



A better way

**Advice on setting up Ringing Centres
in your Guild or Association**



Ringing Centres Committee

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1. Introduction

This booklet aims to share various people's ideas on how you could set up one or more Ringing Centres in your Guild or Association, District or Branch.

We believe that through offering a regular programme of tuition at a local level, Ringing Centres are a very effective way of helping large numbers of ringers to make progress. Our eventual aim is to have a nationwide network of over 250 Ringing Centres, which means at least one for every District or Branch in the country.

How do they work?

There is no fixed formula for a Ringing Centre, but a pattern is emerging.

Generally Ringing Centres are set up to serve a relatively small group of towers, in a distinct geographical area. One or more towers are used as a base, and equipped with various teaching aids. It is important that towers used for training are suitable for periods of extended ringing, and have facilities such as toilets.

A regular programme of training sessions is held, to suit the needs of the ringers in the surrounding area. These are often on a Saturday Morning, and quite often sessions are held over a number of consecutive weeks, in order to reach a specified objective.

By holding lessons relatively locally, less time is spent travelling than on a typical one-day ringing course or training day. Starting at 9.30 and finishing at 12.30 gives three hours solid practice. On a whole day spent at two different towers, four hours ringing might be achieved, but there would be the need to get used to a second set of bells. Sometimes so many people attend the larger training days that the choice of towers is not ideal, and some of the bells can be not the easiest to handle.

As tuition in a Ringing Centre usually continues over several weeks, there is also a greater degree of certainty that a given objective will be achieved and maintained. Whilst a lot of progress can be made, you can't teach someone to plain hunt or ring a method inside from scratch in a day. There is no going back to a home tower where the rest of the band is struggling, forgetting what has been learnt within a few weeks and coming back next year to try again.

A Ringing Centre would be trying to work with all the ringers from that struggling tower to get them up to that standard.

Courses delivered at a local level can also be more flexible, and arranged to suit needs and demands, and not have to be slotted into an annual programme.

Relationships with Towers, Districts and Branches.

Some people would argue that what we have described is what Districts and Branches are trying to do anyway, and a Ringing Centre is un-necessary. Individual towers may also fear that a Ringing centre will entice away their keenest pupils.

The trouble is that Districts and Branches vary considerably, some may have up to 40 towers and over 300 members, others may be a third of that size. There may also be a very wide range of abilities to cater for, perhaps ranging from rounds to spliced surprise, so it is often difficult to cater for everyone's needs.

Some Districts and Branches do very well, and in some there may already be a well established programme of tuition, and a ringing centre may not be necessary. However this is not normally the case. What we do know is that when ringing courses and training days are held by many Guilds and Associations at the more basic levels such as rounds, call-changes and plain hunting, they are often heavily over-subscribed. They also have a problem with an acute shortage of experienced ringers to act as helpers. There is also a heavy demand for the three day courses, organised nationally, such as those at Hereford and Wantage.

Training days take a large amount of organisation, which is why they are perhaps organised only once or twice a year, and in some Guilds and Associations, not at all. People also lead busy lives and are also reluctant to give up a whole day.

What we also find is that many people at the rounds, call change, plain hunting and elementary method stages are anxious to make progress, but cannot make progress with their local band, where they feel most comfortable. Tower Captains need to have many different skills, but many people find themselves becoming a tower captain with little training or support.

A Ringing centre can sit alongside the existing Branch or District structure, but be free to concentrate entirely on training. It would make Branch and District officers jobs easier, and would aim to support local bands and strengthen them, not weaken them.

Ringing Centres generally offer support at the more elementary stages of ringing, perhaps helping people to the stage where they can ring a method and perhaps ring their first quarter peal inside. By ensuring that a steady stream of new people reach this stage, with less people falling out along the way, Districts and Branches benefit from a larger pool of method ringers to support other activities such as practices, meetings, and ringing peals.

Many of the existing ringing centres have been set up by Guilds and Associations, or by Districts and Branches, and this arrangement has worked well, which is why we would like to see many more do the same.