The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary Nov/Dec 2004

Welcome to the summary of postings to the NRT during November and December.
Kaleidoscope ringing *Peter Trotman* sent in a passage from a visitor to his tower on ~~K~~kaleidoscope ringing; I know that ringing good rounds is a fine challenge, but it is not very interesting or exciting. Swapping back and forth with the bell next to me was a step beyond that that added enough challenge to make it interesting again, without being too much of a leap into the unknown. I'm sure that practi~~e~~sing more four-at-a-time, then two-at-a-time, then dodging, will be significantly helpful to me in working my way towards ringing ~~P~~plain ~~H~~hunt and (later!) methods. It began to get my body, ears, and mind better attuned to what it means to ring one blow faster or drop back one blow. A few hundred or thousand more such repetitions will enable me to do those things more crisply and evenly and exactly. As for it's being the first time I have even rung in the lead, it seems a good way to get me started on the mechanics of that skill— - swapping from 2 to 1 for four blows, then back to (good old familiar) 2 for four blows, then four more tries at leading, then four more tries ~~of~~ at being second. I worked at doing it by rhythm and sound, rather than by looking at the tenor ringer and trying to understand where in his backstroke I was supposed to be doing what part of my handstroke~~.~~ ... and I gather that is a good thing. Having written that, I guess I have stumbled onto one of the features that I liked best about the practi~~e~~sing with the K: it is an ordered and easily grasped way to step in and out, from the familiar to the new, back to the familiar, then the new again, repeated as many times as the rest of the band is willing to continue ringing around us. Call changes also involve stepping from rounds (the familiar) into the new, but they frequently have the property of becoming baffling, as things get more and more mixed up; in other words, they don't revert to the familiar until the very end. If somebody standing near me is able to set me straight when needed (now you're after the 5; now you're after the 7; now you're after the 4....) then it is indeed fine practice in moving a bell around, but often it happens that I know I should be ringing after the 5 but I am not aware that because of something else that happened to others with a call, my next task is actually to ring a blow sooner or a blow later while still ringing over the 5.... I expect you understand what I mean. And of course when I get lost and it all goes to pieces, nobody feels very good. With the K, it sets itself right every four blows, or every two blows, or every blow (I'll get to that place soon, I expect), which is very affirming and encouraging. *John Harrison* asked for any comments from anyone who had found ~~K~~kaleidoscope ringing useful. Replies were that people had found you could have more than one conductor and so it was also a useful aid for training future conductors. *Lucy Dawson* asked how other people got ~~there~~ their towers to try it as her tower had so far resisted anything new. Answer included, to ask your band the direct question, 'Do you want to improve?' If, hopefully, the answer is affirmative, outline your plans for KR, stressing that it's a system that has worked well in other towers for many years. Give plenty of time for explanation, discussion and persuasion. This then raised the point that some people say they don't want to improve for a variety of reasons~~,~~ ~~I~~in such cases, a safer argument might be based on their willingness to make a bit of effort to help the new learners. You still have to convince them that there is merit in doing things a different way, but saying 'I don't want to help the learners' is a bigger barrier than saying 'I don't need any help thank you'. I know this argument ducks the question of what to do when those in need of improvement have formed their views about what they do and don't want, but that is a harder one to crack.
Coping with cold hands *Heather Peachey* sent in a request for any suggestions for coping with cold hands now that she is starting to ring more peals. Leaving the heaters on didn't go down well with the rest of the band! Suggestions were, taking Ginkgo biloba for better circulation, keeping the wrists covered possibly with the use of sweat bands or an old sock with the toe cut off and folded down over the wrists~~,~~ ~~W~~wearing thermal fingerless gloves or riding gloves. Another suggestion was to make sure the rope ends were warm and dry by fixing up a tube with a light bulb in the end and dangling the rope into it.
Disabled ringers *Andrew Harper* posted~~,~~: I have just read last week's comic and was interested in

the Thought for the Week. As a reminder, this related the story of a disabled ringer who was helped up the tower by 2 able bodied ringers, with others helping with the wheelchair. I found this interesting because just this topic came up recently in a discussion with our ~~C~~churchwarden who had been given the responsibility of addressing ~~E~~equal ~~O~~opportunities and wanted advice from me as to what could be done to allow a disabled person (understood in this context to mean in a ~~W~~wheelchair) to ring at our tower (access via narrow spiral staircase to ringing chamber a third of way up the tower). As part of the discussion I raised the point that I didn't know if it would be possible for a wheelchair bound person to physically ring due to the length of their pull being restricted by their knees and the wheelchair. Having read the Thought for the Week I wonder if this is correct. Does anyone have any experience of this? *Martyn Owen* replied, yes but there are several things that you need to ensure first. 1) The brakes on the wheelchair are on. 2) Any-thing sticking out that could catch the rope has been removed/taped up and the wheelchair is positioned in the correct place to ring (probably slightly set back so that the rope will not drop on to the ringer's lap). 3) Since the feet are off the ground you have to ensure they are covered up or taken out of the rests. You would probably need to construct some sort of shield to stop the rope getting caught on the ringer/wheelchair. Your biggest problem is actually getting access. Since you have a narrow staircase I would say it is not possible (no safe way of getting the ringer up the tower). You have to remember that the law requires you ~~the~~ give the disabled access where it is a reasonable cost to do so. Your church would be exempt because it is not possible to provide access to the tower due to the structure of the building and the cost associated with altering it. As for actually ringing, the sally might need to be set lower. Ringing would involve a different style to normal. The first factor is that you can't use your body weight to help you ring so you need to be stronger in the arms (probably not a problem for a wheelchair user). You would have to ring with your arms going away from your body and using you wrists more to "'flick"' the rope out of the way. The size of the wheel (of the bell), the weight and the "'go"' will probably be the most limiting factors in ringing. It would be harder to teach someone in a wheelchair because the technique has to be more precise and is different to normal standing up ringing. I have seen people ring on ~~there~~ their knees at towers where the ropes w~~h~~ere ridiculously long. It is very possible. As a good test sit on a chair and ring: it will feel very strange but you should keep full control. *John Harrison* replied, I am a frequent kneeler, and it differs from seated ringing in several respects. Although you can't bend your knees in the normal way, you can still use the weight of your body to a degree by bending your knees more and flexing your hips, something a seated ringer could not do. The other major difference is that when kneeling, the rope still falls clear in front of you, in response to a normal arm action, so for a small bell you can ignore where it goes. (You can't with a big-wheeled heavy bell, because the rope twists as it makes and unmakes the heap, making it wander a bit~~). .~~) With seated ringing, either you will have a very un-natural, forward-reaching action, or you will have to contend with the rope landing on (and/or sliding off) your knees, the chair, or whatever non-snagging means you use to cover them.

Simulator Aadvice *Michael Barnicott* asked~~:~~: I use an ~~a~~Abel ringing simulator on my PC and have used a simulator in a tower. I suspect that a similar facility in our tower could be of great help to us, particularly in learning to listen to the bells. My question is simply~~...~~: does anyone have any advice on where to get the bits and pieces necessary, is there a standard information source on simulators and is there a basic amount of money we should look to raise before embarking on a simulator installation~~?~~?

All starting points gratefully received.

Replies came back, from *Ian Hamilton* The technology is straight-forward; here are some of the practical issues we came across: 1) Depending on where the power points are in your tower, you may have to extend a circuit, which will incur cost for installation and inspection. 2) You will need a means of silencing the bells; an approach is to make "'quick-release"' clapper stays (about ~~?~~£5 per bell?). We have good access to the bells, so fitting the clapper stays on 6 bells takes us between 10 and 15 minutes. Do you have easy access to install the clapper stays?

3) I believe that "'Permanent modification"' to the tower and bells will require a Faculty. If you can arrange it that the sensors are tied/~~v~~Velcroed~~de~~ to the frame, and can persuade the PCC that no permanent modification is being made, you may avoid the Faculty route. 4) Security can be an issue in a ground floor ring, so in 2 installations the PC has been installed in the intermediate chamber, not necessarily the most benign environment for PCs. The PCs were configured to run Abel on boot-up, so we simply flick a switch on the ground floor and Abel is available soon after. The only problem with the PC in the intermediate chamber is getting Abel to start/stop automatic ringing or beginning methods, which is what you want for listening practice. Footswitches for controlling Abel may be the solution, which we are about to try this Christmas. *John Harrison* said to read the review in ~~t~~*The Ringing* ~~w~~*World* about April 9th which discussed the use of simulators and alternatives and had a list of suppliers. You could also read the Learning Curve article on simulators (published in *The Ringing World* October 2003, also available as chapter 22 of 'The Learning Curve Volume 2: 2002-2003', and 'Simulators and Teaching'. Both books are available from Central Council Publications (see regular adverts in *The Ringing World*). *Gregory Russell* posted~~:~~: we are using the simulator more and more, and finding new ways to use it. It seems to be an excellent tool for developing better listening and striking skills, and to allow practice on six or eight (or ten) virtual bells, when only a handful of ringers are available. One has to be careful how to do this, though. We've found that a single person can ring a method by ear, with the other bells simulated, or we can

ring rounds on 6, or plain hunt on four with two covers, with four ringers on the front 4 bells, and the tenors simulated. But you can't really ring something like ~~p~~Plain ~~b~~Bob ~~m~~Minor with three or four real ringers. It is too difficult to keep the ringers in sync with the simulated bells. We've recently started adapting the "'shadowing"' exercise mentioned here a few months ago, for use on the simulator, with very promising results. *John Harrison* posted~~,~~: I have seen several installations where the simulator heads and cables are attached to the top of the frame in this way, and I would advise strongly against it for anything more permanent than a one day course. People walk on frame tops, which means treading on the cables and catching the heads. Most times I have run courses using such an installation, we have had problems because at least one head had become misaligned. For a permanent installation, all components should be mounted where they will not be walked on or likely to get caught by people moving around the frame for normal maintenance, and of course tying and untying clappers. This does not prevent attaching things to the existing fabric in a non-invasive way.

Several replies to this question seem to have assumed fitting sensors on all bells. That is necessary if your aim is to provide electronic sound control for a normal ringing practice, but it was not clear that the original request was about this. To provide training with a simulator, you only need a sensor on one bell, which is much less costly, and less hassle. *Peter Dale* brought up the subject of clapper ties~~,~~: a quick and simple means of doing this is essential. Otherwise there will be occasions when the simulator isn't used when perhaps it ought to be, when time is short perhaps or it isn't worth the effort. In my view there is nothing to beat the tyre muffles. The idea has been around for years and the time is probably ripe for another article in the RW on the subject. Obtain an old motor-bike tyre. Nowadays all car tyres have steel-wire bracing in the tread which isn't good for knife blades. With a Stanley knife, and an angle-grinder to cut through the steel bracing around the rim, slice a three-inch section out of the tyre for each bell. Lubricate the knife blade (WD40 or water) otherwise it's quite a struggle. Make three cuts in the form of an "H" through the tread of each tyre section, large enough to force the flight of a clapper through the tread. The two parts of the "H" are then forced apart and form two flaps that grip the flight tightly. The tyre sections are simply swivelled through 90 degrees between "silent" and "open" positions. Leave them on permanently. It isn't even necessary to remove them to half-muffle the bells because leather muffles will fit over them. The bells aren't completely silenced, but the faint "'woo woo"' hum isn't heard beyond the churchyard. The capital effort of finding an appropriate tyre, cutting it up, and fitting it is well worth it. I must have made dozens of them over the years, so I can now knock up a set of six in under half an~~d~~ hour, and fit them in twenty minutes. You can then "silence" all the bells in less time than it takes to fit one clapper stay, and the clappers still swing naturally to give the right "feel" to the bells. Other methods of a twisted cycle tyre and wooden clapper ties were also mentioned.

Overcoming Ffear in Cchildren *Andrew Harper* asked for help on trying to overcome the fear of catching the sally as he has lost young learners when moving onto this stage. ~~t~~The problem se~~ac~~med to be the speed of the rope and fear of missing the sally. Replies to this were: explain what happens when you miss the sally, ensure they are not over-pulling the backstroke, use rhythm teaching exercises like counting or moving hands alongside another person ringing. Ring with them getting them to catch just above your hands or actually the~~re~~ir hands on yours. Take it in small steps and maybe give a frightened youngster separate lessons until you've got over the hurdle. Start catching the sally with the bell half down then gradually raise the bell as the confidence and coordination improve~~s~~. Use a dummy tail end until the stroke is right. For the tutor to keep the~~re~~ir hands off the rope as much as possible, so that the learner feels the bell, but be ready to step in when needed.

This is a brief round-up of the November and December postings. If you would like any greater detail, please contact me at the address below.

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