



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary Spring/Summer 2005

Welcome to the spring/summer postings for the NRT in 2005. If you wish for any of the topics covered in greater detail, please ask.

Standing Behind

Points were raised as to how to be most efficient when standing behind a learner. These ranged from knowing both what you and the learner are doing, being able to correct in a way that the learner will be able to follow without being disruptive and not intervening when it isn't required. Knowing what information the learner wants to know and what terminology should be used when help is required before ringing starts. Being positive rather than criticising them. Swapping tutors to give info from a different angle.

Ringling with Youngsters

Help was asked for with a problem where a lot of time had been taken teaching quite a large number of youngsters to ring, now the older members of the band were asking for a limit to numbers and that they should not stay for the full practice. Replies came back that the reason why the older ringers were unhappy should be talked about; it should be pointed out that the youngsters would benefit by listening to some 'good' ringing. To hold handling practices on a different night. To ask each older member to mentor an individual. Give equal consideration to the needs of both groups.

Hand Ring Exercise

An idea of holding a glass of water whilst raising and lowering the hands, keeping the water level steady to aid a straight pull. It was pointed out that this would mean terrific bend at the wrists which could cause other conditions in time not beneficial to ringing or health.

Muffles

A very early request for types of muffles was made, answers were for 'easyfit' although a roll of Duck tape was recommended to keep them secure! Pritchards standard leather muffles, whether you have 2 buckled leather straps or 1 strap and 1 thong is up to personal preference and the condition of your flights. Depending upon how often they are used the ease of getting them on and off must be considered.

Electrical insulating tape came out with most votes for stopping slippage!

Coloured Numbers

A request was made for coloured numbers to make OHP slides. Suggestions were to print them onto OHP slides from either Excel or Word, using magnetic numbers on a magnetic white board, or using marker pens.

Stedman

Information on Stedman for a training event started a very long debate. Points that were discussed were, ringing the slow work with only 3 ringers then going on to Stedman Minimus. Keeping the explanation as simple as possible and not bringing in too much detail. The point was made that you can't rely on the lead end if you go wrong so a certain amount of groundwork is needed. A big debate followed on whether it was right to expect a beginner to learn the quick and slow sixes on the front or should they just learn the 30 blows of the slow work with reference to the first and last half and whole turns. Tips that then came out were, watching from 4-5 down if the leads are 'right' (hand – back) then it's a quick 6 and you are going in slow, if it's 'wrong' (back – hand) it's a slow 6 and you're going in quick. Drawing this out showing the movement of the quick and slow bells. For bobs in Triples and above dodge 1 for the bob '1' '2' then if there is another call do the same again. The point was raised that when ringing on 3 bells, every effort must be made to keep the rhythm right, not an easy task especially on heavy bells. This is an abbreviated version of the thread as it went into detail of Stedman on 3 bells and drawing out all the work. If you would like a copy of this please ask.

How to Recruit Ringers

A plan regularly used by Marske-by-the-Sea for recruiting ringers was sent in: this briefly follows the pattern of holding an open evening, advertising it well first (paper, church etc), getting in a competent band for demonstrating. On the night it follows a pattern of welcome/safety talk, explanation and demos (ringing from rounds to PB Doubles for a short time) then have a look at the bells and have a go. This is done on silenced bells. Followed by information on when the next silenced practice will be and inviting anyone to stay and watch a

normal practice. Regular silent practices are then held for 3-4 weeks until they are moved into the main band.

Bell Control Tips

A request for more exercises other than standing the bell each stroke. Ideas came back to ring up and down, ringing straight into queens then back to rounds (not through called changes), using a simulator to cover for a method. The simulator can also be set to different speeds. Ringing heavier/lighter bells. 5 whole pulls to balance, 5 under then reduce the number of each one. Follow the leader with the leader changing speed. Ringing rounds then stand after 5 whole pulls then 4 then 3 then backstrokes, then each stroke then get the learner to choose. Teaching to ring one handed for learners who don't use both hands evenly. Dodging exercise, Simon Says where on the order treble's going, treble's gone the bells should remain on balance until Simon says, ringing called changes changing on backstroke.

Learning Methods

How do we learn methods? (Or revise them?) Using the blue line as a first guide, build the first lead of the method, place bell following place bell. This helps with place bell order, where to pass the treble, and the interaction with other bells. But figures on paper don't match up with actual ringing. The next stage may seem trivial - but give it a try. It doesn't need pen or paper and can be used in any odd moments and for any even number of bells. First, practise drumming the four fingers of one hand sequentially, starting with the index finger, giving the rhythm 1-2-3-4-1-2-3-4-1-2 etc. (NB - open leads are not required!) Now take any bell from rounds and count its places along the blue line as you tap, starting with the row after rounds. Thus for 5th place bell to Cambridge Minor: 6 6 5 6 (back to the index finger) 5 6 5 4, 3 2 1 2, 1 1 2 1. 2 2 1 1, 2 1 2 2 (2nds place bell) etc. Tapping places in this way is mentally stimulating and it also helps one think about each change of place bell, which always happens on the little finger. (If it doesn't, go back to the previous place bell and start again!) Try starting with different place bells. Another suggestion is to use both hands or to walk along reciting the method using left and right arms for hand or back stroke!

Where to Strike

Given a scenario of ringing with two separate groups with very different attitudes. The first ring a variety of methods generally in short touches, feel it is of paramount importance to maintain an even speed and to place the bells according to the rhythm. If a bell is early or late the bell following is still expected to strike where it would have done. There are some

very experienced ringers in the second group who have been involved in teams that enter the striking competitions. Generally they meet for an attempt at a quarter peal of one of the commonly rung methods. In this group a gap or a clip is always regarded as a failing on the part of the second bell involved. Everyone is expected to strike the correct distance from the bell in front. The two views are almost incompatible even though there will be no difference between them if all the bells are placed precisely. The difference shows in how you react when the bell you are following is a bit early or late, particularly if it is the last bell in that change and you are the first in the next change. What is the general opinion on this matter? Also, how would a striking contest score the different situations and is this the cause of the different attitudes? A long discussion followed with most people airing on the side of the first example. Reasons for this included the weight of the bells: if you have a heavy tenor how can you ring after a much lighter bell that is late without knowing it is going to be late as in the case of extreme differences in weight? It is much more detrimental for the rhythm to ring after someone who is in the wrong place: if you ring in 'the right' place, those following you will have a better chance to do likewise. The blows are not isolated, they must be considered in the context of the sequence of which they form part. If one bell is late (or early) it violates the gap that should exist between it and the preceding blow. It also violates the relationship between it and where subsequent blows are expected (by the listener's ear, and by the bell mechanics). The question then is about whether the following bell should try to patch up one broken relationship at the cost of violating others. Good striking (to a precision approaching a few hundredths of a second for 'perfect' striking) is a pretty amazing feat when you think about what is physically involved. It is only possible when everything is very stable. If the pattern that each ringer is trying to fit into keeps changing, then it becomes hard to know exactly where 'thirds place' say really is. In any case, trying to place the bell by making last minute visual adjustments cannot achieve the same accuracy as ringing rhythmically. This was also discussed in *The Learning Curve* in September 2001 (chapter 26 of Volume 1) in the *Ringling World*. If the ringing is to maintain a reasonable standard then the actions of following ringers should dampen out any wobbles and not amplify them. When ringing with a learner it is surely better to ask the band to stick to the rhythm even if this means clashing with another bell. In this way the learner only has to adjust for their own error and not for the change in rhythm as well. To find a middle path between the two may be to make enough of a correction to reduce the impact on the listener but not so much as to

propagate the error around the circle. This does require a higher degree of bell control and so is not advisable for the novice whose attempt may result in a bigger wobble. When ringing at a tower of mainly learners if they went wrong in call changes they would all end up waiting for each other, even as far as the bell leading waiting for the tenor. They gradually took on board the idea not to wait for the bell in front, and their ringing improved as a result of it. This lead on to.

Listening Courses

Using Abel at a listening course, in various de-tuned modes of increasing difficulty. Setting (say) 2 to continually strike late, some of the learners had difficulty in deciding whether 2 or 3 was at fault, despite a previous briefing to 'count rhythmically'. This suggests that many learners could benefit from such listening sessions, but there is a marked reluctance from most learners to participate in any teaching other than actual ringing. This was a view held by many. Learners who attended courses enjoyed them and benefited but there was a marked reluctance to get people (who could probably benefit from one) to attend. The CD "Listening to Ringing" is very helpful, with its simple progression in difficulty. One way to overcome the reluctance of more experienced ringers to attend is to ask them to come as 'helpers'. May be selling the course to a group of more experienced ringers getting them to 'lead by example'. Changing the title of the courses was also suggested but what to? It must be understood though that some people just don't have the time for extra commitments and with this in mind a flexible approach is always best.

Bell Muffles and Half Muffled Protocol

Has there ever been any 'national' protocol in ringing half-muffled for such events? Our practice is on Thursdays and having watched the news of the bombings in London (in doing so noting that Buckingham Palace had lowered its flag to half mast) we felt it appropriate to ring half muffled. HOWEVER... in a quick surf of the Central Council, our Guild and the Ringing World websites I couldn't find any mention of 'our' response. No reply was made!

Mucky Tail Ends

What causes tail ends to go black and shiny? (Not Glycerine!) This request was made after scrubbing ropes for an hour that had been left soaking in washing up liquid overnight; the ropes are 6-7 years old! It was suggested not to use any form of washing up liquid as this may affect the natural properties of the rope. Using glycerine properly in small amounts and rubbing in well should not affect the rope. Good results were apparently achieved from soaking them for perhaps an hour in diluted Kodak Photo-Flo, a surfactant used in photo

processing. Its merits when used as intended are touted as: *Decreases water-surface tension *Minimizes water marks and streaks on film *Promotes faster, more uniform drying. There is a recommended dilution ratio (product to water) on the label, but you may want to increase that for ropes. After soaking the tails, then blot them repeatedly with a clean towel. The transfer of the "muck" from tail to towel was dramatic, and there was no residue left on the rope to cause stiffness. Also, as the towel blotting removed much of the water from the tails, they dried fairly quickly. Soaking in fabric conditioner or baby oil after using washing powder also seems to work. Ropes also go stiff when damp which can cause problems of slipping wheel. Poly tops will remove this problem. Tail ends can degenerate over time (according to local conditions) as the flax loses its natural oils. Repairing such ropes is a big problem with ropes just falling apart and disintegrating upon being touched

This is a brief roundup of the Spring to Summer postings. If you would like any greater detail, please contact me at the address below.

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