

Appendix 4: Universities Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent to the following University and College Societies:

Aberystwyth, Bangor, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Derbyshire Colleges, Durham, East Anglia, Edinburgh, Exeter, Keele, Kingstonian, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton, Surrey, Sussex, Warwick, Welsh Colleges, York.

Replies were received from:

Bangor, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Derbyshire, Keele, Kingstonian, Nottingham, Reading, Oxford, Southampton, Surrey, Sussex, Warwick, Welsh Colleges.

Of the replies received, three (Surrey, Sussex and Kingstonian) no longer have ringing societies, Derbyshire College Youths was said to be virtually non-existent.

Canterbury Colleges Society was reformed in 2000 following a couple of years of inactivity. They ring with other bands in the city, but have monthly quarter peal attempts with students and staff.

Keele University Society was formed in 1965 and was active for a number of years, but now rings with the local residents rather than as a university society.

Seven societies provided figures for their undergraduate membership, and these are summarised as follows, where the average number of members per year over the five-year periods is given:

81-85

86-90

91-95

96-2000

Welsh Colleges	6.8	6.8	7.2	7.6
Nottingham	18.4	21.0	13.6	17.2
Oxford	22.6	24.0	20.0	15.6
Bristol	not provided		12.2	12.8
Southampton	not provided		21.4	20.8
Warwick	no society until 1994			8.6
Reading	reformed in 1993			5.4

Bangor Society was set up in 2000 and now has 5 members.

Cambridge has had about 30 members per year.

The only University that shows a significant decrease in membership is Oxford, but the correspondent did indicate that because of their source, these figures might not be accurate.

The following comments apply to the nine active bands listed above.

All but one society hold practices – at least weekly.

At least 50% of those attending practices are undergraduates, and all are supported by postgraduates as well.

Most practices are run by an undergraduate, and most officers are undergraduates.

Reading run their own separate practice at a tower, which has a local band. All the other societies have sole use of a tower, except for Welsh Colleges and Bangor.

Apart from Welsh Colleges, all societies teach new recruits. Most of the teaching is done by students, but the numbers taught are probably quite low.

Only four societies (Warwick, Bristol, Southampton and Nottingham) receive financial support from the university or college. The level of support is varied, and covers cost of such things as photocopying, travelling expenses for outings, ropes, printing of newsletters, local Guild and Ringing World subs.

Warwick University Society also received support for bell maintenance and for a set of handbells.

All societies hold dinners, outings and social events, although the nature and numbers vary considerably.

Nottingham, Bristol, Oxford and Cambridge all produce a newsletter.

Summary:

The state of University ringing societies does not seem to reflect the downward trend in the number of young ringers nationally. Although there are some societies that are not as strong as they have been or which have folded completely, there are others which are new or recently reformed which are active and growing.

The enthusiasm with which some of the correspondents replied to the questionnaire was impressive. They are obviously very proud of their societies, what they do and what they achieve.

Some correspondents reported that they knew of students at the university who can but do not ring. (If only they knew what they were missing out on.)

The value of the university societies is perhaps emphasised in a comment from Rosemary Ogle of Bristol University who said that “everyone improves during the year, and forgets it when they go home over the summer break; along with new ringers in the society we start at a lower level in the autumn, but this is one of the joys and differences of a university society”.

Comments/suggestions:

The University Societies provide a valuable contribution to the ringing exercise and should be encouraged. Is there anything that the Central Council can do to help them?

Maybe training courses for University Society Masters to help them with running practices, conducting or teaching learners would be appreciated?

Relationships between University Societies and local Guilds/Associations could be encouraged. Perhaps local ringers could help with recruitment at University freshers' events, help with teaching learners, inviting students to take part in Guild activities, training courses etc.

The students' home towers/Guilds/Associations could help by:

- ensuring the youngsters know about the society when they go up to University
- contacting the University society to let them know that a ringing student is arriving
- before the students go to university train them in tower management, conducting, teaching bell handling, organisation of outings, etc.
- if appropriate support the student by attending the University dinner