

Oxford Diocesan Guild, Old North Berks Branch

Report on the Wallingford area Ringing Course May to July 2017

AIM

To teach some adults to handle on their own from scratch – enough to let them start taking part in rounds. By teaching a group and involving several towers there is a social benefit for the learners. They feel part of a group and not isolated. More time on the rope than is usually achieved when teaching during a normal practice night leads to quicker and more effective learning.

PLAN

To hold three taster sessions before the course so that those signing up for the course have some idea of whether ringing was something they wanted to do.

To visit three towers in the target area each week for six weeks. Each visit was to be for an hour, on the practice night of the tower from 7 – 8 pm on the assumption that this would overlap with the practice night to allow the learners to meet the ringers from that tower and to find out about the bells and the social scene offered. Learners could decide for themselves which tower they wished to join when they had completed the course.

TARGET AREA

The twelve towers in the East of the branch consisting of Aston Tirrold, Blewbury, Brightwell, Chilton, Cholsey, Didcot, East Hagbourne, Harwell, Little Wittenham, Long Wittenham, North Moreton, and Wallingford were chosen. We visited eleven of the towers, but Wallingford whilst scaffolding for masonry repairs was in place.

TEACHING

I invited as many teachers of ringing from our branch as I could think of to help. In the event, I am pleased to report that seventeen different teachers taught on the course.

We used the syllabus provided by the ART scheme, "Learning the Ropes" (LTR) to give us the ability to track the progress of each learner.

ADVERTISING

I sent a poster by email to all the towers concerned a few weeks before the course. I don't know how many were displayed but I wasn't exactly overwhelmed by the response – just one person from the target area, David from Cholsey. Three came from the north of the branch, which had been targeted the year before with the pilot course. And one from Oxford come through contact with an Abingdon ringer. Perhaps word of mouth is the better way to recruit people.

TASTER SESSIONS

No-one new came to the taster sessions. Perhaps they weren't advertised well enough.

TEACHING SESSIONS

Eighteen one hour sessions were held, three per week, starting 29 May and finishing 6 July as scheduled.

LEARNERS

Five learners attended the course (Two in their sixties/seventies, and three in their forties or fifties at a guess). Three enrolled initially. Two more were enrolled toward the end of the course.

ATTENDANCE

Of the five learners, Paul and David attended fifteen sessions, Ruth attended eleven sessions, Nicky attended four and Pete joined in the last week or so and came to only one session.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Paul could handle both strokes fairly confidently before the end of the course, and had set his bell ten times in succession at both hand and back stroke.

David and Ruth were almost ringing both strokes on their own. Nicky and Pete were looking promising but needed more teaching, having only started toward the end of the course.

Since the course ended, Paul has been ringing at Sunningwell and David has been ringing at Cholsey. Nicky and Pete are continuing with ringing lessons and really enjoying them. Ruth has sadly been ill since the course and is taking a break before hopefully continuing.

OTHER BENEFITS

It was good to have learners who were not just isolated in one tower. And teachers were learning from each other and gaining in confidence.

THOUGHTS AND FUTURE PLANS

This year I have continued with weekly lessons for all the people on the course. They continue to take place on Saturday mornings, making the most of the friendly relationship between everyone involved in the course.

I would like to continue with the weekly lessons and transform this into an ONB BRANCH RINGING SCHOOL. This would continue to go to a different tower each Saturday morning. It will consist of two consecutive one hour lessons each Saturday, starting in October 2017. The LTR1 session will teach handling skills to enable the beginner to ring with a good technique. And the LTR2 session will teach the foundation skills to help ringing to become an automatic action and to equip the ringer with all the skills they need before they start to ring plain hunt.

Currently the plan is to have up to a maximum of six learners in each group. The learners from the course will form the basis of the learners in the Ringing School.

The LTR1 group will need three teachers of handling each week from our pool of teachers, so each teacher should only need to teach up to once a month.

The LTR2 group will additionally need up to three helpers, ringers who can ring rounds and call changes and strike well. They will be invaluable in helping the learners to get lots of practice on rounds, etc. Perhaps each teacher will bring a friend to help. It will be an opportunity for local ringers to be involved as helpers.

The administration will be a fair amount of work. I hope that someone will emerge who will take the work on from me so that I can concentrate on teaching.

I hope that this plan will work well and provide the towers of the branch with a steady stream of well-trained new ringers.

Susan Read, Abingdon, 19 August 2017