into the formation of young ringers groups with a regular programme. Interestingly, only one Centre reported providing coaching and assessment for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Further up the age scale, one Centre reported organising events for a “Late Starters” group that also included a social aspect.



Skittles match after Cinque Ports joint practice.

Two Centres reported providing ‘training the teacher’ courses, both using the “Integrated Teacher Training Scheme” (ITTS). Given the recent publicity in the Ringing World for this scheme it is hoped that more Centres will begin to take up the initiative although this may be best developed in conjunction with a local association.

The range of activities also included ‘outreach’ where training or assistance is given in other towers such as training complete bands, providing helpers for association training days and arranging ringing for special occasions.

The active Centres tend to have positive relationships with a local association, sometimes more than one to the mutual benefit of all. It is these links that will also help to extend a Centre’s catchment for both learners and helpers.

Although many Centres have active web sites some reported the use of flyers, association annual reports and newsletters to publicise themselves and their events.

One Centre reported being the recipient of an “Excellence in the Community” award from their local County Council for their voluntary work with bell ringing. No doubt there are more Centres that would qualify for similar community based schemes and help to publicise ringing amongst the general public. Two Centres reported giving promotional talks during the year to local groups and another reported using a mini-ring during the London Marathon. In collaboration with other local ringers one Centre successfully participated in a weekend of ‘Heritage Open Days’ organised by English Heritage.

It is obviously important that we share ideas and good practice amongst ourselves, which we can do by providing articles for this newsletter, the Ringing World and via the on-line Ringing Centres Network. It is also important that

we increase awareness of the Ringing Centre movement amongst the exercise in a positive way, new Centres are still being created and we want to encourage the creation of others.

Alan Bentley

## Teaching for the Future

### Building a Strong Band

A ringing band is a team. "A team is a group of two or more people who come together exerting mutual influences on each other to achieve a common purpose"



Professor Aiden P Moran 2004.

In ringing our common purpose is to build ringing skills, maintain or increase the number of ringers and to provide a service to the church. We need to keep the band together and to make it an enthusiastic team. It is all about *team cohesion*. There are many people such as Professor Moran who have spent much time and money looking into how teams function and how to get the best out of this group of people who come together to achieve a common purpose.

It seems there are two aspects of the "team" to which we need to pay attention. The first is the "*team spirit*" and the second "*team work*". A tower captain or ringing teacher needs to develop both of these aspects to get the best out of his or her band.

Team spirit is that enthusiasm for the band to get together and work together. A band with good team spirit will find people arrive promptly for practice sessions, people won't leave early, and individuals will be prepared to put themselves out for the common good. To develop team spirit the captain should put into action forms of behaviour which give the team members a sense of belonging. Important ways in which this can be developed are by facilitating team communication. This means giving the band as a whole time or times to get together casually. The usual way this has traditionally been done in ringing is by socialising after practice usually by going down the



pub. I have heard it said that bands which are successful are the ones which go down the pub. However, this opportunity for socialising can be created by meeting for coffee before hand or after the practice for example. A band which does not socialise will not succeed; this regular chance to get together gives space for members of the band to develop a deeper sense of communication and allow them to really get to know one another. Giving a different member of the band the responsibility for organising social events has been demonstrated to be important to the development of team spirit. The social secretary need not be one of the best ringers in the band but is likely to be one of the best communicators; someone who is natural at getting people together. Having a separate social secretary also demonstrates that different people with differing skills are respected by the team as a whole.

Logos, badges and team clothing, something used widely in ringing, also help to develop this team spirit. Once the team spirit is really kindled the captain should look to the "*team work*."

There are several things which will help this more serious and perhaps more difficult side of building a strong band. The captain is effectively the team leader and he or she should learn to recognise the importance of each individual within the band, making efforts to get to know them on an individual basis and demonstrating respect to them by recognising the things that they can offer to the group as a whole. Some ringers may be good at tower maintenance, some could help with transport to practices some may take an interest in creating or providing tower resources such as wall charts, others may be good rope splicers or have the computer skills to set up a simulator for the tower and some might like to keep the ringing chamber well looked after creating a homely and comfortable environment in the ringing chamber. All this hard work put in by different members of the band will improve many aspects of the experiences of the band members. If the tower captain can develop the *team spirit* sufficiently he will be able to build on this enthusiasm to get the *team work* going.



The captain should also extend the horizons of his band members. He or she is likely to be the most experienced member of the band he should add an extra dimension to the experiences of the band helping to expand the members understanding of what is out there for ringers and how they could work towards them; in effect turning them on to new aspirations. The types of things which could be used range from; taking a developing ringer to another tower to gain experience on different ropes or ringing with a more experienced band, to organising tower outings, to encouraging participation in ringing courses either local or further afield, to encouraging attendance at branch practices or local specialist practices, such as Surprise Minor or Surprise Major or whatever is appropriate for the individual, to setting up quarter peals and peals to encouraging participation in striking competitions. Ringers may be Sunday service only ringers, those who like tower grabbing, those who like visiting churches in beautiful locations to keen quarter peal ringers to peal ringers or those who will become callers and conductors. The captain needs to get to know his band members and help them all develop to their potential in the direction that they would like to travel. It is the captain's job to ensure they are aware of all the different directions and to give them the desire to reach their potential.



Pip Penney

### Current Members of Ringing Centres Committee

Norman Mattingley; Alan Bentley; Les; Roger Booth; Janet Edwards; Pip Penney; Peter Dale (co-opted)