



News of and for Ringing Centres produced by the Ringing Centres section of the Volunteer & Leadership (V&L) Workgroup - [gostedman@outlook.com](mailto:gostedman@outlook.com)

# TRAINING TIMES 13

**WELCOME** to all new readers of this publication.

With the new ways of working and organising, at the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, Ringing Centres are not operating in quite the same landscape as they were before. Understandably this has caused anxiety in some quarters - that will be addressed below - and dismay in others e.g. Castor: "We have been proud to be a Recognised School for 14 years and I would be sad if that were to disappear."

But what I wrote in my last editorial is still true: "Ringing Centres are essentially about people: people who want to learn, people who want to progress, people who want to teach well; people who enjoy one another's company, share one another's success and strive to further the art of change ringing in their locality."

Also true, I think, is what was said at the Council Meeting at Lancaster 2018: "The Ringing Centres movement is in a time of transition - adolescence - the happy and settled years are over but we can anticipate a mature network of fully developed centres in the years to come."

So we have persevered with the annual survey process. We have taken advantage

of the CCCBR website update to re-think how Ringing Centres should be presented there and we have urged the Executive to express a view on recognition.

I am guessing that the definition of what a Ringing Centre is will be broadened to reflect current reality: the name might change and *listing* by the CCCBR will replace *recognition*.

Meanwhile, the Facebook Group is thriving with new members joining regularly. Maintaining communications between Centres, sharing ideas, discussing technological innovations and offering mutual support is what will take the Ringing Centres movement forward to a robust maturity. So, whether you use social media, *The Ringing World* or other means do keep in touch, with V&L, and with one another.

**Maureen E Frost**

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## FACEBOOK .....

1. With hundreds of members this is often the best place to go for a quick answer or a bit of advice.
2. Post reminders of your regular events and tell everyone about special sessions and training events, please.....not enough Centres do this.
3. FB is ideal for exchanging views, raising issues, sharing experiences and celebrating your successes.
4. Photos marking your achievements and reports of new initiatives are especially welcome.

## Places To Learn To Ring Better

**THERE** was a time a few centuries ago (though it sometimes seems like just last week) when all we had was bells in church towers and ropes to pull to make them ring. Mind you, even in the earliest of days there was more to it than that - there were civic towers, and change-ringing was practised on hand-bells as well as tower bells.

More recently modern technology has brought about a huge change: it has given us an enormous variety of stuff to assist us in learning and practising our art. I use the word 'stuff' advisedly, as I can't find a more precise term to cover such a wide range: it needs to include large-scale devices such as dumb-bells, physical attachments such as optical, magnetic or inertial sensors, ways of passing information between these items by electrical or electro-magnetic means, modern computers to present audio and more recently visual simulations of ringing, right through to software that has no physical substance at all but tells us about different methods, tests our understanding of them, and can create a completely virtual ringing environment.

When all this 'stuff' started to appear, it was comparatively easy to label a tower as a 'Ringing Centre' if it had installed one of those new simulator things. It was correspondingly easy to define physical criteria that separated a Ringing Centre from other towers. This is no longer the case. Would we require a Ringing Centre to have, in addition to its tower bells, a full set of at least eight dumb-bells each attached to its own simulator software, so that they could be rung individually or collectively, as we have for example in Adelaide or Worcester? Or would we relax the criteria to include any modern technology and end up having to label a tower where one of the ringers used their phone to check a blue line as a Ringing Centre?

Clearly each extreme is ridiculous, as would be trying to identify a dividing line somewhere in-between purely in terms of physical apparatus. Moreover, should anyone dream up some such line, I can't see Central Council or any other body undertaking the unenviable task of assessing whether a particular tower falls on one side or the other.

Instead I feel a phrase that Maureen used in an email discussion is the way to go: 'towers that *aspire to make a difference*'. No doubt this 'difference' will nearly always involve the use of some of the modern technological 'stuff', but the essential criterion has little to do with the exact quantity, cost, nature or sophistication of this 'stuff'. What matters is the willingness of the tower, as represented by its ringers, to go further in what it offers than just dealing with its local ringers. Will it use its hardware, meaning its bells and whatever other stuff it might have, to attract ringers from further afield, to offer them something over and above what they might get at their home tower? Will it run courses? Will it welcome visitors? Will it, in Maureen's words, '*aspire to make a difference*'?

If you agree that any defining criterion for a Ringing Centre is more to do with a state of mind than ownership of stuff, then I hope you will also see why Central Council is not happy with the concept of official recognition. Any such 'recognition' process would require assessment criteria and examination. Speaking as a member of the CC Executive, and someone on whom this task might well fall, I can see no benefit in my going round

towers to test the degree to which they *aspire to make a difference*. Do I leave Lower Crumpton-under-the-Marsh with the message that they just aren't aspiring quite enough and so have failed to be recognised, or do I adopt the modern 'nobody fails' approach - in which case why bother with an assessment?

Much better, I suggest, is the concept of self-assessment. If your tower *does* aspire to make a difference, *does* welcome visitors, *does* offer an experience a bit beyond the normal (and maybe uses some of the modern 'stuff' to help deliver this bonus), then put your hand up. Advertise what you have to offer. Put yourself on any listing that eventuates. Join the group. Support each other and learn from each other's experiences.

This and future issues of *Training Times* will take this idea further, but the essential concept is to identify towers which, through their aspiration to make a difference rather than the hardware stuff they own, self-assess as willing to join in. Such towers should then work on mutual support and communication, and on the promotion and advertising of what they offer, to give added impetus to their aspiration and added strength to the difference they will undoubtedly make.

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CC Executive, sponsor of the Volunteer and Leadership Work Group

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**What makes a *Place To Learn To Ring Better?*** - Bells that are easy to ring and a selection of the following, perhaps.

- An accessible, comfortable environment in which to ring, with heat and light.
- A large pool of willing, competent and cheerful trainers, administrators, steeplekeepers and supporters.
- Plenty of parking, friendly neighbours and a supportive church community.
- A computer based simulation system installed.
- One or more dumb-bells for use in bell handling training.
- Access to a set of hand bells or anklungs.
- A phone or tablet to film bell handling training to inform feedback.
- A closed circuit television observation system so that the movements of the bells can be seen from the Ringing Chamber.
- Easy-on, easy-off sound control where necessary.
- A wide selection of ringing books and publications.
- Space for meetings, tea breaks and theory sessions.
- A coherent programme of taught sessions, targeted practices, social ringing, recruiting events, open days etc.
- Toilets and refreshment facilities.
- Storage for teaching materials, coffee and biscuits (Fairtrade, of course.)
- A blackboard and chalk - or some modern equivalent.
- An aspiration to make a difference.

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**Training Times 12** featured a detailed article on building your own Dumb Bell by Paul Marshall. TT12 is still available at  
<https://cccbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Training-Times-12.pdf>