

ART and a return to ringing

David Sparling
ART Tutor Co-ordinator

This article was planned before the Government's recent decision to postpone the lifting of restrictions until 19 July. Whilst the delay is disappointing to many of us, a few more weeks of patience will hopefully soon pass. In preparation for a return to 'normal' ringing ART has been extremely busy with a number of initiatives to help everybody get back up to speed.

Online refresher courses

Online refresher courses have been completed for both M1 and M2F Teaching Modules and they are now going through final review. Once released they can be found alongside the existing online learning resources at onlinelearning.bellringing.org

These refresher courses are open to anybody who has already attended the associated teaching module – regardless of when that might have been. They cannot hope to reproduce all the topics covered during what are intensive day courses but they do include all the main points. You can dip in and out of the various sections and as such they are a useful reminder to those who attended a course shortly before lockdown and have been unable to put any of the new ideas into practice as well as to long-in-the-tooth teachers who might just want to remind themselves of some tips that we've probably not used for the past 15 months!

M1 Physical Refresher Workshops

In parallel with the online refresher courses we want to run some half day physical refresher workshops which will include many of the practical exercises covered in the M1 Teaching Course. Again these will be open to anybody who has already attended an M1 Course. The expectation is that these will initially be small and local to avoid excessive travel and to include attendees who will be known to each other to minimize Covid concerns. If you have a group of teachers in your area, why not get together and arrange for a local course? Contact Rose (rose.nightingale@bellringing.org) in the first instance and we will do our best to arrange something as soon as we are allowed.

Method Toolboxes

All of the Method Toolboxes have been completely revamped with a number of new ones added and these are now available to all ringers on the ART website.

ringingteachers.org/resources/Method-Toolboxes

These are split into separate sections for Foundation Skills and Method ringing and they cover a range of topics from Rounds through to Doubles variations, Plain Bob Minor and Stedman Doubles. Worth having a look while you wait patiently for July 19!

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Teaching Modules

During lockdown we have already received a number of requests for Teaching Modules to be held just as soon as we are able indicating that there is a real enthusiasm to 'get going again'.

Over the past 15 months the Tutor Group has met regularly by Zoom to keep up to date with initiatives around the country and to ensure that we are ready to respond once restrictions ease sufficiently.

We had to cancel a number of already committed

courses back in March 2020 and so the rescheduling of these will of course take priority. In preparation, we have updated our course guidance documentation for course organisers with new Covid guidelines and these will be available as we start to schedule new courses.

For more information about Teaching Modules and everything else that ART has to offer see: <http://ringingteachers.org>

Ventilation in ringing chambers

Simon Linford

President CCCBR

In March, David Pouncey, a member of the Council's Covid guidance team, wrote in the Ringing World about Coronavirus transmission in towers, the importance of ventilation, and the role of CO2 measurement in assessing the adequacy of that ventilation. The link between the two is that CO2 levels is a good proxy for quality of ventilation and its measurement has scientific acceptance. Ringers breathing generates the CO2, and if ventilation is poor, the stale air stays where it is, and CO2 concentrations rise. Open a window to introduce fresh air and the CO2 level will fall. If one ringer is carrying a virus, it may be harmlessly dispersed by good ventilation.

Getting ventilation right will help prevent a future lockdown in ringing, if there are future waves of Coronavirus that are not controlled by vaccines. Current SAGE advice is that ventilation should aim to keep CO2 levels below 800ppm in environments where people are physically active, and that if they exceed 1500 they are poorly ventilated, and "should be identified and prioritised for improvement". These numbers are supported by many other countries which have done similar research.

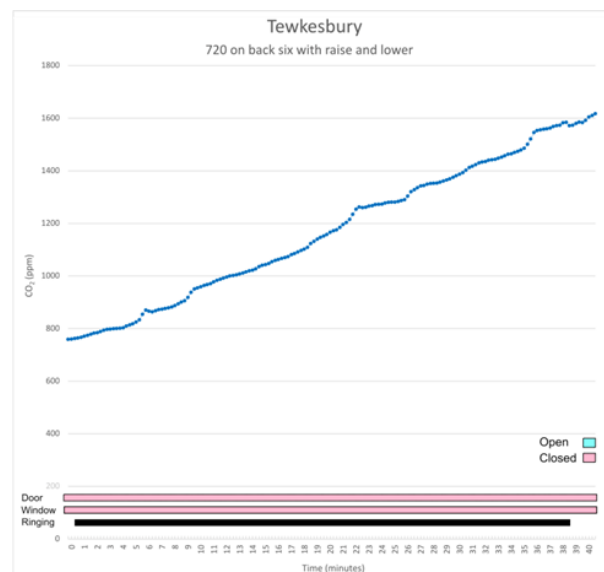
After the return to ringing in May, David did a number of tests at towers involving bands of 6 ringers ringing for different lengths of time up to 45 minutes, with different sizes of ringing chamber and with different ventilation options. The results are very interesting and give a good basis for bands to consider whether ventilation in their tower could be made better and enable longer durations of ringing, if indeed virus levels become a problem again.

The full article is available on the Covid guidance pages of the Central Council website, along with suggested CO2 meters, but I would just like to pick out a couple of the case studies to illustrate how the data was captured and what it indicated.

Tewkesbury Abbey

Many will know that the Abbey has a large ringing chamber with lots of ventilation options. However the test touch comprised ringing up the back 6, ringing 720 of Cambridge Minor and lowering them again without ventilation to see what happened.

Note how the level of CO2 rose steadily, and did not plateau. By the end of their session, on only 6 bells, they exceeded the advised maximum, (800ppm) and were approaching the cut off level (1500ppm) for "poorly ventilated". The conclusion drawn is that no enclosed ringing chamber is going to be so big that ventilation can be ignored, especially if higher numbers of bells are being rung. The stale air just doesn't move around enough.

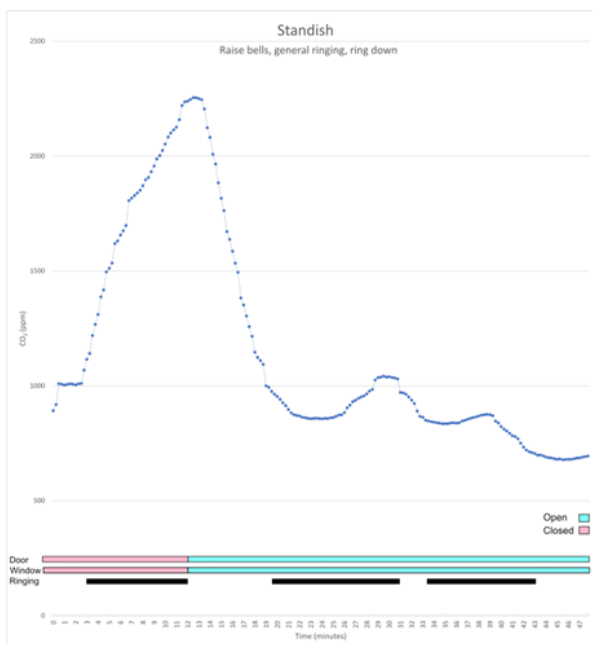


Standish

At the other end of the scale was the testing at Standish, which has a very small (8ft by 8ft) ringing chamber. Although the test started off as at Tewkesbury, with the door and windows closed, it couldn't stay that way for long!

CO2 levels went up very quickly, but the opening of the tower door and two thin slit windows had a dramatic effect; ringing could commence again, and it was able to continue at a safe and sustainable level.

So small towers need to pay special attention to their ventilation; but also that once this is provided, they can be as safe a place to ring as any.



All the tests done showed how increasing ventilation enabled the CO2 levels to be kept at 'safe' levels of less than 800ppm, levels where if there was an infected individual, there would be a good chance that virus would be dispersed by airflow rather than potentially infecting other ringers. It's worth repeating that this is for future scenarios of virus rates increasing again and vaccination having less effect. We are considering how to future proof our towers as much as possible.

Opening doors as well as windows was shown to be very effective in the tests. This causes a chimney effect that draws air through the chamber, especially when it is windy. Also found to be effective was putting a fan in the window, helping to push fresh air into the room.

This is an important point about the use of fans – moving stale air around the room has no positive effect other than to make the ringers feel cooler – if you want to improve ventilation then the fan needs to bring fresh air in more quickly.

Bampton

Finally another example studied was the Troyte Ringing Centre at Bampton where the DAC had not allowed the ringers to introduce ventilation by putting an opening into the west window. During lockdown they identified the future problem, brought the PCC on board, sought professional advice and had a ventilation system installed, using the old clock weight chute for ducting. The CO2 measurements showed that the system was successful in improving ventilation to an acceptable level (although it wasn't cheap).

David concludes his latest paper by accepting the limitations of his findings, that they are susceptible to many variables and particularly to confirmatory bias. More results would be useful and we will establish a network to share results from those already investing in CO2 meters (note that they need to be decent and with an NDIR sensor – expect around £100, and hence something that might be a branch or association investment).

However, some clear messages emerge. If we accept that in the future Coronavirus will be circulating in the community and people's immunity level will have slipped, then it is important for all towers with an enclosed ringing chamber to look at their ventilation levels. This becomes even more important when ringing for longer periods and on higher numbers.

Restricting the number of people in the ringing chamber, and the duration of ringing will of course reduce the risk; but that means jettisoning some of the most enjoyable aspects of ringing – the cheerful, crowded practice nights, the peals and QPs. Improving ventilation has the potential to make them possible.

With thanks to David Pouncey for allowing the heavy editing of his original article, which can be found at ccbr.org.uk/coronavirus

Note: some of the studies went beyond current Central Council guidelines (duration of ringing, level of CO2) but this was for the purposes of research and using carefully chosen, low risk ringers.

Challenges of the recruitment campaign

Simon Linford

CCCBR President

When do we want to do it?

We need to be sure we can teach face to face with no further interruptions, e.g. from a winter increase in restrictions. This probably means Spring 2022. We could target lapsed ringers before that though, maybe in the Autumn.

What age profile are we targeting?

Different towers want different things. The same campaign does not necessarily work for all age groups, and the sort of campaign that works for one segment could actively discourage another. Young learners will forward the art of change ringing, older learners are more likely to fill our towers.

Do we recognise that we now have two different activities?

Whether we are recruiting people for a pathway into method ringing, or recruiting people who will be happy to ring good rounds and call changes in the local tower or area, this is a performing art, with a high expected standard of performance.

Do we just send learners to places they will be taught well?

This is definitely true for young recruits who really need to be taught in groups by people good at teaching youngsters. One possibility is to get centres to apply to be somewhere that you can learn to ring, with something about the specific environment. This might serve to focus ringers, branches or associations on creating attractive learning environments.

What is the message?

The Millennium targeted an event. Ringing Remembers had a good theme. A theme has to be positive - not that we are running out of ringers and are desperate.

What are we prepared to pay?

The Council is prepared to organise and pay for the branding exercise. Good work was done on a possible campaign called 'Resound' in 2014. Targeted marketing is not free, and the more targeted the marketing, the more successful it will be, but the more it will cost.



What next for Recovery Champions?

David Kirkcaldy

Vice-President, CCCBR

This was the subject for the latest get together of the Recovery Champions which followed on from the Recovery Convention's week of presentations. Feedback from those attending the presentations was positive, with people having picked up lots of ideas to put into practice when restrictions are eventually relaxed.

The next question is what do Recovery Champions want next? We now have well over 140 Champions signed up and almost 500 different people signed up for at least one of the presentations. This is a very useful basis for establishing a network of ringers who are all keen to try and help make a difference and improve ringing in their areas.

During the workshop held on Sunday 6 June, the future was discussed in small groups and two areas stood out to me as important in peoples' minds; these were also reflected in the feedback from the recovery week presentations.

First, people stated that they thought we should work on recruitment and retention. To that end Simon Linford has already put together a series of questions as to how this could be managed. These can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

Secondly a support network could grow out of the Recovery Champions. It is worth pointing out statements made by different people which were reflected in the discussions at the seminar.

- *Feeling rather overwhelmed that I do not have the time, the skills, the support/assistance required to put lots of the ideas in place.*
- *It's not easy to gain more experienced teachers or helpers, in fact most of the time it can be learners helping learners.*
- *My tower is part of a group benefice of six churches all of which has a ring of bells but I can't even get them to ring together once a month for our joint benefice service.*

How can we help and support these ringers to put in place some of the ideas they have heard about from the presentations that have worked in other areas?

Whilst it is the case that not every idea can be transferred successfully to another area, could a support network help?

How would a support network work?

It shouldn't be a rigid one size fits all. We had a number of different ideas suggested. From being 'buddied up' with someone who you may only want to talk to occasionally to the idea of a 'hit squad'. One person said they would be willing to travel to another part of the country for a week to help with ringing if they felt that it would make a difference. Another suggestion was to introduce regional based meetings in the future, although this did not seem to receive much support with the majority favouring a continuation of the current format.

If this is the way we continue our work should we move away from the term Recovery Champions? Is the network that has been built up likely to outlast recovery from Covid restrictions?

The steering group is still keen to hear the views of those signed up and point us in the correct direction for our future work. At the moment we have a blank slate as far as what to offer next and when to offer it.



Getting back to the tower

Ringers are beginning to filter back to their towers.

People are approaching the return in different ways. Some towers have re-established a weekly practice and are ringing for services and scoring quarter peals as if they have never been away. Others are more cautious and are perhaps still restricting their numbers to 3 or 4 ringers because their ringing rooms are titchy and poorly ventilated. Some people may not feel ready to go back and are waiting for the full lifting of restrictions. Some towers are running short practices in the tower, but also meeting up in the Ringing Room to continue learning the more advanced methods that they have come to appreciate over the past year. Some are not holding practices but are ringing on a Sunday. Some people are going to the pub. Here is a selection of stories.

Tower versus hand

Our local tower has a ground floor ring of 6 and a large west door. Ventilation is good, so although the room is not huge, we can safely ring all 6 bells. Weekly practices and service ringing resumed as soon as 6 individuals were allowed in the same indoor space. The first few weeks were devoted to basic sessions for those of us who had been ringing less than 2 years before lockdown - rounds, call changes and plain hunt. Quarter peal attempts were offered for the more experienced ringers at other times. If you only have 45 minutes or so to play with and a set band of 6, then it is an efficient use of time to target specific groups.

There has also been a very welcome introduction, which I hope remains a permanent fixture on the

Aches and pains

I have rung twice. With over 50 years since I learned to ring, with one long gap of over 20 years after which I rang as if I had never stopped, I expected to have no problems. I had two. One was that I found, now older and in less good health, climbing the steps was very hard work. The other was sharp pains in my right arm

practice schedule – 6 can ring in the tower, but up to 6 can also ring something else, somewhere else. Hence, 3 of us were to be found comfortably seated on folding chairs in the church porch, happily dinging away on handbells last Tuesday. Afterwards we all went to the pub together, and the big bell and little bell *aficionados* even agreed to share the same table. The only drawback was those big bells are a bit noisy, and when they clattered down in peal we could not hear our little bells speak. That is the trouble with noisy neighbours.

Mary Jones

bicep... both times, but worse the second. I am now going to use hubby's dumbbell (gym type... not bell type) To get that muscle used to working again!

Chris de Cordova

From a Learning the Ropes ringer

We have managed to get back to ringing 6 bells out of 10 at Hereford Cathedral. The ringing chamber is very large and the ropes well spaced out. My first reaction to the return was a cautious "yay". The first climb of the 168 steps was surprisingly hard, the first time taking hold was a bit "oooh, is this going to be ok?". Fortunately our ringing master doesn't usually give us time to get nervous or to over think things. It was rounds and call changes and look to, off we go.

Can I reassure those who are nervous about returning

and say, if you could ring before lockdown, you still can! Striking will almost certainly be a bit off but that was the same for the experienced ringers. Ringing in a mask is odd but not unbearable and the smiles after the first ring were practically visible through the masks!

Keep to the guidance, be safe and enjoy your return to ringing.

Len Hand



Getting back to ringing

I learned to ring as a teenager and I rang at university, but for fifty years after leaving Durham I never gave it a thought. One Sunday morning in 2017, my wife was talking to one of the ringers over after-service coffee at our parish church and expressed an interest in seeing what went on in the tower. So we pitched up to a practice night and we've been ringing ever since. My first steps proved to me beyond doubt that muscle-memory doesn't last for half a century: it was back to square one. Once I'd got past the basics, it was a long, slow process of improving my handling until I could be trusted not to make a total mess of plain hunt and call changes. So we began to turn into useful (if technically limited) members of the tower and we were both very excited to ring for the 2018 Armistice Day celebrations.

Then came COVID-19, and for the last twelve months or so we have barely touched a rope. When it became possible to resume any kind of ringing, we rang two bells on a few Sundays: very, very boring, but at least it proved to the village that they hadn't been melted down for scrap. In the meantime, weekly sessions on

Ringling Room have been great for keeping the band together and for learning theory – and at last I'm beginning to be able to visualise blue lines and remember what the next piece of work is (usually).

We are gradually returning to something like normal ringing. The first practice was gruesome – almost everyone apart from our tower captain was all over the place – but our service ringing turned out to be better than that first practice and we are beginning to improve. But lack of rope-time means that I'm tending to over-pull, even on the treble, and at one point last Sunday my arms were aching so much that I committed the cardinal sin of standing my bell without permission.

The big question is: *Can I transfer what I've learned on Ringling Room to pulling real ropes attached to real bells?* I don't know the answer yet, but I'm sure that having a better grasp of theory than I had eighteen months ago can't be a bad thing.

Frank Cranmer

Returning to ringing

I started to learn to ring in March 2018. I should have been trebling to a second method for a quarter peal to achieve my Learning the Ropes Level 3 just a week after lockdown. It felt like a really meaningful step in my ringing progress thwarted by a pesky virus.

We had a practice on 22 March 2020 and then nothing for months. In August, I had my first ring on the bells. I was nervous, but half way through ringing up I knew I had enough muscle memory to manage my bell and it felt good. We were only ringing for Sunday service which was frustrating as I knew I needed more practice. We did practise on Ringling Room. It was great to see everyone on Zoom and to remember how to count to six and back, with some "twiddly bits" in the middle.

Then lock down again. There was no Christmas ringing for me as we were asked not to mix at all. A long winter with only virtual ringing where the only delight was being warm between rings!

I was honoured to be asked to toll at a tower in our benefice for the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral. I was able to practise when I put the muffle on with our tower captain standing nearby. It felt great to have a bell rope in my hands again and to feel the weight of

the bell as it started to rise. I had a few bell control issues whilst tolling but maintained my concentration and technique. It felt very strange being in a tower on my own but it will remain a memorable part of my ringing career.

Finally we were allowed to ring again, and on 17 May we rang for the funeral of a family member of one of our ringers. It was, whilst sad, thrilling to be ringing with a band again and being ready on the call of "look to" a sense of nerves, some performance anxiety and excitement. We stuck with some slow plain hunt which was melancholic but so much more challenging than when I'd rung it previously. Ringing slowly was hard without practice. The family were grateful to have the bells rung and that's the most important thing.

Practices have restarted but for six of us at a time. We're getting better at ringing and managed some good rounds and call changes for this morning's Sunday service before a plain course of Plain Bob Doubles. It was far from perfect but we did it and that was very rewarding. It's great to be back, I hope to ring my QP soon and get my LtR level, and as time goes on improve my ringing and learn some new methods.

Jane Robinson