

Ringling Trends Committee Report for 2008

The Committee met on two occasions during 2007, the first meeting was in February and the second meeting at the end of October. Two members of the committee decided to stand down early in the year followed by a third member at the Council meeting in May. Subsequently four new members were co-opted to the committee.

Following on from the pilot scheme carried out in 2006, Phase 1 of the programme was progressed and contacts were made with 8 Associations prior to sending out questionnaires. Associations were asked to distribute questionnaires and then to input the information from the questionnaires into a spreadsheet. The response to this was varied but we are very grateful to all of the towers that have responded and all of the associations concerned for helping with this project. We are also very grateful to a member of the Surrey Association who provided a valuable contribution by producing a more professional and user friendly questionnaire.

It was originally planned that Phase 2 of the project would start in mid 2007 with Phase 3 following later in the year but as a consequence of delays in Phase 1 it was decided at the committee meeting held in October 2007 to further delay Phase 2 pending a decision on the way forward. The original intention had been to carry out a 'census' but this was proving difficult as responses from associations varied from 20% to 80%. It became clear that we would not achieve a 'head count' of ringers and the patchy responses have forced us to review our expectations for the survey and approach to later phases. Since then it has been decided that we will proceed with Phase 2 on the same basis as Phase 1 and with the results from Phase 2 we will be able to make a properly informed decision on the way ahead.

Phase 1 responses have been received to date from associations covering Surrey, Greater London (part), Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire (part), Cornwall, Tyne and Wear, Northumbria, Durham, Ireland, Northamptonshire and Rutland. These results together with the pilot scheme results from parts of Surrey and Hampshire have been transported into a database from the spreadsheets and the resulting datasets used to prepare the various charts. Data is available from Kent but this is not yet included in our figures, we are also awaiting information from the main area of Cambridgeshire, West Midlands and Staffordshire.

The first chart at **Fig 1** shows the age range of ringers. General indications are that the age ranges from the responding areas mirror the results of the pilot scheme and that the majority of ringers are over 50. Compare this top heavy picture with the general UK population (**Fig 2**) and it is very clear that the ringing population does not match the general population and that the population under the age of 39 is under represented in ringing along with females overall. It is also worth noting that the ringing population under the age of 20 will only start from the age of 8 or so.

Fig 1

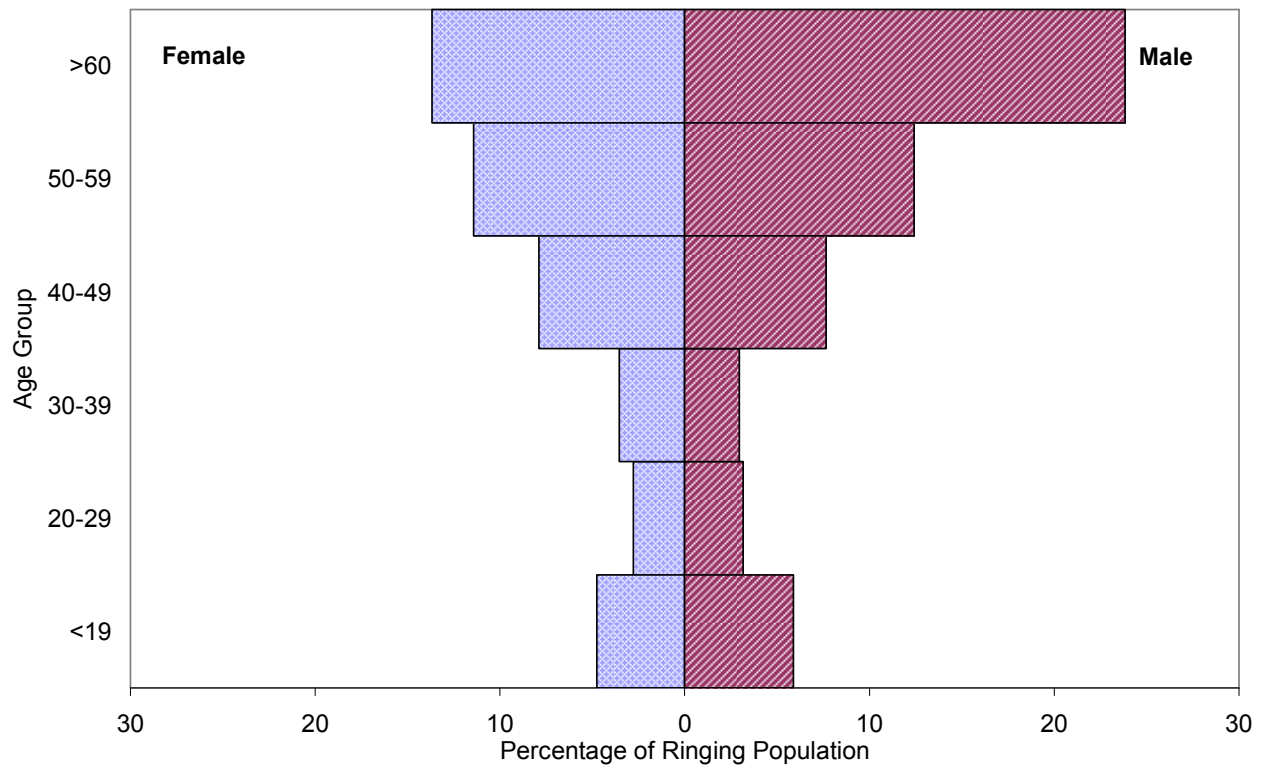
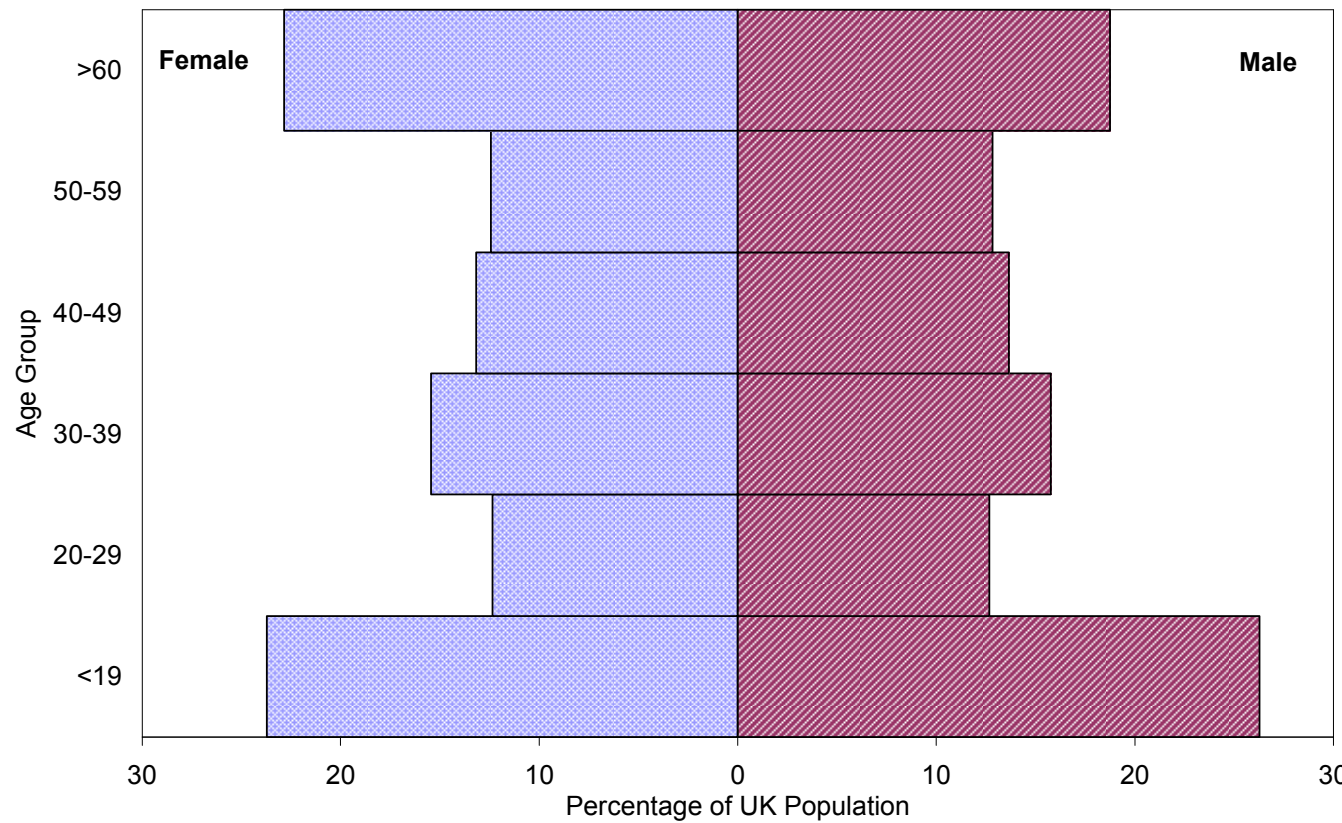
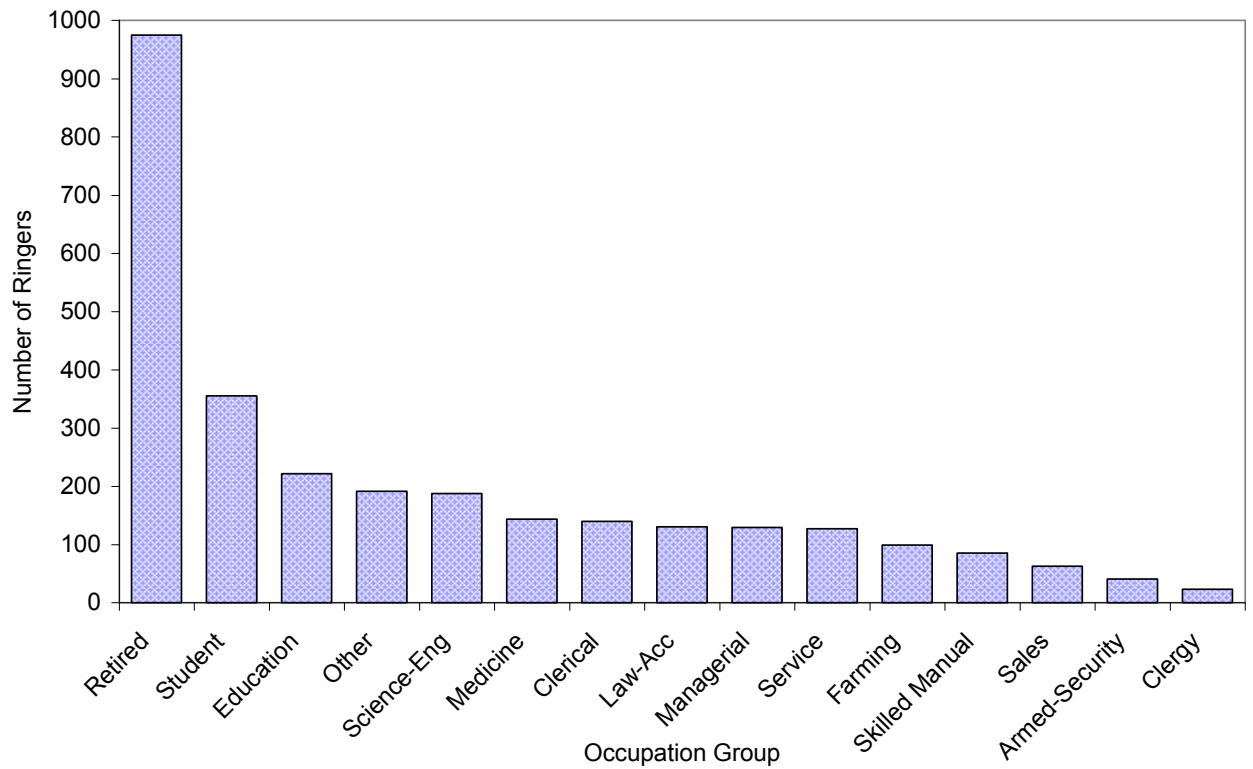


Fig 2.



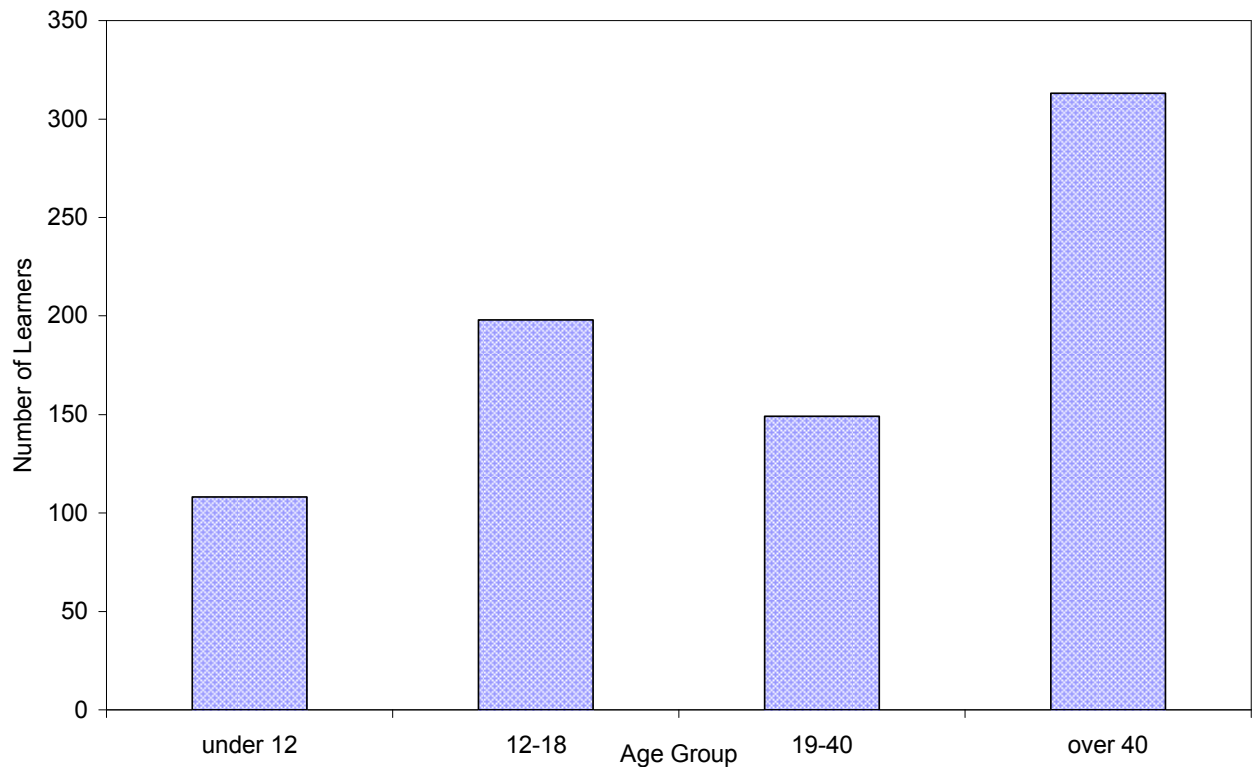
Similarly, the responses so far indicate that the majority of ringers are retired as shown in **Fig 3**:

Fig 3.



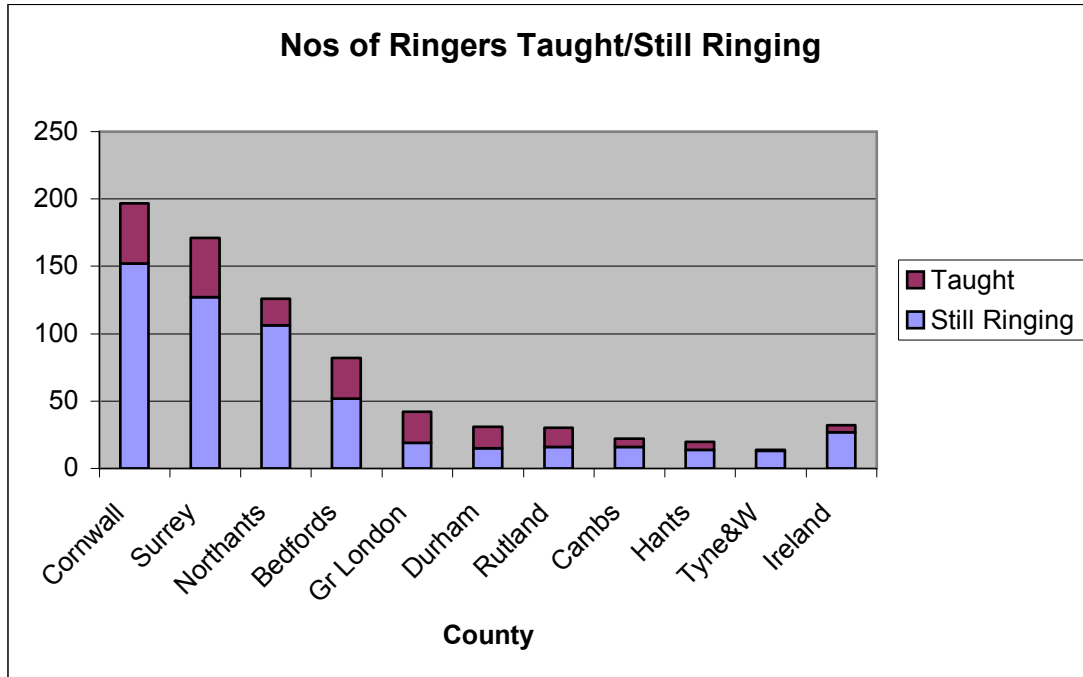
Information was also sought regarding the number of learners taught to ring in the last 3 years and **Fig. 4** indicates that most new learners are over the age of 40:

Fig 4.



The retention figures for learners are shown in **Fig 5**:

Fig 5.



This data is based on the number of ringers taught by responding towers in the past three years. The height of the bar represents total numbers taught with the maroon area representing lost learners and the blue those still ringing.

The results of the 2005 Ringing Roadshow questionnaire were published in the Ringing World in September 2007 and again the same picture of the current state of the ringing exercise emerged. It has been agreed that a leaflet detailing the findings from Phase 1 of the main survey will be available at the 2008 Roadshow.

Other activities carried out by the Committee during the year included a review of universities and a list of the current university societies in the United Kingdom has been compiled. Comparing this list to the locations of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom, 61% of these have access to a university ringing society. When considering student numbers (using data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency) 67% of the student population has access to a student ringing society. To investigate the state of health of university ringing a questionnaire will be distributed to student ringing societies. This will cover the support received from non-students, the number of new members and the teaching of non-ringers amongst other factors.

Trends in other organisations are also being examined and it is becoming clear that other similar and voluntary organisations face difficulty in recruiting younger members of the population.

Additional data will be presented at the Council meeting.

Beryl Norris (*Chairman*)

Alison Hodge

Stephen Elwell-Sutton)

Frank Lewis)

Mike Till)

Jennifer Holden)

Co-opted members