

Worcester Cathedral's Teaching Centre

by Mark Regan



Some of our students

The clock room in Worcester Cathedral tower now houses a purpose built Teaching Centre for Bellingring. This six dumbbell computerised facility is the first of its kind. It can be used to teach new ringers; and to coach listening and method skills to those who can already ring. Used as a teaching resource it will benefit everyone who uses it.

Our objectives

- Sustain and increase the Cathedral's Guild of Ringers.
- Develop better teaching techniques to make ringing more attractive to new ringers.

- Work with local schools, the University and the City community to recruit new ringers.
- Build a Teaching Centre which is available for *everyone* to use. We will develop it as an international resource.

What have we built?

Six dumbbells hang in three separate frames in the clock room of the Cathedral tower, an empty space underneath the Victorian platform. They are designed and built in sympathy with the 14th century and Victorian structures.

The engineering solution is robust, tested and approved by Chapter, our Architect and



Frame going up to the tower trapdoor

Structural Engineer. The dumbbells are supported in steel frames, strapped to the wooden beams of the 'wigwam' – the Victorian sub frame which supports the bell frame. The dumbbells hang in a separate room from the tower bells. This means that parallel practices can take place and pupils are not distracted by ringers or those 'sitting out'.

The dumbbells work with computers, and Abel software, the Bagley simulator, and speakers or headphones – together they create a ringing simulator. This is the same principle as a flight or driving simulator. The experience is *exactly* the same as ringing and hearing a real bell. The advantages are:

1. Ringing with perfect ringers who put their bell in the right place all the time
2. Unlimited 'rope-time'. There is no 'down time' waiting for a go.



The 'Gang of Three' – Neil Sparey, Chris Phillips and Jim Wheeler



Jim Wheeler's dumbbell – showing all the design features including Chris Phillips's wheels



Wheel going through the tower trapdoor

3. You can learn to handle a bell
4. You can ring anything on Abel on up to 22 bells.
5. You can practise a new method
6. You can practise listening skills
7. You get lots of one-to-one ringing time with your teacher.

The Teaching Centre initiative is sponsored by the Cathedral Chapter and was approved by the Cathedral's external Fabric Advisory Committee. Our Clergy sponsor and the Cathedral Community support our recruiting and training new ringers.

Why have we built it?

The tower houses 15 ringing bells which comprise the fifth heaviest ringing peal in the world. Only 0.5% of churches with ringing bells have a tenor over 40 cwt. The bells are difficult to ring to an acceptable standard. Their weight and the tower movement make it extremely difficult to teach new ringers.

Until now, there was no history of teaching ringing at the Cathedral. The last liaison with schools was in the 1970s when pupils were taught elsewhere. In the past the Cathedral attracted its ringers in a haphazard way. There was no succession planning and its ringers had little involvement in Cathedral life.

The Cathedral is in the middle of a residential community. The bells are extremely loud outside. Teaching ringing can be as painful to the listener as learning a new musical instrument is to those exposed to the noise. This facility means that ringers are taught *without* making noise which can be heard outside. Pupils can practise for hours without causing any disturbance. Practice time is really important.

How have we built it?

Each pair of dumbbells is housed in a light steel cage, similar to a bell frame. A dumbbell comprises a fly wheel, which swings on two sets of ball bearings. The design team comprised Jim Wheeler, Neil Sparey and Chris Phillips. They were built by Jim Wheeler and Neil Sparey of NDS Engineering in Clifton-upon-Teme. Chris Phillips built the wheels.

Weights are attached to create the effect of a real ringing bell. A sensor sends a signal to a computer, which generates the sound of a real

bell. The computer provides the learner with a simulated experience of ringing with a whole team of ringers.

The frames measure 1 x 2 x .5 metres. Each unit (with dumbbells) weighs approximately nine cwt. They do not spin quickly and are carefully weighted using railway plates. Each dumbbell's wheel is 1.8 metres in diameter. The dumbbells hang approximately seven feet above the floor. Each dumbbell handles like a six hundredweight bell.

We also fixed sensors to two of the tower bells to enable pupils to get the feel of real bells when pupils graduated from the smaller dumbbell. This process made us realise that the size and simulated effect of the dumbbells was important.

Other solutions were considered. One plan was to install the Stoulton Campanile in the clock room. Another was to build a metal bridge across the clock room which would house a 'ring' of dumbbells. The first presentation of our plans to Chapter was in November 2006.



The original Bagley Dumbbell in the Clockroom

How will it work?

1. To train ringers to ring the Cathedral bells now.
2. Ensure a supply of well taught ringers who will ring the Cathedral bells in the future.
3. Increase participation of ringers in the Cathedral community.
4. Enable us to work with local schools and the University to provide an extra-curricular activity.
5. Enable us to teach adults.
6. Enable us to teach ringing to all levels.
7. Provide a unique resource for the Cathedral, City churches, the Diocese and beyond.
8. Offer the Teaching Centre to other ringers and organisers of training courses as a facility.

Partnerships

So far our partners comprise:

1. The Cathedral community
2. Local Schools
3. The University
4. Our Funders
5. The City's Civic community
6. The City's Arts community

Current activity

Bernard Taylor has developed and run structured courses designed to fit in with school terms. The most important feature when teaching new ringers is the emphasis on 'hearing' rather than 'rope sight' when a learner moves from handling a bell to ringing with others. The learning process is 'feel, hear, see' rather than 'feel, see, hear'. Rope-sight is meaningless if you cannot hear your bell.

Learning ringing requires good teachers, equipment and practice time. The Head Teachers of the two schools with which we have worked endorse the scheme. This will help us model and plan for the future. We also work with experienced school teachers from these schools; they teach us how to teach. All the Cathedral ringers are enhanced CRB cleared.

For the past 20 months we have run our teaching programmes on temporary structures using different types of dumbbells. We borrowed David Bagley's mobile dumbbell and then built a prototype of what we have now installed. The trials were successful. They comprised structured training courses, teaching ringing to school children and adults. Of the 18 pupils taught to ring while we were experimenting with the dumbbells, nine are still ringing. The majority of the teaching in this period was done by Bernard Taylor and Mark Wilson. Now the Teaching centre is built we will go into schools and the University to recruit.

Funding

The cost of the project (£23,000) has been covered by generous grants from The Elmley Foundation (who support the arts in Worcestershire and Herefordshire), the Founders' Company, private individuals and other fund raising initiatives.

Next steps

If you would like to see it, use it, or know more about it, please contact Bernard Taylor or Mark Regan.

Our first course is on 19th April, 2007. Please see the advertisement in this *Ringing World*. More courses will follow.

We will be running a 'train the trainer' workshop later in the year. However, if you would like to book the Teaching Centre for you, your own tower or ringing course please call or email 01531 650888 or bhtaylor@bloomberg.net

See advert on p.179.

FROM THE E-LISTS

John Camp is away.

Coping with External Pressures

Church bell ringers are under a number of external pressures that can have great influence on the management of bell towers. These pressures include child protection, health and safety, fire risk assessment and insurance. However, with care, most of these factors can be managed, and even used to the bell ringer's advantage.

The Tower Stewardship Committee of the Central Council has been set up to monitor the development of these external factors and help ringers and tower management authorities on how to manage them.

The management of most of these external factors is usually vested in the owners of the building. In the case of the Church of England, this is normally the Vicar, Church Wardens and PCC. However, these functions are often delegated to a specific church member. Most parishes now have a dedicated child protection officer (sometimes called a young persons' co-ordinator or similar). Usually, the church treasurer is responsible for insurance matters, and more and more, it is common practice for a health and safety officer to be appointed. These "managers" are usually very well meaning, and have the best intentions of the church at heart. However, they may well not know, or understand how bell towers work, or even know who the ringers are at their church.

Hence it is worth ringers ensuring that their interests are looked after. Ringers should be aware of what external pressure may affect the tower, and maintain a dialogue with the appropriate person responsible for the church policy in each area. Rather than have the church impose a policy on the bell tower, why not develop a joint policy that encompasses the whole church? The church insurance company – often the EIG – is keen to see this sort of interface between church and ringers.

However it must be understood, as in the general spirit of health and safety, the appointment of an official to look after a specific area does not excuse anyone else from having any responsibility. Even, for example, if the tower captain is not the church's health and safety officer, he still has a degree of responsibility for anyone entering the area she/he has responsibility for, even when the place is unattended? Just think of the consequences of leaving bells up in an unlocked tower.

Don't be put off by the above. Risks can be managed. Assessments can be performed. Insurances can be put into place. CRB checks can be made.

The Tower Stewardship Committee has compiled leaflets covering the following areas that offer advice on how to manage these external pressures. They cover the following areas:

- Tower Management
- Child Protection in Towers
- Church Law in Relation to Bells
- Fire Risk Assessment
- Insurance and Ringing
- Tower Safety and Risk Assessment

These leaflets can be found on the Central Council web site at:

<http://www.cccbr.org.uk/tsc>

These leaflets have been published on the Internet, in electronic form, mainly so that updates can be made easily when new and updated information is available. As the Tower Stewardship Committee has an ongoing mandate to monitor both existing and new rules and laws to see how they impact on bell ringers, we have decided to use this form of publication to ensure that the most up to date information is readily available. If you are a tower captain without Internet access, do see if there is someone in your tower or church who can download them for you?

Why not print them out, and get together with members of your PCC (or equivalent) to produce the appropriate assessment, before one is imposed on you.

Part of the work of the Tower Stewardship Committee also involves contact and negotiations with outside organisations. Our negotiations with EIG have resulted in very competitive quotations for public liability insurance being offered to Central Council-affiliated societies, based on the number of members. Details were published on p.419 on the *RW* 27th April 2007.

For further information, and help, please contact:

Ernie Runciman

Chairman, Tower Stewardship Committee

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Phone: 07624 412 235 (Mobile)

01624 615154 (Home)

Skype: [ernie.runciman](https://www.skype.com/user/ernie.runciman)

32 Royal Court, Royal Avenue, Onchan,

Isle of Man, British Isles, IM3 1LH

HAVE YOU MADE A WILL? HAVE YOU HAD A WINDFALL? OR JUST COME INTO MONEY?

Would you like to help the worthy cause of bell restoration?

Your local ringing association will have a bell restoration fund and will be delighted to hear how you can help them.

The Central Council Bell Restoration Fund also needs money to help with national (and even occasionally international) projects.

Most charities get substantial amounts of their income from bequests. Very little is left to bellringing causes, and it is time this changed, to build on the good work started with Millennium money.

To find out how you can contribute or how to include bell restoration in your will, contact Mrs Kate Flavell

7 Kings Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT3 4DX

Tel: 020 8942 1662

E-Mail: flavells@f2s.com

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Editorial

We were so sorry to learn of the death of Christopher Dalton at the weekend. One of the Exercise's foremost bell historians, Christopher will be greatly missed. He was a talented writer and photographer and leaves us an immensely valuable legacy in his published works on bells – the result of years of meticulous research. We extend our sympathy to his widow Susan and their sons Richard and Thomas.

Our congratulations to Mark Regan and his colleagues on setting up the exciting new training centre at Worcester Cathedral (p.156). It looks as though Worcester is set to become one of the great hubs for ringing in the 21st Century and we applaud these efforts to reach out to the local community – and to schools in particular. Presenting ringing as a stimulating and challenging activity to the younger generation is crucial for its survival.

Full marks to Tim Joiner and his Middlesex team for a really innovative piece of ringing PR in creating the 'Peals on Wheels' float for the Lord Mayor of Westminster's New Year parade. Mini-rings can play an important role in raising awareness with the general public. The float won 4th prize – £3,000, most of which will be donated to the St. Magnus-the-Martyr bell project.

Included with last week's issue was a poster advertising the 2008 Ringing Roadshow. The aim of the organisers is to get a poster not only on the wall of every tower, but also on church and community notice boards where potential recruits will see them too. District and branch secretaries are being sent stocks of posters to give to towers, so if your tower ends up with more than one, please don't just recycle it – find another notice board!

First Peal Congratulations

Adrian Ritchie, Christine M. Nunn, Ann Tyler, Joseph Wrigley

1000th Peal Congratulations

David. A. Town

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Letters to the Editor should be sent to him at The Ringing World Limited, Eagleside House, 7-9 Chantry Street, Andover, Hampshire SP10 1DE, or e-mailed to letters@ringingworld.co.uk. The sender's full name, address and telephone number (daytime and evening) should be supplied, but if these details are not to be published this should be clearly stated at the head of the letter. Where a letter to the Editor is not for publication, kindly put 'Not for Publication' at the head of the letter. It is not usually possible to acknowledge receipt of letters privately. We reserve the right to edit letters and do not guarantee to print the whole of any letter received. Publication of a letter does not imply agreement with its contents by the Editor and/or Directors of The Ringing World Ltd. The Ringing World Ltd shall not be liable for accuracy of information or opinions expressed in published letters or for any loss or damage suffered as a result of their contents.

Both Bernard and Mark Regan extended a very warm welcome and we were treated to a tour of the tower and a demonstration of how bad our striking wasn't on one of the six simulators. I was worried that a large group of us would be overwhelming at the session but as it was most of the ringers had heard we were coming from Suffolk and fled! Having ascertained that some of us were not too bad at striking we progressed to the ringing room where Mark very patiently arranged rounds for us all and some rang the harmonic minor ten which were beautifully heart rending in their tone.

The enthusiasm, endless patience and total commitment to nurturing less able ringers shown by Mark and his team inspired us to consider future training weekends at Worcester and we were still talking about our experience at the end of the week's holiday. A big thank you to Bernard, Mark and the Cathedral ringers that were at the practice for giving us such an informative and fun time, a great start to our holiday.

MANDY SHEDDEN

Tour Organiser

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Augmentation

SIR, – I refer to the letter, published in *The Ringing World* of 11th July, on the above subject from Rod Ellway, and I note that he seems to believe that a ring should not be augmented unless the local band can guarantee to ring all the bells each Sunday. To counter this view I would say that if Ludlow has ten bells they will be able to ring all these bells when they have sufficient ringers present, whereas they may have ten or more ringers available on occasions but if you only have eight bells there is no possibility of ringing ten bells.

There is also another argument for augmenting to ten, and I suspect that this may well apply at Ludlow where the tenor weighs just over 25cwt. Augmenting to ten will mean they will have a light ring of six, with tenor weighing, I guess, about 8cwt, which will be relatively ideally suited to training a team, as compared with an eight with a 25cwt tenor.

Finally I wish the band at Ludlow all success in their augmentation project.

R. GORDON CORBY

Cark in Cartmel, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria

Warm welcome at Worcester

SIR, – In contrast to the tone of letters often seen in *The Ringing World*, I thought it might be nice to write in appreciation for a change. As part of a week long visit to the Vale of Evesham on a ringing tour last week, I arranged with Bernard Taylor at Worcester Cathedral to join them on their Monday evening practice night. About 17 of us made the long climb up to the ringing rooms and we were most rewarded with what we encountered while at the practice.

Correction

SIR, – Please may I correct an error in my report of Rod Pipe's 2000th peal. It is not true to say that George Pipe miscalled Rod's first peal on three occasions, although it did take Rod four attempts to get off the mark.

Many apologies to George and to Rod for this inaccuracy.

DAVID HULL

York

From India ...

SIR, – I took the book off the shelf for reasons unconnected with bell ringing. What caught my eye? Chapter 10, *Bell Metal Industry of Assam: Problems and Prospects!* Seven pages of everything you wanted to know about – except bells. In Sarthebari, one of three centres of the trade, more than a thousand families make bell metal plates, bowls and cymbals in 350 workshops using between 60,000 and 80,000 kilos of metal (on my estimate worth rather more than half a million pounds) a year. The product's great virtue – food kept in such utensils is not spoilt: the problem – marketing. Many people of North East India itself are not aware of the existence of the industry!

What is to be done? May I suggest that the Central Council at once form a committee, and after due deliberation despatch a mission to Sarthebari for the promotion of ringing, the production of bells, and thus a cheerfully noisy contribution to sustainable regional development.

For the record the book is *Dimensions of Rural Development in North-East India* by B. Datta Ray and Gurudas Das, Akansha, New Delhi, 2004. Your local library, if you still possess one, must have a copy.

Dr PETER J. PERRY

Sherborne, Dorset

Spare copy?

SIR, – On behalf of a young friend, grandson of the late Revd W. N. Hall who was Vicar of St Mark's Church, St Helier, Jersey at the time of the re-dedication of the bells in January 1974, I am looking for a copy of the service or re-dedication as it appeared in *The Ringing World* at the time. He is looking to include it in an examination he is undertaking. I was not then resident in Jersey and so had no interest in retaining my own copy of the journal although I remember reading it at the time. Since shortly after that date the tower has subscribed to the *RW* and has a full set of the journal but the issue with the article is not in our archives. I am therefore looking for either a copy of the relevant issue of the *RW* to put into our archives and/or a photocopy.

JACK WORRALL

St Helier, Jersey, C.I.

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of *The Ringing World* are available

A few issues 1954-1959, most others for 1960-2000, also many years complete 1965 on

Note that many older copies are secondhand

Enquiries (with SAE please) to:

R G Fanthorpe, Saddlers Cottage, 15 Farm Lane, East Markham, Newark, Notts NG22 0QH

N.B. Only current year's issues available from RW office

Ambridge Pipe dream

SIR, – I am getting a bit tired of criticism in *The Ringing World*.

First that silly old fool Bert Fry writes in and criticises my conducting ability in Ambridge Grandsire Doubles. Like he would know! He only rings the tenor behind and would not know a blue line from a pickled egg. Fishtails 2/3 indeed. Piffle!

Then someone I have never heard of called Maureen Hall has a go at me because was I bit sharp on practice night the other week. I may have over-reacted, but the ringing was terrible and I have a lot of stress in my life at the moment. It is no joke living with a daughter who left her husband and ran off with his brother and a social-climbing wife who does not appreciate pigs.

Your readers may be aware that the Ambridge band has recently taken up competing in striking competitions. A Mr Pipe from Birmingham has written to me with a few hints and tips. Although no doubt kindly meant, his advice was not very helpful. Unlike Birmingham, in Ambridge we do not have 15 people who can ring on 12 or an Audition-point-focussed Surroundsound Recording System (whatever that is). Or a Strikometer come to that.

It is a pity we do not have Mr Pipe in Ambridge. He might be able to keep that Bert Fry in order, which is more than I can worst luck!

NEIL CARTER

Ambridge, Borssetshire