

Survival & Recovery

Survival & Recovery Strategy

At the start of the first lockdown we were still looking forward to ringing events in the summer. There were plans for a grand “Ringing Returns” festival to mark the end of the almost unprecedented few months off ringing. Three months without ringing would be painful but not seismic. We might get a bit rusty, but we could recover.

It now looks clear that by the time ringing returns to ‘normal’ we will have missed at least a year. A year without ringing, a year without recruitment, a year without training, a year without the social intercourse that makes ringing what it is.

We therefore face two challenges. Survival through a bleak winter with little in the way of ringing to keep us motivated, and then rebuilding at least some of what we had before. That is going to need a lot of effort from a lot of people, but we are not going to wait until next year to start. There are things that can be done now, particularly in terms of survival.

ART and the CCCBR are already working together on ways in which we can help ringers and bands stay together and then recover. For example, the production of a Survival and Recovery Toolbox from which ringers, bands and even ringing societies can pick the tools that will best help them keep going until ringing can resume and tailor them to local needs. The toolbox will give access to training, a variety of new (and old) ideas and the opportunity to learn from what others have done or are thinking of doing.

Over the next few weeks, we plan to start a roll-out of tools, resources and ideas for replacing the routines, friendship and opportunities that we have lost because we are not presently ringing.

Let’s try and keep as many people as possible enjoying ringing this winter so

that we can recover and rebuild when ringing returns to ‘normal’. Some of it will just be helping more people to find resources that already exist.

The Council Executive and ART Management Committee are thinking about recovery strategies at a more fundamental level as well. If you have any ideas or would like to help in any aspect of this – building, delivery or engagement – then please get in contact with us. Working together is the best way of building a positive future for ringing.



Get Involved

If you would like to be involved in developing the Survival and Recovery Toolkit, we would love to hear from you. Please contact either Lesley Belcher, ART Chair at lesley.belcher@bellringing.org or Simon Linford, CCCBR President at president@cccbr.org.uk

Over the coming weeks we’ll be looking for your stories on how you have kept your ringers engaged and what you are doing during this time, but also in preparation for when we can resume ringing.

In future editions we hope to bring you more information about a Tower Captain’s Toolkit, physical conditioning, ideas for how to encourage and improve relations with church and local communities, making good use of handbells, recovering confidence and much more.

Keep up to date by checking out the websites and social media sites for ART, CCCBR and The Ringing World Virtual Hub.

50 Virtual Ringing Things

In lieu of being able to collect 50 real activities, 50 Virtual Ringing Things has now been launched at <https://onlinelearning.bellringing.org/>

This is the place to explore the world of virtual ringing and the many different activities that hook fellow ringers into our addictive hobby. The challenges cover simulator software, online ringing, handbells and the enigmatically named tail ends (things that don't fit into the other categories).

For any collectors out there, you will receive your 50 Ringing Things certificates when you've ticked off a sufficient number of challenges. Remember, only challenges completed after registering on the scheme count!



Covid Guidelines and BellBoard Virtual Hub

CCCBR meet regularly with the Church's Recovery Group and issue regular updated guidance for safe bellringing. This can be found on the CCCBR website at <https://ccabr.org.uk/coronavirus/>

BellBoard now has a Virtual Hub, giving details of talks, workshops and events for all ringers to sign up to. If you are hosting an online event or talk and would welcome more attendees, do advertise the event at <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/virtual-hub.php>. Why not add your virtual events to the Hub — you can still control numbers and access.

Church and community

We will be looking into how we can encourage and strengthen relations with the church and our local communities. This will be a key element of resuming ringing. The community may have got used to the lack of bells or missed it terribly. An opportunity and a threat. Positive engagement with help ease us back into the local soundscape and give us opportunities for recruitment activities, when the time comes.

We are keen to set up a network of local champions for each Association / Guild or collection of towers and will be sending something round to the affiliated Societies soon, to ensure that we link up with the most appropriate person. If that is something that you would be interested in being involved with, look out for information via your Society or contact us direct.

Online Learning Portal

ART is developing an online learning portal offering training in a wide range of topics. Currently available courses cover:

- Composing practice night touches of spliced
- First steps in calling bobs
- Understanding Call Changes
- Minor stepping stones
- Ropework, knots and splices for bellringers
- Introduction to basic belfry checks and routine maintenance

More courses are under development and will be advertised when they are published. You can register for free at <https://onlinelearning.bellringing.org/>

Surprise Major Ringing Room Practices

Simon Linford, CCCBR President, is organising a series of Surprise Major practices using Ringing Room, throughout December.



These pilots will hopefully lead the way to rolling out what Simon has previously described as the "Cast of 1000" The idea is to establish a roster of 1000 experienced ringers who are prepared to go to one additional practice a month provided it is reliably organised, well run, and for some folks' specific benefit. It is an idea specifically aimed at the middle and upper reaches of the 'Red Zone' where aspiring ringers can get stuck for opportunities. In the meantime, additional practices will be run on Ringing Room and this will be rolled out in the New Year based on the experience of the December trial.

Keeping it local

We really want to hear from you if you have a local story to tell about how you have kept your band of ringers together, with the aim of publishing positive stories to inspire others. Send your stories to Mary Jones at mary.jones@bellringing.org

In this edition of the newsletter, we've included some ideas from around the UK about what ringing groups are doing to prepare for Christmas, despite restricted availability of their usual bells.

Virtual Carol Service

The annual Carol service is usually the best attended event in the calendar. We were so disappointed to have to cancel this year, owing to Covid, but decided to see if we could hold it on line. In October a very successful AGM had been held via zoom, so we felt confident the members had both the technology and enthusiasm to have a go. Invitations were sent to all members and they had to register for a login code. One member is a keen pianist and agreed to play for us. Another had written the service and members were approached to do readings. A full service sheet will be emailed to members, but the words to the carols will be displayed on screen. At the start of the service, all members will be asked to light a candle, to show the service has started. All will be put on mute, so we can sing along to the carols, and still be able to hear the piano. Also, we will all be visible on screen so we can see our friends. Members are asked to wear festive attire.



The service will last 35 minutes. Following the service, we are having a separate social with mince pies and mulled wine. Chris Mew is going to ask us all to 'show us your bakes' so we can see how good the pies look. It's not the same as seeing all our friends, but in these strange times, it will keep us going until we can meet again.

Annie Hall, Coventry Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers

Handbells @ Christmas

I have always cherished the memory of childhood Christmases and the delight of singing carols with the choir as we toured the village accompanied by handbells. I hoped to one day, somehow, set up another handbell band to ring at Christmas. The opportunity arrived! To help our newly formed tower of ringers to understand the finer intricacies of plain hunting, I borrowed a fine set of handbells from one of our fellow churches. I have to admit that in the first year they were hardly touched. However I was not dismayed, I had an ulterior motive. When lockdown came and was followed by restrictions on ringing, the handbells came into their own. Another team member organised practices and we were soon happily running off rounds and queens and plain hunt and even got bookings for a wedding and a 90th birthday!

Summer ran into autumn and I started thinking ahead to Christmas. I knew that the original carol music that I had used, (it must be at least 60 years old), still existed. I had been given other copies of handbell music, not all our team read music, so it had to be numerical. However, I felt that the old music was by far the clearest to follow, (plus there might be a chance of me remembering the harmonies for my particular bells). I got hold of the music and produced copies for everyone. The team was slowly

being assembled, it included ringers and some who had never pulled a rope or held a bell, when....second lockdown arrived. Our tentative practice dates were thrown into disarray.

Time is tight, we have three bookings for carol services and less than two weeks to get our act together. Three of our team of six have never picked up a bell before and no-one but me has rung carols on handbells. We handle two bells each, although I have had to swiftly access online coaching to understand how to ring three, (that extra "D" at the top). After only two practices, I'm pleased to say that we feel confident of giving a reasonable performance for our congregations. We've time to squeeze in another two rehearsals, so things are looking and sounding good. I think the team are enjoying it, I hope they are pleased with their progress so far, which, from a standing start, is amazing. We might even be able to recreate my early memories and go round our villages with the carol singers, although we probably can't conjure up the snow.

The joy of all this is that not only are we enjoying ourselves, we are also hopefully bringing some cheer to people this Christmas time, in this difficult year. So, let me encourage you to dust down those handbells, find some music, assemble a team and give it a go.

Diana Gilder, Norfolk Diocesan Association of Ringers

Ringling Room - from getting started to host!

Anthea Enzor was so excited to get started on Ringling Room with the ART Workshop in November and from there has been able to host a workshop for a group of 6 ringers. We would like to share Anthea's story.

"I just wanted to say thank you very much for getting us started on Ringling Room. We are now practising five times a week, two with our less experienced ringers and three with those who have been ringing a bit longer, although several of the more experienced ringers help out at the learners' practices. We are also getting ringers from other towers who want to join in!

I have been astonished at the impact these practices have had and the ongoing support for them. The learners have made amazing progress. In the first session we rang rounds and call changes, but soon realised they could start having a go at Plain Hunt. And they haven't looked back! They are all ringing touches of PlainBob Doubles, and some are ringing touches of Grandsire Doubles, with singles! The keenest, who was just ringing rounds before lockdown, is ringing touches of Plain Bob Minor, rings Plain Bob Triples inside as well as Stedman Doubles and Triples!

Two of them come along to the more advanced practices too as they are doing so well!

Some of the more experienced ringers found it harder to adapt their ropesight skills to ringing online and there has been a lot of frantic counting going on, but their progress has been amazing too. We all found ringing on an odd number of bells is easier than even bell ringing, and there are still a couple who can ring a touch of Stedman Doubles, but can't manage Plain Bob Minor very well. In fact these two are both having a go

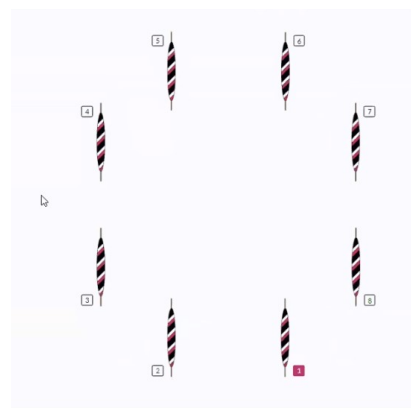
at Stedman Triples, something neither of them thought they would ever be able to do on tower bells!

The speed of the ringing does depend on everyone's internet connections, and there can be some lag, although this improved over time. It also depends on the speed that the ringers can process what is going on on the screen, so we find we have to go at the speed of the slowest ringer in the band. However, it is very easy to stop and start again if things go wrong, and to have several goes at the same touch, probably something we would never do in the tower.

I am really intrigued to know how these skills will transfer when we eventually get back to tower bell ringing. For the learners I guess there will be a stage when they will have to work hard on their bell handling skills to enable them to ring what they are able to ring on Ringling Room. Also they will have to adapt their listening skills as they are used to pressing a key and hearing their bell ring straight away, not some time after they have pulled their rope as it would be in the tower.

For the more experienced ringers, I hope that, having had the chance to learn new methods and really understand how to ring them well, without worrying about physically ringing the bell at the same time. It will give them confidence to have a go in the tower. We will have to wait and see!

I recently had a conversation with one of our more experienced ringers. She said that her virtual choral society rehearsal had clashed with one of our Ringling Room practices, but she had chosen to ring as she was enjoying her ringing so much at the moment. She felt she has made more progress recently than she has for years. She also said that Ringling



Room has been great as it has kept us all together.

I can vouch for the fact that she has made a lot of progress, both with her method ringing on tower bells and also with her handbell ringing.

I have also received this email from one of our less experienced ringers..."

"You don't know what you are responsible for! There I was, in my dressing gown at the breakfast table, surrounded by tidal waves of printed off blue line method sheets, an ever increasing number of hand drawn method lines, porridge, berries, coffee and feverish notes about bobs and singles.

I really appreciate this opportunity to learn more about ringing."

Anthea Enzor, Durham & Newcastle Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers.

If you'd like to book a place on a free Teaching with Ringling Room workshop then contact Denise at denise.tremain@bellringing.org