



# Training Times 10

## Working Together for the Future of Ringing!

### Let's Cluster! *By Les Boyce*

Crisis? What crisis? Can we afford today to be as dismissive about the future of ringing as Jim Callaghan famously was about the "Winter of Discontent in 1979? A year ago Elva Ainsworth (*R. W. 22 May 2015, p544*) gave us some stark pointers to the trends in numbers of active ringers, a downward direction; we could be down from 40,000 ringers in 2000 to 20,000 now. So what to do?

#### *Ringing Teaching*

The Ringing Foundation identified poor quality teaching as a key barrier to the successful recruitment and training of new ringers and sponsored ART to address that by training up a new generation of ringing teachers and help improve the experience which new ringers receive. Nationally over 2,000 delegates have attended ITTS courses since 2011. Around 400 of these have already achieved accreditation by ART and many more are working towards it.

Some tower captains have started to ask ART Teachers for help with teaching in their towers and competent new ringers are being produced. This is alongside the work of excellent existing teachers. We need to keep replacing the existing good teachers as they retire (many are elderly) and add to their number with younger teachers. This part of the problem – poor teaching - is on the way to a solution.

#### *So where's the problem*

If we are starting to make good the shortfall in good ringing teaching, where do we need to focus next? Is recruitment the problem?

Many towers seem to be able to get potential learners to make that initial contact and enquire about bell ringing. Tower open days, articles in the church or village magazine, stalls at shows and fetes, word of mouth all seem to work as recruitment strategies. A few towers seem to achieve a steady flow of new recruits. In the best situations new recruits receive intensive one-to-one tuition with sessions 2 or 3 times a week and are fast-tracked to competent handling within a short period.

#### *Practice Opportunities*

But then often things seem to go wrong. After being the centre of attention for weeks on end and getting perhaps well over an hour's rope time in a week, the new ringer is suddenly plunged into a main practice where they are just one of several ringers with differing learning needs. The focus on them as an individual diminishes greatly and rope time may drop to 20 minutes a week. Some learners, who, having been taught to handle a bell competently, find themselves attached to a local tower where the ringers practise infrequently or not at all and where service ringing is at best occasional. Should we be surprised that new ringers give up? Nine out of 10 do for various reasons.

#### *Keeping 'em on board – working together*

Retention and ringer development are the next key challenges. Some towers, with the best will, are unable to hold regular practices with their own resources. Clustering of towers, support from branches and making full use of ringing centre facilities all need to be deployed to tackle this problem. Technology too can help. Installing motorcycle tyre mufflers, simulators and sound control can all help to increase rope time for learners. Many recruits are retired or working part-time, so day-time, mid-week practices are possible using this technology. More rope time is likely to increase commitment from learners. Birmingham School of Ringing has pushed its retention rate for new ringers up to around 70% through a structured programme of training opportunities which can take a new ringer from bell handling through various levels of change ringing. Taunton Branch is achieving similar success levels.

While we may not be able to do a Birmingham everywhere, we do need to encourage working together and providing a more structured learning experience for our new recruits. This will mean rethinking some traditional loyalties to towers and branches. "Cross-border working" at many levels is vital if we are not to be wringing our hands in despair at the collapse of ringing in five years' time!

## A New Phase at Bradpole, Dorset.

By Alan Frost



The roots of **Bradpole Ringing Centre** go back to 2003. **Bradpole Ringing Centre Society** was formally launched on Saturday March 12 2016. The Society framework – a constitution – incorporates democracy and ethical standards as a pattern for the future. How it is working will be reviewed with the churchwardens after six months. There is a healthy demand for courses and a willing band of helpers but satisfying demand remains a big challenge.

BRCS has a website <http://bradpolercs.webs.com/> and a dedicated email address: [bradpolerc@gmail.com](mailto:bradpolerc@gmail.com). A Facebook Group also aids communications

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/383587258481999/> 2015 was a busy year (despite problems with sensors) with a programme of courses, open sessions, private bookings, focused and targeted sessions. An enthusiastic bunch of young ringers also use the facilities at the centre from time to time. Some sessions were experimental, such as the ITTS Lite events aimed at familiarising tutors with useful activities.

You can read about the pioneering 'A Very Short Introduction to Ringing Bells' on the FB group or in *The Ringing World*: March 4 2016 page 237. If you can teach a hen-night party of ladies to ring in 90 minutes, almost anything is possible!

## B.R.C. Facebook page – a Review

By Phil Bailey

The "Bell Ringing Centres" Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ringingcentres/?fref=ts> was set up a year ago and has over 180 members. It's a "closed" group, so if you have not already done so you can apply to join by clicking the "Join" link on the page.

A look back over the last year's news:

- Bradpole Ringing Centre in Dorset held a seminar focusing on three triples methods, Erin, Hunslet and Little Ashford. Maureen E Frost was asking if people could suggest other triples methods that they could focus on. They didn't want to ring Grandsire as it is rung a lot in that area. Margaret Chapman informed Maureen that there are 16 triples methods in this year's diary. Alan Frost has given us an update on Bradpole opposite.
- Chris de Condova has told us all about helping a 68 year old who is learning and has no musical background and has never developed a sense of rhythm. Chris has been using Abel with this ringer as the ringer is finding it hard to hear their bell. Chris also told us about teaching people on their simulator and she asked for people to comment about going from ringing on a simulator to ringing 'real life'.
- Tom Farthing from Chicago asked people to comment on a video of a simulator for teaching bell handling that he had posted on the Facebook page. Several ringers thought it was a good system. Matthew Sorell wrote quite a bit saying that there was a lot to like about it. This simulator operates a bell on the same level as the ringer. Tom has sent us a short article which is included in this issue.
- Matthew Sorell posted about a BBC Radio Norfolk broadcast, "Learning the Ropes", about the 300th anniversary of the first true peal rung in Norwich in 1716.
- Graham Nabb alerted us to the new ART Awards that were promoted for the first time.
- Luke Reed posted a video of Stedman Triples being rung at Wincanton 8 bell practise.
- Margaret Chapman advertised an Open Day last October at Piglet, Somerset.
- There were several posts from ringers asking about local tower practises and outings.

Please do use the Facebook page as it is good to share each other's experiences of ringing issues. There are a number of ringing centres which have not yet signed up on this site so I would like to invite centres to join and post news items. It's an excellent way to promote your centre!

## The Farthing Bell *By Tom Farthing*

When my brother, a non-ringer, suggested building a practice bell with the bell on the same level as the ringer, I thought it would never work. Thankfully, I kept my mouth shut and he figured out a way.



*The Farthing Bell*

Originally, I thought it would be most useful for demonstrations. I can pack it in my mini SUV and set it up by myself in about an hour. Gradually, I realized how valuable it could be as a training device. The learner can see the effects of their pull and can see the parts working. The trainer can run the training session in slow motion so the learner has time to understand what is happening. The trainer can also keep the bell at balance without snatching the rope away from the learner. I find these advantages make for a much more effective and much less stressful training session.

I have had good results with first lessons. Intermediate ringers have also had good results correcting handling faults using this practice bell because they know they can experiment, knowing that the bell will never get totally out of control.

You can see the "Farthing Bell" in action at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjPTnFkEl3o&feature=youtu.be>. Tom can be contacted at: [bells@farthing.us](mailto:bells@farthing.us)

## ART launches new module for Call Change ringers *By Les Boyce*

Any ringer who visits other towers and rings in different parts of the country will be aware of the wide spectrum of ringing ability across the U.K.. Bell ringing's national leaders, by definition, tend to be the more experienced and technically expert ringers and not representative of the general level of ringing in many parts of the country. So the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART), has been criticised by some leading ringers for not setting the standards required of the teachers it accredits high enough. Yet at the same time, potential teachers wanting to progress from teaching bell handling (Module 1 of the Training Scheme) were complaining that for some of them the requirement to have rung a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor was difficult to achieve and not relevant in towers that only ring call changes.

ART responded to this by surveying the ringing situation in the towers around the home of each member of the Management Committee and by consulting ART members and the wider ringing community at the last Ringing Roadshow in Newbury. The results of these surveys indicated that in most of the more rural areas of the country call changes and plain hunt are predominantly what is rung and that there is clear support for a programme aiming to show how to teach and develop bands at this level. The result is that ART has developed a new Module for the ART Training Scheme (the former ITTS) – Module 2F.

ART Module 2F (Foundation Skills: Teaching from Rounds to Plain Hunt) launches in May and a first course in Devon will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. It is designed to meet the needs of teachers who:

- Would like ideas for improving the bell control, listening skills and sense of rhythm in early ringers.
- Are teaching a band to ring rounds, call changes or plain hunt.
- Would like to explore the rich variety of activities offered by kaleidoscope ringing.
- Want to succeed in getting their ringers to know their place in the row and to count their places.
- Want some ideas on how to encourage ropesight to develop.
- Want activities to increase the variety of ringing activities for early learners.
- Want to arouse their curiosity and get them fascinated in their ringing.



ART Module 1 Course – Pinhoe, Devon. Feb 2016

Like the other ART Modules the day course for 2F consists of a mixture of theory and practical sessions. The theory has a big emphasis on coaching early ringers and covers:

- the importance of approaching teaching in easy, understandable stages,
- the critical importance of using effective feedback,
- the theory of coaching,
- how to form a strong band.

The practical sessions are on how to teach call changes and different ways of introducing ringers to covering and Plain Hunt. These activities are congruent with learners pursuing the Learning The Ropes (LTR) scheme at Level 3. LTR is only available to those who attend ART courses and to members of ART (teachers who have been accredited under the Training Scheme). Those attending are required to have a good standard of bell handling as defined in the learner Assessment for Level 2 of LTR. As with the other modules the trainee teacher will be supported by a more experienced teacher acting as a mentor during a period of teaching practice.

Module 1 (Teaching Bell Handling) remains unchanged and the existing Module 2 (Teaching Change Ringing) becomes Module 2C and has been slightly updated to include revised theory. Teachers can take any module in any order and Associate membership of ART will be offered to those who complete one module and Full membership to those completing Module 1 and either 2F or 2C.

The first Module 2F course takes place in Devon on 23 July. More information about the Module 2F and future courses is available on the ART website at: <http://ringingteachers.org/participation/courses>

## Keeping in touch with Centres

A request will shortly be sent out to C. C.-Recognised Centres to complete the annual report form on activities in 2015 and for updates to their entry in the Directory of Ringing Centres.

The information gleaned from these reports help the Committee plan its future activities, suggests topics where help may be needed and provides a repository of expertise and good practice which can be shared with others. It also gives centres the chance to promote their activities and events through the C C website.

Centre contacts will be asked to return the report forms by 30<sup>th</sup> June. All centres responding will be sent a Certificate of Central Council Recognition.

## The Committee – who we are and what we do

Acting Co-ordinator: Les Boyce

Members: Phil Bailey, Les Boyce (to May 17), Barrie Dove, Paul Marshall, Norman Mattingley, Pip Penney (to May 16) and Matthew Sorell (to Feb 16)

The Committee maintains a directory of Ringing Centres on the Central Council website and collates annual reports from recognised centres to inform its work and share good practice. Certificates of Central Council Recognition are issued to centres meeting Council's criteria. Advice and help is offered to new and existing centres and training groups.

Anyone interested in assisting in the work of the Committee is invited to contact Les Boyce ([lesboyce@gmail.com](mailto:lesboyce@gmail.com)).

The Committee's remit now includes a brief to support all groups which offer training to ringers outside their own tower, including youth groups, not just formally Recognised Ringing Centres. We would like to hear from any such groups wanting help or support—please contact the Co-ordinator.

A Reminder that a series of case studies and other guidance for centres and those interested in group recruitment and training, is available at:

<http://cccbr.org.uk/ringingcentres/goodpractice/>

*Comments and Contributions for future editions of "Training Times" are very welcome. Please e-mail Les Boyce.*