

## AIM OF PRACTICES

1. To maintain and develop a band to ring the bells regularly, especially for services.
2. To consolidate and improve accurate rhythmical striking and provide an opportunity for everyone to ring something that can stretch their ability and retain their interest
3. To maintain a welcoming and sociable atmosphere.

## GROUND RULES

1. You are in charge. Don't abuse the privilege!
2. Always be there before official starting time (otherwise everyone else will gradually get later and later)
3. Welcome everyone and thank them afterwards. Try to discover the ability of visitors as they arrive (see 14. below)
4. Watch out for safety especially with non-ringers and learners. (Chimes, feet on floor, don't pull ropes until told, no walking about)
5. Ringing time is precious. Get as much into practice night as you can (you can talk or explain a new method afterwards in the ringing room or pub!)
6. If you intend to have a learners' session at the beginning of practices, make it clear in advance but don't be surprised if none of the experienced ringers turn up to help the learners! (I prefer to have tied-clapper bell handling sessions at another time or before normal practice and then encourage learners to stay the whole time and be catered for throughout.)
7. Bear in mind the conundrum that the less you know, the more practice you need and the less opportunity is available.
8. If you have more than 6 bells and cannot always ring them all, it is better for good rhythm to start the session with 6 bell ringing, then move on to eight then 10 etc. Mixing the rhythm of 6 and 8 bell ringing is not so conducive to encouraging good rhythmical striking.
9. Don't ring touches with the tenor turned in, if the band doesn't have secure rhythm.
10. Make sure you know who is coming for Sunday service ringing next.
11. Remember that some people don't want to make progress but they get their enjoyment out of ringing well the things that they know (struck well) Don't put them off by pressing them unreasonably but use them for what they are good at.
12. Make use of special occasions (ringer's birthday, local event, national event etc.) to practice accurate firing on practice night from time to time. Similarly half muffled ringing around Remembrance or when a local person dies.
13. Develop a deputy or successor!
14. Finish on time to keep faith with neighbours

## CONTENT OF PRACTICE

1. Practice night is to improve your band's Sunday ringing.
2. It is difficult to plan beforehand unless you are certain who will be there and when, so you have to think on your feet.
3. Every touch should have a primary purpose

4. Each ringer should be the specific subject of at least one primary purpose.
5. Each primary purpose needs to be supported as best as possible.
  - ? plain hunt - try to keep one learner with a secure band and have an experienced stander-behind helping with counting and seeing places and coursing down techniques.
  - ? tenor behind - to learn the accurate rhythm, the novice needs a good band ringing beneath them who can keep rhythm even if the tenor does fluctuate.
  - ? calling a touch - try to have a band that can ring the touch well so as not to distract from getting the calls in the right place at the right leads.
  - ? trebling up or down - put the most experienced trebler-up as stander-behind or on the 2nd and have a reliable tenor ringer
  - ? splicing - start with simple variations of known methods e.g. St Simon's and St Martin's Doubles; Plain and Little Bob.
  - ? don't forget that you can let a call change ringer call changes, before they can plain hunt, given a sound band
- 6 If you do not have a competent band to raise in peal, consider ringing up odds and evens separately - they don't sound too bad when they clash!
- 7 It is usually better to ring a method twice for one learner at a time, rather than with two together who stumble over each other.
- 8 Make full use of experienced ringers and visitors to help your band
  - ? recognise and weigh their skills and faults (shouting?)
  - ? calling touches or different touches to normal
  - ? advice about suitable touches and methods
  - ? standing by learners
  - ? points to look for in methods e.g. pass treble in 2,3 dodge 3-4 up.
  - ? if it is your need, tell them specifically to keep a ringer(s) right even if they are not calling it (Sometimes visitors will refrain from helping because they are not calling it)
  - ? ask for tips to help bell handling and control, calling etc.
- 9 Don't push people beyond their bell control ability. (You will unnerve them and irritate the other ringers)
- 10 Each touch can have a secondary purpose to make sure everyone is kept busy - learner watching plain hunt, ringing tenor behind. But be warned an inaccurate tenor behind to Stedman will invariably cause it to fire out as the front work needs a steady tenor to lead from.
- 11 If you are having a prolonged spell of practices with much initial rounds, calls and plain hunting, have a secondary purpose of keeping your more advanced ringers interested with useful diversions - calling (simple) touches, calling changes, ringing different bells to normal, an occasional "funny" method (like Thingummy Bob). Otherwise they will come later and later and then not at all!
- 12 The opportunity should be made available for everyone to ring in reasonably spaced touches (not ring twice then not at all for the next five touches)
- 13 Establish if anyone is going early so that you can maximise their ringing time. (i.e. just as you plan to make them the primary purpose, they announce that they are going!)

- 14 Ask people if they have looked up anything special (as you may have mentioned at the last practice, or another method or calling) and try to plan it in when you want it.
- 15 Try to announce the next but one touch as well &/or try to announce that during the practice you aim to ring so-an-so, so that anyone can do the revision they need.
- 16 Make sure you designate someone to call each touch!
- 17 Make sure the primary purpose ringer and if possible the secondary purpose ringer has support from stander-behind or an experienced person ringing is designated to assist.
- 18 Always allow enough time in the initial rounds for the striking to settle down and for people to get used to their bell, rope length, odd struckness, before going into changes.
- 19 Don't be afraid to over-rule your appointed conductor if you think the ringing is too bad. You are in overall control.
20. Make sure that rounds and call changes and plain courses for learners are as long as touches of methods - about 120 changes (5 minutes) – they need the practice.

## **REVIEW**

1. How did it go this time? What went well and why? What could I do better next time?
2. Did anyone have a raw deal which I need to make up for next time?
3. Do I need outside help for any member of the band? How can I get it? (Branch training, encourage to attend another practice ...etc)

## **STANDING BEHIND**

1. Ask the learner what he/she wants to know to improve their ringing
2. Ask what particular form they need the information i.e. count their place for them, which bell to follow, whether to ring fast or slow
3. Anticipate when they are going to go wrong. Notice if they are looking in the wrong direction (you can only go by their head position - ringers opposite can see their eyes and are likely to know before you!); whether they are catching the sally too high for a slow pull; not shortening the tail end to go fast.
4. Speak clearly and concisely and not too loudly to put off nearby ringers or to embarrass the learner.
5. Question the learner whilst ringing as to which dodge comes next - this helps them ring and think at the same time.
6. Leave a debriefing until afterwards, do not dwell on faults whilst still ringing - only give advice just before the same situation occurs again. (eg Always hits the leading bell when coming away from lead. Say "Pull your backstroke lead harder and hold your handstroke up more" just as they are leading next time)
7. Do not keep giving information when it is not needed - this can be even more irritating than saying nothing, especially after a fault that the learner recognised.

## **WHO WOULD BE A TOWER CAPTAIN?**

1. Make sure that your appointment is recorded by the PCC!
2. Make and maintain good relations with the Incumbent, Church Wardens & PCC. Make sure that they let you know of any services or changes that will affect ringers.

3. On Sundays and for weddings ring the things that you ring best, plan the very best (striking) as the "service touch" when the majority of the congregation are approaching. Good rounds and call changes are far better than badly struck Plain Bob Doubles. Put the "odd-struck ringers" on the opposite "odd struck bells"!
4. "Choreograph" your bell ringing. Fast and joyous for weddings, slow and sombre for memorials. Firing for weddings, new year or special national or local events. Get the finish time right for the organist and incumbent or wedding party.
5. Encourage the local view that the bells belong to the village / town. (We are only the present stewards of an asset that hopefully will be there in 300 years - long after we have gone!)
6. Tell neighbours in advance of non-service ringing, especially the most critical or affected. A couple of month's notice for peals, a couple of week's notice for quarters and branch events and visitors.
7. Use local notice boards, church magazine, local newspaper correspondents and even "flyers" and ask the vicar to announce it in the "notices" slot. Explain technical terms like "a peal lasts 3 hours" etc. so that people know what to expect. It helps promote bellringing if the chatterers can say that the visiting ringers are from Tobias Cranbourne and how much worse / better they were than the locals!
8. Find new recruits from church, the pub, neighbours, school, newcomers... If you do not feel competent to teach them from scratch, get the best available for initial bell-handling. Don't hesitate, get them started straight away!
9. Emergency lighting - have you sufficient?
10. Heating - have you sufficient?
11. Annual meeting - if you do not already, shouldn't you have one with the vicar in the chair?
12. Are you good at corresponding? Do you need to appoint a secretary?
13. Are you good at socialising? Do you need to appoint a social secretary?
14. Steeple keeping - does someone look after the bells, ropes etc? If not get someone trained up by the Branch Steward!
15. Clock winding and chimes. Is it safe for the clock minder or maintenance contractor to go up the tower. If the bells are left up, DO make sure there are unmissable signs on all access routes and who to contact for safe entry.
16. Chimes and chiming ropes - are controls set for ringing / clock chiming as appropriate; can visitors find them?
17. Cleaning the ringing room - does someone look after it? Is it the steeple keeper's job? Delegate someone – like, the first to complain!