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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In 1986, at the instigation of the Board of Directors of The Ringing World Ltd, the Administrative Committee of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers decided to conduct a national survey of the state of the Ringing Exercise in the British Isles. A Committee, chaired by the Council's President, John Baldwin, was established to plan and execute the Survey and the Council's various standing committees were invited to nominate representatives to it.

The Committee began work in 1987. Its initial membership was:

John Baldwin;  
Steve Coleman (representing the Education Committee);  
Christopher Groome (representing the Board of Directors of The Ringing World Ltd);  
Ron Johnston (representing the Publications Committee); and  
Tim Pett (representing the Computer Coordination Committee).

It was later joined by Stella Bianco, who took particular responsibility for the logistics of what became a major operation.

Planning for the Central Council Survey of Ringing proceeded through 1987 and 1988, with the members of the Committee congregating frequently on Sunday evenings in Abingdon, thanks to the kind hospitality of Gill and Tim Pett, as well as visiting Tewkesbury and Pershore to further their labours. It was soon determined that the Survey would differ from previous exercises undertaken for the Council and would be based on random sampling which would allow generalisations to be made about the state of the Exercise as a whole. The goal identified at the outset was to conduct an information gathering exercise aimed at 'increasing the number of churches at which the bells are rung regularly on Sundays': this goal remained at the forefront of the Committee's work throughout the next two years.

As the Committee clarified what information it needed in order both to assess the current state of the Exercise (in a way that could be used as a yardstick for later Surveys) and to provide thought-provoking material for those wishing to promote the Exercise, it became apparent that a series of linked investigations was needed. Five separate questionnaires were designed, for: incumbents (to be administered by telephone); tower captains; individual ringers (other than tower captains); General Secretaries of territorial Associations and Guilds; and Branch/District Secretaries of territorial Associations and Guilds. It was decided to administer all of these in late 1988, and the week ending Sunday 20 November was chosen as the focus of the Survey (though to avoid 'contamination' the date was kept secret to all but the Committee members and the army of volunteer helpers, who only discovered the exact Sunday a few weeks beforehand.)

By the time of the Central Council meeting at Whitehaven in May 1988 the Committee was ready to outline its plans for the first time. This was done at an Open Meeting held in Whitehaven Parish Church with a large attendance. Following an introductory presentation by Ron Johnston, a wide range of questions and comments allowed the nature of the Survey to be clarified, and provided the Committee with some useful advice. The meeting was also used by Chris Groome to recruit to the large number of volunteer helpers needed to administer the questionnaires to the incumbents, tower captains and individual ringers; to the 77 who volunteered either then or, following a call for more in The Ringing World, later the Council is indebted for their commitment and care in a crucial task.

Planning for the Survey continued on schedule. Comprehensive briefing notes were provided for the helpers and Stella Bianco, with Brenda and Tony Jones, collated the material and filled the envelopes. Despite a postal dispute (fortunately settled in time), all of the material was delivered to the helpers' home addresses. The very substantial amount of voluntary assistance given was much appreciated. At least one member of the Committee had slight palpitations when he woke on 20 November to see that it had snowed, but fortunately Sheffield's weather that day was not typical of the British Isles (is it ever?).

By early December, a flood of completed questionnaires was arriving at the homes of Steve Coleman and John Baldwin, especially the latter. They were all checked and were then coded for computer analysis by Lesley Brookes, to whom the Council owes a great debt for her many hours of work on its behalf. The coded material was entered into computer files by staff at the Computer Centre at the University College of Wales, Cardiff, and these were then sent (over the telephone wires) to Ron Johnston at the University of Sheffield, for detailed checking and analysis. Independent checking of the coding was done by Tim Pett.

The Committee was determined to get some preliminary results into The Ringing World as early in 1989 as possible, and its first articles - which obtained a great deal of unexpected media coverage, both national and local (see Chapter 24) - appeared in the issue for 17 February. A flow of further articles was produced by Ron Johnston, and checked by the other Committee members, during the following nine months.

By May 1989, six months after the Survey was administered, the Committee was able to take initial stock of its findings. These were presented to a very full room of interested ringers at the Open Meeting held by the Central Council at Birmingham, in which all of the members participated. Once again, comments from the floor were valuable, and led to further analyses which were reported in later articles in The Ringing World.

As indicated at the outset, the Survey was not undertaken as an end in itself but as a means of learning more about the state of the Exercise, so that action can be taken to improve that situation. Thus, Tim Pett produced a set of ten important questions raised by the

Survey findings (published here as Chapter 23) in order to focus debate.

At its meeting in October 1989, the Central Council's Administrative Committee decided that the Open Meeting scheduled for May 1990 should focus on actions to be taken to promote ringing following the Survey findings. It also recommended that those findings be circulated as widely as possible, in order to further the discussion, and asked those involved to produce a book comprising the articles that had been previously published in The Ringing World: this is that book.

In assembling the articles into this form, the Committee has reproduced them more-or-less as initially submitted. The main exception to that rule is that, wherever necessary, the data have been updated. Some of the articles were written before all of the questionnaires were coded and available for analysis; for completeness, the figures here refer to all returns.

With one exception, all of the articles reproduced here have appeared in The Ringing World. The exception is Chapter 15, which is a brief report produced for the Board of Directors of The Ringing World Ltd. It is included here for completeness.

The members of the Committee trust that the material presented here is of value, not only to the Central Council and its various committees but also to ringers throughout the British Isles who are concerned about the state of the Exercise and wish to improve the condition of ringing. They would like to thank all ringers who contributed, in a great variety of ways, to the success of the 1988 Survey of Ringing.

## Chapter 2

### Why a Sample Survey?

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 17 February 1989)

The goal of the Survey of Ringing was to get as full and as comprehensive a picture of the state of ringing in the British Isles as possible, within the constraints of the time and resources available. We wanted to know how many ringers there are, how many of the bells are rung, and how often, how good are the relationships between ringers, the clergy and the church in general, what people can ring, what the present situation is with regard to recruitment, what the various ringing Associations and Guilds are doing, and so forth. In brief, we wanted to assess the state of the Exercise, to help the Central Council and its various committees, and the ringing community generally, to plan better for the future.

The best way to get a full picture, of course, is to take a full picture. But there are some 5425 towers with five or more bells in the British Isles according to Ron Dove's latest Guide and it is commonly believed that there could be anything between 30,000 and 50,000 ringers. To survey them all would have been impossible without a herculean organisation. So we needed to survey a sufficiently large sample from which we could derive an accurate general picture. This did not mean just issuing questionnaires and analysing those that came back, since there would be no way in which we could evaluate whether those who bothered to answer our questions were representative of all towers and ringers.

The theory of sampling provides a basis for conducting an efficient part-survey which is accurate, within defined limits, as long as the basic rules of sampling are adhered to. Those basic rules are very simple, with regard to the two commonest types of sampling. Under random sampling, every member of the population to be studied has to have an equal chance of being selected, and those that are picked have to be chosen randomly so as to maintain those equal chances. Tables of random numbers are available for ensuring that a proper selection is made: they are the equivalent of the bingo caller's barrel of ping pong balls. Under systematic sampling, the members of the target population are arranged in some order and then every  $n$ th person in the list (every fourth, say) is selected. So long as there is no reason to suspect that the ordering procedure biases the selection of the sample towards certain groups and away from others, this is an entirely acceptable way of proceeding.

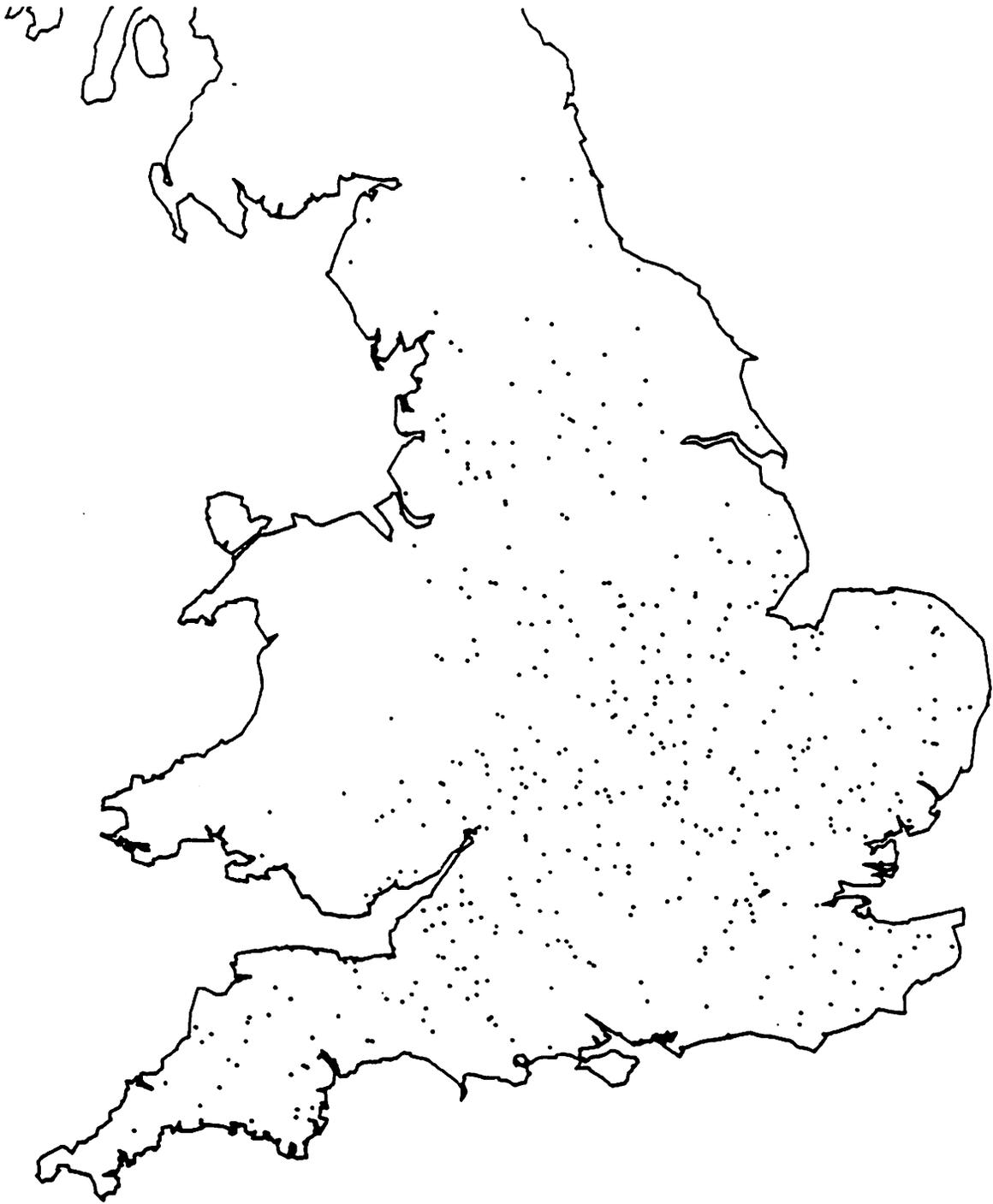
We wanted two separate samples: 1) a sample of towers, which would enable us to question incumbents and tower captains, and to conduct a census of ringing on a given Sunday; and 2) a sample of ringers. For the sample of towers we selected 500 (for reasons given below), picked at random from all of the towers listed in an updated computer version of Dove's guide, arranged alphabetically. For the sample of ringers,

we decided to get lists of ringers at each of those 500 towers from the tower captains, to organise them alphabetically, and then to select every third in the list starting with the second (ie ringers 2,5,8 etc.). Although this 'discriminates' slightly against those whose surname begins with 'A', we had no reason to believe that such people differ from those with surnames beginning with other letters.

Why take a sample of 500? There are two basic laws in the theory of sampling that are relevant here (they are called the Central Limit Theorem and the Law of Large Numbers). In brief they tell us that the larger the random sample (or a systematic sample that we can assume to be random) the more accurate will be the estimation of the situation in the overall population. It is the absolute size of the sample that is important, not the percentage of the total population surveyed.

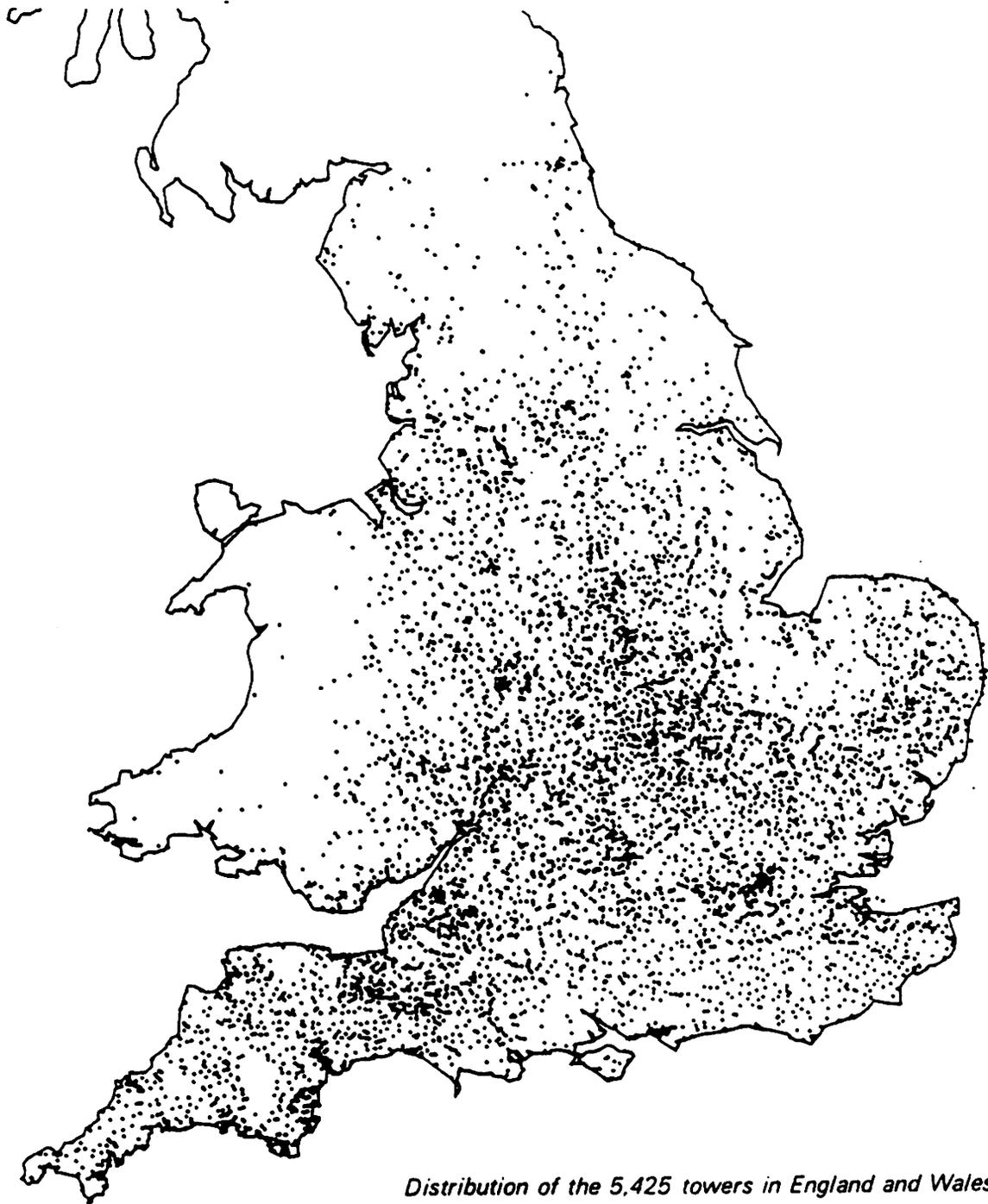
How accurate? Let's assume that we are trying to find out how many towers had their bells rung on the chosen date. We conduct a survey, and we assume that it says 25 per cent were. How sure are we about that figure, given that the sample was a properly taken one? What the theory of sampling tells us is that if our sample was of 100 towers, then we can be virtually certain that the real percentage was somewhere between 16.5 and 33.5; if our sample was of 200 towers, we can be virtually certain that the true value was between 19 and 31; and if we took a sample of 500, the limits would be between 21.2 and 28.8. Clearly, the larger the sample the more accurate the estimate. (You can work this out for yourself by tossing a coin and counting the number of heads and tails; the more times you toss the coin, the closer the percentage of heads is to 50, assuming that you don't have a weighted coin.) And there is no great benefit in increasing the sample size too far, unless you want to be very accurate indeed; for a sample of 1000, the certainty limits would be 22.3 and 27.7, which would mean doubling the work to 'tighten' confidence in the result by only about one per cent at each end of the limit. So with regard to the finding reported above that the bells are rung regularly on Sundays in 62.8 per cent of the towers, we can be virtually certain that the real figure lies between the limits of 58.6 and 67.0 per cent.

Thus we decided on a sample of 500 towers, taken randomly. How do we know that it is representative? One way is to see if they are all bunched in certain parts of the country. The two maps accompanying this article suggest not; the map of the 500 (Figure 2.1), which excludes the four in Ireland, two in Scotland and one in the Channel Islands, so that individual towers are not identifiable, is very similar to that (Figure 2.2) of all towers in England and Wales. (We can do more precise tests, but won't report them here.) And we could



*Distribution of the sample 500 - very similar to overall distribution (note: four in Ireland, two in Scotland and one in the C.I. not shown).*

**Figure 2.1** The distribution of the 493 sampled towers in England and Wales



*Distribution of the 5,425 towers in England and Wales.*

Figure 2.2 The distribution of all towers in England and Wales

see if certain sizes of ring are over- or under-represented. The figures are

No of Bells	In Total (%)	In Survey (%)
5	752 (14)	61 (12)
6	2697 (50)	249 (50)
8	1678 (31)	158 (32)
10	206 (4)	23 (5)
12	92 (2)	9 (2)

(For those who may be wondering, Caistor was counted as an 8, and Basingstoke All Saints as a 10!)

So there is no evidence that we clearly over-represented some groups and under-represented others. Rings of 5 were slightly under-represented, and rings of 8 and 10 very slightly over-represented, but the differences between the two columns of percentages are very small indeed and there is certainly no statistically significant difference between the 5245 towers that make up the entire population and the 500 we sampled. Our sample is representative of towers as a whole.

For the survey of ringers, we decided to take a 1 in 3 sample from each of the 500 towers, excluding tower captains, as they were being surveyed separately. If we were correct in assuming that there are about 40 000 ringers in the British Isles, then our sample of 1 in 30 (1 in 3 ringers in 1 in 10 towers) should have given us about 1300, more than enough to give a very accurate picture of the situation.

By using a sampling procedure, therefore, and giving all those engaged in assisting with the administration of the survey clear instructions on its use, we have obtained sufficient data, at very low cost to the Central Council (though not without a great degree of commitment of voluntary labour by a large number of people), to give us a very accurate picture of the state of ringing in late 1988. (Note that this is the picture as a whole, and not about any one part of the British Isles; we can make useful generalisations about all ringing, and about rings of 6 and 8, but not, for example, about ringing in Wiltshire, where we sampled only 15 towers. The survey could be replicated for particular areas, but our brief was to consider the British Isles as a whole, and our sample size was selected accordingly.)

What sort of response did we get? Very good indeed for the following number of completed questionnaires was received:

From INCUMBENTS (maximum possible 500)	483
From TOWER CAPTAINS (maximum possible 500, if all towers ringable)	300
From INDIVIDUAL RINGERS (1170 distributed)	1052

So what have we discovered? A great deal, and over the next few months we expect to provide you with a stream of articles detailing the results, as well as snippets of interest. We shall, of course, also be informing the Central Council and its committees of the findings, and

in due course (when we have completed the basic analyses we have set out for ourselves) will be happy to respond and answer ringers' queries, though of course the data were provided anonymously, and we will not identify individuals or towers.

We have also conducted complete surveys of all territorial ringing Associations and their Branches/Districts, and will be relating the results of those too. The response to those was:

TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS WITHOUT BRANCHES

25 distributed	22 received
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TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH BRANCHES

34 distributed	34 received
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BRANCHES OF TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS

195 distributed	187 received
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### Chapter 3

#### One-Third of British Bells Silent on Sundays: First Survey Results

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 17 February 1989)

#### How Many Bells Rang on 20 November 1988?

What does our title mean? What did we find out about the ringing that took place on 20 November 1988? (Why that date? We wanted a Sunday unlikely to be affected by holidays, special services, the exigencies of the weather, and so on. Very few qualified. It snowed in some places on 20 November!: we can't be sure whether it affected the number of towers where the bells rang.)

In this first report, we focus on what the incumbents told us. We asked all 500 of them (or the people acting for them in some places; in a few, it was not possible to get a response and in a few others the responses are not usable, for a variety of reasons) whether the bells in their church (we named it; several were responsible for more than one) rang on 20 November. (All of the questioning was done within a few days of that Sunday.) The replies from the 466 usable responses were:

YES            262 (56.2%)

We followed this up by asking those who answered NO if the bells are usually rung on Sundays, with the result

YES            42 (a further 9%)

For the rest, we then asked if the bells are unringable, to which we got the answers

YES            32 (or 7%)

This left a further 130 where the bells are not regularly rung, and are not believed to be unringable.

To summarise, the situation is

Bells regularly rung on Sundays	62.8%
Bells ringable but silent	30.2%
Bells unringable	7.0%

We leave readers to judge whether this a healthy situation.

## Chapter 4

### Just Over One Ringer per Bell

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 10 March 1989)

Early risers may have heard a ringer from Kensington interviewed on the 'Sunday' programme on Radio 4, just before Christmas last year. He claimed that there are about 100,000 ringers. He may be right; in fact if he was referring to all people who have been taught to ring he was undoubtedly understating the situation very significantly. If we look just at currently active ringers, however, those who are members of bands and who can be called upon to ring, especially on Sundays, the figure is almost certainly less than half of the claimed 100,000. This is a conclusion drawn from the recently-conducted Central Council Survey of Ringing, and in this second article based on their work, the members of the Survey Committee indicate how many ringers they think there are, and what the average size of bands is.

#### Counting the Ringers

One of the initial tasks carried out by those administering the questionnaires was to inquire how many ringers are associated with each of the 500 towers surveyed. This was done by making contact with the Tower Captain, through the incumbent in many cases, and asking her or him for a list of all the ringers in the local band. This obviously raised a number of difficulties, because many were unclear whether a particular individual should be counted or not. It was impossible to draw up precise rules about inclusion/exclusion, so the agents were instructed to get a list of 'all the people who are members of the band' and to

Interpret ALL members to mean: everybody who rings on Sundays and/or practice nights, and the tower captain considers to be members of the band, including infrequent/irregular attenders ..., because the survey is to cover all ringers

Queries were still raised, of course, about students away at school or higher education, for example, and whether learners who could not yet handle a bell in rounds should be included. On the first, we suggested that they should be included if they rang at the tower regularly for at least part of the year; on the second, the advice was only include them if they are able to ring unaided.

No doubt there were some inconsistencies, but we believe we have got as close as possible to a proper count of the number of ringers associated with the 500 towers. There may be a little double-counting, notably in areas where many ringers serve more than one tower (certainly there are some who act as tower captain at more than one), but this shouldn't lead to significant inaccuracies (though see Chapter 11). And, of course, we exclude those who are active ringers (we imagine that most of them are active peal ringers) who are not associated with any tower and who do not contribute substantially to the week-by-week activities of training learners, helping others to advance, and keeping the sound of the bells pealing out on Sundays.

So what did we find? We have returns available for 471 of the 500 towers, and these form the basis of the findings presented here. It is doubtful whether the data from the other 29, when available, will significantly alter the results.

We categorised the 471 towers into six groups, as follows:

1) Unringable: no ringers	31
2) Unringable: some ringers (bells presumably temporarily unringable)	2
3) Ringable: no ringers	41
4) Ringable: tower captain but no other ringers	23
5) Ringable: local band	366
6) Special cases	8

Thus there was a band at 78 per cent of the surveyed towers, and at 84 per cent of those with ringable bells. (The special cases were mainly towers where ringing is not possible at present, because the church has recently been made redundant, for example: they included one church where the bells were removed between the taking of the sample and the actual conduct of the survey.)

There appear to be more towers with bands than towers where the bells are rung regularly on Sundays. (Our first article - The Ringing World, 17 February 1989; Chapter 3 - showed that the bells were rung regularly on Sundays at only 62.5 per cent of the surveyed towers.) The reason for this difference seems to be that a substantial number of bands are too small to ring the bells regularly.

#### Number of Bells and Number of Ringers

If we use the above categorisation, excluding the eight special cases, we see significant differences between towers according to the number of bells. Table 4.1 gives the percentages of towers in each category, according to the number of bells there. Thus all of the rings of 12 in the Survey are ringable and have bands of ringers, compared to less than half of the rings of 5. Perhaps not surprisingly, since a large number of them are in small villages, the rings of 5 are much more likely either to be unringable or, if they are ringable, to lack a band of ringers than are the towers with 6, 8, 10 or 12 bells.

How large are the bands? Table 4.2 gives the percentages with different band sizes at all towers where the bells are ringable, and according to the number of bells. (The numbers in each column may not sum exactly to 100 because of rounding errors.) In general, the towers with more bells have bigger bands, with 60 per cent of the 12-bell bands comprising 17 or more ringers, for example, whereas 65 per cent of the 5-bell towers have fewer than five ringers. The rings of 10 form a partial exception to this generalisation, with 17 per cent of them having no ringers even though the bells are ringable. There were only 23 10-bell towers in the sample, however, so our confidence in that statement is relatively weak; we can only be certain that the percentage of 10-bell towers with no ringers lies between 2.5 and 32.2. Against this, nearly half of all 10-bell towers in the sample have a band comprising more than 12 ringers. (Of the twenty-three 10-bell towers in our sample, four had no band of ringers. Two of them fall in the special cases category, however; of the remaining 21, there is thus no band in just under 10 per cent.)

The average band sizes are given in Table 4.3. Not surprisingly, among towers with ringers the average band in a 12-bell tower is more than twice the size of that in a 5-bell tower. In all towers, the average number of ringers where there are 12 bells is nearly five times the figure for those with 5 bells. In all cases the average band size for towers with ringers exceeds the number of bells, indicating sufficient to ensure that all are rung, as long as most people attend frequently. None of the averages indicate that, even just in the towers with bands, the average number of ringers is anywhere near twice the number of bells, which some consider necessary to ensure a sufficient pool of ringers to draw upon. The 6-bell towers are on average best-placed among those with bands, averaging 1.5 ringers per bell. Substantial numbers of 6-bell towers are either unringable or have no band, however, and overall, not surprisingly, the 12-bell towers are healthiest in terms of numbers of ringers.

### So How Many Ringers Are There?

Our answer to this question is derived in a very straightforward way from the figures presented above. According to them, the average number of ringers per band in the 463 surveyed towers was 7.97. This suggests an overall total in the 5245 towers of 41,800. However, if we include the eight towers that were special cases, arguing that if there were eight such cases out of the 500 sampled, there should be about 84 in the 5245, then the average band size for all surveyed towers becomes 7.84, which leads to an overall total of 41,100 - or approximately one ringer for each change in the extent of Major! Remembering that we are dealing with samples, however; we can conclude that almost certainly the number of active ringers in the British Isles at the time of the survey was between 38,000 and 44,000, and probably about 41,000.

There are 35,776 bells in the 5245 towers (excluding the semitone bells), so the number of ringers is only just in excess of one per bell. In itself, this suggests that there are hardly enough ringers to ensure that all bells are rung. But, of course, many towers have more

ringers than bells; many have fewer ringers than bells and (too many) have no ringers at all. Certainly there are insufficient ringers overall for us to be complacent, especially with regard to the 5- and 6-bell towers, large numbers of which have insufficient ringers to ensure that their bells are regularly heard on Sundays.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the first two articles in this series we have presented the basic data about the state of the Exercise in the British Isles at the present time. A great deal more data remain to be analysed and written-up, and more detailed conclusions must await such full consideration. These initial findings have been presented now, however, to stimulate interest in the results of the survey and to begin a constructive debate on how the state of the Exercise can be advanced for the future.

Table 4.2: Number of Members in Band by Number of Bells in Tower

Number of Ringers	Bells in Tower					All Towers
	5	6	8	10	12	
0	40	18	6	17	0	16
1-4	25	15	11	0	0	14
5-8	18	31	21	4	0	24
9-12	10	24	35	30	30	26
13-16	5	9	21	26	10	13
17-20	2	3	4	13	30	4
21 or more	0	2	1	9	30	1

The figures in the table show the percentages of bands of different sizes. Thus of the 5-bell towers, for example, 40 per cent have no ringers, 25 per cent have between one and four ringers (inclusive), and so on.

Table 4.3 Average Band Size by Number of Bells in Tower

	Bells in Tower					All Towers
	5	6	8	10	12	
Towers with bands	8.0	9.0	10.6	14.4	17.3	10.0
All with ringable bells	4.5	7.8	9.7	13.0	17.3	8.5
All towers	3.6	7.1	9.5	11.9	17.3	7.8

The figures in the table show the average band size per tower, according to the number of bells in the tower. Thus in the 5-bell towers, for example, the average band size in those with a band is 8.0, whereas in all 5-bell towers it is 3.6.

Table 4.1: Category of Tower by Number of Bells There

Category	Bells in Tower					All Towers
	5	6	8	10	12	
1	19	8	1	0	0	7
2	2	0	1	0	0	1
3	22	9	4	10	0	9
4	14	4	4	0	0	5
5	44	79	90	91	100	78

The figures in this table show the percentage of the towers in each category, according to the number of bells in the tower. Thus 19 per cent of the 5-bell towers are in category 1, 2 per cent are in category 2, and so on. The categories are those described in the text (p.12)

## Chapter 5

### Ringling: How Often and How Many?

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 7 April 1989)

The Central Council Survey of Ringing has found disturbing evidence of the number of silent towers in the British Isles, and of the number of ringers. Recent reports of an increased number of quarter peals rung suggest that the health of the Exercise is if anything improving, but if there are lots of towers without ringers and more where there are insufficient to ensure that the bells are heard every Sunday, then there is cause for concern which the Council, its affiliated bodies, and all ringers must face up to. In this latest article drawing on the Survey, members of the Committee report on the amount of ringing at the time of their investigation last November.

The Survey received responses from 300 tower captains, the individuals responsible for organising ringing at the selected churches. Of them 69 per cent reported that the bells at their tower were rung on the surveyed Sunday - 20 November 1988 - but only 52 per cent responded that those bells were rung every Sunday; a further 19 per cent reported that the bells were rung on 'most Sundays', 11 per cent that they were rung on 'at least one Sunday per month', and the remainder that they were rung 'less frequently than monthly'. Since less than eighty per cent of the towers in the British Isles have a tower captain who could respond to the Survey (as reported in our preceding article - The Ringing World, 10 March 1989: Chapter 4) this means that the bells are heard every Sunday from less than half of the towers which contain rings of 5 or more. This can hardly be considered a healthy state of affairs.

When do they ring, and how often? Conventional wisdom has it that bells are rung for two services each Sunday, but of the 300 tower captains, only 57 reported that the bells were rung on more than one occasion on 20 November, twice in 55 cases and three times in the other two. The bells were heard once only from 152 of the towers and were silent in 91 of the 300. In most cases the ringing was for one of three services: matins (37 per cent of occasions); parish service/communion (35 per cent); and evensong (25 per cent).

How many bells were rung, and how many people turned up to ring them? Table 5.1 answers the first question. In total, all of the bells were rung at just 55 per cent of the towers where the bells were heard on 20 November 1988. Only at the 6- and the 12-bell towers did all the bells get rung in a majority of cases; whereas all were rung in 74 per cent of the 6-bell towers, for example, this was so in only 30 per cent of the 10-bell and 38 per cent of the 8-bell towers.

Turning to the number of ringers who attended, Table 5.2 shows the percentages according to the number of bells in the tower. The average turnout was between 6 and 7, a figure achieved at none of the small number of 5-bell towers reporting but at all but one of the 12-bell towers. A double-digit turnout was a rarity, however, occurring on only 16 per cent of the reported occasions when ringing took place on 20 November 1988. Only one of the 5-bell towers had more ringers present than there were bells to be rung, and although three-quarters of the 6-bell towers had sufficient ringers present for all 6 to be rung, there were extra ringers present at 40 per cent of those towers only. Only at the small number of 12-bell towers was it the norm to have several more ringers than bells to be rung.

But how many ringers were present relative to the number who could have turned up? In Table 5.3 we give the number present according to the number in the local band. (The eagle-eyed will note that in the first row of that table we show that in 73 per cent of the towers with 4 or less members in the band the turnout was greater than 4; the reason is that visitors were present.) In general the figures suggest only low turnout rates. Thus in half of the towers with bands comprising from 9 to 12 ringers, for example, turnout was of 6 or less; of those bands with 13 or more members only one-third mustered a turnout of 9 or more. The average turnout, as a percentage of the band size, was about 55 per cent.

The overall picture is somewhat depressing, therefore, for these data do not indicate that towers are bursting with ringers on Sundays. The position is best, it seems, in the 6- and the 12-bell towers, and least healthy in the others. But there is very little room for complacency, for if the evidence of 20 November 1988 is anything to go by, the majority of those towers which have bands of ringers are struggling to make their bells heard on Sundays.

And what do they ring? We asked the tower captains what was regularly rung at their towers on Sundays, with the results presented in Table 5.4. Not surprisingly, the majority of tower-captains reported regular ringing of rounds and call-changes, but only one type of method-ringing - Plain Bob - was reported as occurring at even half of the towers. In general, the larger the number of bells available, the larger the percentage of towers where the more 'advanced' methods were regularly rung, as is very clear with both Stedman and Surprise. We leave it to readers to judge whether the absence of regular method-ringing from nearly half of the towers whose captains responded to the survey is disappointing - after all, the great majority (93 per cent) of our them agreed with the statement that 'Well-struck call-changes are preferable to less well-rung methods on Sundays'.

Is the picture any different on practice nights? Of the 295 tower captains responding to the relevant question, 82 per cent reported a regular practice at their tower, although the figure varied from 67 per cent of the 24 5-bell towers, through 80 per cent of the 6-bell towers and 86 per cent of the 8- and 12-bell towers to 100 per cent of the 10-bell. Over three-quarters of the towers holding practices do so

weekly throughout the year. We shall have more to say about practices in a later article.

Finally, what about the recruitment and loss of ringers? We asked our respondents three questions about this. First, we asked how many ringers had left their bands over the previous twelve months, either moving to another tower (locally or elsewhere) or giving up ringing altogether. Table 5.5 shows that just over one-third of all towers lost ringers who moved, with a slightly larger percentage losing ringers who unfortunately gave up the Exercise; the latter totalled 211 individuals. Against this, we also asked how many proficient ringers had moved to the towers, how many learners had been recruited, and how many of the recruited learners were still ringing. Table 5.5 shows that about one-quarter of towers received 'immigrants' and that two-thirds recruited learners during the previous twelve months. Some 640 new learners took up ringing, three times the number who were lost, although of the 640 only 494 were reported as still active. Thus, there was almost certainly a net gain in the number of ringers over the year at the sampled towers whose captains responded to our questionnaire.

Of course, these figures refer only to the towers where ringing was taking place at the time of the survey; they exclude those where there may have been ringing a year ago but there is none now, and which have presumably contributed a net loss to the Exercise (some, but almost certainly not all, of the ringers at a tower where the bells have become silent may have transferred to another). So the net gain figure is no cause for complacency. What the Survey is showing very clearly is not only a large number of silent towers but also a large number of others where there are insufficient ringers able to turn out on an average Sunday and ensure that all of the bells are rung.

Table 5.1 Number of Bells Rung at Sunday Service Ringing

Number of Bells Rung	Number of Bells in Tower				
	5	6	8	10	12
1 - 3	0	3	4	0	0
4	60	11	6	9	0
5	40	12	5	13	0
6	*	74	34	26	8
7	*	*	16	9	8
8	*	*	36	17	0
10	*	*	*	26	8
12	*	*	*	*	77
Number of Towers	5	91	86	15	7
Number of Occasions Bells were Rung	5	113	107	20	13

The figures in the body of the table are percentages of the number of occasions on which the bells were rung on Sunday 20 November 1988. Thus, for example, 91 tower captains at 6-bell towers reported a total of 113 separate occasions on which ringing took place; all 6 bells were rung on 74 per cent of those occasions.

Table 5.2 Number of Ringers Attending

Number of Ringers Present	Number of Bells in Tower				
	5	6	8	10	12
1 - 4	60	14	8	9	0
5 - 6	40	47	29	21	15
7 - 8	0	27	38	35	15
9 - 10	0	10	18	4	0
11 - 12	0	2	5	21	0
13 - 16	0	0	3	9	54
17 or more	0	0	0	0	15
Number of Towers	5	91	86	15	7
Number of Occasions Bells were Rung	5	113	107	20	13

The figures in the body of the table are percentages of the number of occasions that the bells were rung. Thus, for example, of the 107 occasions when bells were rung at an 8-bell tower on Sunday 20 November 1988 there were more than ten ringers present at 8 per cent of them.

Table 5.3 Number of Ringers Present by Number in Band

Number in Band	Number Present					Number of Towers
	1 - 4	5 - 6	7 - 8	9 - 12	13 or more	
1 - 4	27	36	9	27	0	11
5 - 8	25	39	21	0	0	57
9 - 12	11	41	32	14	3	79
13 - 16	7	23	37	26	7	43
17 - 20	0	9	36	36	27	11
21 or more	0	25	75	0	0	4

The figures in the body of the table are percentages of the row totals. Thus, for example, among the 43 towers with bands comprising 13-16 ringers, in 23 per cent of them the attendance was either 5 or 6.

Table 5.4 The Range of Sunday-Service Ringing

Per Cent Ringing	Number of Bells in Tower					All Towers
	5	6	8	10	12	
Rounds/Call						
Changes	54	79	82	87	63	78
Plain Bob	50	47	56	73	50	52
Grandsire	29	30	50	80	63	41
Stedman	0	15	19	40	75	18
Treble Bob	0	11	13	13	13	11
Surprise	0	11	9	27	50	11
Number of Towers	24	141	112	15	8	300

The figures in the body of the table are percentages of the column totals. Thus, for example, of the 112 8-bell tower captains 50 per cent reported that they regularly ring Grandsire for Sunday service.

Table 5.5 The Flow of Ringers

	Number of Bells in Tower					All Towers
	5	6	8	10	12	
<b>Loss of Ringers</b>						
To others in the area	17	14	10	7	0	15 (50)
From the area	21	35	40	33	50	36 (152)
From ringing	37	34	44	40	37	38 (211)
<b>Gain of Ringers</b>						
New learners	46	70	68	73	50	67 (640)
From other towers	29	23	31	20	50	27 (136)

The figures in the body of the table are the percentages of towers reporting the relevant gain or loss. Thus, for example, 17 per cent of 5-bell towers reported losing ringers to other towers in the area and 37 per cent reported losing people who gave up ringing. The figures in brackets at the end of each row indicate the total number of ringers involved; thus there were 211 people reported as giving up ringing over the previous twelve months.

## Chapter 6

### Ringers and the Church: What the Survey Tells Us

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 21 April 1989)

Bellringing didn't get very good treatment in The Archers recently. Shula Hebden was having matrimonial difficulties, and her husband Mark didn't approve when he came home one evening to find she'd gone off to ringing practice. She told Tom Forrest she'd have to give up ringing, because there were too many demands on her time. (One of the members of the Survey Committee did not tell the reporter from The Observer that Shula should have put ringing before her marriage, however!!) And then, when Jack Woolley volunteered to learn to take her place, the new vicar of Ambridge told him that he wasn't interested in the picture postcard aspects of church life, and wanted him in the congregation not in the belfry. Jack persisted, and the other ringers tried to put him off because he has a heart pacemaker; intriguingly, it seems that at Ambridge they run a 'closed band' with a fixed number of ringers only, and advertisements when there is a 'vacancy'.

Shula and Mark's marital difficulties are not our concern; nor are the peculiarities of the organisation of ringing at Ambridge (which, we believe, is within the territory of the Four Shires Guild) though we do hope that ringers with pacemakers will not be put off. But the views of the clergy on ringing and ringers are of significance to us. What do the clergy think about ringing; what do they know about it; and what other roles do ringers play in church life? These were some of the questions addressed in the recent Central Council Survey of Ringing, and here the members of the Committee tell us what they discovered.

\* \* \* \* \*

As part of the Survey, nearly 500 members of the clergy were interviewed, over the telephone, about ringing at the sampled towers, and about their relationships with ringing and ringers. We cannot assume that they are representative of the clergy as a whole, since it may be that the clergy at churches with rings of bells differ in some ways from those at churches without bells - though we know of no reason why they should. All that we can report here are the responses of some 480 clergymen.

One major finding is that although the great majority of them believe that bells form an important part of church life, the subject of bells and bellringing was rarely mentioned during their preparation for the

ministry. We asked them the following question:

Do you think that the use of church bells is

An important part of church life  
An unimportant part of church life  
An irrelevant activity?

Over 80 per cent agreed with the first statement, and only 1 per cent agreed with the third. ('Well they would do, wouldn't they!', might be your response, since they knew the survey was being conducted by the CCCBR, but clergymen are not that easily led, are they?!) If it is an important part of church life, however, why is nothing about bells and ringing provided for people who are preparing for the ministry? Less than ten per cent reported being given any information about the role of bells in church life during their training.

Of course, some of them are ringers themselves, but not that many. Of those interviewed, 14 per cent are currently active bellringers. A further 19 per cent had at some time been ringers, but had since given up. Most of the active ringers learned before they were ordained, so if we want more ringing clergy, the message is apparently that we should get more ringers into the clergy rather than the other way round.

And what is the relationship between the clergy and ringers? We have all heard the stories (some of them apocryphal, no doubt) about towers where the bells are not rung because of 'unringable vicars', and others about clergy who just don't like bells. (And their families too; Mrs. Runcie was reported in a national newspaper a few years ago as not liking the sound of bells.) Our Survey didn't identify any of these, as far as we could tell, but it did suggest that considerable numbers of clergymen could do more to integrate their ringers with other church activities. For example, among the towers where the bells are regularly rung on Sundays, only 11 per cent of the incumbents reported visiting the ringing room every Sunday (and quite a few of those who did were ringers themselves, anyhow); 35 per cent said that their visits were infrequent, and 8 per cent never visited the ringers. Similarly, less than 40 per cent regularly attended meetings of their ringers (they may not have been invited, of course, but presumably they hadn't made it clear that they would like to be); about the same percentage ensured that the ringers were represented on the PCC (or similar body) and arranged special services so as to involve the ringers in other aspects of church life.

The picture we get is of relationships between clergy and ringers which are somewhat distant in many cases. Perhaps we need to ensure that the clergy know more about us, and are better informed about bells and bellringing. This could be especially valuable in the cases of bells that are either unringable or unringed on Sundays. How many clergy know about our ringing Associations and Guilds and the services they can offer? Of the incumbents surveyed who had ringable but unringed bells (on Sundays at least), only 41 per cent had initiated any attempt to get ringing started. About 31 per cent had been in contact

with a local Association with regard to assistance with ringing at their church, and in just over half of those cases assistance with training a band had been discussed. Over three-quarters of those who had been in contact with an Association had found it helpful, and none responded that it had been unhelpful. Only a third of those incumbents had made the initial approach to the Associations, however, suggesting that the latter may have to be more assertive in making their existence and ability to help known to the clergy - in the absence of such information being part of the basic training provided by the church.

Of course, there is also the opposite side of the coin; what other roles do the ringers play within the church community? Again, there are many stories of clergy who demand that their ringers attend services (twice a Sunday in some of the tales) and who don't allow the non-attenders to continue as ringers; many of these apply to churches where the ringers who leave must do so in full view of the assembled congregation, which can be embarrassing to the incumbent, to say the least. But only 5 per cent of the incumbents questioned impose any rule about ringers' attendance at services.

Perhaps they don't need to, because the ringers go in any case. Of the tower captains interviewed in the survey, 59 per cent indicated that they attend services regularly in the churches where they ring, and the survey of individual ringers showed that exactly half are regular attenders. So, if there are 41,000 ringers or thereabouts, as we suggest, then about 22,000 are swelling the congregations.

In the mid-nineteenth century ringers were brought into the church as part of the Oxford Movement. The 'secular sport' about which Bill Cook has written in Change Ringing, Volume 1 was ended. Associations were founded to promote the acceptance of ringers as church workers and to bring about the integration of church and ringing room. The clergy now generally accept the importance of bells in the life of their church (as did the small sample of people attending morning service at Sheffield Cathedral when they were surveyed by Radio 4 on 12 March), and most ringers are active members of their church.

But much more can be done to ensure that the clergy are aware of the valuable musical instruments in their towers, of the keenness of ringers to ensure that those instruments are cared for and used, and of the existence of ringers' associations that can help in a great variety of ways. If, as the results of our Survey are showing, there are weaknesses in ringing at the present time, then perhaps even closer ties between ringing associations and the churches are called for. More peals and quarter peals, and the largest-ever entry for the National Twelve-Bell Contest, are indications that in some ways ringing is healthier than ever. But with more than a third of towers silent on Sundays and with the situation at many of the others that insufficient ringers attend to ensure that all of the bells can be rung, these Survey findings suggest that there are other areas of the body needing urgent treatment. That treatment may need church:ringer cooperation to an extent not previously attempted.

## Chapter 7

### Teaching the Art: What the Tower Captains Say

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 19 May 1989)

The future of the ringing exercise depends on a continued flow of recruits, who will take to the art and stick with it. So what is the present situation with learners and learning? To answer that question, we look at some of the responses to the Central Council Survey of Ringing from the tower captains, the people mainly responsible for ensuring that flow and for keeping the bells ringing.

A majority (63 per cent) of the 300 tower captains who provided usable responses had been elected by their fellow ringers, with 16 per cent appointed by the incumbent and a further 5 per cent by the PCC (or similar body). Most (66 per cent) were elected for an indefinite period, with a further quarter holding office before re-election for one year only. They bring to the task a wealth of experience in it, for on average those responding had been doing the job for over eight years; fully 14 per cent had been tower captain for an unbroken period of 25 years or more, and only 38 per cent had been in post for less than five years.

#### Recruitment

Of the 300 tower captains, 59 per cent reported that they had tried to recruit learners during the previous twelve months (the Survey was conducted in November 1988). And 67 per cent reported that new recruits had joined them during that period - clearly some towers obtained learners without having to go out and look for them! In one-quarter of those towers, however, there was only one recruit during the year, and in another quarter there were just two; only 30 tower captains reported more than five new learners joining their bands during the year in question. Most retained the interest of at least one; only 19 of the 201 reported that none of their recruits was still with them.

And is finding and keeping recruits harder now? Tower captains were asked whether over the preceding twelve months getting new learners had been 'increasingly difficult', 'no change', or 'easier than previously': 39 per cent thought the situation hadn't changed, 44 per cent thought it had got more difficult, and only 9 per cent found it easier than previously. (The other available category for the answer was 'no recruits necessary', which was selected by 3 per cent of the respondents only!) They were also asked whether they found that recruits 'are increasingly likely to give up', 'are more likely to

stay' or 'don't differ' from previous generations: the answers were 25, 13, and 52 per cent respectively.

Overall, therefore, tower captains reported that they are finding recruits harder to get and harder to keep. Interestingly, the older the tower captain (and, on average, the longer she or he had been in post - 15 per cent of the tower captains are female according to the Survey) the greater the perceived difficulties. Whereas only 28 per cent of the 60 tower captains aged 20-39 found getting recruits increasingly difficult, the figure was 52 per cent for those aged 60-79 (of whom there were 63 among the respondents). Similarly, only 3 per cent of the younger group found that recruits are increasingly likely to give up, compared to 35 per cent of the older group. It may be that older tower captains for some reason find recruitment and training more difficult than their younger contemporaries, or it may be that they are remembering a golden age further back than the later generation can recall. (For further analyses of this point, see Chapter 17.)

In terms of recruitment, it was the 5- and the 12-bell towers that were least likely to have recruited new learners during the previous twelve months (Table 7.1). Of the towers that did recruit, the greater the number of bells the greater the number of recruits. Interestingly, the greater the number of bells the larger the percentage of tower captains who reported that it was becoming increasingly difficult to get recruits and (with the exception of the small number of 12-bell towers in the sample) the more likely that the recruits would soon give up ringing. This probably reflects the concentration of 10- and 12-bell towers in larger towns, where there are more alternative attractions and where declining congregations in many of the parishes provide only a small base from which to recruit; in the latter regard, the inner city churches face the same recruitment problem as many of the smaller rural parishes, where the majority of 5-bell towers are to be found.

### Training

And what learning programmes do they provide for their active ringers? Most tower captains (82 per cent) reported holding a regular practice, usually once a week for part of the year at least. And of the towers that hold practices, 28 per cent report having additional special practices for learners, while 35 per cent allocate particular periods within the weekly practice for certain groups. In two-thirds of the cases, ringers are asked to learn special methods for a particular practice, but only 40 per cent of tower captains reported that they planned how they would conduct practices beforehand. The average attendance at practices over the previous three months was reported as 8, and in 73 per cent of the towers it was usually possible to ring all of the bells.

Not surprisingly, the situation varied somewhat according to the number of bells in the tower, as Table 7.2 shows. A regular practice was held at only two-thirds of the 24 five-bell towers whose captains responded to the Survey, compared to at least 80 per cent of towers

with six or more bells. The more bells in the tower, the more ringers who attended practice, on average - though in the cases of 10- and 12-bell towers the average attendance was less than the number of bells. Thus whereas it was the norm at most 5- and 6-bell tower practices to ring all of the bells, this was so at only a little over half of the towers which have 8 or more bells.

Who make the best recruits? The tower captains were given four age groups - under 15; 15-19; 20-39; and 40 or over - and asked which make the best and which make the least promising recruits. In general the older group was least favoured; only 13 per cent of those who nominated a 'best' group selected the over 40s, whereas 39 per cent identified them as the 'least promising'. Those aged 20-39 were the most popular, with 35 per cent putting them in the 'best' group and 7 per cent only in the 'least promising'. Opinion was most divided about the under 15s; 31 per cent thought they offered the best potential, and 32 per cent thought they offered the least! The respondents were also asked 'which sex have you found better as recruits (in terms of rate of progress)?': 7 per cent said males, 20 per cent females, and 66 per cent identified no difference.

How about the teaching process? Some 30 per cent of the tower captains reported giving their learners a set of goals and telling them what rate of progress they expected; 10 per cent had a chart on the ringing room wall recording individual progress. The band as a whole was set goals by 39 per cent of the respondents.

### The Use of Books

What books do they use to help in teaching? The Survey gave tower captains a list of thirteen relevant to different stages of the learning process in ringing and asked which were used in their tower. It also asked whether learners were supplied with books, and if so which; whether they were encouraged to buy their own, and if so which; and which books the tower captains considered best for both learners and teachers. Table 7.3 gives the results.

Over half of the respondents indicated that two books - the Beginners' Handbook and Diagrams - were used (that word was emphasised in the question) in their towers, with four more books being used in at least one-quarter of the towers. In over half of the towers, learners were provided with a book, with two books scooping the pool between them - the Central Council's Beginners' Handbook and Pam Copson's One-per-Learner Book. In 66 of the other 126 towers learners were encouraged to get a book; the same two led again, but E.S. and M. Powell's The Ringers' Handbook came a strong third.

The tower captains were also asked what they considered the best books, separately for learners and for teachers (they could nominate up to two in each category). For learners, the Beginners' Handbook won by a very short head from the One-per-Learner Book among the 401 nominations. Many fewer opinions were passed about the best book for teachers - perhaps indicating a market opportunity; A Tutor's Handbook

was the clear winner, followed by two of the books in the Jasper Snowdon series.

### Ringling Courses

How about attendance at ringing courses? Only a minority of the tower captains had taken part in any courses: 13 per cent had participated in at least one as a tutor, 28 per cent as a helper, and 24 per cent as a student. Just under half (49 per cent) reported that they encouraged members of their bands to attend courses; 69 per cent indicated that none of their members had attended a course in the previous year, while a further 11 per cent indicated that one member from their tower had attended a course. In all, 197 ringers from the 300 towers attended at least one course during the year - which suggests that in the British Isles as a whole just over 2000 ringers went on at least one course in the twelve months prior to our survey last November. (The figure is derived by grossing up from our sample towers to the total population: see our article in The Ringing World for 17 February 1989: Chapter 3. It will be checked in our later analyses of the responses from individual ringers and from Associations and their Branches: see Chapters 12, 13, and 14.)

The tower captains were asked what they considered the most valuable topics for courses (they could nominate up to three), and Table 7.4 gives the outcome. Courses on teaching learners and bell handling, along with courses on ringing Plain Bob, were the most popular, suggesting that it is with the early stages of teaching ringers that tower captains most appreciate assistance; they also appreciate courses on teaching conducting and on bell maintenance. One-day courses were preferred by 44 per cent of the respondents; 22 per cent opted for half-day courses as the preferred length, with 17 per cent choosing evening courses. Only 4 per cent of the tower captains preferred courses lasting several days.

### Ringling Standards

And what of the quality of the ringing? Tower captains were asked about the standard of Sunday service ringing over the previous twelve months. Their replies, in percentages, provide a generally optimistic picture:

Improved considerably	15
Improved somewhat	32
Stayed about the same	40
Got somewhat worse	6
Got considerably worse	2
No answer	5

How can improved ringing, especially improved quality of striking, be encouraged? In many parts of the country, there has been a substantial increase in the number of striking contests for Sunday Service bands in recent years, and tower captains were asked their opinions of

these. Their replies (in percentages agreeing with the four statements) were:

#### Striking contests

Help to improve the quality of Sunday ringing	65
Help to build team spirit in the band	65
Are good fun but not to be taken too seriously	60
Are not in the spirit of church activity	18

These provide general endorsement for the contests. However, only 25 per cent of the tower captains reported that their bands had entered any contests during the previous twelve months. Of those whose bands did participate, 72 per cent entered only one during the year.

#### Local Ringing Associations

Finally, what of the relationships between the tower captains and the local ringing Associations? Most of the respondents (84 per cent) are members of a local Association; 39 per cent of them have held office at Branch level, and 22 per cent at Association level. But over a quarter (28 per cent) had attended no Branch activities in the previous twelve months, 15 per cent had attended just one event, and 12 per cent went to two. (Since 47 per cent reported that the local Association had held a meeting at their home tower during that period, it may well be, therefore, that many tower captains did not support any Association or Branch activity away from their home tower.)

Over three-quarters indicated that they encourage their ringers to join the local Association (28 per cent reported that members' subscriptions were paid from tower funds), and 61 per cent encourage them to attend meetings. They were asked how many of their ringers are members of the local Association. The answers, as a percentage of the total, ranged from 0 to 100; 16 per cent of tower captains reported less than 10 per cent of their ringers being members but 30 per cent indicated that over 90 per cent are.

When asked whether they are satisfied with what their local Association does, 73 per cent of the tower captains answered yes. They were then questioned in more detail about four of the main activities of Associations - their ringing meetings, ringing practices, social events, and ringing courses - and asked whether they found what is provided as generally satisfactory or unsatisfactory, or whether they had no strong opinion. The answers are in Table 7.5. They indicate very little dissatisfaction, but substantial proportions who had no strong opinion to offer, especially about ringing courses.

\* \* \* \* \*

A great deal of information has been presented here which it is hoped is of wide interest to all involved with ensuring the future health of the ringing Exercise. Further analyses will look at the responses of the individual ringers sampled in the Survey and at the activities of

the ringing Associations, to provide a rounded picture of the situation.

Table 7.1 Recruitment by Number of Bells in the Tower

	Number of Bells				
	5	6	8	10	12
Recruits (%)	46	70	68	73	50
Average Number Harder To Get (%)	2.1	3.2	3.4	3.5	5.0
More Likely to Give Up (%)	43	43	46	53	63
	17	26	26	40	0
Number of Towers	24	141	112	15	8

The first row in the table indicates the percentage of towers which had obtained recruits during the previous twelve months (46 per cent of the 5-bell towers, for example) and the second row indicates the average number of recruits in those towers which obtained any. The next row shows the percentage of tower captains who indicated that recruits were now harder to get and the last row the percentage who indicated that recruits were now more likely to give up.

Table 7.2 Practice Nights by Number of Bells in the Tower

	Number of Bells				
	5	6	8	10	12
Hold Regular Practice (%)	67	80	86	100	86
Average Attendance All Bells Rung (%)	6.5	7.5	8.5	9.0	11.5
	94	87	56	57	57
Number of Towers	24	141	112	15	8

The % figures in the body of the table refer to the number of towers in the column total. Thus, for example, 67 per cent of the 24 captains at 5-bell towers reported a regular practice.

Table 7.3 The Use of Books in Towers

	Books Are			Best for	
	U	P	E	L	T
Beginners' Handbook	60	39	32	20	4
Diagrams	50	1	0	4	16
One-per-Learner Book	35	36	20	19	1
Ringers' Handbook	30	6	15	8	9
Ropesight	27	1	2	3	10
Doubles and Minor for Beginners	26	1	2	2	4
Follow-on Book	23	6	0	5	2
A Tutor's Handbook	15	0	0	1	35
From Rounds to Bob Doubles	12	4	3	2	1
Conducting for Beginners	11	0	0	0	2
Tower Captain's Handbook	11	0	0	0	4
Towards Better Striking	6	1	0	0	1
Triples and Major for Beginners	5	2	0	0	0
Responses	300	174	66	401	140

Key to Columns: U - Used; P - Provided; E - Encouraged; L- Learners;  
T - Teachers.

The figures in the body of the table are the percentages of the number of responses received from the tower captains. Thus, for example, there were 140 cases of a book being mentioned as 'best for teachers' (each respondent could nominate up to two), of which 35 per cent identified 'A Tutor's Handbook'.

Table 7.4 Preferred Topics for Ringing Courses

How to Teach Learners	55
Ringling Plain Bob	46
Tower Maintenance	37
Teaching Bell Handling	36
Conducting	29
Ringling Rounds and Call Changes	27
Ringling Surprise Methods	11
Rope-Splicing	11
Tower Captaincy and Leadership	10
Ringling Stedman	4

The figures in the body of the table are the percentages of the tower captains who indicated that they found such courses among the most useful.

Table 7.5 Tower Captain Evaluations of Association Branch/District Activities

	Generally Satisfactory	Generally Unsatisfactory	No Strong Opinion
Meetings	63	8	20
Practices	57	9	22
Social Events	43	7	39
Courses	33	9	42

The figures in the body of the table are the percentages of the tower captains giving the reply indicated in the column heading. The percentages do not sum to 100 as some gave no response to the question.

## Chapter 8

### Looking After the Bells: What the Survey Was Told

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 14 April 1989)

Care of bells is an important activity, and their upkeep calls for continued investment of small sums of money. How do towers cope? The questionnaire to tower captains in the recent Central Council Survey of Ringing included some items relevant to these issues, and the results are summarised here.

We had responses from 300 tower captains. Among them, 46 per cent indicated that the officers at their tower included a Steeple Keeper (or similar position). Of those 139 individuals, 71 per cent were elected by the ringers, 16 per cent were appointed by either the incumbent or the PCC, and the remainder obtained the post in 'some other way'. In 55 per cent of the cases where there was no official position of Steeple Keeper, any routine maintenance was normally done by the tower captain, whereas in a further 31 per cent it was done 'by any member of the band as the occasion arises'. The Central Council's Maintenance Handbook was used in only 16 per cent of the towers, and just 6 per cent had a copy of the Tower and Bells Handbook. A clear indication of the need for assistance was given by the responses of the tower captains to a question about the most valuable topics for ringing courses. They could select up to three from a list of topics and 37 per cent of the choices were for courses on 'Tower maintenance'.

When it comes to paying for routine maintenance, the commonest source of the money (36 per cent of the cases) is from tower funds; in 26 per cent, the PCC (or similar body) meets the bills; and in a further 25 per cent the costs are shared by the PCC and tower funds. Similarly with the purchase of new ropes, in 29 per cent of cases the cost is a call on tower funds, in 30 per cent the PCC pays, and in a further 29 per cent the two share the cost.

Where does the money come from for tower funds? Three common sources were investigated: peal fees; fees for visiting bands; and the fees for ringing at weddings. Regarding the first, only 30 per cent indicated that there was a fee levied on peal bands: £8, £6 and £4 were the commonest charges, in that order (in 20, 16 and 13 per cent of the towers respectively), although in 12 per cent the charge was between £20 and £25, inclusively, and one charged £36.

For visiting bands, only 16 per cent of the tower captains reported a standing charge. That was £2 in just over half of the cases reporting a charge; only seven reported a charge of £5 or more, with just one exceeding £10 (it was £22).

Regarding ringing for weddings, 95 per cent indicated that a fee is charged. The median rate is £20: only 3 per cent charge less than £10

whereas 10 per cent charge more than £30. In one-third of the towers, all of the money received is distributed among the ringers and in only 6 per cent do they get no payment; in the remainder (61 per cent) the money is shared between the ringers and tower funds.

There would seem to be a substantial need for more training in the skills of tower maintenance, therefore, and it may well be, given the price of ropes and the costs of maintenance, that many towers 'undercharge' for the use of their bells.

## Chapter 9

### Is It the Same Everywhere? A Geography Lesson from the Central Council Survey

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 7 July 1989)

The early reports from the Central Council Survey of Ringing have raised many questions in people's minds and have produced a number of queries. One of the most common has been 'Is it like that in our area?'. Because the Survey was designed to provide a picture for the British Isles as a whole, it is impossible to answer that question for any one district; the sample size there will be much too small, and it was agreed from the outset that no information would be published that could be traced to individual towers and ringers. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some general conclusions about the 'geography of the state of the ringing Exercise', and the Survey Committee report on their findings here.

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The geographical analyses reported here look at regions and settlement types. We also looked at differences between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties, but they were almost all insignificant.

**1 Regions.** We use seven - with apologies to those who dislike the 'new' counties: Southwest England (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset); Southeast England (Isle of Wight, Hampshire, West and East Sussex, Kent, Surrey, Greater London, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire); West Midlands (Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester, West Midlands, Shropshire, Staffordshire); East Midlands (Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire); East Anglia (Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire); North of England (Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cumbria, South, West and North Yorkshire, Humberside, Cleveland, Tyne and Wear, Durham, and Northumberland); and Rest of the British Isles (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands).

**2 Settlement Size.** We use five categories: Inner City of major conurbations; Suburban; Large City; Town; Village. The categorisation was inevitably somewhat arbitrary in some cases; at a later date we hope to incorporate population size for the villages.

### Where Do They Ring on Sundays?

Table 9.1 shows the percentage of towers where the bells were rung on the surveyed Sunday, according to the two classifications, and also by the number of bells in the tower.

There were very significant regional differences, with the two southern regions and the North of England having many more of their rings heard than was the case in the two Midlands regions and in East Anglia. The bells were most likely to be heard in the Rest of the British Isles, however.

There were significant differences among the settlement types, too, with the inner city and village church bells much more likely to be silent. (In all of these analyses, where we use the term significant this indicates the result of a statistical test designed to show whether a difference observed in a sample is likely to be present in the population from which the sample has been drawn. Thus where significant differences are identified, these almost certainly would have been present if we had studied all 5250 towers. No details of the statistical tests are given here! For those who want to know more, contact Ron Johnston.)

There is also a significant difference according to the number of bells in the tower; the larger the number, the greater the likelihood that the bells were rung on the Sunday in question.

Some regions and settlement types have more 5- and 6-bell towers than others, of course, so it could be that the regional and other differences identified in Table 9.1 are really just reflections of that fact. Testing for that (using what Ron Johnston calls an ANOVA design!!), we find that the regional difference disappears but that the settlement type difference remains. The smaller the number of bells in a tower, the less likely that they were rung on the Sunday in question; in addition, the bells were less likely to have been rung in villages than in other settlements, especially towns and suburbs, however many there are in the tower.

### Which Towers Have a Band of Ringers?

In our second article (Chapter 3), we looked at the number of ringers at the 471 towers for which we had information. Excluding the 41 towers where either the bells were unringable or there was a special case (see The Ringing World, 10 March 1989), we can analyse 430 cases here. (As an aside, we can note that of the 31 unringable towers, one-third occur in each of two regions - Southwest England and the East Midlands; three-quarters of them are in villages.)

Table 9.2 indicates the percentage of towers with a band, according to each of the classifications. Again, there is a substantial regional variation, with more than 80 per cent of the towers having a band in each of the two southern regions, plus the West Midlands, compared with only 56 per cent in the East Midlands and 68 per cent in East Anglia.

The North of England scores only just below 80 per cent, but the prize goes to the Rest of the British Isles, where 21 of the 24 towers reported having a band of ringers.

There is a substantial difference between the settlement types, too. Over 90 per cent of the towers in the suburbs, in the centres of the large cities (places like Bristol, Norwich and Nottingham, which is not to imply than any one of those three is represented in the Survey), and in the towns were reported as having bands of ringers, compared to only 63 per cent of the inner city churches and 70 per cent in the villages.

Of course the villages are more likely to have rings of 5, many fewer of which have a band of ringers, than are the towns. Some regions have more rings of 5 than others, too, so are the differences for regions and settlement types in Table 9.2 really reflections of the number of bells in the tower? And if so, is the real reason for the lack of a band the small number of bells or the small population served by the parish church? The analyses show that, taking account of the number of bells in the tower, the differences between the settlement types remain, but not those between regions. Village and inner city towers are least likely to have a band of ringers, however many bells there are.

#### **How Many Ringers?**

Table 9.3 gives the average number of ringers per bell in each of the categories, for the towers which had bands of ringers. It shows that among the regions, where towers have bands they are on average healthiest in terms of members in the Southeast and the North of England and, especially, in the Rest of the British Isles. There is also a substantial difference between settlement types; the village and inner-city bands tend to be the smallest.

Band size also varies according to the number of bells in the tower, as shown in Table 9.3. Once these variations were taken into account, however, the regional and settlement type variations remained. Relative to the number of bells in the towers, bands are largest in the towns and suburbs of the British Isles and smallest in the inner cities and villages; they are larger in the Rest of the British Isles than in 'mainland England', while within England the healthiest situation is in the Southeast and the North.

#### **And How Many People Rang on 20 November?**

When it comes to turnout rates, we are only able to analyse the 300 towers from which we received responses from the tower captains. We found no significant patterns; approximately the same turnout levels were recorded in each region and settlement type.

#### **What Did They Ring?**

Tower captains were asked what was regularly rung at their towers on Sundays. Table 9.4 shows that the larger the number of bells the greater the percentage of towers where Stedman, Treble Bob and Surprise

are regularly rung. In addition, those methods are more likely to be rung in the inner city and large city towers, and very unlikely to be rung in the villages, differences that hold even when the number of bells in the tower is allowed for. Regionally, there are fewer clear differences, but Stedman and Grandsire do seem to be more popular in the south of England than elsewhere.

### Recruitment and Change

Was there any variation in the relative growth and decline of ringing, by number of bells in the tower, by region, or by settlement type? Table 9.5 provides answers derived from the tower captains, and so doesn't refer to the towers where ringing stopped during the year and there was nobody left to answer.

Of the 300 tower captains, 201 (67 per cent) reported recruiting learners during the twelve months prior to the survey. There was a significant difference in the proportion of towers that obtained recruits only by region: 81 per cent of towers in the West Midlands and the North of England obtained recruits as did 73 per cent in the Southeast, compared to 50 per cent in East Anglia, 59 per cent in the East Midlands and 61 per cent in the Southwest; the percentage for the Rest of the British Isles was 68.

The average number of recruits per tower, over all towers in each category since we are interested in the total pattern of recruitment, is given in Table 9.5. The greater the number of bells, up to 10, the greater the number of new recruits. The city towers did better than those in the towns, suburbs and, especially, the villages. The Rest of the British Isles' towers did much better than those in the English regions, particularly the East Midlands and East Anglia. Tower captains were also asked how many of those recruits were still ringing at the time of the Survey, and the average numbers show the same general pattern by region but a very high wastage rate for the inner city towers and for the (small number of) rings of 12. The most significant difference, according to our statistical tests, was between the regions.

We also asked how many ringers had left their band during the preceding twelve months: 111 reported the departure of people who had given up ringing altogether; East Anglian towers apparently suffered worst in that respect, and the inner city towers lost none, but overall there were no significant differences. In 44 cases, ringers were lost to other towers in the local area; there were significant differences between the settlement types in the amount of loss, with the city towers faring best. And 104 towers lost ringers who left the area altogether: the greater the number of bells, the greater the average loss, largely because the larger rings are in the larger cities which experience the greatest bellringer mobility it seems; villagers are least likely to move away. Finally, 82 of the tower captains reported that proficient ringers had joined their bands over the period. Again, the main significant difference is between the settlement types; the villages got fewest immigrants, as might be expected, and the large

cities, though not the conurban inner cities, were the main beneficiaries - hence the larger average number for the rings of 8.

Overall, there was a net increase in the number of ringers during the year (a conclusion obtained by summing the numbers in columns 2 and 6 of Table 9.5 and subtracting from that figure the numbers in columns 3, 4, and 5) but it averaged only 0.69 ringers per tower - which is equivalent to about 3600 extra ringers for the country as a whole over the twelve-month period. As the final column of Table 9.5 shows, a net gain was reported in all of the categories except one - for 12-bell towers which suffered a net loss of ringers over the twelve-month period, largely because of the large numbers who either moved away from the area or gave up ringing. The other four types according to number of bells all experienced a net gain of between 0.68 and 0.86, or approximately two ringers for every three towers.

There were significant differences in the other two categories. By region, the Rest of the British Isles experienced by far the best net inflow, followed (at an average of just over one ringer per tower) by the West Midlands and then the Southeast. In East Anglia, the average situation was no real change in the number of ringers at all. By settlement type, the large cities and the suburbs performed worst, and the large cities the best. Overall, the situation in villages was three times better than that in the main conurbations.

\* \* \* \* \*

So where is ringing healthiest? Not, it seems, in the country with which it is generally associated - England - but rather in Scotland, Wales and Ireland and the Channel Islands, in all of which the opportunities are much fewer. In England, it is the inner city and village churches which seem to have most problems, and regionally ringing appears to be least healthy in the eastern counties.

Table 9.1 Percentage of Towers where the Bells were Rung on Sunday 20 November, 1988

Region		Settlement	Number of Bells		
Southwest	65	Inner City	63	5	22
Southeast	69	Suburban	80	6	58
West Midlands	50	Large City	83	8	75
East Midlands	42	Town	81	10	90
East Anglia	48	Village	46	12	89
North	73				
Rest of B.I.	86				

The figures in the table indicate the percentage of the towers in the relevant category reported by the incumbent as having their bells rung on the sample Sunday.

Table 9.2 Percentage of Towers with a Band of Ringers

Region		Settlement	Number of Bells		
Southwest	86	Inner City	63	5	55
Southeast	83	Suburban	92	6	86
West Midlands	82	Large City	92	8	92
East Midlands	56	Town	92	10	90
East Anglia	68	Village	70	12	100
North	77				
Rest of B.I.	88				

The figures in the table indicate the percentage of the towers in the relevant category reported as ringable and having a band of ringers.

Table 9.3 The Average Number of Ringers per Bell

Region		Settlement		Number of Bells	
Southwest	1.36	Inner City	1.22	5	1.24
Southeast	1.44	Suburban	1.45	6	1.43
West Midlands	1.32	Large City	1.70	8	1.26
East Midlands	1.22	Town	1.42	10	1.44
East Anglia	1.18	Village	1.24	12	1.44
North	1.44				
Rest of B.I.	1.59				

The figures in the table indicate the average number of ringers per bell in the towers reported as having a band of ringers.

Table 9.4 What is Rung Regularly on Sundays.

	Rounds/ Call Ch	Grandsire	Plain Bob	Stedman	Treble Bob	Surprise
<b>Region</b>						
Southwest	78	45	38	24	10	7
Southeast	87	51	67	26	14	16
West Midlands	87	50	62	12	13	9
East Midlands	59	41	53	9	12	12
East Anglia	60	24	47	13	12	11
North	83	35	53	8	11	10
Rest of B.I.	67	17	39	17	6	17
<b>Settlement Type</b>						
Inner City	40	40	20	40	0	40
Suburban	81	50	68	26	21	16
Large City	89	78	68	37	16	37
Town	84	51	57	22	15	12
Village	73	28	44	10	6	5
<b>Number of Bells</b>						
5	54	29	50	0	0	0
6	79	30	47	15	11	11
8	82	50	56	19	13	9
10	86	80	73	40	14	27
12	62	72	50	75	11	50

The figures in the table show the percentage of tower captains in the relevant category who indicated that the method indicated was regularly rung at their tower on Sundays.

Table 9.5 Recruitment and Change.

Region	Recruits		Proficient Gave Up	Ringers Who Moved		Who Joined	Net Change
	G	S		AT	FA		
Southwest	1.87	1.40	0.73	0.17	0.52	0.39	0.37
Southeast	2.20	1.64	0.69	0.12	0.57	0.48	0.74
West Midlands	2.59	1.84	0.43	0.23	0.50	0.47	1.15
East Midlands	1.66	1.19	0.54	0.24	0.31	0.25	0.35
East Anglia	1.63	1.42	1.17	0.13	0.58	0.50	0.04
North	2.65	1.76	0.81	0.16	0.64	0.32	0.47
Rest of B.I.	4.22	3.50	0.83	0.22	0.55	1.12	3.02
Settlement Type							
Inner City	2.75	0.75	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.25
Suburban	2.28	1.68	0.89	0.13	0.80	0.40	0.26
Large City	3.46	2.42	0.56	0.00	1.11	1.21	1.96
Town	2.43	1.80	0.85	0.21	0.43	0.54	0.85
Village	1.86	1.48	0.68	0.12	0.31	0.32	0.69
Number of Bells							
5	1.12	1.00	0.45	0.09	0.18	0.46	0.74
6	2.27	1.77	0.82	0.16	0.43	0.32	0.68
8	2.30	1.62	0.73	0.24	0.48	0.58	0.75
10	2.65	1.93	0.47	0.06	0.80	0.26	0.86
12	2.25	1.38	0.87	0.00	1.47	0.41	-0.55

The figures in the first six columns of the table show the average number of ringers per tower in each category. In the columns for Recruits, G indicates the number gained and S the number who stayed; thus, for example, the average 5-bell tower gained 1.12 recruits during the twelve months, of whom 1.00 were still ringing at the time of the survey. The next three columns show the number of proficient ringers who left each tower, on average, separated into those who gave up ringing all together, those who moved to another tower in the local area (AT) and those who moved from the Area (FA): the average 5-bell tower lost 0.45 who gave up ringing, 0.09 who moved to another local tower and 0.18 who left the area. The sixth column indicates the average number of proficient ringers who joined a band during the previous twelve months: 0.46 in the case of 5-bell towers. In the final column, the average net change is given, obtained by summing columns 2 and 6 and subtracting from that figure the sum of columns 3, 4 and 5.

## Chapter 10

### Bellringers: Who Are We?

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 2 June 1989)

The Central Council Survey of Ringing was undertaken to find out about the current state of the Exercise, in order to inform efforts to increase both the number of ringers and the number of bells that are rung each Sunday. It was not a major sociological study of ringers, but individual ringers and tower captains were asked some questions designed to give a general picture of the membership of the Exercise, as an aid to recruitment policies. In this, the latest in the series of articles emanating from the very busy Survey Committee and Ron Johnston's over-worked word processor, we learn something about ringers and their ringing.

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Because tower captains were asked a large number of other questions regarding the organisation of ringing, the personal information collected on them is less than that obtained from the 1052 individual ringers who responded to the Survey. Thus some of our findings cannot be generalised to all ringers, but only refer to ringers who are not tower captains.

#### A Brief Sociological Profile

We have three pieces of information about both tower captains and all other ringers - their sex, their age, and whether or not they attended a University, Polytechnic or College; in addition we know the occupation of all ringers (other than tower captains) who are currently in work

Table 10.1 shows that whereas there is only a slight preponderance of males among 'ordinary ringers' the post of tower captain is very much a male preserve. Tower captains are also older on average, not surprisingly given the substantial number of ringers aged under 20. (Ron Johnston tells us that both of these differences are statistically significant, and therefore almost certainly present in the populations from which the samples were drawn. He used a chi-square test in the first case and a Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test in the second!) Tower captains were less likely to have attended an institution of higher or further education (a Z test of proportions this time!), probably reflecting their older ages.

The percentage of all ringers who have attended a University, Polytechnic or College is very much higher than in the population at large, clearly suggesting that campanology is very much a 'middle class' activity. This is confirmed by the occupational data provided by the 633 ringers currently in paid work; see Table 10.2. (Classification of occupations is an extremely difficult task, even for professionals,

so we have only a general picture here for our coder had some difficulties.) Fully 53 per cent have been categorised in what are known as the higher status white-collar occupations (the various professions plus management and administration) with a further 22 per cent in the more routine white-collar tasks. Very few ringers gave occupations that are typically classified as manual (or 'blue-collar', or 'working class'), and none reported what are classified as 'unskilled' occupations, which is very different from the working population of the British Isles as a whole; fully 6 per cent are farmers, however, suggesting a 'middle class' preponderance in the rural areas as in the towns and cities.

### Ringling Histories

When did they learn to ring, and how old were they then? Over half of all ringers, and substantially more than half of tower captains, learnt to ring in their 'teens. Less than one-in-five tower captains were older than 29 when they took up the Exercise, compared with one-in-three of all other ringers.

Tower captains took up ringing much longer ago, on average, than did other ringers, three per cent as long ago as the decade of the First World War. In part this is not surprising, for they are on average older. But the age difference alone is insufficient to account for the major disparity shown in the lower half of Table 10.3; nearly half of all 'ordinary ringers' took up campanology in the 1980s. The implication is of a relatively small, 'hard core' of people who have been active for a long time, a substantial number of whom are tower captains, and a much larger number of relatively recent recruits, a large number of whom will probably not remain active for many years, if past trends are any guide. (We asked the 'other ringers' if there had been a period of more than a year, after they were taught, when they had done no ringing: 30 per cent said yes, so clearly we are able to attract back a substantial number of those who for some reason become 'lapsed ringers'.)

It is often claimed that ringing runs in families, and many who take it up do so because a close relative is already a ringer. Table 10.4 shows that at the time when they took up ringing, only one-in-seven had either a parent or a brother/sister who rang at the tower where they learned, and few had any other relative present. (Don't assume that nearly one-third had a member of their immediate family also in the tower; many of those with a parent-ringer also had a sibling-ringer in the family.) Ringing is clearly quite a family activity for the present generation, however; nearly one-in-five of our respondents has a spouse who is also a ringer, for example.

### Ringling Activities

What can they ring? Both groups were given a list of six methods and asked if they could ring them 'inside' - on any number of bells. The tower captains have wider repertoires (Table 10.5), but over half of all ringers have mastered Grandsire and/or Plain Bob 'inside' (to their own satisfaction at least), one-in-four can ring Cambridge Surprise,

and one-in-eight can ring Spliced Surprise. Less than two-thirds have ever rung a quarter-peal, however (a question not asked of tower captains) and only a small number had conducted one.

When it comes to peals, the tower captains are much more experienced, although nearly one-in-three of them have never rung one; of the other ringers, fully two-thirds have not experienced a first peal. The number who have rung 100 peals or more is small, even among tower captains. (We estimate from the samples that among the currently active Sunday-service ringers in the British Isles there are about 550 tower captains and about 1,900 other ringers who have rung at least 100 peals.)

Over half are regular attenders at services in the churches where they ring (Table 10.6), with tower captains slightly more so than others.

Most tower captains are members of a local Association, as are two-thirds of other ringers: tower captains are more likely to be/to have been active as an officer of an Association or one of its Branches/Districts. Average attendance at events during the previous 12 months was only twice, with as many as 47 per cent of "other ringers" recording that they had attended no events.

Penetration of The Ringing World is not great, with only just over half of all tower captains and one-third of "other ringers" seeing it regularly.

#### Some Attitudes

Finally, both groups were asked three sets of attitudinal questions, about ringing in general, about their own progress, and about the Associations.

The first set involved giving the respondents six statements which they were asked to agree or disagree with. The statements (with short titles for the table) were:

- The important thing is that the bells are rung on Sundays, not what methods are rung (Sunday ringing importance)
- Well-struck call-changes are preferable to less well-rung methods on Sundays (Call-changes well-struck)
- Most ringers are more concerned with learning methods than with striking properly (Methods not striking)
- Peals do little to advance the quality of Sunday ringing (Peals and Sunday ringing)
- Too many ringers put peal ringing before the encouragement of Sunday ringing (Peals before Sunday)
- Ringing has little part to play in modern church life (Ringing and Church Life)

Perhaps not surprisingly, there was general agreement with the first two statements (Table 10.7). Opinion was almost equally divided on each of the next three; that so many agreed with them suggests considerable scepticism among a large number of ringers regarding the merits of method-learning and peal-ringing. With regard to the last, it is of

more than passing interest that one-seventh of all ringers and one-ninth of tower captains agreed with a statement that 'Ringing has little part to play in modern church life', though of course we don't know whether for them this was a normative statement or just a description of the contemporary situation.

The second set of questions was introduced by one that asked

Do you feel that you would like to advance further in your ringing, but are unable to?

As Table 10.7 shows, exactly half of the sample of 'ordinary ringers' answered yes, as did 57 per cent of tower captains: clearly there is a substantial population of frustrated ringers out there in the towers! Those who answered yes were then asked whether this frustrated desire to advance came about because:

You feel you are not up to it.  
The band you ring with doesn't provide the opportunities.  
The standard of ringing in your area is low  
Some other reason

Tower captains were much less likely than other ringers to see their own inability as the reason for lack of advancement (Table 10.7), and more of them saw the problem as the calibre of their band.

Finally, questions were asked about four aspects of the work of ringing Associations and their Branches/Districts. Both groups were asked for their opinion of what their Branch/District provided in terms of ringing meetings, ringing practices, social events, and ringing courses: they were asked to grade each according to three categories - 'generally satisfactory', 'generally unsatisfactory' and 'no strong opinion'. The results are reported in Table 10.8; because substantial numbers didn't answer (perhaps because they have no experience, perhaps because the activities were not undertaken in their home area) we have added a fourth category of 'no opinion given'.

Tower captains were more likely to find each of the four activities either generally satisfactory or generally unsatisfactory than the other ringers, more of whom either had no strong opinion or had no opinion to express. This suggests that a substantial number of ringers have little, if any, experience of the activities of the Association Branches/Districts; perhaps fewer would feel frustrated about their own progress if they did?

Ringers other than tower captains were asked the same set of questions with regard to activities of the Association itself, rather than its Branches/Districts. Although again very few found what is provided 'generally unsatisfactory', about 70 per cent had either no strong opinion or no opinion to offer, clearly indicating that the Associations are having little impact on a large proportion of the 'ringing public'.

\* \* \* \* \*

What do we conclude from this analysis? Clearly ringing draws on a narrow social base, which may reflect the social structure of the church congregations or may tell us something about the appeal of ringing. Can it be widened? And the impact of the Associations on the average ringer appears to be weak. Again can it be widened; what can be done to involve more, for the good of ringing as a whole?

Table 10.1 Basic Demographic Data

	Tower Captains	Other Ringers
Sex		
Male	87	58
Female	13	42
Age		
Under 20	2	20
20 - 39	23	29
40 - 59	48	38
60 and Over	27	13
Attended University/ Polytechnic/College	28	44

The figures in the table are the percentages of the respective groups.

Table 10.2 Occupations of those Currently in Paid Work

Professionals in		Clerical	12
Law/Accountancy/		Sales	4
Statistics/Computing	6	Armed/Security Services	1
Civil Service/Local Government	2	Catering/Other	
Education	9	Personal Services	6
Medicine	6	Farming	6
Clergy	1	Skilled Manual Workers	6
Science/Engineering	10		
Others	11		
Management	9	Others	12

The figures in the table are the percentages currently in paid work whose occupations fall into the given categories.

Table 10.3 Ringing Histories

	Tower Captains	Other Ringers
Age When Learnt to Ring		
Under 15	47	41
15 - 19	21	17
20 - 29	14	10
30 - 39	8	14
40 - 49	7	11
50 or Over	3	6
Decade When Learnt		
1910s	3	0
1920s	3	2
1930s	8	2
1940s	18	7
1950s	19	10
1960s	18	12
1970s	18	19
1980s	13	48

The figures in the table are percentages of the respective groups.

Table 10.4 Family Links in Bellingring

	Was a Ringer at the Tower where Learned	Is a Ringer Now
Grandparent	2	1
Parent	14	13
Child	8	18
Spouse	8	19
Brother or Sister	16	18
Other Relative	6	10

The figures in the table are percentages of all ringers.

Table 10.5 Ringing Activities

	Tower Captains	Other Ringers
Methods Rung 'Inside'		
Grandsire	75	53
Plain Bob	83	62
Stedman	59	35
Kent	60	31
Cambridge	48	27
Spliced Surprise	26	14
Quarter Peals Rung		
0	*	39
1 - 10	*	27
11 - 50	*	16
51 - 100	*	5
More than 100	*	12
Conducted a Quarter Peal	53	17
Peals Rung		
0	29	65
1 - 10	29	17
11 - 50	14	7
51 - 100	8	3
More than 100	16	5
Conducted a Peal	28	7
Rung Changes 'in hand'	*	23
Tune-Ringing 'in hand'	*	43

The figures in the table are percentages of the respective groups.

\* No data collected

Table 10.6 Other Links to Ringing and the Church

	Tower Captains	Other Ringers
Attend Church Service regularly	59	50
Member Local Association	84	68
Average Number Events Attended in Last Twelve Months	2	2
Held Office		
Branch/District Level	39	15
Association Level	22	9
Attended Ringing Course as Student	24	15
Subscribes to <u>The Ringing World</u>	44	18
Sees <u>The Ringing World</u> regularly	52	17
Had copy 1988 <u>Ringing World Diary</u>	*	22
Has a copy of 'Dove'	*	32

The figures in the table are percentages of the respective groups, except for the third row of figures.

\* No data collected

Table 10.7 Attitudes

	Tower Captains	Other Ringers
Agree/Disagree statements		
Sunday ringing importance	98	94
Call-changes well-struck	93	88
Methods not striking	56	59
Peals and Sunday ringing	57	45
Peals before Sunday	46	40
Ringling and Church Life	11	15
Unable to Advance	57	50
Not up to it	13	23
No opportunity with band	42	31
Low standard in area	12	7
Some other reason	33	38

The figures in the table are percentages of the respective groups agreeing with the statements.

Table 10.8 Opinions of Association Activities

	Tower Captains		NSO	NOG	Other Ringers		NSO	NOG
	GS	GU			GS	GU		
<b>Branch/District</b>								
Meetings	63	8	20	9	46	4	30	20
Practices	57	9	22	12	53	5	24	18
Social events	47	3	39	11	35	4	39	22
Courses	33	9	42	15	19	6	47	28
<b>Association</b>								
Meetings	*	*	*	*	29	4	42	26
Practices	*	*	*	*	27	4	43	26
Social events	*	*	*	*	21	5	46	28
Courses	*	*	*	*	17	4	49	30

The figures in the table are percentages of the respective groups.

\* no data collected

GS generally satisfactory; GU generally unsatisfactory;  
NSO no strong opinion; NOG no opinion given.

## Chapter 11

### Itinerant Bands

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 16 June 1989)

The conventional view of the organisation of Sunday service ringing is that each tower has its own band of ringers who turn up once or twice every Sunday to ring for 30-60 minutes before a major service, usually Matins and/or Evensong. But this is not the situation in all parts of the British Isles. There are insufficient ringers available in some inner city areas to provide a separate band for each tower, for example, and joint bands which move from one church to another have been organised. In some rural areas, too, where parishes are small and livings have been amalgamated, there is a similar problem of sustaining bands of ringers at each church; again, the solution in a substantial number of cases is a combined band which provides ringers for several churches, perhaps not ringing at each on every Sunday but moving round them according to a rota. And then there are the towers which rely on others to provide their ringers on occasion, as with some Cathedrals which have a band provided by a different branch of the Diocesan Association on successive Sundays.

Just how common are such arrangements; how out of date are we in sticking to the traditional model of one-tower-one-band? Ron Johnston's latest article based on the Central Council Survey of Ringing offers an answer.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of the nearly 500 incumbents interviewed, 260 indicated that their bells were rung on the sampled Sunday (20 November 1988). In 36 per cent of the cases they were rung only once on that day. The incumbents were asked the composition of the band; four categories were offered, as shown in Table 11.1. The conventional model is correct for the large majority of towers - each has its own band of ringers. But the band is shared with other churches in 29 of the 260 cases, according to the incumbent.

In addition to the towers where the bells were rung on the sampled Sunday there were another 40 for which the incumbent reported that they were rung on most Sundays but not, for some reason, on 20 November 1988. Nearly half of those 40 have their bells rung by a band that provides the ringers for other churches too (Table 11.1). This gives a total of 47 towers out of the sampled 500, nearly 10 per cent of all towers, in which the band is shared with at least one other church.

Where are they? Most reported shared bands operate at 6- and 8-bell towers (Table 11.2). But those are the most common towers in any case. The second set of figures - in brackets in the table - indicates the percentage of towers in each category reported as having a shared band; the highest figures, perhaps surprisingly, were for 8- and 12-bell towers, with 11 per cent of all 8-bell towers where the bells are regularly rung on Sundays relying on a shared band.

There is a clear north:south divide shown in Table 11.2. As many as one-in-six of all towers in the Southwest and Southeast were reported as having a shared band, compared with about one-in-seven in the Midlands: shared bands were much rarer in East Anglia and in the North of England, and none were reported in the Rest of the British Isles, undoubtedly because most of the towers there (with the exception of some parts of Wales) are considerable distances apart. With regard to settlement type, most shared bands are at village churches, but there are no significant differences between the different settlement types in the percentages with shared bands (the second figures in the table), although half of the small number of inner city towers were reported as having shared bands - which accounts in part at least for the large number of 12-bell towers with such an arrangement.

How many people are involved? Of the 300 tower captains who responded to the survey 45 indicated that they are responsible for the ringing at churches other than that for which they were questioned. This tallies reasonably with the incumbents' returns, given that not all tower captains replied to our questionnaire. Most of the 45 organised ringing at one other tower only, though one was responsible for the ringing at a total of four others. Only just over half of them were also responsible for ringing at towers where the bells were rung on the surveyed Sunday (20 November 1988), however, so either their band does not visit every tower in its group on every Sunday or it has insufficient ringers to ensure ringing everywhere on every Sunday.

Of course, a shared band may have a separate tower captain for each tower; none of the respondent tower captains responsible for ringing at more than one tower is in charge at a 12-bell tower, for example. We also asked tower captains 'Do you personally regularly ring at another tower on Sundays', and 29 per cent replied yes, so more ring at several churches than are responsible for the ringing at several towers. Over half of those responsible for the ringing at a 5-bell tower and one-third of those in charge of ringing at one of the small number of 12s in the Survey also rang regularly at one or more other towers, for example. Ringing at another tower was particularly common among tower captains at the few inner city towers, and was much more prevalent in the southern than in the northern regions.

The tower captains were also asked how many times they rang on 20 November 1988: just under half rang once; 19 per cent rang twice; 7 per cent rang more than twice; and 23 per cent didn't ring at all. Ringing on three or more occasions was most frequent among the small number of 12-bell tower captains; those associated with 8-bell towers were most likely to ring once only. Not ringing at all on the day was much commoner among those associated with 5- and 6-bell towers (42 and

26 per cent respectively), suggesting that one of the reasons may have been an insufficiency of ringers available. Regionally, non-ringing on the Sunday in question was commonest in East Anglia (45 per cent of all tower captains there) and rarest in the North of England and the Rest of the British Isles. (Interestingly, of those who reported that they regularly ring at more than one tower, 54 per cent rang only once on 20 November, compared with 46 per cent of those who ring at one tower only.)

Among the 1052 other ringers who responded to the Survey, 19 per cent also ring regularly at towers other than that from which they were sampled. They were asked if this is because their band provides the ringers for more than one church or because they are members of more than one band: 58 per cent said the former and 53 per cent the latter, with 28 per cent (6 per cent of all ringers) being both a member of a band that services more than one tower and a member of more than one band! Overall, about 12 per cent of all ringers are members of bands that staff more than one tower, and about 8 per cent are members of more than one band (with the latter presumably able to do so because the bells are rung at different times).

Nearly half of all the respondents from 12-bell towers reported ringing at other towers regularly on Sundays, as did 30 per cent of those from 10-bell towers and 28 per cent of those from the 5-bell towers; the figure for both 6- and 8-bell towers was 17 per cent. Ringing at more than one church is more typical of cities than of towns and villages; the figures for the five settlement types (see our article in The Ringing World for 7 July, 1989: Chapter 10) are - inner cities, 40 per cent; suburbs, 11 per cent; large cities, 39 per cent; towns, 16 per cent; villages 18 per cent. Of those who ring at more than one tower, three-quarters of those based at 5-, 6- and 12-bell towers reported that it was because their band serviced more than one church, whereas that was the case with only about half of the respondents from 8- and 10-bell towers (who are more likely to free-lance among several towers, it seems!).

When asked on how many occasions they rang on 20 November last, 43 per cent said only once, 16 per cent replied twice, and 5 per cent rang more than twice: fully 36 per cent of all the ringers surveyed did not ring on that day (and only very few volunteered the information on the questionnaires that they would have done but for the weather). Not ringing on the day was particularly prevalent in the case of ringers associated with 5-bell towers (66 per cent) and least common among those associated with 12-bell towers (21 per cent). There were no significant differences between regions in the turnout rate, but there were between the settlement types: in the villages, 42 per cent did not ring on 20 November and only 2 per cent rang more than twice; in the inner cities, 19 per cent did not ring and 44 per cent rang three times or more

Of the ringers questioned, 63 per cent attended practice at their home tower during the week prior to the surveyed Sunday (which compares with 73 per cent of their tower captains). In addition, 26 per cent of them reported attending a practice at another tower during that week

(ringers from 5-, 10- and 12-bell towers were more likely to do this than were others; not surprisingly, ringers living in the Rest of the British Isles were least likely to). When asked why (they were given a list of four possible reasons, plus an 'any other' category) 40 per cent said it was because 'ringing elsewhere helps to improve your ringing'; the other three reasons got similar levels of support (along with 'any other'), with 17 per cent (over 4 per cent of all respondents) reporting that they were helping to train a band there.

\* \* \* \* \*

In a large-scale survey, designed to identify general patterns, it is not possible to explore particular arrangements in detail; all that the survey can do is point to issues that need further research. The findings presented here clearly indicate a potentially fruitful area for future inquiry, and perhaps readers of The Ringing World can help by writing in and describing the situation where they ring. If a third or more of British Isles' church towers with rings of five or more bells are silent, in many cases because of a shortage of ringers and potential ringers in the congregations and parishes that they serve, then perhaps a way forward to get more bells ringing is to get more joint bands organised. There is substantial experience already available on which to draw.

One further implication of what we have presented here is that our earlier estimate of the number of ringers in the British Isles (Chapter 4) may have been too generous because we did not take account of the amount of potential double-counting involved in the method used. Up to 20 per cent of the ringers surveyed in November 1988 as members of the bands associated with the sampled 500 towers could have been surveyed if a totally different sample of 500 had been taken, because they are either members of a joint band or are members of more than one band. Several ways of allowing for this double-counting have been tried now that these additional data are available, and suggest that the number of ringers in the British Isles may be much closer to that figure of one-per-bell (i.e. about 36,000) than we initially thought. The statistical niceties of the estimating procedures are of little relevance, however. What is important is that we need more ringers, and more ringers to ring at more churches; the former calls for recruitment drives, whereas the latter calls for mobilisation of ringers in an area to service as many towers as feasible.

Table 11.1 Nature of the Band

	Rang on 20.11.1988	Did not ring on 20.11.1988
A regular band associated with that church only	87	52
A regular band that rings at that church and at others too	11	45
Visitors who don't normally ring at that church	1	0
Identity unknown to the incumbent	1	1
<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>40</b>

The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals

Table 11.2 Shared Bands by Location and Number of Bells

Number of Bells	Region	Settlement Type
5	Southwest	Inner City
6	Southeast	Suburban
8	West Midlands	Large City
10	East Midlands	Town
12	East Anglia	Village
	North	
	Rest of B.I.	

The figures in the table are percentages. The first figure indicates the percentage of the towers with shared bands that are in the relevant category; the second (in brackets) indicates the percentage in that category that have shared bands. Thus, for example, 4 per cent of all shared bands operate in 12-bell towers, and 13 per cent of 12-bell towers have a shared band.

## Chapter 12

### Activity at the Grass Roots

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 6 October 1989)

To date, all of the reports from last year's Central Council Survey of Ringing have focused on information gained from incumbents, tower captains, and individual ringers. In addition to those sample investigations, the Survey involved a complete enumeration of the General Secretaries of territorial ringing Associations (or Guilds or Societies) in the British Isles, and the Secretaries of all of their Branches/Districts. In this and two later articles on behalf of the Survey Committee, Ron Johnston turns to the analyses of those data, looking first at the Branches/Districts to give an overall picture of activity at the grass roots of ringing organisations in the British Isles.

\* \* \* \* \*

In all, we sent questionnaires to 194 Branch/District Secretaries (hereafter we refer to them all as Branches), and received replies from 187, which is an excellent 96 per cent response rate. (Steve Coleman did a superb job encouraging all the Secretaries to respond.) This presentation of the results looks first at basic membership data, and then turns to the major activities.

#### A Statistical Profile

The average Branch covers an area containing about 23 towers, of which 17 have ringers who are Association members (Table 12.1); given that approximately 73 per cent of all towers have at least one ringer, this implies that almost all towers where there are ringers have at least one Association member. (Nevertheless, 91 per cent of Secretaries responded 'yes' to the question 'Are there towers in the area covered by your Branch where the ringers play no part in the Branch activities?'.)

Average Branch membership is about 123, or just under 6 per tower, counting only those towers with members; if all towers are used, we get an average of just over 5 per tower. The percentage of towers in a Branch with members varies widely, from less than 10 in 3 per cent of the cases to 100 in 7 per cent (14 Branches only out of the 187). Similarly the number of members per tower ranges widely, from 0.07 to 13.14 if we take all towers as our base, and from 1.58 to 13.14 again if we take only those towers with members (Table 12.1).

In terms of running the Branches, 71 per cent reported having a committee. The average committee had 9 members, though the range was from 1 to 33. On average they were drawn from six different towers; the majority met between three and five times a year.

The percentages reporting particular office holders were:

Ringling Master	98	Deputy Ringling Master	43
Secretary	68	Treasurer	37
Secretary/Treasurer	28	Chairman	75

In addition 30 per cent of the Branches had one other officer, 30 per cent had two others, and 12 per cent had three others; only 17 per cent of those with a committee 'survived' with one or more of the six listed above and no other.

And what activities do these officers and committees organise?

### Meetings and Practices

The Saturday afternoon and evening meeting, with ringing before and after a church service, tea, and business meeting, is the traditional Branch activity. Of the 187 respondents, 94 per cent reported that their Branch holds such meetings. The average number held was about 11 (more or less one per month) though 6 per cent held less than 4 and another 12 per cent held more than 20. Average attendance at meetings was about 23, but 10 per cent of Branch secretaries reported averages below 12; countering that, 7 per cent averaged attendances in excess of 40 persons. Of the Branches, 61 per cent advertised all of their meetings in The Ringing World, and only 5 per cent never advertised there.

With regard to the ringing, exactly half of the Branches had special methods to be rung at some or all of their meetings. (We intended to find out what they rang, but unfortunately produced a badly-worded question: the information provided suggests that Cambridge Surprise is the commonest method rung, in just over half of Branches, followed by Grandsire and Plain Bob and then Stedman, London, and Spliced Surprise; of the eight methods that we listed, Erin was by far the least popular, being regularly rung in 19 per cent of Branches only!)

A church service was held at every meeting by 17 per cent of Branches; 8 per cent held no services. There was a business meeting associated with all ringing meetings by 18 per cent of Branches also, with only one Branch reporting that it never held such a meeting.

In addition to Saturday meetings, week-day evening meetings have increased in popularity in recent years, as people have become more mobile and working hours shorter (except for members of the Survey Committee!). Just over half of the Branches held such meetings during the twelve months prior to the Survey (which took place in November 1988); the average number was 8. In addition, Branch quarter peals were organised in 59 per cent of cases, and Branch peals in 22 per cent.

The popularity of striking contests has increased greatly in recent years, from a situation only a decade or so ago when very few were held. Fully 73 per cent of the Branches held a striking contest during the previous twelve months. Table 12.2 shows the number of teams

entering, which averaged 6. On average these were drawn from just over 5 towers, so less than one tower in four in the average Branch (or one tower in three if we look just at towers with members) entered at least one team in the local contest.

### **Social Events**

In many Branches, the highlight of the year used to be the annual coach outing. Sixty-one per cent of Branches held an outing in the period studied, with an average attendance of just under 30. If all of those attending were ringers, no more than a quarter of the members attended in the average Branch; since many ringers take family members with them on such outings, it is probable that only about one-eighth of the ringing members went.

Seventy per cent of the Branches held social events during the year; of those which did, most held only one, but about 10 per cent held four or more.

### **Promoting Ringing**

A series of questions was put regarding unrung and unringable towers within the territories served by the Branches. Just over one-quarter of the Secretaries reported that there were no unringable bells in their Branch area, but six indicated the existence of ten or more unringable towers. Table 12.3 shows that the great majority of the Branches have less than 10 per cent of their towers unringable, although in one case nearly one-third are; the average is 6 per cent unringable, which is one tower in about seventeen, or a little over one tower per Branch.

With regard to ringable bells which are not rung regularly on Sundays, the picture is much more gloomy, in line with our earlier reported findings from the other elements of the Survey. Only 9 per cent of Branches reported that all of the ringable bells are rung regularly on Sundays (Table 12.3) and nearly ten per cent reported that half of the towers where the bells could be rung are silent; the average was 20 per cent.

The Secretaries were asked whether their Branches had done anything during the previous twelve months to remedy the situation regarding unrung bells in any way. With regard to unringable bells, 36 per cent said that something had been done to get at least some ringable again, with exactly half of them saying that they had achieved some success. And with regard to silent but ringable bells, 33 per cent reported some activity to try and get ringing restarted. When asked if there were towers where ringing now takes place thanks to Branch efforts during the last 12 months, 39 per cent replied yes.

### **Ringling Courses**

Like striking contests, ringling courses have increased in popularity very substantially in recent years, again in part at least because of the greater mobility and amount of leisure time enjoyed by most

people. When asked if their Branch had run any courses during the previous twelve months, 38 per cent of the Secretaries replied that they had. Most (42 of the 69) ran just one course: 18 ran two, five ran three, one ran four, and three ran 5. Of the 112 courses, the largest number (27) were all-purpose, covering a range of topics; the most popular for single topic for a course was Plain Bob (23) followed by courses on 'First steps in change-ringing' (13), Standard Methods (7) and Stedman (6).

The majority of those courses were small, not surprisingly given the average branch size (Table 12.4); the average attendance was about nine students, with six helpers and two tutors. Most of the courses were short too, with all-day Saturday the most popular, followed by single-evening and half-day on Saturday.

### Keeping in Touch

Of the 187 Branches from which we obtained information, 39 per cent reported that they produce a regular Newsletter. (Many Secretaries responded to our request and sent copies, which are giving Steve Coleman many hours of happy reading. Note to Secretaries; to ensure that copies of all Newsletters are available for posterity, and for the future historians of ringing too, make sure that the Central Council Library receives a copy of every issue.) The great majority of them appear quarterly (33 per cent) or less frequently, though nearly 10 per cent are monthly. Circulation is generally small; some clearly produce one copy per tower only, and few apparently provide a copy for every member.

With regard to other publications, half indicated that they have a bookstall open for the sale of Central Council and other publications at Branch business meetings.

### And How About Health at the Grass Roots?

Readers will make their own minds up regarding the health of Branch/District activities, as indicated by the data provided here. We asked the Branch Secretaries three questions to see what they thought (Table 12.5).

A major task of Branches is to promote Sunday service ringing in their area, so we asked Secretaries about the current situation. Ten per cent thought the overall state of Sunday service ringing was declining, and nearly a quarter thought things were improving. This situation could be attributed to the Branches, but although you could argue that a strong Branch produces a healthy Sunday situation you could just as readily argue the opposite: healthy Sunday service bands mean healthy Branches. The correlation isn't that strong anyhow, and nearly a quarter of the Secretaries reported a decrease of interest among ringers in Branch activities over recent years.

So are the Branches relevant in the contemporary situation? One would

expect the Secretaries, who are presumably committed activists, to say yes. Our question was

Some ringers claim that traditional Branch activities (particularly Saturday meetings) are of little relevance or interest to the majority of ringers

and we asked whether they agreed, disagreed, or had no opinion. As many as 26 per cent agreed, so a substantial proportion believe that if Branches are to have a major role in the promotion of the Exercise in the future, it will be different from the part traditionally played.

Table 12.1 Branch Size

	Towers in Area Served	Towers with Members		Members
5 - 9	3	12	0 - 24	1
10 - 14	11	23	25 - 49	4
15 - 19	20	31	50 - 74	14
20 - 24	19	16	75 - 99	18
25 - 29	14	7	100 - 124	14
30 - 34	9	6	125 - 149	15
35 - 39	8	4	150 - 174	10
40 - 44	4	1	175 - 199	9
45 - 49	4		200 - 224	3
50 or more	8		225 - 249	3
			250 or more	8
Number Replying	183	186		183

The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals

Table 12.2 Striking Contests

	Number of Teams Entered	Number of Towers Represented
1 - 4	23	29
5 - 8	56	58
9 - 12	15	11
13 - 16	5	1
17 - 20	1	0
21 or more	1	2

Number Replying	136	137
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The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals

Table 12.3 Unringable and Unrung Bells

	Unringable	Ringable but Not Rung
0	26	8
1 - 5	25	4
6 - 10	20	12
11 - 15	14	15
16 - 20	9	12
21 - 25	2	13
26 - 30	1	11
31 - 35	2	8
36 - 40	1	6
41 - 45	0	3
46 - 50	0	1
51 or more	0	7

Number Replying	183	180
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The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals

Table 12.4 Ringing Courses

	Students	Helpers		Tutors
<b>Attendance</b>				
0	0	11	0	6
1 - 5	19	30	1 - 2	68
6 - 10	48	42	3 - 4	21
11 - 15	13	10	5 - 6	3
16 - 20	8	5	7 - 8	1
21 - 25	8	2	9 or more	2
26 or more	4	1		
<b>Length</b>				
One Evening		24	Several Evenings	1
Saturday - Half Day		22	Saturday - All Day	38
Weekend		0	Longer than Weekend	1
Other		15		

The figures in the table are percentages of the 106 courses for which we have details.

Table 12.5 Branch Health

State of Sunday Service Ringing		Interest in Branch Activities		Relevance of Branch Activities	
Improving	25	Increased	34	Agree	26
Static	66	The Same	43	Disagree	66
Declining	9	Decreased	22	No Opinion	5

The figures in the table are percentages of the respondents

## Chapter 13

### Associations in Action

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 25 August 1989)

Having looked in an earlier article at the activities at the grass roots of ringing Associations, Ron Johnston turns now in this latest article based on the Central Council Survey of Ringing to the Associations themselves. The analysis is based on a 100 percent response from the General Secretaries of the 34 territorial Associations with constituent Districts/Branches.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### How Big?

The Associations range in their number of resident members (i.e. excluding non-resident life members, or the equivalent, most of whom join in order to ring peals accredited to the Association) from 81 to 2152.

Most have at least four categories of membership. Ordinary membership (or the equivalent) is available in all. Table 13.1 shows the distribution of Associations (less the one which gave no figures) by number of Ordinary members; the average for the latest year was just over 500.

Eight different subscription levels were charged, ranging from £1.00 per annum to £5.00. In four Associations Ordinary members paid £1.00, with £1.50 the fee in another one. In six, the charge was £2.00 and in another five you were asked for £2.50. The commonest subscription level was £3.00, in 13 Associations; two charged £3.50, two £4.00, and one charged £5.00. To qualify as an Ordinary member, fifteen of the Associations required ability at change-ringing, with four indicating that a member has to be able to ring a set number of changes. There were no qualifications (i.e. anybody could be elected) in seven cases.

Two other membership categories common in more than half of the Associations were Life and Honorary; most had only a few of them (Table 13.1). In most, election to these levels was honorific, was not open to all, and did not depend on ringing abilities. In most cases there was no subscription.

Thirteen of the Associations had an Associate member category, for which there was no particular ringing qualification. Only one of them had more than 100 such members; the subscriptions ranged from £0.30 (one case) to £3.00 (four cases). There were eleven Associations with a category of Junior member, with most charging £1.00 as a subscription, and seven had a category of Senior/Retired member.

And what do the members get for their money? All but one of the Associations publishes an Annual Report, and most provided Steve Coleman with a copy to read; he's now a mine of information on the niceties of Reports! In 32 per cent, members are offered an insurance scheme; in all but one, the cost came from the subscription and did not involve the members separately opting to join such a scheme.

Most Associations (88 per cent) also raise money by charging a fee for peals which are to be credited to them. Fees ranged from £1 to £5, with £2 the norm. In 53 per cent of the Associations which charge a fee at least part of the income is earmarked for specific purposes; either one or both of the Bell Repair Fund and the cost of producing the Annual Report is the use of the money in almost every case.

### **Coming Together**

Much of the activity to promote more and better ringing takes place at the Branch/District level, and the Associations per se meet much less frequently. Apart from their Annual General and other business meetings, most organise a variety of functions intended to promote ringing, both directly (i.e. ringing events) and indirectly (i.e. social events organised to promote good fellowship among ringers).

Regarding ringing events, striking contests have increased in popularity enormously in recent years, and 94 per cent of the Associations (i.e. all but two) reported holding at least one contest in the twelve months prior to the Survey (which took place in November 1988); 59 per cent held two. The most popular type of contest is that open to any tower within the Association with a given number of bells (Table 13.2), followed by contests between winners of Branch/District competitions. The majority attracted between 5 and 9 entries, with the maximum being 29 (which must have tested the judges' powers of concentration).

Regarding social events, half of the Associations held an Annual Dinner in the year in question: attendances ranged from 40 to 202, with an average just under 90. If all of those attending were members of the Association, this gives an average of 12 per cent of the members going to the Annual Dinner.

Associations were also asked whether they organised other social events in the year surveyed; 56 per cent responded that they did, with five Associations holding two such events, one holding three, and the remainder holding just one. The nature of the events ranged very widely, the most popular single type being a barn dance: attendances averaged about 60.

### **Promoting Ringing**

General Secretaries were asked whether their Associations organised any activities designed for the following three purposes, with the

percentages answering yes:

To increase the number of ringers	24
To increase the number of towers where the bells are rung on Sundays	32
To increase the standard of ringing	76

Ringling courses are an increasingly popular way of working to improve the standard of ringing; 53 per cent of the Associations ran at least one course during the year in question, with one-third of those running only one and one-third running three or more. The great majority of the courses catered for a range of activities; of the more specific courses, only those organised to develop the ringing of Plain Bob appeared more than twice. Almost all of the courses were for a single day - Saturday. The great majority of them catered for 30 students or less, with an average attendance in the high 'teens; most involved two or three tutors/instructors and about ten helpers.

### Promoting Bells

Nearly all (91 per cent) of the Associations offer an advisory service for churches with regard to bell maintenance and repair. All but one reported that the service was approached for advice during the preceding twelve months, with an average of six approaches for those which were able to record the number. In addition, 55 per cent reported that they had approached the Central Council's Towers and Belfries Committee for assistance at some time.

All of the Associations have a Bell Repair Fund, an activity which is promoted by the Central Council's Bell Restoration Funds Committee, which monitors and reports on the operation of those funds every three years. These Funds disbursed up to £11,000 each in 1987, with an average of just under £2000; three made no grants in that year. The largest number of separate grants was to nine towers; most Associations made grants to no more than three.

Methods of raising money for the funds included collections at ringing meetings (91 per cent) and the use of covenant schemes (82 per cent) in most cases. In one-third of the Associations, all or part of the peal fee was allocated to the fund, and a part of the annual subscription was similarly allocated in 44 per cent. (The percentage of the subscription allocated to the Bell Repair Fund ranged from 5 to 67, with an average of 33.)

Most Associations offer grants only, though one-third reported that they also offered loans and/or guarantees. All were prepared to make grants for repairs to existing bells and frames; 79 per cent would support augmentation schemes; 88 per cent would contribute towards the cost of replacing existing bells by a new ring; and 79 per cent would contribute towards the costs of new rings in towers without bells.

## Evaluation

So how do the General Secretaries evaluate what their Associations do? We asked two questions about this.

The first enquired whether interest in the Association's activities had changed over the last few years. Few (three of the 34) thought it had decreased, and just over one-half thought things had stayed about the same (Table 13.3). The second question was predicated on the belief that promoting Sunday service ringing is the major task of Associations. We asked whether the situation with 'ringing (and specifically Sunday service ringing) is currently improving, static, or declining'. Of the 34, 12 thought it was improving, and 21 thought things were static. Only one said the situation was declining.

So things are being held steady in most parts of the country. What do we have to learn from those where interest is increasing and the situation regarding Sunday service ringing is improving?

Table 13.1 Associations by Size

	Ordinary		Life	Honorary
<200	2	0 - 9	7	5
200 - 399	5	10 - 19	3	3
400 - 599	12	20 - 29	4	3
600 - 799	4	30 - 39	3	2
800 - 999	5	40 - 49	1	1
1000 - 1199	3	50 - 59	1	2
1200 - 1399	0	60 - 69	1	0
1400 - 1599	0			
1600 - 1799	1			
1800 - 1999	0			
2000 - 2199	1			
<b>Number responding</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>

Table 13.2 Association Striking Contests

Eligibles		Entries	
All Towers in Association	18	1 - 4	145
All Towers with Given		5 - 9	57
Number of Bells	38	10 - 14	20
Winners of Branch Contests	25	15 - 19	5
Any Band from within		20 or more	4
Association	2		
Other	18		

The figures in the table are percentages of all contests held

Table 13.3 Evaluation of Association Activities

Interest in the Association's Activities		Situation with regard to Sunday Service Ringing	
Increased	38	Improving	35
Stayed the Same	53	Static	62
Decreased	9	Declining	3

The figures are percentages of the total number of Associations

## Chapter 14

### The Undivided Societies

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 10 November 1989)

In two recent articles, Ron Johnston has reported on what the Central Council Survey of Ringing Committee found from their questionnaires addressed to the General Secretaries and the Branch/District Secretaries of the territorial ringing Associations which are divided into two or more subordinate areas. To complement those findings, he now discusses the responses from the General Secretaries of the 'Undivided Societies', those which have no Branch/District structure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Questionnaires were sent to the Secretaries of 25 Societies (an omnibus term to cover associations, guilds etc), selected because they organise ringing activities in defined areas and have more than a small number of affiliated towers (hence the various university, polytechnic and college guilds were excluded, along with the 'professional' associations, such as the National Police Guild and the Guild of Post and Telecom Ringers). We sent the two questionnaires designed for the General and Branch Secretaries respectively of the other Associations, with the request that answers be provided to the relevant questions on each. (This meant that there was some repetition, and we are grateful to the Secretaries for their forbearance. Checks show that when they answered a question twice, they gave the same answer on each occasion!) Seventeen replies were received, and form the basis for this report.

The majority of the Societies are small, with an average total membership of 128, though this includes one reporting a membership of 1000 and two with none (presumably those in the latter category are associations with no defined membership, as is likely to be the case with the former too). Most report having Ordinary and Junior (or some similar category) members; few have any others. They cover areas containing between 15 and 115 towers (the average was 42), with between 11 and 40 of them providing members; in two cases, all of the towers in the area had members affiliated to the Society, with an average of two-thirds of towers providing members.

What activities do they organise? Fifteen reported that they hold regular Saturday meetings, with one holding 50 in the year, but the average was one per month; the average attendance was about 20, with a maximum of 60. A church service was held at all or some of the meetings in 14 cases, and a business meeting in 15. Only five also held regular midweek meetings.

At least one striking contest was held in the year prior to the Survey in 15 Societies (with three holding two and the others one each); on average 8 bands entered. Ten held an annual outing, with about 30

participating. Social events were organised in 15 (twelve held an annual dinner, with an average attendance of 45). Quarter-peals and peals were each organised in 11 cases; seven Societies had tried to get unringable towers open again in their areas during the previous year (though only one was able to report success), and success in getting Sunday-service ringing restarted at one tower at least during that year was reported by seven.

There was a committee to oversee the organisation in 13 of the 17 Societies. Committee size ranged from 6 to 31 (average 11), representing from 4 to 26 towers (in one case, every tower was represented). All Societies had a Ringing Master (with five having a Deputy also); 16 had both a Secretary and a Treasurer, with the posts being combined in the other. Only six had a Chair(man/person).

Whereas in many respects these smaller Societies are similar to their larger counterparts in the activities organised, in others they differ. Only 3 of the 17 reported holding any ringing courses during the previous year, for example; only 5 produce a Newsletter and 9 an Annual Report; 8 have a peal-booking fee; three offer insurance cover to their members; and ten have a Bell Repair Fund, disbursing grants of up to £2300 per annum to as many as four towers, with an average allocation of about £500.

So how do the Secretaries evaluate what is going on in their territories? The answers to the two standard questions were as follows:

Would you say that, over the last few years, interest among ringers in your Society's activities has:

Increased	7
Stayed Much the Same	6
Decreased	4

Would you say that within the area covered by your Society, ringing (and specifically Sunday service ringing) is currently:

Improving	8
Static	6
Declining	2

These answers compare very favourably with those reported in our earlier articles ('At the grass roots' - The Ringing World, 6 October 1989: Chapter 12 - and 'Associations in action' - The Ringing World, 25 August 1989: Chapter 13). Does this mean that the undivided societies are more effective? We leave you to judge, while not promising that we won't return to the subject ourselves.

\* \* \* \* \*

With this piece we have now published all of the basic material produced by the respondents to our various questionnaires. These presentations, plus that made at the Central Council Open Meeting in

Birmingham and the various discussions led by members of the Survey Committee at meetings around the country, have stimulated many reactions from ringers, including letters to The Ringing World editor and the interesting series of articles on individual bands.

So what has it all told us? A great deal, we believe, or we wouldn't have persisted (and the editor would have told us not to!). And what next? We have our own plans to produce two series of short pieces (Survey Snippets, like that on 'Age, experience and recruitment' - The Ringing World, 15 September 1989: Chapter 15) and a series of articles by Steve Coleman, under the title 'Rummaging Through' (see The Ringing World, 1 September 1989) which will look at some of the potential lessons of the findings: are smaller societies more effective at encouraging participation? do bigger societies collect more per capita for Bell Repair Funds? and so forth. Perhaps there are questions you would like answered, having seen the basic information that we have. If so, let us know, by contacting one of the members of the Committee.

Meanwhile, as you know, the Central Council has established a new committee (temporary if Geoff Harris has his way!) to suggest ways in which the Council, on the occasion of its Centenary (or is it Centennial?), should act to promote even greater health for the ringing Exercise: don't forget to let them know your opinions too.

## Chapter 15

### Ringers and The Ringing World: What the Central Council Survey Tells Us

(Previously Unpublished)

This report was prepared for the Directors of The Ringing World Ltd and provides a series of tabulations of answers to the questions asked in the questionnaires used in the Survey of Ringing about The Ringing World.

#### Tower Captains

The questionnaire for tower captains was the longest of the five used in the Survey and covered a great deal of ground. Two questions about The Ringing World were asked. The first looked at purchasing.

Do you buy The Ringing World?

Yes	44%
No	56%

If yes, how do they buy it:

Newsagent	26%
Post	73%

If no, do they see it every week

Yes	14%
No	70%
No Answer	16%

Thus only just over half of all tower captains (44% plus 14% of 56% = 51.8%) see The Ringing World every week.

The second question asked for evaluations.

With regard to your job as Tower Captain, is The Ringing World

Very useful	8%
Of some use	35%
Of little use	36%
No answer	20%

#### Individual Ringers

This questionnaire, returned by 1052 ringers, also asked a question about purchase.

Do you get your own (or family) copy of The Ringing World?

Yes	18%
No	81%

If yes, how do they buy it

Newsagent	29%
Post	67%
No answer	4%

If no, do you see The Ringing World regularly?

Yes	22%
No	69%
No answer	9%

With regard to 'ordinary ringers', therefore, some 36% see The Ringing World regularly.

This was followed by a series of statements, with each of which the respondent was asked to agree or disagree. The responses were:

	Agree	Disagree	No answer
I find it interesting and valuable for people like me	47	14	39
Too much of its space is taken up with peals	26	34	40
There are ample articles of interest to learners	28	31	41
News takes too long to appear	34	22	44
There is too little about Sunday service ringing of bells	39	18	43
Not enough space is given to quarter peals	15	42	42
The letters page is very interesting	47	12	41
In find the Notices section extremely useful	45	12	43

About 40 per cent did not respond to each statement. Among those who did, there was only one statement (the third) on which opinion was about equally divided and with several there was between a 3:1 and a 4:1 ratio between one opinion and the other. Clearly, the journal is generally appreciated, in particular the letters and notices, but the amount of space given to quarter peals is not popular and there is a wide feeling that Sunday ringing activities are under-represented.

## Chapter 16

### Who Reads The Ringing World?: A Survey Snippet

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 8 December 1989)

From time to time people, and not just the Editor and his Board of Directors, wonder whether the balance of material in The Ringing World is right; are there segments of the potential market among ringers that are not being tapped, but which could be with a reorientation of the paper's contents? The 1988 Central Council Survey of Ringing found that only 44 per cent of tower captains and 18 per cent of other ringers purchase The Ringing World weekly, and that of those who don't only 14 per cent of tower captains and 22 per cent of other ringers nevertheless see it weekly. Clearly, then, there is a large as-yet untapped market, for only about half of tower captains and one-third of other ringers are regular readers. So who are the non-readers, who might be attracted to subscribe? Ron Johnston has analysed the data from the Survey to see if they provide any hints.

\* \* \* \* \*

Among the individual ringers, the pattern of responses is the same for those who buy The Ringing World (RW) and those who don't buy it but read it regularly, so all of the data here refer to the former group. Two conclusions stand out.

First, RW purchase is much greater among the more 'advanced' ringers. Of those who can ring Grandsire on any number of bells, for example, only 28 per cent are subscribers, compared with 60 per cent of those who can ring Spliced Surprise (and, of course, 18 per cent of all ringers): similarly 62 per cent of those who have rung Maximus subscribe compared with 29 per cent of those who have rung Minimus. Among those who have rung 100 quarter peals or more, 70 per cent subscribe, as do 79 per cent of those who have rung 100 or more peals: the percentages for those who have rung none are 2 and 8 respectively.

Secondly, those who are involved with the organisation of ringing are much more likely to subscribe to The Ringing World. For example, 53 per cent of those who have at some stage been a tower captain subscribe, as do 89 per cent of those who have been a tower librarian; 56 per cent of those who have held office in an Association Branch/District reported that they subscribe. It is the keen and the active who buy The Ringing World, therefore - though not all of them by any means.

The survey of tower captains produced very similar results: 84 per cent of those who had rung 100 or more peals subscribed, for example, compared to 13 per cent of those who had rung none; and 83 per cent of those who had been an Association officer were subscribers.

What, then, do we make of these findings? First, we must of course note that experience (the range of methods rung and the number of peals rung, for example) and activity (the likelihood of having held office) are closely linked to the length of time people have been ringing. Half of all ringers have been ringing for less than ten years, and so have not, in most cases, accumulated the experience identified, nor as yet been elected to Association office. Among those people, it seems, the general perception of The Ringing World is that it caters much more for the experienced ringers than for the general novice. (The non-subscribers were much more likely to agree with the statements that in the RW 'too much of the space is taken up with peals' and to disagree with the claim that 'there are ample articles of interest to learners'). You (and the Editor) may not agree; if you don't, then the question is not 'how can the RW be made more attractive to the relative novices?' but rather 'how can we sell it to them?'

Perhaps the crux of the matter lies in the fact that experienced ringers tend to be concentrated in certain towers, where those who learn become acquainted with The Ringing World. Unfortunately, there are many towers where few, if any, of the ringers are either 'advanced', in the use of the term here, or experienced in the wider activities of ringing Associations. Perhaps they rarely, if ever, see the RW. In this context, it is of more than passing interest that whereas 14 per cent of ringers and 29 per cent of tower captains at 5-bell towers subscribe to The Ringing World the comparable percentages for 12-bell towers are 53 and 88. The market as yet largely untapped by The Ringing World is in those towers where 'advancement' is difficult, peal-ringers and Association officers are few, and the approach to ringing is in many cases very different from that in the average 8-, 10- and 12-bell towers.

Or perhaps everybody would subscribe if they were to be appointed librarian? (If only every tower had a library?!)

So what should the Editor do, if anything? Are there ways of getting The Ringing World as currently constituted to a wider readership, or is it necessary to restructure our paper substantially if we want more subscribers? Or is the status quo satisfactory. No doubt the Editor would be delighted to hear of any positive suggestions.

## Chapter 17

### Age, Experience and Recruitment?: A Survey Snippet

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 15 September 1989)

In an earlier article based on the Survey results (The Ringing World, 19 May 1989: Chapter 7), we reported that tower captains find getting recruits harder these days, and also that they find that recruits are less likely to stick with ringing. Further, we noted that the older tower captains were generally more pessimistic. The full figures are in Table 17.1.

What do we conclude from that? Some may suggest that the older tower captains are increasingly out of touch with the younger generation and do not recognise the need to provide a stimulating experience for learners, who will want to stay with ringing because of the interest and enjoyment they get from it. Others may argue that young learners want an enjoyable social life linked to ringing, and that it is unattractive if it is associated with 'old fogeys'. Young ringing masters, on the other hand, are better able to recruit and retain learners, because they are aware of these issues, or so the argument goes. There is nothing in the table to say that this is the correct interpretation, however; the pattern there is consistent with the argument that younger ringing masters are more effective, but that is all.

The counter-argument to that just put is that the older ringing masters are the more experienced, and have a wider perspective on the problems of recruitment and retention than the younger 'whipper-snappers'. Certainly Table 17.2 shows, as one would expect, that the older tower captains have spent longer in the job, on average. So is it experience that matters, or age?

Table 17.3 seeks to answer that question by correlating opinions about recruitment and retention with years of experience as a tower captain. The pattern is the same as that in Table 17.1, though less marked; in general, the longer tower captains have been in office the harder they find the process of getting and keeping recruits.

So which interpretation do you prefer? The data point to the relationship with age as being the more important, which suggests that young captains are the more likely to get and keep recruits for your tower; but even if they are relatively young, you probably shouldn't keep them in office too long.

Is a healthy ringing Exercise one with a regular turnover of tower captains, then? The Survey Committee didn't see its task as making those value judgements for you, but just to give you the information and suggest how it might be interpreted. The rest is over to you.

Table 17.1 Tower Captain Age and Ringer Recruitment and Retention

	Age of Tower Captain			
	20-39	40-59	60-79	80 and over
<b>Getting Learner Recruits</b>				
Increasingly Difficult	28	47	54	64
No Change	41	38	38	36
Easier than Previously	18	8	3	0
No Recruits Needed	7	2	0	0
<b>Recruits are</b>				
Increasingly Likely to Give Up	6	28	35	55
Are More Likely to Stay	12	13	15	18
Don't Differ	69	48	44	27
<b>Number Responding</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>11</b>

The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals; they don't sum to 100 because they exclude those who gave no reply to the question.

Table 17.2 Tower Captain Age and Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Age of Tower Captain			
	20-39	40-59	60-79	80 and over
0 - 4	57	39	16	9
5 - 9	21	21	21	9
10 - 14	11	17	16	9
15 - 19	1	6	6	9
20 or more	9	17	40	64

The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals

Table 17.3 Experience as Tower Captain and Ringer Recruitment and Retention

	Years of Experience				
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20 or more
<b>Getting Learner Recruits</b>					
Increasingly Difficult	31	46	59	63	49
No Change	46	36	36	31	35
Easier than Previously	12	13	0	0	8
No Recruits Needed	5	0	2	6	2
<b>Recruits are</b>					
Increasingly Likely to Give Up	16	23	34	19	40
Are More Likely to Stay	13	15	11	0	15
Don't Differ	58	52	48	81	35
<hr/>					
Number Responding	113	60	44	16	62

The figures in the table are percentages of the column totals; they don't sum to 100 because they exclude those who gave no reply to the question.

## Chapter 18

### Those Parasitic Peal Ringers?: A Survey Snippet

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 27 October 1989)

Those who attended the Central Council Open Meeting at Birmingham in May 1989 will recall that one person present (not a member of the Survey Committee!) claimed that peal ringers (University graduates all, he said) are a major problem for the Exercise. They contribute nothing to the fundamental activity of ringing regularly on Sundays, he contended, and play no part in the important work of ringing Associations. Do you agree? Was he right? To see if peal ringers are the parasites on the Exercise that was so forcefully claimed, Ron Johnston has analysed some of the data from the Central Council Survey of Ringing questionnaire to individual ringers.

\* \* \* \* \*

We asked the respondents (the sample of individual ringers, excluding tower captains) how many peals they had rung: of the 1014 who answered, 684 had rung none, 175 had rung between 1 and 10, 73 had rung between 11 and 50, and 82 had rung 51 or more. Our analysis focuses on these four groups (Table 18.1).

On one issue, the critic was clearly correct. We asked whether the respondents had attended a university, polytechnic or college (termed graduates in the table, although not all may be!). The answers show that the more peals you have rung, the more likely it is that you are a graduate.

But so what, if those intellectuals get more pleasure from peal-ringing than others what does it matter, if they ring on Sundays, go to practice nights, and support Association activities? And the next five rows of figures in the table show that they do. The more peals our respondents had rung, the smaller the percentage of them who didn't ring on the previous Sunday (20 November 1988), the greater the percentage who ring regularly at more than one tower each Sunday, and the greater the percentage who go to other towers' practices; furthermore, there were no differences between peal-ringers and others in attendance at their home practice.

Similarly with attendance at Association meetings: the more peals rung, the smaller the percentage who attended no meetings in the previous year and the larger the percentage who attended more than two.

Finally what about their attitudes. We asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with each of the following six statements:

- A The important thing is that bells are rung on Sundays, not what methods are rung
- B Well-struck call-changes are preferable to less well-rung methods on Sundays
- C Most ringers are more concerned with learning methods than with striking properly
- D Peals do little to advance the quality of Sunday ringing
- E Too many ringers put peal ringing before the encouragement of Sunday ringing
- F Ringing has little part to play in modern church life.

On A, B and F there were no differences: all ringers are equally concerned to put the quality of ringing as the highest priority on Sundays, and agree on its relevance to church life, though on C we find the peal ringers most concerned about the lack of attention given to striking. On D and E, many more peal ringers identify its positive impact on Sunday ringing than do non-peal ringers (well they would, wouldn't they! perhaps they would like to tell us why); peal-ringers also disagree with the contention that they give peal ringing too high a priority.

So, hands off the peal ringers, they are not the villains that at least somebody believes? The Central Council Survey of Ringing tells us so, so it must be right! We must enter a slight caveat, however. The Survey only covered those ringers who are affiliated with a Sunday service band. We're told that there are some people who ring lots of peals but aren't members of a band, and of course they would have slipped through our net. Perhaps there are lots of them (really!) and the criticism is valid. Among affiliated Sunday service band members, however, we give the peal-ringers a clean bill of health; in several ways, they are among the stalwarts of the Exercise.

Table 18.1 The Characteristics and Attitudes of Peal-Ringers

	Number of Peals Rung			
	None	1-10	11-50	51+
Graduate	39	49	56	68
Didn't ring last Sunday	42	25	29	17
Rings regularly at other towers on Sundays	11	23	41	52
Regularly attends home practice	81	82	88	83
Attended home practice last week	63	62	58	63
Regularly attends other practices	17	41	58	41
Regular church service attender at tower where rings	56	47	27	32
Attended no ringing meetings in last year	57	35	17	20
Attended more than two	6	22	35	38
Agreed with statement				
A	92	97	97	98
B	87	89	86	93
C	54	67	71	69
D	47	53	36	17
E	42	43	38	33
F	13	17	12	18

The figures in the table are the percentages of the ringers in each column category; the statements in the bottom block are set out in the text.

## Chapter 19

### Those Stay-at-Homes on Sundays: A Survey Snippet

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 26 January 1990)

The Central Council Survey of Ringing in November 1988 obtained responses from 1052 individual ringers (excluding tower captains). Of them, 36 per cent reported that they did not ring at all on the Sunday in question, whereas 43 per cent rang once and 21 per cent did on two or more separate occasions. So who are the stay-at-homes? Clearly, on any one Sunday a percentage of all ringers will not be able to attend for a variety of good reasons (work; illness; holidays - unlikely in November, which is why the Survey was held then). But are certain types of people in general less likely than others to attend on an average Sunday? Ron Johnston tried to find out.

\* \* \* \* \*

For this analysis, we divided the ringers up into two main groups: those whose home tower bells were rung on the Sunday in question, and those whose home tower bells were not rung then. As Table 19.1 shows, of the former group 27 per cent didn't go to ring on that Sunday whereas 50 per cent rang once and 23 per cent rang more than once. Not surprisingly, attendance at ringing by those whose home tower was silent was much less: 69 per cent didn't ring at all, 20 per cent rang once, and 11 per cent rang twice or more.

The tables look at the attendance record of the ringers surveyed in terms of: whether they attend services at the church where they ring; whether other members of their family ring; their age and sex; how experienced ('advanced?') they are as ringers; how many bells there are in their home tower and how big their home band is; and their expressed keenness about ringing.

Church attenders were more likely to ring on Sunday than non-attenders, though the differences were not substantial (Table 19.1). Similarly, ringers with children who also ring were less likely to stay at home. Church and kinship ties help to increase the turnout, it seems, so when you are recruiting perhaps you should focus on regular church-going families.

There were no substantial differences between the sexes, except that males were more likely to ring on the Sunday in question if their own tower was silent then - a difference that is perhaps associated with the availability of transport. Older ringers, up to the age of 60, were much more likely to attend than their younger counterparts, however, and were especially likely to ring more than once.

And what about keenness? We asked the respondents whether they would describe themselves as 'a tremendously keen ringer', 'a moderately keen ringer', or 'interested but no more' (we assumed that

disinterested ringers wouldn't ring, or at least wouldn't answer our questions!). As Table 19.1 shows, the keen ones were four times less likely to stay at home than the 'just interested', among those whose home tower bells were rung on the appointed day, and also four times more likely to ring on two or more occasions; the differences weren't as substantial among those whose own bells were not heard then, but were in the same direction.

Experience was measured by the methods people could ring and by whether or not they had rung quarter peals or peals. The more 'advanced' ringers, especially those who have rung lots of quarters and peals, were less likely to stay at home on Sundays, and much more likely to ring on two or more occasions (Table 19.2). Ringers at 10- and 12-bell towers were also more likely to ring several times on the one Sunday, but there was little difference between them and the ringers at 5- and 6-bell towers in whether they rang at all. The larger the local band, the less likely members were to turn out, perhaps because their attendance was perceived as not so vital: loyalty was greatest where it mattered most, it seems.

\* \* \* \* \*

So what do we conclude? What should you do to encourage your ringers to turn out on Sundays, and what sort of people should you recruit? Clearly the most important thing is to instil a keenness about ringing in your band, and to promote quarter peal and peal ringing; it is the keen ringers who have achieved most who are most likely to attend. And don't concentrate too much on the young when recruiting, unless their parents ring also; churchgoers are a little more reliable than others. Perhaps somewhat perversely, don't let your band grow too big; it seems to discourage members from participating.

But it is keenness that really matters. Ringing is healthiest if we can make it interesting and enjoyable, so that people put it high on their priorities. So tower captains and others please note; your job is to stimulate enthusiasm, and then you will help to produce a healthier exercise.

Table 19.1 Ringers' Characteristics and Sunday Attendance

Times Rang	Home Tower Rang			Home Tower Didn't Ring		
	0	1	1+	0	1	1+
Church attender	22	54	24	66	25	7
Non-Church attender	32	44	23	73	15	12
Family members who ring						
Parent	26	47	26	65	6	30
Child	16	51	32	55	25	15
Spouse	25	51	24	61	25	14
Male	26	49	24	71	18	11
Female	28	50	22	66	26	8
Age						
Under 15	33	54	14		too few	
15-19	30	48	22		too few	
20-29	29	47	24	67	23	10
40-59	22	50	27	67	19	14
60 and over	26	53	21		too few	
Keeness						
Tremendously	11	50	39	50	28	22
Moderately	26	51	23	70	20	10
Interested	43	48	9	77	17	6
<hr/>						
TOTAL	27	50	23	69	20	11

The figures are percentages of the two groups; ringers at towers where the bells were rung on the surveyed Sunday and those at towers where the bells were silent on that day. Thus of the female ringers, of those whose home tower bells were rung on the Sunday in question 28 per cent did not ring on that day themselves; of those whose home tower bells were not rung then, 66 per cent did not ring themselves (i.e. did not go to another tower).

Table 19.2 Ringers' Experience and Sunday Attendance

Times Rang	Home Tower Rang			Home Tower Didn't Ring		
	0	1	1+	0	1	1+
Can ring						
Stedman	19	48	33	47	29	24
Cambridge	17	48	36	48	26	26
Maximus	14	44	42	53	13	34
Quarters rung						
None	34	50	15	84	12	3
100+	17	45	38	46	9	45
Peals rung						
None	31	51	18	77	17	4
10+	20	38	42		too few	
Bells in tower						
5 or 6	24	58	17	74	19	7
8	28	51	21	58	22	20
10 or 12	28	31	42		too few	
Size of home band						
6 or less	16	60	24	61	30	9
7-12	25	56	18	72	13	15
12+	31	39	30	83	17	0
TOTAL	27	50	23	69	20	11

The figures are percentages of the two groups; ringers at towers where the bells were rung on the surveyed Sunday and those at towers where the bells were silent on that day. Thus of the ringers at 8-bell towers, of those whose home tower bells were rung on the Sunday in question 28 per cent did not ring on that day themselves; of those whose home tower bells were not rung then, 58 per cent did not ring themselves (i.e. did not go to another tower).

## Chapter 20

### Who Practises?: A Survey Snippet

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 3 February? 1990)

Of the respondents to the Central Council Survey of Ringing in 1988, 54 per cent of the individual ringers reported that they attended the practice at their home tower in the previous week. There wasn't a practice at every tower, of course: some 70 per cent of the respondents were associated with a tower which did hold a practice during that week, and just over two-thirds of them (68 per cent) attended. So who went, and who stayed at home? As with Sunday Service ringing attendances (discussed in an earlier article in The Ringing World ? 1990: Chapter 19), for many who could not attend there was undoubtedly a good reason. But were certain groups more likely to attend than others? Once again, Ron Johnston has been exploring the data files to find the answer, focusing his attention on those ringers at towers which held a practice during the week immediately prior to the Sunday of the Survey (20 November 1988).

\* \* \* \* \*

There were few substantial variations around the total percentage of 68 (Table 20.1). In particular, there were no differences according to band size - people were as likely to turn out at towers with small bands as at towers with lots of affiliated ringers. Similarly, there were no big differences according to experience - those who had rung lots of peals were no more likely to go to practice than were those who had rung none, for example, and people who could ring Surprise were no more likely to turn out than those who could not yet achieve such method-ringing.

Family ties, or at least those involving parents and children, were related to turnout, however; those with a parent or a child who is also a ringer were more likely to go to practice than was the average ringer, but somebody whose spouse is also a ringer was less likely to attend. So get the kids interested, and the parents are likely to come along on practice night (or one at least is) - or perhaps it's the other way round, get the parents interested and the kids will come. Whatever the stimulus, young people are in general the best attenders at practice (though, as we showed in our previous article, they aren't as loyal on Sundays: so is it homework that keeps them away, or late nights on Saturdays?!). Young adults were the worst attenders on average; perhaps they have most other calls on their time, at home and in their careers.

We anticipated that ringers who have held or who currently hold a position of responsibility in their home tower would be more loyal on practice night, but this was not the case with Secretaries and Treasurers. Those who had been (or are) either a Steeplekeeper or a

Ringling Master were more likely to attend, however, so perhaps we should make sure that everybody has a turn at tasks directly related to the bells themselves and the organisation of ringing, rather than the behind-the-scenes bookwork.

The main functions of a practice are to help individuals advance their ringing capability, and for bands to improve the quality of their performance. We asked a question to identify 'frustrated' ringers, those who 'would like to advance further in your ringing, but are unable to'. Of them, only 66 per cent went to the practice in the previous week. We also asked them why they were frustrated: of those who felt they themselves weren't up to it, the percentage attending was 73; of those who felt that their local band didn't provide the needed opportunities, 67 per cent attended; and of those who replied that 'the standard of ringing in the area is low', just 48 per cent went along. So people will continue to come if they think that the problems are personal; they are much less likely to attend practices if they feel that there isn't likely to be much help available when they come.

Keeness is all important. We asked the respondents whether they would describe themselves as tremendously keen about ringing, moderately keen, or 'interested but no more'. As the table shows, the keener the ringer, the more likely he or she was to go to the home tower practice during a certain week in November 1988.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lesson seems clear. If your practice is interesting and people think that they will get something from it, then they will attend, whatever their ringing repertoire. And if you use your practices to stimulate keeness among those who attend, they will probably repay you by becoming loyal attenders. It isn't what you ring that pulls them in, but whether people find coming along beneficial (to others, perhaps, as much as to themselves). So a lot depends on leadership in the tower, not just from the Tower Captain but from the other members of the band too. Make people feel that the practice is worthwhile, and they will come to it, it seems; they will probably be more likely to attend if there is a good 'atmosphere' among your local band, so that your members enjoy the company when they are not ringing as well as the ringing itself. Tower captaincy isn't easy!

Table 20.1 Ringers' Characteristics and Attendance at Practice

Church attender	70	Methods can ring	
Family members are ringers		Plain Bob	69
Parent	72	Stedman	72
Child	73	Cambridge	72
Spouse	65	Number of bells can ring to changes	
Male	69	5	70
Female	67	8	68
		12	73
Age		Quarter peals rung	
Under 15	79	None	69
15-19	73	51 or more	69
20-39	62	Peals rung	
40-59	70	None	69
60 and over	65	51 or more	73
Position in tower		Keeness	
Secretary	65	Tremendously	85
Treasurer	60	Moderately	70
Steeplekeeper	74	Interested	49
Ringling Master	72		
Unable to advance	66		
Not up to it	73		
Band can't help	67		
Low standard	48		

The figures are percentages of all ringers at towers which held a practice during the week in question who attended that practice. Thus of those who have rung no peals, for example, 69 per cent attended their home tower practice night during the week surveyed.

## Chapter 21

### Get the Families Along: A Survey Snippet

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 10 February 1990)

One of the perennial issues facing Tower Captains and others seeking to recruit new ringers is what sort of people to go for. Who make the best ringers - the young or the old? Who are the most reliable when it comes to Sunday Service attendance? and so on. One possibility sometimes suggested is to recruit members of families, thereby hopefully producing the situation whereby if one is keen and regular in attendance, the others will be too.

Does that work? The results of the Central Council Survey of Ringing can't answer the question directly, but data are available on the family relationships of ringers, as illustrated in our articles on 'The stay-at-homes' (Chapter 19) and 'Who practises?' (Chapter 20). Ron Johnston looks at those data again, to see if many of our current ringers did take up the Exercise when others in their family were already active.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three questions are analysed here: we asked respondents their current age (in groups), their age when they started ringing, and whether any of their relatives were ringing at the same tower when they first learned. The results show substantial family links in ringing.

Of those who learned to ring when they were aged less than 15, some 35 per cent of those still under 15 at the time of the Survey had a parent who rang at their tower and 33 per cent had a sibling (brother or sister) who did: thus a very substantial proportion of recent recruits appear to have taken up ringing because somebody else in their immediate family was already a ringer (and presumably enjoyed it!). Among the older current ringers (aged 60 or over), of those who took up ringing before they were 15, 21 per cent did so with a parent and 29 per cent with a sibling: the family link has always been strong among the younger recruits it seems.

Among those who took up ringing when they were older, either a spouse or a child (or possibly both) apparently attracted a substantial number into the tower. Of those now aged between 40 and 59, for example, and who learned to ring in their 30s, 31 per cent had a child who was already a ringer at their home tower, and 23 per cent had a ringing spouse: of those who took it up in their 40s, 30 per cent of

those now aged 40-59 had a ringing child, as did 24 per cent of those now aged 60 or over.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even the most cursory reader of The Ringing World will know about the many ringing families whose members are very active in the Exercise in a variety of ways, but perhaps none of us was as aware of the extent of the family links that the Survey has illustrated. Many of the young who come along to learn to ring do so because a parent or a sibling has introduced them to the bell tower, whereas many of the middle-aged recruits come along to see what it is that attracts either their spouses or their children to this esoteric art.

We seem to get up to about one quarter of our recruits in these ways. Perhaps therein lies the potential for more. Ask your adult ringers if their children would like to learn (or be more subtle and invite them to come and watch and make the decision for themselves); and ask your younger ringers if they have brothers, sisters or parents who might like to learn too. And, if you can do it tactfully, ask your married ringers if their spouses might like to come along to a practice (and the pub after!?) and try their hand.

Of course, what we don't know is whether ringers with relatives who are ringers are more likely to stick with it: that question can only be answered by follow-up surveys.

Chapter 22

**Stella's Twenty Questions: An Anniversary Quiz**

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 17 November 1989)

It is now just a year since the Central Council's Survey of Ringing was administered. From February 1989 on, the Survey Committee has provided The Ringing World with a stream of articles summarising the findings, and giving us by far the most detailed picture of the state of the Ringing Exercise ever produced.

But how much of it has sunk in? To test your memory Stella Bianco has set you twenty questions, all of which are based on the data presented in the articles published in The Ringing World during this year. For each question, she has provided a range of possible answers from which you must select that which you think is correct. When you have made your selection, you can check how well you have done (and thus how much of the messages from the Survey Committee has got home to you) by turning to page 101.

\* \* \* \* \*

1) Approximately how many towers are there in the British Isles with a ring of 5 or more bells?

A 3800 B 4500 C 5200 D 5900

2) And approximately how many of those rings are silent on the average Sunday?

A One quarter B One third C One half

3) Of the towers which have 5 or more bells, approximately what percentage have them rung on two or more occasions per average Sunday?

A 10 B 15 C 20 D 25

4) Approximately what percentage of churches where the bells are rung on the average Sunday share their band of ringers with at least one other church?

A 5 B 10 C 15 D 20

5) Approximately how many active ringers are there in the British Isles?

A 25000 B 35000 C 45000 D 55000

6) And approximately what percentage of them rang for a Sunday service on 20 November 1988?

A 50 B 60 C 70 D 80

7) Approximately what percentage of ringers ring regularly at more than one church on a Sunday?

A 20 B 24 C 28 D 32

8) Approximately what percentage of ringers learned to ring in the 1980s?

A 20 B 30 C 40 D 50

9) Approximately what proportion of recruits give up ringing within twelve months?

A One third B One quarter C One half

10) What is the most common age group at which ringers learned to ring?

A 10-19 B 20-29 C 30-39 D 40 or older

11) Approximately what percentage of ringers can ring Plain Bob?

A 50 B 55 C 60 D 65

12) Approximately what percentage have never rung a quarter peal?

A 20 B 30 C 40 D 50

13) Approximately what percentage have never rung a peal?

A 55 B 60 C 65 D 75

14) Approximately what percentage of ringers' spouses are also ringers?

A 18 B 22 C 26 D 30

15) Approximately what percentage of ringers belong to a Guild/Association?

A 44 B 55 C 66 D 77

16) Approximately what percentage of ringers had attended no Guild/Association event during the year prior to the Survey?

A 23 B 35 C 47 D 59

17) What percentage of ringers have held office in an Association District/Branch?

A 5 B 10 C 15 D 20

18) Approximately what percentage of ringers see a copy of The Ringing World each week?

A 25 B 35 C 45 D 55

19) Approximately what percentage of ringers have attended at least one ringing course as a student?

A 5 B 10 C 15 D 20

20) Approximately what percentage of incumbents at churches with bells never visit the ringing room?

A 8 B 12 C 16 D 20

## Answers

1 C; 2 B; 3 C; 4 B;  
5 B; 6 B; 7 C; 8 D;  
9 A; 10 A; 11 C; 12 C;  
13 C; 14 A; 15 C; 16 C;  
17 C; 18 B; 19 C; 20 A.

How well did you do? A score of less than five correct and it is clear that the survey results have very largely passed you by! Between five and ten and you have got the main message (or have played the random numbers game very well!). Eleven to fifteen and you obviously read The Ringing World very thoroughly. More than fifteen not only have you got a photographic memory but you are also very interested in surveys, and the President looks forward to you volunteering to assist in the planning of the next (in 2004)!!

## Chapter 23

### Ten Questions Posed by the Central Council Survey of Ringing

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 24 November 1989)

Following a recent meeting of the Survey Committee, Tim Pett has compiled ten questions arising from the Survey of Ringing. The Committee hopes that there will be a vigorous debate throughout the Exercise and in these columns on the action which should follow the Survey. Proposals will be brought together for the Open Meeting at the 1990 Council.

1. One-third of British bells are silent on Sundays. Does this matter? If so, should there be (a) a national recruitment drive, (b) more effort put into recruitment at the Guild/Association level, or (c) something else?

2. The more bells there are in a tower the more likely they are to be rung on Sundays. Should (a) all rings of bells be augmented to 12!, (b) recruitment drives be concentrated on Guilds/Associations with a preponderance of 5s and 6s, (c) more effort put into promoting 5- and 6-bell ringing, or (d) something else?

3. Nearly one-third of all new recruits give up ringing in the first 12 months. What can be done to retain a greater proportion of these?

4. There was a clear request from tower captains for more information on belfry maintenance, yet only 16% had a copy of the Maintenance Handbook and 6% the Towers and Bells Handbook. How can this need for more training in the skills of bells and belfry maintenance be met?

5. Some 35% of clergy reported that they visited the ringing chamber infrequently and 8% not at all. How can closer relationships be made between ringers and local church officials?

6. There is still a great need to train the ringing teachers. 55% of tower captains found courses on how to teach learners the most useful. The Beginners' Handbook and One-per-Learner Book are provided or encouraged widely. What more should be done?

7. Ringers come from a narrow social base. Should anything be done to widen this and, if so, what?

8. Ringing is healthier in many large city suburbs and other densely-populated areas. Should more effort be put into providing new rings of bells in these areas?

9. Many areas, particularly inner cities and some rural parts, possess bands serving several churches. Should this be encouraged more and what can be done to make it easier?

10. Most "average" ringers perceive that their Guild/Association has very little impact on their ringing. Is this perception accurate and, if so, what can be done to improve the effectiveness of Guilds and Associations?

Discuss these questions with your fellow-ringers and let us know your answers.

Christopher Groome

## Chapter 24

### Serendipitous Publicity: or How to Get on Radio 4 with Tom Forrest

(Appeared in The Ringing World, 12 May 1989)

The Central Council Survey of Ringing was conducted in November 1988, and the first set of preliminary results was published in The Ringing World for 17 February 1989 (Chapter 3). This reported that approximately one-third of towers are silent on Sundays. The presentation was factual and neutral in tone; the final sentence merely stated 'We leave readers to judge whether this is a healthy situation'.

This story was picked up by The Church Times, and a reporter spoke to John Baldwin on the following Friday. He suggested that they speak to me also, as I was analysing the data and could give more information. I was in London that day, and returned to Sheffield too late to return the call. I rang on the following Monday morning to be told: a) the reporter was on a week's holiday; b) the story had gone to press; and c) they would be interested to receive material from us in due course.

The story appeared that week; it gave the impression that I had been employed as an academic consultant on the Survey.

The education and religious correspondent of The Observer picked up the story and decided to write a piece on it; her husband is a vicar (presumably at the church whose tower captain was pictured in her story). She rang John, but he was in Israel and Beryl Baldwin gave her my number. We spoke for about half-an-hour on the phone on the Thursday evening. She interpreted The Church Times story (she hadn't seen The Ringing World) as indicating a crisis. I told her that the number of ringers was much as we expected, that we anticipated 25-30 per cent of towers being silent, and that since we had no earlier, comparable survey there was no base from which to argue that things had 'got worse'. I did say that the tower captains' survey was showing that recruitment was becoming more difficult and fewer people 'stuck' having learned; I speculated on possible reasons, such as the declining role of the church in modern society, and the greater range of calls on people's time. We discussed the mentions of ringing on 'The Archers' that week, but I DID NOT suggest that Shula should have put ringing before her marriage (!!). Throughout, I played down any 'crisis' mentality; there are still 41,000 ringers, other indicators (peals etc) show ringing in good health, and I was sure we would rise to the challenge of recruiting more ringers and getting more towers active. She rang me at work the next day, said she was going to run the story, and asked a few questions about the history of ringing and about peals - but didn't use the material.

At 2100 on the Saturday evening, I was rung by 'The World This Weekend' team from Radio 4, who told me what was in The Observer, said they intended to do a short piece on it in their programme the next

day, and asked me to go to Radio Sheffield at 0930 to record an interview. I agreed, and went along briefed with our articles (the second had appeared by then, in The Ringing World for 10 March: Chapter 4) and computer print-out. I first did a brief interview for Radio Sheffield, which was transmitted the following morning. The Radio 4 interview was difficult, because they clearly wanted to present the situation as a crisis and I refused to be drawn either on that or on what they wanted me to say ('people are more fickle') about why people give up ringing: I only reacted strongly when they posed the likelihood of bells being replaced by machines. The item was broadcast at about 1350, and was introduced by statements of a dire crisis in ringing with towers closing every week almost, which was totally at variance with anything I had said. They used very little of the 10-12 minutes of interview with me, but some clips from 'The Archers' of that week. (Colleagues now ring me to ask for updates on the series!)

After the interview, a reporter came to the Cathedral with me and recorded interviews with ringers (including some visitors from Nottingham and Newcastle: see The Ringing World, 2 June 1989) and with members of the congregation, some of which were used in the Radio 4 piece and others in the Radio Sheffield piece, with the bells in the background (all 12!). According to our niece who lives in Paris, the Radio 4 piece was also used on the BBC World Service.

On the following two days I was rung up by Radio Bedford, GMR (Greater Manchester Radio), Radio Leeds and by the Newcastle local paper. I agreed to record brief, factual interviews with each, explaining the nature of the Survey and its findings, and being positive and optimistic about the future. Each asked about their local area; I explained that the Survey was a national one and that I could say nothing about any local area. Several had already arranged interviews with local clergy, and in each case (using the Ringing World Diary) I put them in contact with local ringers. I have no idea what material was used. Later in the week I had similar contacts from Radio Bristol and Radio York (do the Sunday papers take longer to get there?; the Radio York reporter hadn't heard of David Potter!). I was also contacted by a publisher in Wantage who was interested in producing a short, 'popular' book on ringing; by a religious affairs producer from Channel 4 who wondered if I might be in Winchester on March 19 so that Brian Redhead could interview me for a programme to go out on Maundy Thursday; and by a reporter from the US TV network CBS who is now planning a programme on ringing.

None of this publicity was solicited. All we had done was, at Chris Groome's insistence, produce an early report in The Ringing World so that ringers could have some idea of our findings. In our article, and in all subsequent ones, we have not suggested crises but have used, in Chris's words, measured tones. But the media, especially the national media (it is my impression that the local media were much less intent on dramatising the material), were intent on reading much more into the findings than we were - helped by 'The Archers' story. We had issued no press releases, believing that would be premature.

What did I (do we) learn?

- 1) That The Church Times is not necessarily immune to ringing stories, and does monitor The Ringing World.
- 2) That there is quite considerable media interest, which we could develop to our advantage.
- 3) That however well-prepared you are, and however measured your responses, if the media want to dramatise what you say, they will.
- 4) That, like it or not, status counts; that the Survey was apparently conducted by a Professor clearly impressed some media reporters.
- 5) That we should develop our contacts with 'The Archers'.

The conclusion? All publicity is good publicity, except an obituary, and ringing isn't about to die. I didn't hear any of the local radio pieces, but feel we probably came out of them rather well; and there may have been other stations that didn't contact me (or don't like answer phones). We do have problems of recruitment, retention and motivation (sounds like the AUT and NUT) and the public coverage that we got cannot have done us harm; it may well have done us good.

Ron Johnston.