



# Training Times

## Change Ringing for the Future: Ringing Centres and the Wellesbourne Conference

As one of the delegates at the Wellesbourne Conference it occurred to me to write a report of the event from a “ringing centres point of view”. What could ringing centres contribute to the strategy for the future of ringing? It was gratifying therefore to read in the accounts of the day in *The Ringing World* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> December that ‘AJB(arnfield)’ is suggesting that people ignore the existing ringing structures and set up ringing centres – suitable buildings with a decent rings of bells, simulators and sound control, as much control over access and use as possible and gather competent bunches of ringers with an interest in ringing and teaching from wide areas around. These centres are to be the “lifeboats” for a ringing tradition which has already hit the iceberg and is sinking fast.



Photo: Claire Bell

The Ringing Centres Committee certainly wants to encourage and support the development of new ringing centres. Several new centres have come on stream in the last two or three years or are being planned. We are also aware that other centres have become defunct. So what is happening out there? ‘AJB’ decided to check the health of the “stock of lifeboats” by examining the peal and quarter peal columns (*Letter to RW 16<sup>th</sup> December*) – what recorded performances are being staged at ringing centres? But as this issue of *Training Times* shows, there is no one model of ringing centre in existence. Centres are responding to local needs with the resources they have to hand; what is provided by centres varies widely as the reports published here show. That said the Ringing Centres Committee is now exploring ways of evaluating the quality of what goes on in our Central Council-accredited centres and Alan Bentley’s article in this issue describes our thoughts so far.

So back to the question of what ringing centres can do for the future of ringing. Here are a few suggestions:

- Promote good ringing teaching through running ITTS –based course for teachers and learners
- Encourage the use of mentoring of ringers in their area – more experienced ringers supporting those learning on an informal and individual basis
- Promoting recruitment into ringing by providing local towers with high quality display materials, model bells, mobile simulators or hosting mini-rings
- Encourage and host young ringers groups for the area
- Continue to offer the good quality training that individual towers find it difficult to provide
- Support opportunities for extended ringing, not just peals or quarters but 360s and 720s days for those learners who find the notion of a quarter too daunting a step just yet.
- Run ringing “academies”, particularly for youngsters, similar to music teaching or stage schools. Parents are happy to pay to get the kids off their hands for a couple of hours!

If you missed the Wellesbourne Conference then you can catch the session summaries on YouTube at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search for “Wellesbourne Ringing Conference” – the views of the young ringers are particularly enlightening.  
*Les Boyce*

## What is a Ringing Centre?

*This issue explores several different answers to this question. Braunston R. C. is catering for the needs of older ringers through its “Monday Group”, while Edington has placed particular emphasis on work with youngsters – one of whom reports on their summer outing. Another “user’s view” is given in Amanda Lee-Riley’s account of her experiences at the Cinque Ports Centre and how this has linked to her home tower. Finally the Committee would like your thoughts on a suggested star-rating scheme for ringing centres.*

## The Monday Group – Braunston R.C.

With the approach of the Millennium there was a nation-wide move to teach new ringers so that as many towers as possible could “Ring In” this rare event. This recruiting drive attracted many people of the more “mature” age groups

and it became apparent to those of us who were teaching these good people that, for them, learning was a much slower process than with youngsters. (It was also apparent that, having committed themselves to learning to ring, most of them remained steadfast despite their difficulties)

Thus the teaching time available on the average practice night, even when supplemented by separate tied bell practices, was insufficient, the learning curve in many cases was almost flat.

By this time the Braunston ringing simulator had proved itself and, with our Vicar's agreement, I decided to put a letter in the Ringing World offering basic tuition on Monday afternoons and giving a date for a first meeting.



With the simulator we could "ring" all afternoon without annoying anyone. The response was encouraging and the first meeting was held on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1999. Some of the first attendees were not local, one coming from over 50 miles away. Many of the first sessions were devoted entirely to basic bell handling and learning to strike a bell in rounds. Prolonged practice time at these basics produced encouraging results. Having improved their basic skills the long distance members dropped away, now better able to progress at their own towers, and the group continued on a more local basis.

Progression into call changes was a major step, then we were faced with Plain Hunt. The difficulty here was that I was the only one capable of plain hunting. To tackle this problem we nominated an individual for each bell, settled down to some chalk and talk, instructing each person in what to do for the first change into Plain Hunt, i.e. treble has to hold up, 2 has to go to lead, etc., then we rang that as a call change. More chalk and talk for the next change – treble has to move up another place, 2 stays at lead, etc. Now we could ring two consecutive changes of plain hunt. And so we progressed, a row at a time, learning it all by rote. Sacrilege? – but it was the best we could do without more help. And, during this time we continued practising our call changes.

The big breakthrough happened when first Geoff\* and then Hilary\* retired and came to support the Group on a regular basis. It is thanks to their unstinted help that our present progress became possible. No matter that our progress is slow, it IS progress. Not least, we all enjoy our Monday afternoons. Here's to future progress.

\* Geoff Pullin, our Branch Chairman and Hilary Aslett, then Guild Ringing Master.  
*Peter Wenham*

## EDINGERS SUMMER OUTING 2011



### Outside Southbroom

Our outing on 31 August started at St James, Southbroom, Devizes, where we rang rounds, call changes and plain hunt. We were delighted that Dan and Georgie from Wyllye tower could join us for the day.

From there we walked along the canal towpath towards Caen Hill, stopping for an ice cream at The Wharf. Then we continued along the path to the picnic site next to the locks where we ate our lunch. When we had finished eating, Bob taught us how to ring the handbells he had brought. Adam even learnt how to ring plain hunt!

When we had packed up, we continued walking to the bottom of Caen Hill and then drove to St Matthew's, Rowde, where we again rang rounds, call changes and plain hunt. Dan impressed us by ringing Plain Bob Doubles perfectly!

From Rowde we drove to Edington Priory Church where we rang all 10 bells, which was really fun! After ringing, we enjoyed a scrummy BBQ.

*Sophie Russell – "Edingers": Edington R.C. Young Ringers*

## IS YOUR RINGING CENTRE 5-(☆☆☆☆☆) STAR?

### [A proposed star rating system for ringing centres – draft, for comment](#)

A star rating system is proposed by the Ringing Centres Committee to enhance the existing CCCBR recognition status. This proposal document is a very general, first draft which outlines the purpose and methodology of a system

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which, if implemented, will be a fundamental change to the way in which RCs are currently assessed.

The purpose of the new system will be three fold:

- To recognise and publicly acknowledge the work done by those RCs which maintain a high level of service;
- To encourage RCs to raise the level of service they provide by enabling them to self assess and recognise where improvements can be made;
- To give the RC Committee an understanding of the level of activity within the RC movement and to respond accordingly.

The intention is not to create a 'league table' or 'divisions' of RCs but to apply a standard measure against information provided by the participating RCs. There is no intention for the RC Committee to inspect and/or police the actual quality of the service provided and/or the accuracy of the information submitted by the RCs, but to rely on trust that the submitted information is genuine and given in the spirit intended; the RC Committee would not have the resources to undertake this exercise properly in any event. The system will, however, require each RC to maintain reasonably accurate records of their programmes to enable it to be submitted wholly or in part of their annual or bi-annual report to the RC Committee. To this end it will most likely be necessary to use a pro forma that will minimise the collection, collation and calculation of data.

It is proposed to have a 5 star rating system whereby stars are accumulated with an increasing level of activity and/or facilities/equipment. To aspire to more stars, therefore, would require not only a better fitted out RC but where usage of the hardware was also happening on a regular and on-going basis. To qualify for at least one star it will be necessary for each RC to confirm a minimum level of activity, it will not be sufficient just to have an amount of equipment.

The alternative system would be similar to the star rating of hotels whereby stars are assigned to particular features. Although simpler to administer this system would not provide a measure of a RCs level of activity.

The setting of points to equipment and usage will obviously be fundamental to the success of the star rating system and no doubt be challenging in developing. It will be necessary to ensure that points will be applied in a comprehensive and proportionate manner and the number of points assigned to a particular piece of equipment and its usage will be weighted to reflect an appropriate degree of significance to the learning/training task in hand. The points system will need to be as simple as possible in the

way it is applied and monitored but not so simple that it makes the outcome meaningless.

The points system will not be limited to activity within the tower but will also recognise the effort put in by individuals from RCs who regularly help at other towers and contribute through Outreach to the betterment of training ringers less experienced than themselves. This will also apply to initiatives undertaken to improve public relations within the non-ringing community. There will most likely be other areas of teaching, learning and training, such as the preparation of resource material, which may require a more discretionary approach for its assessment by the RC Committee.

It is proposed that to qualify for CC recognition a RC has at least one star. Although this condition would not necessarily be prejudicial to having an entry in the CCCBR web site by a non-qualifying RC, this benefit will need to be reviewed if a RC is deemed by the RC Committee to be inactive for an extended period of time.

This is a fundamental change to the way that RCs are assessed and one it is hoped will enhance their reputation and generate more interest amongst the general ringing public. It is anticipated that this scheme will be developed by the RC Committee in the coming year and comments from as many ringers as possible who are involved with RCs will be welcomed and fully considered as part of this process.

*Alan Bentley*

For the CCCBR Ringing Centres Committee

## **A Tale of Two Towers: a learner's experience**

My addiction to ringing started developing very soon after I had my first lessons, in early April 2010. The ringers at my home tower (6 bells, tenor just over 7cwt) were - and are - so friendly and supportive towards a (middle-aged, female) learner that their attitude, together with my tutor's experienced and straight-talking focus on developing a good style right from the start, made my early experiences of ringing very positive ones.

That's not to say, of course, that the problems that beset most beginners were not mine also. During my second month of learning the sally seemed willfully to try and remove itself from my agonised reach every time I tried a whole pull all by myself...though the words 'pull right through at backstroke' did eventually sink in! However, once I had been judged safe to handle without a minder and was taking part in rounds, I began to wonder how I could get extra time on a rope outside our normal practise evening. When I started to explore all of the web-based information resources for ringers I found that I was fortunate enough to live only 30 minutes' drive from a very active Ringing Centre. With the warm endorsement of my

home tower tutor I emailed the Ringing Centre to check that it was really true what it said on their website - that beginners were welcome to their Saturday morning drop-in sessions. Thus started a very happy association with the Ringing Centre and the variety of teaching practices there.

The tuition and practice opportunities I receive at my own tower are wonderful – that’s my ringing home and I regard my fellow band members as friends. Yet I also receive enormous benefits from regularly attending the Saturday morning sessions at the Ringing Centre, where I am with a group of other beginners and learners who are at a variety of levels. There I can compare my progress with others who are at broadly similar stages to my own, I can hear news about what’s going on in the district, make friends with learners from other towers and encourage new beginners, and receive tuition from at least one national-level ringer and a very strong team of support tutors. And I can do all this without feeling that the time given to my toddler-level ringing is preventing my home tower colleagues getting more advanced practice. I know that they don’t begrudge the time in any way, but it does naturally make one slightly hesitant to catch hold during the very early stages of ringing.



Cinque Ports Ringing Centre, Dover

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It is interesting to compare the differences between my home tower and the Ringing Centre. My home tower rings quite a wide range of methods so in order to give enough time to those methods it makes sense for our Tower Captain to focus on ringing full methods, ie the whole circle of work each time. At the Ringing Centre, the focus is on practising specific sections or techniques that I and others ask for assistance with - there are several of us at a broadly similar level and what helps one person also helps the others. There is also a useful contrast in the training methods used - for example, when I was ready to learn to hunt, the tradition with us is to start by learning to treble to Grandsire Doubles. My early experience of hunting from any other bell than the treble was therefore mostly through the Ringing Centre, where Plain Hunt is used occasionally

(along with Bastow Minimus and Minor, and Cloisters) as a way of practising particular bells’ paths through a method. And dodging - the opportunity to try both single dodges and also the combination that the Centre’s Ringing Master describes as ‘Treble Bob work’ was extremely useful when I came to take my first faltering steps of ringing inside to Bob Doubles, some two to three months ago. My home tower tutor said she could see how the dodging practice at the Centre had helped and I know that getting some good experience of the dodging rhythm in advance made my first, terror-struck, attempts at ringing the two to Bob Doubles just that tiny bit less stressed. My home tower tutor will now ask what I have been learning at the Centre and is sometimes able to take that into account with whatever I’m set to ring at home. That was especially the case when I was learning to raise and lower a bell, where having the chance to raise and lower on different bells, at intervals of 3 - 4 days (home tower practice is mid-week), and with different tutors observing and commenting on my actions, eventually allowed the ‘muscle-memory’ of the techniques to sink in. Even with ropesight, it has been useful to have two complementary sets of advice to triangulate on.

So, 20 months after I first took a bell-rope in my hands, and 17 months since I first tiptoed into the Ringing Centre, I feel that the combination of home tower and ringing centre provides - sometimes for the contrast as much as for the convergence - an enormously valuable early experience of both the practical and the theoretical aspects of ringing and its techniques, and one that I’m extremely grateful to have.

*Amanda Lee-Riley*

### **Current Members of Ringing Centres Committee**

We welcome two new members of the committee elected at the May Central Council Meeting:

Philip Bailey (Ely Diocesan Association)

Mike Clements (Norwich Diocesan Association)

Both Phil and Mike are involved in setting up new centres in their areas.

Chairman: Norman Mattingley -  
([norman.greenways@btconnect.com](mailto:norman.greenways@btconnect.com))

Alan Bentley; Roger Booth; Les Boyce; Peter Dale; Pip Penney;

*Comments and Contributions for future editions of “Training Times” are very welcome. Please e-mail Les Boyce at: [lesboyce@gmail.com](mailto:lesboyce@gmail.com)*