

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



April 2021, Summer Issue

Chairman's message



The last year has been difficult in so many ways. It's hit us all but it's hit some more than others. In life generally, while some people worked from home, others were forced to work long stressful hours to keep the wheels of society turning, and many were out of work.

In ringing too the impact has been uneven. The ban on tower bell ringing affected us all but some bands made the switch to ringing and socialising online while others didn't. When the restrictions were eased last summer some bands managed limited service ringing, and handbell ringers just moved outside and carried on. But not all churches allowed ringing, and a lot of ringers don't ring handbells.

The ringing community rose to the challenge with the development of online ringing platforms. As well as letting bands practise online they allowed geographically isolated ringers to attend practices they would not otherwise be able to, and had the unexpected benefit of ringers learning methods more easily when they could focus on what they were doing without struggling to control a bell at the same time. Then there were societies that set up regular online talks for their members, and generously welcomed ringers from beyond their membership.

Ringers who took advantage of these opportunities have had enrichment to offset being deprived of normal ringing. But for many there's just been the deprivation. In ringing as in life, pandemic experiences have been very different from person to person.

As we move towards restrictions being eased we need to look ahead to rebuild ringing, which may be very different depending on individual circumstances. For the fortunate it will just mean blowing away the mental cobwebs, building up the muscle tone, and picking up where we left off. But for the less fortunate it will be harder. If bell control didn't come naturally before then it may take a while to build up confidence after, and if the band was short of ringers before, and a few don't return, then it could be even harder after.

Something we've all done is get out of the habit of regular ringing. That habit helps us to get up early on Sunday mornings, and to turn up for practices after a long day – it's something that even the most enthusiastic of ringers partly rely on. We need to rebuild our ringing habits, the regular attendance and punctuality that enables bands to function effectively.

Those of you who run towers will I hope be following the Covid updates in the Central Council website (cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/). The Council has played a valuable role working with Church and Government to make sense of the changing and sometimes ambiguous rules as they affect ringing. One notable achievement in recent months has been to get greater recognition of the need for some decisions to be made locally, in the light of local circumstances, because as the cliché says, one size doesn't fit all. Of course that puts more onus on you and your churches to work out what is and is not safe, rather than just 'following the rules'.

There is still some way to go. Normality will return in stages and take some time, but we should start to think about how best to make use of relaxations when they come. If you haven't already discovered it, I would recommend looking at the '*Survival and Recovery Toolbox*', which has a lot of useful ideas and information: ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox/

I'm pleased to see the Branch Elementary Practices have restarted – currently they are online but they will move into the tower when permitted. I'm also pleased that we have a new Youth Officer who is herself a young ringer, Holley Wakeling. I'm sure we all wish her success, and will support her in any way she needs.

Finally, if there are any ways you think the Branch could help you, or things you think that we should be doing, then please get in touch.

John Harrison, chairman@ldb.odg.org.uk

Reconditioning for the return to tower bellringing

When was the last time you rang a bell for longer than 15 minutes? We rang on the 16th March 2020, our last practice night prior to the first lockdown. Sad. Our ringing fix has been met with the development of online ringing technologies, so thank you to all who have made this possible. Ringing Room causes lots of sitting, peering forwards at a computer screen on an ergonomically poor chair using one finger! Where does that leave our physical state? In one word.....**deconditioned!** A Herculean task for us all to address.



Many will justify their summer walking and exercise regimes in maintaining or even improving physique during the kind weather and Boris's advocacy for the great outdoors. But have we addressed the necessary exercise that will help us ring bells again and more so without injury?

What does Bellringing do for us physically? Words that spring to mind are strength, balance, posture, grip, coordination, spatial awareness, stamina and more. That's without the cognitive effect of mental agility, thinking and concentration. What a brilliant activity.

To ring bells well physical skill is required with the correct muscle input in the right direction for the bell to swing 360 degrees or less. We need grip strength, shoulder flexibility and stability, coordination between hand, arm and eye, balance, good posture and enough strength to control the bell's inertia. Bellringing is a great activity for all ages. But over the last year we haven't had the physical bells to exercise us, and there really is no substitute, hence becoming deconditioned.

How do we Recondition ourselves? No specific equipment required — here's a few ideas.

Firstly, we need to get up, stand and walk and be active more often. That means reducing the long hours watching TV or sitting at a computer.

Walk Run if you can *Climb stairs*
Make housework a workout Cycle
Carry and walk with heavy items or with ankle weights
*Walk your method blue lines
along the floor or up and down stairs*

Get Active

Not all of us manage to just jump up and get moving. This is general advice and if concerned at all visit your local physiotherapist for specific advice and ask to have exercises adapted for bellringing.

Posture

Having a straight posture allows a good reach at backstroke, which improves rope control, and can prevent injury within the shoulder joint. Correcting and exercising our posture will prevent injury on return to ringing.

Sit up straight on dining chair.
Hold still.
Correct your posture as you pass a window or mirror
Reach and stretch to touch high shelves (put teabags here)
Stand up against wall shoulders back
*Think posture from your belly.
Grow tall, walk tall*

Stand on one leg -no hands

*Stand tandem one foot in front
of the other*

Walk slowly along a line on the floor

Stand feet apart, one ahead – sway from one foot to the other – move body weight



Clock stepping: one foot in middle, still.

Step other foot to a black spot and back.

Balance

Balance is important for ringers as we need to have a good stability for an arm activity. All these ideas can be done while the kettle boils.

Strength and stamina

Sit to stand to sit 5x daily

Stand: bend knees and hips to squat.

Push up straight and hard with legs.

Hold a tin of baked beans – bend and straighten your elbows.

Shoulder lifts – carry the shopping, hunch your shoulders, walk the long way to the kitchen

Lunge squats Steps ups

Standing: Raise up onto toes and down then lift toes and balance on heels – keep repeating

Press ups: hands on wall or table or floor

Grip strength: wring out or squeeze cloths and sponges, or undo jars

Ringers need whole body strength to provide a good whole pull action. Core strength allows stability for the downward movement at both strokes especially around the shoulder girdle and prevents over pulling of the arm muscles. Unless you are a tenor ringer of heavy bells, most of us need just enough strength to be able to raise the bell just beyond the horizontal swing when the bells' inertia will aid the rest of the rise. Whole body strength then aids our general stamina to hopefully one day ring for more than 15 minutes.

There are many ways to get moving and exercise or just be active, with plenty of ideas online. Choose something at your level of fitness and strength and, if keen, purchase equipment like ankle weights, dumbbells or resistance band.

Movement Snacks. Don't sit working for long periods of time, try to break up the sitting with movement snacks selecting ideas from all 3 boxes for 10 minutes.

Dual Tasking. Whilst being active why not revise methods lines, compositions, handbell pairs, calling. This enhances memory and recall – just what the Ringing Master ordered!



Jane Mellor, Training Officer and Branch Recovery Champion

Survival and Recovery Toolkit Summary

The *Survival and Recovery Toolkit* was launched in 2020 by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) and the Central Council of Church Bellringers (CCCB), as a joint venture to help ringers and bands stay motivated and connected now and ringing together once this pandemic is over.

The toolkit is a resource for tower captains, individuals, bands, and ringing societies to draw on for training and opportunities to learn from others. There has been great development in the virtual bellringing world for both tower and handbell ringing to keep interest. ART and CCCB have created a network of *Survival and Recovery Champions* who will help coordinate the flow of ideas and information into regions.

The toolkit combines existing resources, case studies and opinions. The current emphasis is on survival with retaining ringers making them feel wanted through their own preferred ringing platform. Within the 'Survival section' there are good ideas of organising virtual ringing, webinars on Ringing Room, an excellent written resource to start learning handbells with how to teach and good ideas to build relationships within the church and the local community.

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The section on 'Getting fit for ringing' includes exercises and advice for returning to ringing, an interactive map of all the practices happening in the UK with contacts to join, confidence building advice from a counsellor and lots of suggestions and YouTube clips on how to get up to speed ringing again. Tower Captains have their own section with advice for new captains, especially for learners who have learnt to ring through the pandemic virtually but have not touched a rope yet. A worthy read. The 'Recovery section' has lots of ideas on post pandemic training, BellBoard virtual hub with online talks, projects, group learning, recruitment, and an excellent example of a district newsletter.

This whole toolkit created by the CCCBR and ART will be useful as the Sonning Branch restarts ringing.

Jane Mellor, Training Officer and Branch Recovery Champion



Here are some useful links to the Recovery newsheets:

http://ringingteachers.org/application/files/6816/1471/1296/Survival_Recovery_Newsheet_Issue_4.pdf

http://ringingteachers.org/application/files/2316/1296/5957/Survival_Recovery_Newsheet_Issue_3.pdf

http://ringingteachers.org/application/files/3016/1045/3463/Survival_Recovery_Newsheet_Issue_2.pdf

http://ringingteachers.org/application/files/3516/0768/9811/20201207_Survival_Recovery_Newsheet_Issue_1.pdf

News snippet from Binfield



Peter Davenport and I from Binfield Tower have been attending regular Monday evening Ringing Room practices. Steve Wells very kindly runs these practices for us. We are also lucky to have support from Sue Portsmouth who regularly attends as well. We now use Wheatley which means we can still have a productive practice when attendee numbers are low. We recently had a joint Ringing Room practice with Wokingham All Saints, kindly facilitated by Jane and Nigel Mellor.

Jan Glen

Peals, Quarter Peals & interesting rings

Since the first lockdown towards the end of March 2020 all bell ringing performances worthy of note by branch members have been either on handbells or virtual ringing using software such as *Ringling Room*. By searching on *BellBoard* I have found the following performances, listed in alphabetical order of member's surname. My apologies to any members whose performances I have missed.

Chris Cole, St Paul's: 3 peals and 9 quarter peals, all in hand

Neil Curnow, All Saints: 5 quarter peals, all in hand

John Harrison, All Saints: 17 quarter peals in hand, 1 'in hand' on Ringing Room

Nigel Mellor, All Saints: 12 quarter peals in hand, 18 virtual 'in hand' quarters

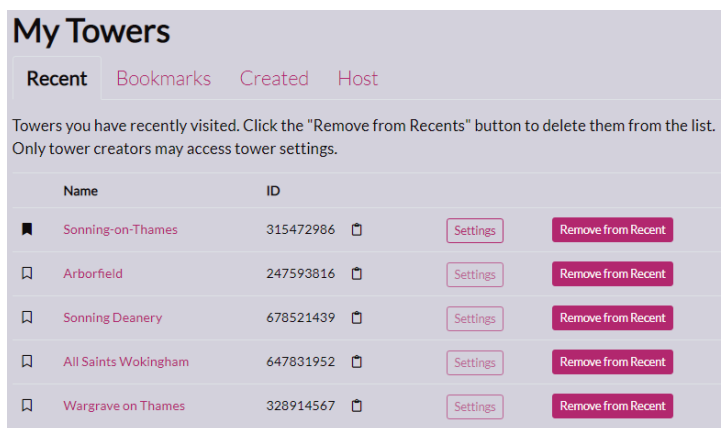
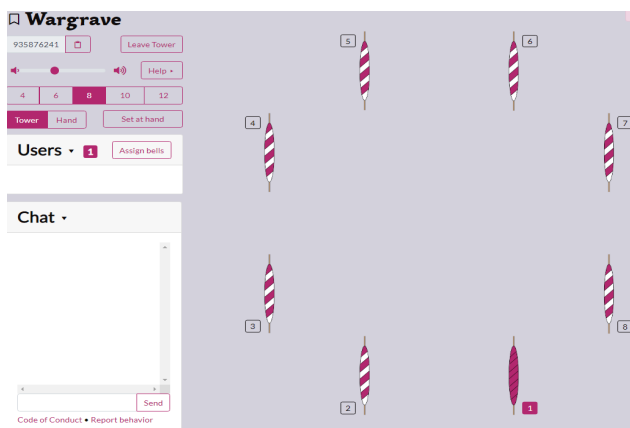
Janet Menhinick, Sandhurst: 2 peals and 40 quarter peals in hand, 11 virtual 'in hand' quarters

Sue Portsmouth, Sonning, 25 quarter peals on Ringing Room

Graham Scott, Eashampstead: 17 quarter peals on Ringing Room

David Sullivan, Wargrave: 14 quarter peals on Ringing Room

Vinni Sullivan, Wargrave: 17 quarter peals on Ringing Room



From all the worthy rings that I have summarised above, I show a few below on the basis that they have a dedication specific to the branch, involve several branch members, or I just like them – the editor's decision is final!

Wokingham, Berkshire
2 Murdoch Road
Saturday, 13 June 2020 in 43m

1264 Plain Bob Major
1–2 Marcia L Dieppe
3–4 Janet E Menhinick
5–6 John A Harrison
7–8 Nigel A L Mellor (C)

Rung in the garden, in memory of
Ron Diserens

Ringling Room (Loddon Hub)
Wednesday, 24 June 2020

60 Stedman Doubles
1 David Sullivan (Wargrave) (C)
2 Simon Farrar (Twyford)
3 Pam Elliston (Sonning)
4 Sue Portsmouth (Sonning)
5 Graham Slade (Hurst)
6 Imogen Reason (Wargrave)

A diamond wedding anniversary compliment to
Geoff and Enid Harvey of Sonning, married
25/06/1940.
First in Ringling Room, and first ringing since a
serious wrist injury in early September 2019 – 6.

Wokingham, Berkshire
2 Murdoch Road
Sunday, 9 August 2020 in 41m

1280 Kent Treble Bob Major
1–2 John A Harrison
3–4 Janet E Menhinick
5–6 David G Maynard (C)
7–8 Nigel A L Mellor

First of method in hand: 7-8.
A 40th wedding anniversary
compliment to David Hodgson (Rector
of All Saints, Wokingham) and his wife
Lorraine.

Peals, Quarter Peals & interesting rings (continued)

Ringling Room (Loddon Hub)
Friday, 28 August 2020

720 Cambridge Surprise Minor

- 1 Holley F Wakeling
(Waltham St Lawrence)
- 2 David Sullivan (Wargrave)
- 3 Sue Portsmouth (Sonning)
- 4 Lavinia Sullivan (Wargrave)
- 5 Graham Slade (Hurst)
- 6 Simon Farrar (Twyford) (C)

To celebrate Holley's excellent GCSE results

Wokingham, Berkshire
2 Murdoch Road
Sunday, 23 August 2020 in 45m

1260 Plain Bob Royal

- 1–2 Marcia L Dieppe
- 3–4 Janet E Menhinick
- 5–6 David G Maynard (C)
- 7–8 John A Harrison
- 9–10 Christopher P Cole

80th birthday compliment to Ralph Elmes from fellow members of the handbell group.

Ringling Room, Berkshire
Wednesday, 21 October 2020 in 50m

1320 Cambridge Surprise Minor

- 1 David Sullivan (Wargrave)
- 2 Barbara E Wells (Easthampstead)
- 3 Sue Portsmouth (Sonning)
- 4 Lavinia Sullivan (Wargrave)
- 5 Stephen C Wells (Easthampstead)
- 6 Graham N Scott (Easthampstead) (C)

To welcome Dani Jo McEvoy (19.6.2020) and Zara Grace Warwick (30.9.2020) — granddaughters to 6.

Guild of St Cuileáin
Reading, Berkshire

26 Redlands Road
Monday, 2 November 2020 in 2h 10 (12 in F)

5152 Reading Abbey Surprise Major

- Composed by R W Lee
- 1–2 Daniel J Page
 - 3–4 David G Maynard
 - 5–6 Jack E Page (C)
 - 7–8 Christopher P Cole

The first peal in the method on handbells



Ringling Room (UK)

Sunday, 21 February 2021 in 61m

1288 Grandsire Triples

comp. R William Willans

- 1 Stephanie Pattenden (London)
- 2 Lavinia Sullivan (Wargrave)
- 3 Sue Portsmouth (Sonning)
- 4 Peter Emery (Worcester Park)
- 5 Alison T Merryweather-Clark
(North Leigh)

6 Charles Pipe-Wolferstan
(Burnham on Sea) (C)

- 7 David Sullivan (Wargrave)
 - 8 Geraldine R Forster (Staines)
- On the 50th anniversary of the first performance of this composition

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