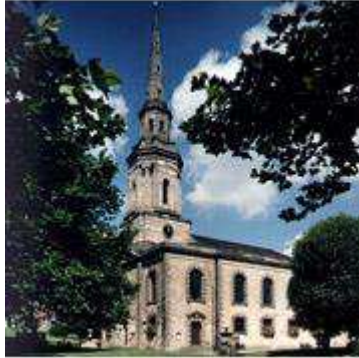




Training Times

Birmingham School of Bell Ringing

by
Clare McArdle



The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing (BSBR), established in September 2013, is probably the most comprehensive dedicated bell ringing training programme ever devised. The School was established to provide high quality ringing training and an environment where we can guarantee that students are taught well, at their own pace, and get to a position where they are a valued member of a local band.

The School started with two towers (St. Paul's, Jewellery Quarter and St. Edburgha, Yardley). From January 2014 we added another tower (St Mary, Handsworth). Before too long we will also open the final tower to complete the framework and this will require more helpers and tutors. The more that get involved, the less onerous it will be on each individual.

All the tutors are CRB checked and have completed an Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS) course. Once enrolled at the School, students are automatically made associate members of the St Martin's Guild, so that all parties are covered by public liability insurance.

Recruitment

To start the school we held a recruitment campaign, and we also invited existing ringers from towers within the Guild who wanted to learn to ring rounds and call changes or plain hunting to join the course at the appropriate level. Not all of our students have therefore started at level 1.

Some of the students were perhaps a little too ambitious in their expectations and we have needed to move them to a different group to help them improve their basic technique.

While new recruits are learning to ring, we will introduce them to a tower near where they live,

where they can become a member of the band. The only commitment required of new bell ringers is to ring bells for service on a Sunday. Indeed the School will not teach anyone not able to make that commitment.

Learning the Ropes

The BSBR follows the "Learning the Ropes" programme devised by the Association of Ringing Teachers. This programme follows five key stages of learning to ring, from the initial bell handling, through foundation skills to progressing into method ringing to Plain Bob level.

Group size

We have deliberately kept the number of students in each course down to a maximum of six. We operate a waiting list system, so that new people can join as existing students move up a level. Not all of the students are able to attend each week and we organise the lessons using 'Doodle' polls, where each student indicates which sessions they will be attending. This information is then transferred to a Google spreadsheet, so that the organisers can see who is coming each week, and as this is stored in the 'cloud' this information is readily accessible.

Charges

To help towards our expenses, each student pays a course fee of £5.00 per week, although there are some concessions. As each student is an individual, each will progress at a different rate.

Tutors and helpers

We have a pool of ITTS trained instructors and each of the sessions, each week has a dedicated leader. This may not be the same person each week, but as all the instructors are ITTS-trained, there is a common approach. The qualified instructors are supplemented by a group of helpers, who are experienced ringers but not necessarily ITTS-trained.

Benefits

Although it is still early days, the School has attracted a healthy group of students and helpers. We are already finding that the students are making new friendships, and as a result, ringers are helping each other out at neighbouring towers. In particular, the School has already helped rejuvenate ringing in this part of the Guild.

(Contact: claremcardle151@yahoo.co.uk)

New Guidance Published

The Committee has just published a series of case studies and other guidance for centres and those interested in group recruitment and training, work with young people and fund raising. The above article on the BSBR is adapted from one of these studies.

The information is available at:

<http://cccbr.org.uk/ringingcentres/goodpractice/>

What's happening in centres?

The Committee regularly surveys centres to keep up-to-date with their activities. Nearly half of the 37 CC-recognised centres have so far responded to the 2014 questionnaire. The number of centres is static with the loss of two and the gain of Bradford Cathedral and North Cave (East Riding). The latest survey tried to quantify some of the activities of centres.

The average number of training events offered by centres to ringers outside their own tower varied from 1 per month up to 20 (all bar this one varied up to 12 per month), with a mean of 7. The types of events offered varied from basic bell handling up to 10 bell change ringing. Apart from the basic instruction in bell handling and the teaching of methods up to six bells there is no set pattern - it is largely dictated by the availability of local resources in the form of tutors and helpers.

Just over half of centres reported they had tutors who were accredited by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) through the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS). The number of tutors available per centre varied between 2 and 10, with a mean of 4, whilst the number of tutors accredited through ITTS/ART, or who were in the process of gaining accreditation, varied from 0 (6 respondents) to 6, with a mean of 2. There is evidently scope for the Committee to encourage more tutors to take up this very worthwhile qualification. Some centres run ITTS courses themselves.



Ella receives her LTR Level 1 Certificate from ITTS-accredited teacher, Patsy Thorn at Edington R.C.

This was the first survey to ask whether centres have health & safety and safeguarding policies and public liability insurance. The vast majority have, but we should encourage all centres to do so.

The majority of Centres are standalone, but some are networked with other towers. Two centres reported an increase in the number of towers within their networked catchment. One networked centre is managed through a new society which is both a registered charity and affiliated to the Central Council; this centre believes this model is essential for the future well-being of the ringing centre movement. This same centre has also formed a commercial enterprise with two other centres to provide belfry access equipment. One centre reports having 25 towers from which they drew their clients. From this snapshot of half of the accredited Ringing Centres it is evident there is still a lot of good work being carried out which relies on a relatively small number of individuals, many with other commitments, for their Centre's continued existence. The ringing centre movement has been around for a number of years, one reported that this was their 23rd year of operation. It is important that we increase awareness of what centres do amongst the exercise in a positive way to encourage the formation of new Centres and to ensure the movement's future well-being.

Alan Bentley

The Committee – who we are and what we do

Chairman: Norman Mattingley

Members: Phil Bailey, Alan Bentley, Roger Booth, Les Boyce, Robert Brown, Pip Penney and Richard Newman. We have at least one vacancy and anyone interested in joining is invited to contact Norman Mattingley (normanmattingley@gmail.com).

At the 2013 C.C. Meeting the Committee's remit was widened to include a brief to support all groupings which offer training to ringers outside their own tower, including youth groups, not just formally recognised ringing centres. The Committee would like to hear from any such groups wanting help or support – please contact the Chairman.

Comments and Contributions for future editions of "Training Times" are very welcome. Please e-mail Les Boyce at: lesboyce@gmail.com