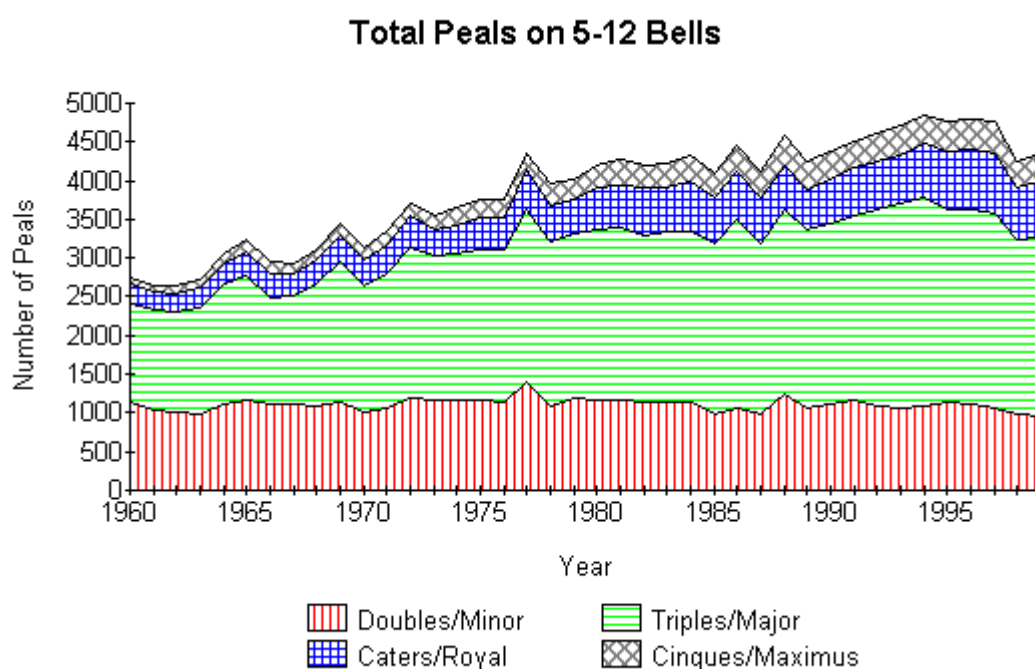


### **Appendix 3: Trends in Ringing**

This study concerns trends in ‘what’ is rung and by whom. From a glance at the peal columns of the Ringing World over a period of a few years, it is immediately apparent that the technical complexity of what is being rung has increased immensely. The question posed here, though, is whether this is reflected in a general increase in the complexity of what is rung throughout the exercise. The conclusion that is drawn, though not rigorously established, is that the gap between the most able bands and the less able is widening and that the overall level of technical achievement is not increasing, and may even be decreasing.

#### **Peal Ringing**

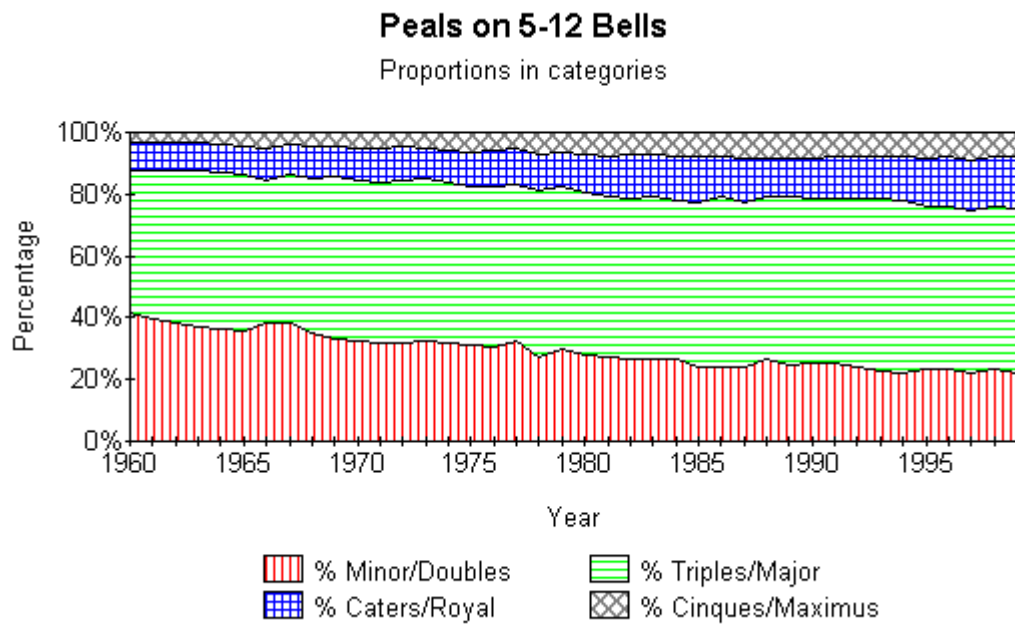
The number of peals rung each year has increased at an average rate of 54 per year since 1960; that is predominantly due to increases in peals of Major, with Royal and Maximus both showing significant increases as well. Figure 1 shows the total numbers of peals grouped by number of bells. Note that 4 bell peals and peals on more than 12 bells are not included, but add little to the analysis. It should also be noted that peals of Triples, Caters and Cinques have not shown the significant changes that are exhibited by the even bell methods. The odd bell peals show a slight general increase, but do not greatly influence the overall trend.



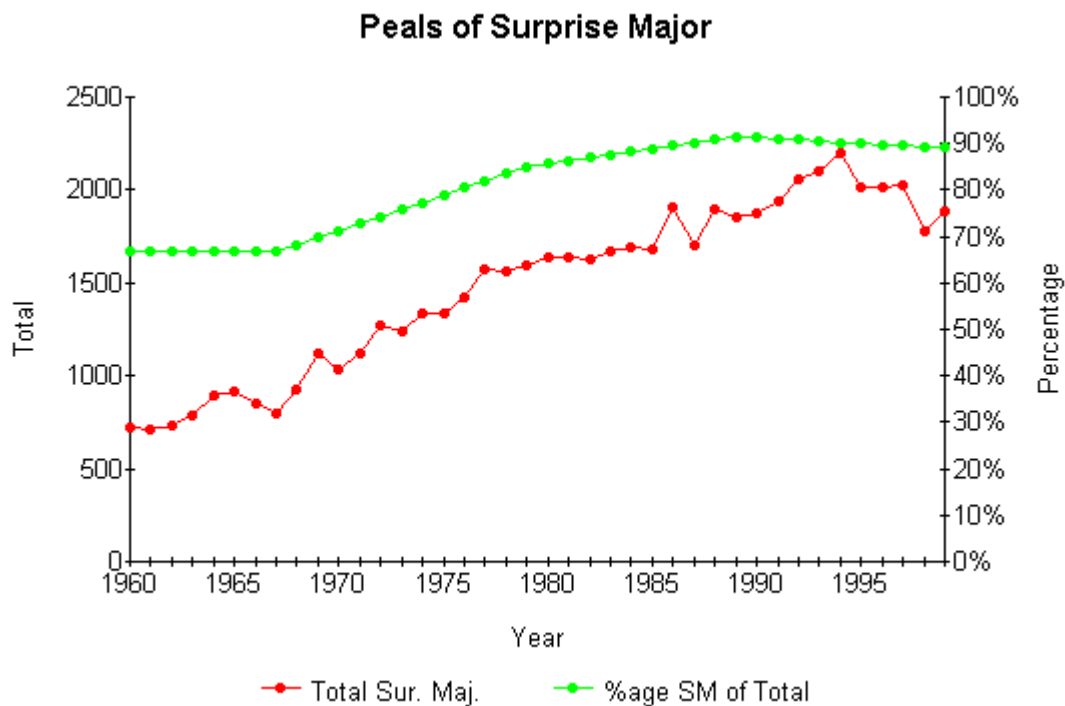
**Figure 1: Total Peals 1960 – 1999.**

It is informative to consider the proportions in each category, as shown in figure 2; here it can be seen that the relative number of six bell peals has decreased, but peals on ten and twelve have dramatically increased. The increase in eight, ten and twelve bell peals is due almost exclusively to increases in the number of peals of Surprise. Interestingly, the number of peals of Minor, whilst remaining pretty static over the years, has shown a slight general increase in Surprise methods. As an example, the number of Surprise Major peals is plotted in figure

3. This also shows the proportion of peals of Major that are Surprise. Although this has been a high proportion since 1960, it has increased from just under 70% to about 90%.



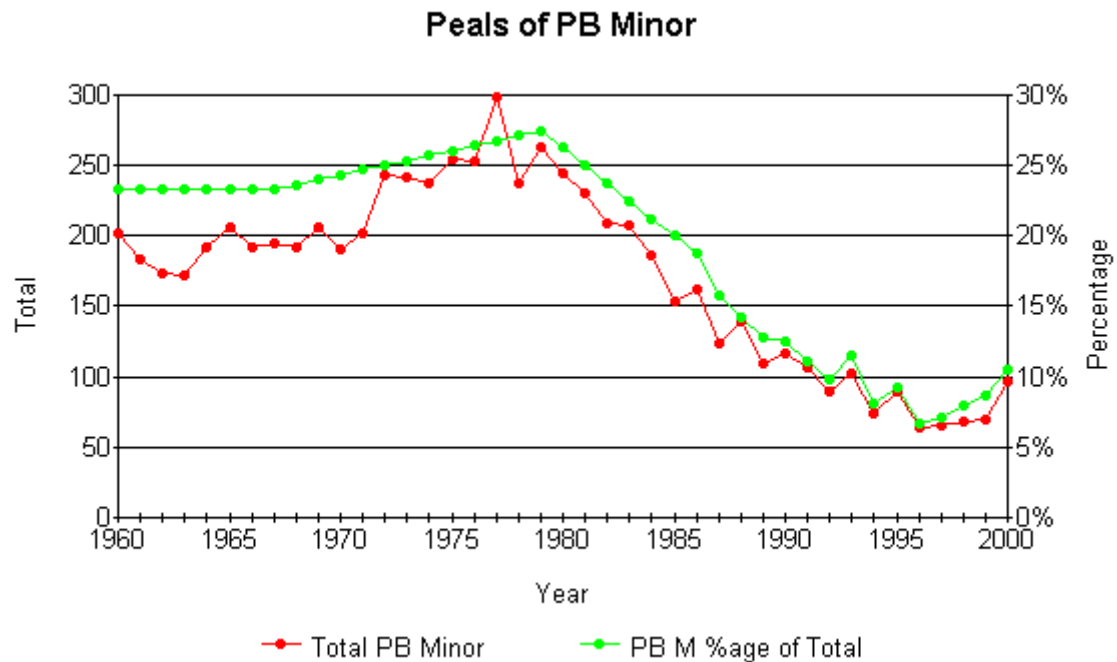
**Figure 2: Relative number of peals in each category**



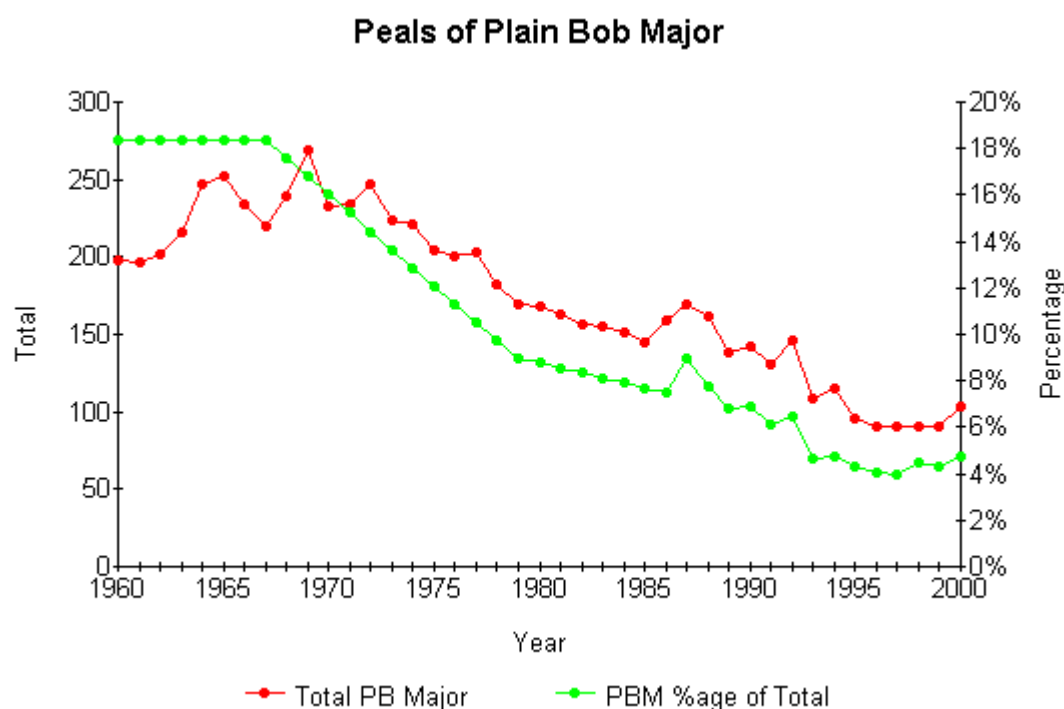
**Figure 3: Peals of Surprise Major**

The numbers in figure 3 are based on sampling, rather than absolute values.

The question of 'who' rings peals is rather difficult to determine. It would seem that the number of people ringing peals has remained fairly static, or perhaps even declined, despite the overall increase in the number of peals. Between 1986 and 1999 the number of first pealers fell from 603 to 242, which indicates, at least, that the number of people entering peal ringing is in decline. Some guide may be gained by considering the number of peals of Plain Bob; this is shown for Minor and Major in figures 4 and 5 respectively. In both cases there is a significant reduction in absolute terms as well as in proportion to the total number of Minor and Major peals.



**Figure 4: Peals of Plain Bob Minor**



**Figure 5: Peals of Plain Bob Major**

The numbers in figures 4 and 5 are based on actual values 1987 – 2000 and samples 1960 – 1986.

The age profile of peal ringers cannot be determined with any certainty, but based on an educated guess in reading the peal columns of the Ringing World, it is increasing. Given the trend in the overall age profile of ringers, this is a reasonable assumption.

An indication of how many people ring peals can be obtained from a marketing survey conducted by the Ringing World in 1999. The survey had a sample size of 131, but is believed to have covered a representative range of towers and ringers. The figures for peal and quarter peal ringing seem to be fairly clear-cut. This is shown in table 1, and indicates that more ringers (just) do not ring peals at all. More importantly, only about 20% of ringers have rung more than 10 peals. Roughly speaking there are about 1600 or so ringers who make up the majority of names reported in the Ringing World peal columns. The Huntington District Millennium survey (carried out by Philip George) indicated that about 31% of the ringers in the area rang peals<sup>[1]</sup>, which whilst fewer than the proportion indicated by the Ringing World survey, supports the conclusion that the majority of ringers do not ring peals.

Number of peals rung	
Unspecified	2%
0	51%

Number of peals attempted	
Unspecified	12%
Less than once a year	78%

1-10	27%	Less than once a month	8%
11-100	16%	Less than once a week	<1%
More than 100	4%	Once or more a week	<1%

**Table 1: Peel ringing, taken from RW Survey**

### Quarter Peals

Quarter peal ringing cannot be assessed as easily as peal ringing, mainly because not all are reported in the Ringing World. There has been a marked increase in the number of quarter peals recorded during the forty year period since 1960, but whether that indicates more quarter peals being rung, or simply more being reported in the journal cannot be established. Simply based on the numbers reported, it is estimated that the number being rung has increased by nearly 400 a year; this is likely to be an overestimate.

Number of Quarter Peals Rung	
Unspecified	2%
0	17%
1-10	34%
11-100	24%
More than 100	24%

**Table 2: Quarter peals, taken from RW Survey**

The Ringing World Survey indicates that (table 2) indicates, as might be expected, that quarter peal ringing is more popular than peal ringing. But, even so, it would appear that less than 50% of ringers ring quarter peals frequently. The Huntingdon survey supports the basic conclusion; in this case the results indicated that 32% of the local ringing population rang quarter peals.

### Trends in Ringing – Technical Complexity

Since the beginning of change ringing, ringers have advanced the technical complexity of their performances. There would seem to have been a significant step up, in terms of complexity, from the 1970's and this may be due, in some part, to computers being more widely available and so enhancing the confidence with which bands can push back the boundaries. At the high end of technical complexity this seems to continue unabated. The ringing of complex methods is also probably more widespread among peal ringers – maybe for similar reasons. However, peal ringers comprise a relatively small proportion of the overall exercise, and there is little evidence to suggest that the improvements in technical complexity of peal ringing has filtered through to the general level of technical competence of Sunday service bands.

Based on a sample of 30 towers, the Huntingdon survey indicated that only about 40% of towers perform change ringing for Sunday service (table 3). There is no reason to assume that

this is representative of national<sup>[2]</sup> ringing, and indeed the survey is predominantly rural, but if adjusted for the likely influence of city and urban Churches (see results of Ringing Roadshow Questionnaire), this would still indicate a preponderance of round and call change towers in areas where change ringing is the usual ambition.

Technical Complexity	Sunday Service	Practice Night
Rounds	7%	0%
Call Changes	53%	23%
Plain Bob/Grandsire	30%	43%
Single Oxford/St. Clements	0%	10%
Stedman	7%	7%
Treble Bob/Surprise	3%	23%

**Table 3: Ringing for Sunday Service and Practice Night (Huntingdon Survey)**

Of course, technical complexity says nothing about overall quality of ringing and no judgement as to whether this has changed is made. But it seems reasonably clear that advances made at the ‘sharp’ end of ringing have not filtered through to advances in the wider ringing community. Leaders of national and local courses generally indicate that there is a considerable demand for tuition in the basic methods (Plain Bob, Grandsire) and one could speculate that for many recruits to ringing the training or opportunity to develop their ringing skills is inadequately met. As a ‘trend’ this may not have changed over the years, but the apparent reduction in the number of people entering the peal ringing fraternity and the definite reduction overall in the number of peals being rung in the more basic methods, would indicate that effort to enable more recruits to progress in change ringing is required. This may be facilitated through the development of Ringing Centres, which could give ringers the opportunity to extend their change ringing ability under expert tuition and conditions more conducive to progress than can often be achieved at the local tower.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The boundaries of technical complexity continue to be impressively extended, and the practice of the art form through peal and quarter peal performances is extremely healthy. However, there is no evidence these developments have influenced the overall development of ringing at the general ‘Sunday Service’ level. There is some evidence that people entering ringing do not have access to sufficiently good tuition to develop their technical capability in line with their aptitude or ambition. Certainly, it would appear that the number of ringers being encouraged into peal ringing is diminishing.

The Central Council and its affiliated societies have put significant efforts into training over a period of many years, and the introduction of Ringing Centres is a recent innovation in this respect. It is recommended that all societies be encouraged to support the concept of ringing centres and to develop them for teaching change ringing under the most able tutors.

## Sources

'The Huntingdon District Millennium Survey', Philip George (Nov. 2000)

'Tower & Steeple Survey', Ringing World Marketing Survey, Andrew Craddock (No. 1999)

Peal Statistics supplied by the Peals Analysis Committee of the Central council, Jeremy Cheeseman (2001)

Ringing Roadshow Questionnaire, Pat Newton (2001)

The Ringing World (1960 – 2000)

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<sup>[1]</sup> It is important to note that these percentages are not based on the same question. The RW survey is based on total number of peals or quarter peals rung (in some cases the ringers may not still be active peal or quarter peal ringers), whereas the Huntingdon survey is based on the number of peals or quarter peals rung that year (1999)

<sup>[2]</sup> National implies in England