Background Paper

1.   Introduction

The aim of this paper is to assist the Ringing Foundation and the 'Forum' in considering the issues surrounding the recruitment and training of ringers over the next 20 years, so that we can develop a plan that will address recent trends in ringing and safeguard the future of the exercise.

Between 1988 and 2009 the proportion of ringers aged over 60 increased from 13% to 40% of ringers. We now need to recruit people to replace this 40%, as they are likely to retire over the next 20 years. However this is over and above those ringers that we would have needed to recruit and train anyway to replace those lost through other factors.

In addition 79% of tower captains were aged over 50 in 2009. Many will be coming up for retirement over the next 20 years and they will also need to be replaced.

The 1988 Survey and research undertaken by the Trends Working Party at the 2003 Roadshow showed that those in the 20 – 40 age bracket made the most effective teachers. However the number of ringers in this age bracket has dropped from 29% in 1998 to 12% in 2009.

This means that at a time when we need to recruit and train more ringers, many of the pool of existing Tower Captains and Instructors will be retiring and the supply of those best able to replace tem will also have reduced by well over half.

With this **triple whammy** there is therefore there is a need re-evaluate the way in which we train ringers. If we continue as we are now, the number of ringers is estimated to decrease to around 30,000 by 2033.

The Foundation and the constituent members of the Forum cannot undertake any teaching directly. This needs to be done at a tower level, supported by the next level up. However, we can influence what is done at a local level by undertaking relevant research, ensuring those at a local level understand what needs to be done, sharing good practice and providing training, advice, financial and other support.

No of Ringers by Age and Gender
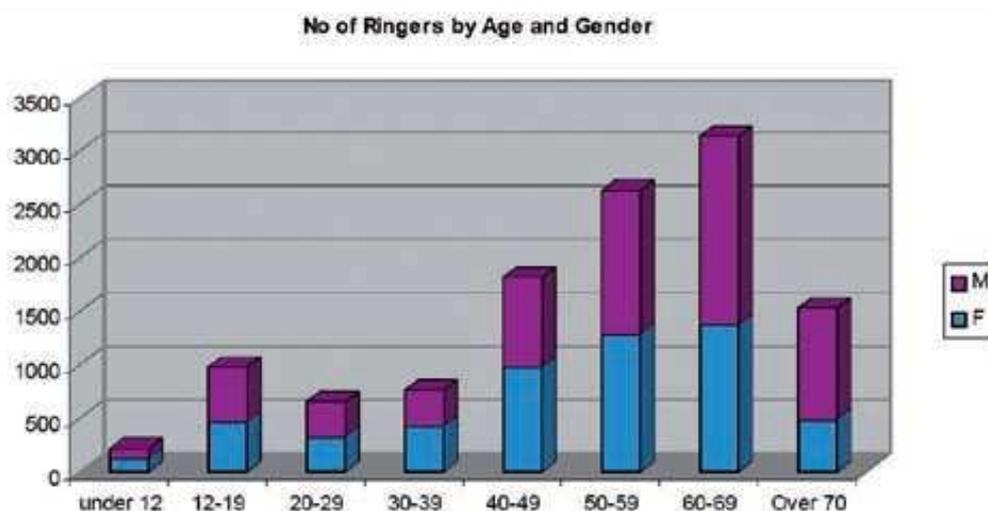
2. Recruitment and retention

Arriving at an estimate of the number of people that we need to recruit and train to maintain a stable ringing population is extremely difficult and is an area which needs much more research.

Table 7.1 of the 1988 survey enables us to calculate the number of people that were recruited in 1988. **This was around 11,400 people.**

The problem is that at this time there was a very high drop-out rate. Many of those recruited at this time were school aged children, and this may have been a factor.

In 1988 it was estimated that there were 41,800 ringers worldwide. About 50% of all ringers had been ringing for less than 10 years. Only 20% had been ringing between 10 and 20 years and 10% between 20 and 30 years.

From this we can deduce than we were losing about half our ringers every 10 years. Put another way, the long term drop-out rate was about 6.7% per annum

However given that we were recruiting 11,400 people a year, or 115,000 people in ten years, there must have also been a very high drop-out rate in the early years to end up with only about 20,000 people who had been ringing for 10 years or less. Don't forget that this figure would have included many of the 11,400 people who had been recruited in the previous year.

Factors affecting recruitment and retention

There are a number of different factors that affect recruitment and retention rates. These include:

- **Age group of the recruit:** It is relatively easy to recruit children, but nowadays there are a host of other activities for them to get involved in. Older recruits like the millennium learners may learn more slowly and not become as accomplished in method ringing, but may make more stable members of the band

- **Age of Tower Captain/Trainer:** Research in 1988 and 2004 showed that by far the most successful were in the 20 – 40 age group. However 79% of tower captains were aged over 50 in 2009.

- **Quality of tuition in that tower:** Many people come into training by accident and there was no recognised training scheme for instructors to give them the tools to teach well. ITTS was developed to address this point

- **Lack of progress/not meeting expectations:** Some ringers ring out of a sense of duty to the church, however another important motivational factor is a sense of achievement and progress. Learning the Ropes was developed as a curriculum to enable people to set objectives and help with making progress.

- **Mobility in society:** We now live in a multi-cultural society where people are much more mobile. After leaving University people may live in rented accommodation and move every few years, often not having their first child and buying a house till their late 30's/early 40's. In this environment only the most enthusiastic will maintain contact with the exercise.

<u>Ringing Foundation's estimate</u>

Provided that the leaky bucket of retention can be addressed through ITTS and Learning the Ropes, the Ringing Foundation estimates that 40% of the ringing population will retire over the next 20 years as they are currently aged over 60.

40% of 40,000 = 16,000 ringers. Divided by 20 years = **800 new trained ringers per annum**

However these trained ringers are at Level 5 learning the ropes (can at least ring two doubles methods inside and rung 6 quarter peals), not raw recruits. In 1988 only about 50% of all ringers were at the equivalent of this level. Only 33% had rung more than 10 quarter peals and 40% had not even rung a quarter peal. Therefore a proportion of those that we are replacing will not be at this level, but this will be offset by the numbers of people that we need to train to maintain the other 60% who are aged under 60 and leave through natural wastage. There will also be those who we recruit and drop out in the intervening years.

<u>Further research</u>

Action: We need further comprehensive research to look at current recruitment and retention rates, so that they can be compared with the 1988 figures. We also need research to establish how effective ITTS and Learning the Ropes are in retaining ringers and how long the average recruit takes to progress through the levels.

Could the Ringing Trends Committee and ART undertake this research, so that we can set realistic targets for the numbers of ringers that need to be recruited and trained? Presumably it is too early to use the ART's data from Moodle?

Age of ringers	1988	2009
Under 20	20%	10%
20 – 39	29%	12%
40 – 59	38%	38%
60 and over	13%	40%

Recruitment in 1988	Bells					All
	5	6	8	10	12	towers
Total towers	752	2697	1678	206	92	5425
% with new recruits	46%	70%	68%	73%	50%	66%
Towers with recruits	346	1888	1141	150	46	3,571
Average number of recruits	2.1	3.2	3.4	3.5	5	3.2
Total recruits	726	6,041	3,880	526	230	11,404

Length of ringing career	1988	2009
Less than 9 years	48%	?
9 – 18 years	19%	?
19 – 28 years	12%	?
29 – 38 years	10%	?
More than 39 years	11%	?

3. **<u>Who will carry out the teaching?</u>**

Whilst we have a significant number of existing tower captains, the 2009 survey reported that 79% of tower captains were over 50, so probably well over 50% of all Tower Captains will retire from ringing completely in the next 20 years.

This means that we will need to find at least 2,250 new tower captains over the next 20 years

In many towers the tower captain is the teacher, although it is desirable that at least one other ringer is competent to assist him/her and help as a deputy and provide for succession planning.

We therefore probably need to ensure that we train at least 5,000 people in 20 years = train 250 people a year to teach bell-handling.

In addition, as ITTS is being established for the first time, many of the existing teachers could become accredited. The 1988 survey showed that 55% of all Tower Captains would welcome courses on how to teach learners.

The 1988 Survey and research undertaken by the Trends Working Party at the 2003 Roadshow showed that those in the 20 – 40 age bracket made the most effective teachers/tower captains. However currently only 12% of ringers are in the 20 - 40 age bracket = about 5,000 ringers.

Therefore we should focus recruitment on this age group, so that we have a large pool of the ideal people to become teachers and provide for succession.

To recruit and train 250 people a year to become teachers would be manageable, but does not imply that we would be imposing anywhere near 100% coverage. ITTS has gradually been developed over the last three years and at end of 2012 there were 333 people who had attended Module 1 ITTS course as a teacher and 175 mentors, so this objective is consistent with this level of take up.

Action:

Could the Ringing Trends Committee expand on this, with more data?

Do we know what proportion of people in the 20 – 40 age group would be willing to be taught how to teach/become Tower Captains?

Age of Tower Captains and recruitment success (Tables 17.1 and 17.3 of 1988 survey)

Age of Tower captain	1988	2003	2009
Under 20	2%		
20 – 49	23%		
40 – 59	48%	50%	
60 and over	27%	36%	

Getting recruits -	Age of Tower Captain			
	20 – 39	40 – 59	60 – 79	80 +
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%

Recruits are	Age of Tower Captain			
	20 – 39	40 – 59	60 – 79	80 +
Increasingly likely to give up	6%	28%	35%	55%
Don't differ	69%	48%	44%	27%
More likely to stay	12%	13%	15%	18%

Age Profile of Tower Captains
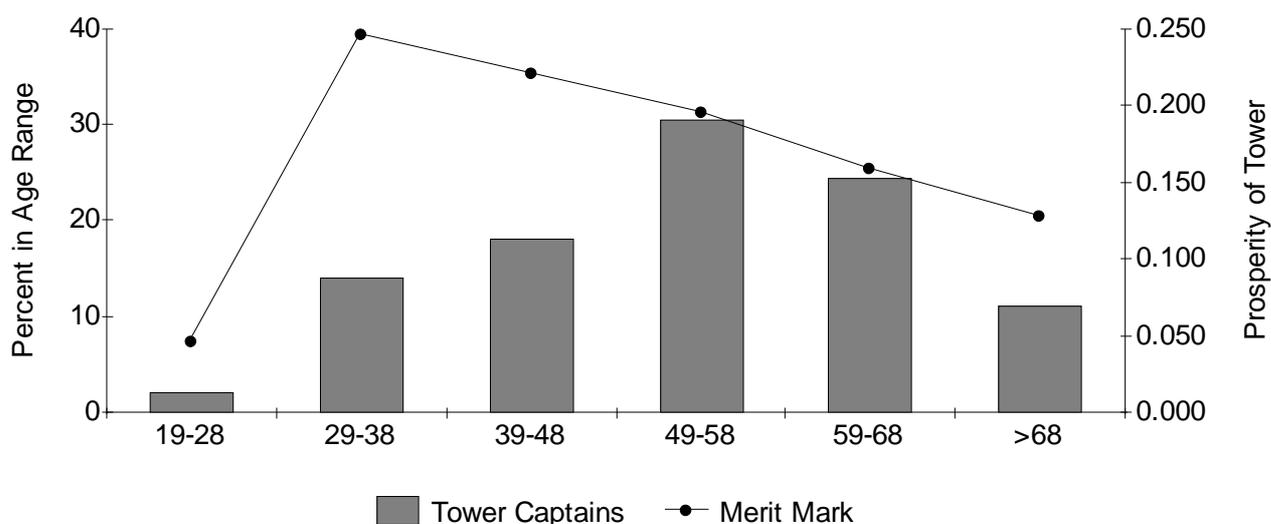### Including Effectiveness

Chart from survey carried out at 2003 Roadshow

4.   Age and recruitment

The following chart summarises the issues with different age groups

Age group	Considerations	What needs to be done
Under 10	Too young to physically manage a tower bell. May be able to ring tunes on hand-bells to lead into change ringing later.	
10 - 14	Those aged 10 (year 6) should be physically able to manage a tower bell and children as young as 9 have rung peals in light towers. Ringing needs to have a large 'fun' component for children in this age group	Activities need to be in him home tower or nearby. Parents are unlikely to want to travel significant distances with their children
14 – 18	Children become more motivated by the activity itself. They learn fast and can make considerable progress	Scope for County wide groups to help challenge young ringers and make progress. Also need to get this age group in helping with teaching young ringers 'young leaders'. Could develop an 'Academy of Bellringing' to help with this.
18 – 21	Many, but by no means all will attend University. People often drop out at this stage as they find other activities	
20 – 40	Make the most effective tower captains. However often drop out due to moving to a new area.	Organisations like the Plymouth Youths which cater for ringers in the 10 – 40 age group can help
40 – 60	Can progress to surprise level given the right environment	
Over 60	Take longer to learn, and may not become most accomplished, but are stable members of the band	

Action: Do we have a view/rationale on the best age groups to target?

5. Catering for young ringers

Only 22% of ringers are under 40, and this is out of step with the general population. We need more ringers in the under 20 age bracket, but also in the under 30 and under 40 age brackets as a significant proportion of these could become successful Teachers/Tower captains/Society officers within a few years.

We cannot expect people in the youngest age brackets to respond well to older tower captains and instructors. The research undertaken in 1988 and 2003 illustrates this well.

If we are to recruit sufficient people in their teens, twenties and thirties to redress the current imbalance, we will need to get these younger ringers more involved with teaching other ringers from the outset. The Scouts have a 'young leaders' programme aimed at involving people from about age 14 onwards and we could replicate this.

There is a perception that there is a high drop-out rate amongst young ringers, although we do not have any data to quantify this. As a result of this perception and perhaps the fact that nowadays many of our instructors are aged over 50, we have been recruiting many more people in the 40 – 60 age bracket than we were 30 years ago.

In response to the question of whether it matters that we are recruiting fewer young people now, in 2003 the Trends Working Party stated, rather bluntly, that the vast majority of ringers in the red and black zones were people who learned to ring in their teens. It would be difficult to find a ringer in the black zone who was older than thirty when they learned to ring. Therefore the recruitment of people under 30 is important in maintaining technical standards.

Challenges

We live in world substantially different to that which existed 30 years ago, when many of the existing ringing population were young people. We now have the Internet and there are many other spare time activities for young people to participate in. Other activities have adapted, Cricket has devised 'Kwik Cricket' and 'Twenty20' Cricket to appeal to a wider audience. Most spare time activities have well established training schemes. The population is now much more mobile, village life has changed and church attendance has declined, so traditional methods of recruitment are less effective.

There is increased emphasis on school performance and parents spend considerable time ferrying their children from one activity to another. Payment of a modest weekly fee for these activities is accepted. Child protection is also another added dimension. In addition, a considerably higher proportion of young people enter further education, not necessarily through the traditional universities. Even when they leave full time education, high property prices mean that young people tend to live in rented accommodation and are highly mobile, and often put off settling down starting a family till their late 30's. The school population is growing, but a significant proportion of these children come from families with roots outside the UK, and whilst many are Christian, they have no tradition of change-ringing in their families.

We therefore need to recognise this environment and aim to provide a structure to introduce young people to ringing and keep them interested, from around age 8 to age 30.

ITTS & Learning the Ropes

Central to the Foundation's strategy is the use of accredited instructors, trained using the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS) and delivering the 'Learning the Ropes' curriculum, to provide a structured programme of tuition for each new young ringer. Whilst use of these is schemes voluntary, they will be a pre-requisite for projects funded by the Ringing Foundation.

Young ringers groups

There are a number of young ringers groups operating in different areas of the country. It is important that young ringers are able to ring with people of their own age. The Foundation wish to see many more young ringers groups, so that those young ringers who are members of local band can meet and enjoy a mix of social and ringing activities with other young ringers at least once a month.

Raising awareness through schools

Taking ringing into schools is important as most young people are not aware of ringing. Even if they do not subsequently take up ringing, it is important that young people are exposed to ringing. This will make it easier to recruit them as ringers later, and it will also help with problems such as noise complaints as the general population will have a better appreciation of ringing.

Work in schools can range from local ringers going in to the classroom for all or part of the school day to deliver a series of bell related activities, though to the more ambitious Charmborough Ring in Schools project, where a mobile belfry was erected in a school, to enable pupils to have a 'taster' session. In some circumstances, subject to safety considerations, trips to a local tower can also be arranged.

Many primary schools have sets of handchimes, belleplates or handbells, which are used for tune-ringing. Whilst the Ringing Foundation is primarily concerned with change-ringing, the strengthening of links with tune-ringers at a local and national level, can be a significant source of new recruits to take up change-ringing, and the teachers who run tune-ringing groups in schools could become excellent leaders of young change-ringers groups if they can be recruited and take up change ringing.

The Foundation intends to explore whether a tune-ringing module can be added to ITTS and also explore how links can be forged with teacher training colleges to develop a package where young people can be introduced to tune-ringing in years 4 and 5 (8 to 10 years old) and progress to change-ringing from year 6 onwards (>10 years old).

School ringing clubs

After school and holiday clubs are held in a wide range of activities and bell ringing clubs exist in some schools. The ringing Foundation intends to promote an expansion of this work through making contact with existing groups, seeing what works well, sharing good practice and encouraging and supporting Guilds, Associations and ringers at a local level to set up new clubs.

University Societies

Are well established in some Universities. Generally they tend to cater for existing ringers and have an important role to play in enabling these ringers to progress. Such societies are generally self-funding. The Ringing Foundation will support initiatives by University Societies to recruit and train undergraduates to become ringers and for members of university societies to attend ITTS courses.

<u>Upper age limit</u>

We no longer live in a nuclear society where people settle down after University, get married and have an average of 2.4 children. People in their 20's are considerably more mobile, and surveys show that a substantial proportion of ringers in the 18 – 30 age group give up ringing. This is probably because for many except the most advanced, ringing is a social activity, and on moving to a new area they have difficulty finding a suitable new band to join.

It is therefore important that this youth strategy caters for people in the 18 – 30 age group. Not only is it necessary to avoid the loss of such people and improve retention, but the 1988 survey showed that they are the most effective age group when acting as tower captains, and they will also relate best to the under 18 age group when leading youth groups. We also need to cater for those who do not go to university or are in higher education at a place where there is no student ringing society.

The Plymouth Youths are a model on which such groups can be based. They cater for young people in the age range 8 to 30. The Ringing Foundation will therefore promote the establishment of similar groups based on this model.

<u>Regional Ringing Development Officers</u>

There needs to be a network of support and guidance to enable these various initiatives to succeed.

The Ringing Foundation therefore intend to fund a group of Regional Ringing Development Officers. It is envisaged that these will be part time posts, although they could be voluntary with paid expenses. The role of a Ringing Development Officer will be to maintain contact with existing Youth Groups, Guilds, Associations, Ringing/Teaching Centres and similar organisations in their region. They will visit each of these organisations in their region at least once a year to offer guidance and support, and monitor activity.

An important aspect of their role will also be to encourage the setting up of new projects such as youth groups, school groups and ringing/teaching centres and ITTS courses, and provide support at guidance to individual leaders at a local level. They will also act as ambassadors for the Ringing Foundation and encourage people/organisations donate.

- South East
- South West
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East Anglia

- Northern England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Ireland

Separate arrangements will be devised to cover overseas areas.

The Foundation will need to raise the necessary finance to fund these posts. Initially Ringing Development Officers may need to cover more than one region.

The employment, management and coordination of these staff is a matter which will need further discussion between the Ringing Foundation, the Central Council and the Association of Ringing Teachers.

It is envisaged that there will be some targets set in terms of the number of new ringers, teachers and young people undergoing training in each region. The Ringing Foundation will wish to monitor the effectiveness of the Ringing Development Officers and channel limited funding to best effect.

Leaders network

Other ways of providing support include the sharing of good practice and encouraging innovation. A yahoo e-group has recently been formed http://groups.yahoo.com/group/youthringing/ and this discussion group will be promoted as one way of sharing information between group leaders.

Conferences and seminars

Another way of sharing expertise of establishing groups and working with young people is through conferences and seminars. To maximise accessibility, rather than a national conference smaller conferences or seminars could be held in autumn 2013 on a regional basis. The Ringing Roadshow in 2014 also presents another opportunity to share experience and good practice.

Moodle Website

Guidance on establishing and running young persons and schools groups is being developed and placed on the Moodle website, which forms part of ITTS. This is being undertaken by the Association of Ringing Teachers, with input from various sources.

Young leaders

Young people are the most effective at leading people's groups, so it is important to develop a culture which encourages people to take on leadership responsibilities from an early age. The Scouts have a 'young leaders' programme to develop children from age 14 and involve them in leading groups of younger children.

This model will be adopted and developed as part of ITTS, so that once established, young ringers groups can establish a sustainable source of future leaders.

An 'Academy'

The possibility of forming an organisation which young ringers can join will be explored. This will provide periodic newsletters and publicise events targeted at young ringers. Safeguarding issues mean that this will need to be carefully controlled, but could be operated by the ringing Development Officers, perhaps in conjunction with the ringing World.

National youth contest

The Ringing Foundation will support the national Youth Contest as a way of bringing young ringers together. In the longer term it is hoped that this will become a regional competition, with a national final. The Ringing Foundation will also encourage and support similar national initiatives, such as perhaps a national young ringers camp.

[One of the key criticisms of the RF's existing business plan is that it concentrates too much on 'young people'. We need to make it clear what we mean by 'young' people. **Young people = people under 40**]

6.   Geography

In 1988 ringing was healthiest in the suburban and large city areas. We do not have figures for the present, but it is suspected that many of the baby boomers who perhaps contributed to this have since moved to the more rural areas.

There is anecdotal evidence in London at the moment with problems filling officer positions in the Northern District of the Surrey Association, SW Essex and the possible merger of the Southern and Western Districts of the Middlesex Association that a significant change has taken place. Similar things may be happening in other large cities.

 [**Action:** Do we have any survey evidence of societies finding it difficult to fill officer posts – this and the whole issue of succession planning is potentially a powerful argument]

We now live in a multi-cultural society, with significant numbers of younger people coming to this country from the EU and many other countries. Younger people are also more mobile and tend to live in rented accommodation. The average first time house buyer is now over 40, and families are being started later. Our strategy therefore needs to reflect the fact that ringers under 40 may move every few years and they will be less tied to one particular tower.

In rural villages many churches are part of team ministries and the frequency of services has been reduced. Even in 1988 only 46% of village churches had their bells rung on the particular Sunday of the survey.

Therefore it seems unrealistic to expect every individual village tower to maintain its own band. Whilst many may continue to do so (and we cannot force them to change) it seems sensible to encourage more village towers to combine and have shared bands, and to encourage more collaboration generally.

Churches in Towns could continue to maintain their own bands, and these could perhaps act as a focus and support ringing in the surrounding villages.

Similar arrangements could also take place in Suburban and City environments, where an increasing proportion of towers already have combined bands, who then keep otherwise silent towers ringing.

1988 Survey	Ringers per bell	Percentage of towers rung on 20/11/1988	Percentage with shared band
Inner City	1.22	63%	50%
Suburban	1.45	80%	9%
Large City	1.70	83%	9%
Town	1.42	81%	11%
Village	1.24	46%	12%

 [**Action:** Could the Ringing Trends Committee provide more up to date data?]

7.   Cluster working

The concept of Cluster Working with people working together to teach rather than as an isolated task is currently being developed by members of the Association of Ringing Teachers. Teaching alone can often be a soul destroying, ineffective and time consuming approach. The main advantage of working in groups is that progress is faster and more effective, thus producing better ringers faster as well as meeting the expectations of the modern new ringer. It also maintains quality of teaching. It is also more motivating for learners and more supportive for teachers

Cluster working is a good way of maintaining ringing at a local level, where individually towers might struggle to teach on their own. A cluster does not need not the facilities of a fully fledged Ringing or Teaching Centre, especially as many towers now have their own simulators.

Cluster working has emerged as a 'bottom up' initiative from some of the members of the Association of Ringing Teachers. More research and support is needed to help develop this concept and roll it out on a more widespread basis.

Clusters centred on towns and supporting the surrounding village teams, and similar arrangements in urban and suburban environments could have a significant impact on the future of the exercise.

What would they do?

- Arrange ITTS courses
- Monitor and encourage progression of Teachers & Mentors
- Encourage and arrange group teaching sessions and other workshops (eg listening skills, theory etc.)
- Encourage recruitment generally
- Provide youth group opportunities
- Encourage and arrange 'Learning the Ropes' based practice sessions
- New Ringers Progress through 'Learning the Ropes' at each level
- Coordinate teaching resources to best effect

8.   What do people ring and how has this changed/expectations?

Perception is that the best ringers are ringing more complex things, but the average ringer is less capable.

What do we need to do to maintain standards/abilities

To what extent do existing ringers want to maintain their skills and make progress?

Or are they content just to ring on Sundays?

We need to understand what ringers expectations are, for a number of reasons.

[**Action:** Can the ringing Trends Committee help with research?]

9.   Communication and identity

Traditionally communication with the Ringing Community has been through the Ringing World. However this only has a circulation of around 3,000 copies and in the modern internet environment it is difficult to see this surviving in its present form.

Even a move to a fortnightly or monthly publication may only be temporary and not the best long term solution for the exercise.

Grass roots ringers tend to identify with their tower and then perhaps their local District or Branch, although low attendance at many practices at meetings tends to suggest that even this link is not as strong as it ought to be. Identification at Society level and with the Central Council is even more remote.

Communication with the mass of ringers is therefore difficult, yet in many other spare time activities participants belong to an organisation which produces electronic newsletters

There would be benefits in establishing a national organisation to which individual ringers could belong. There are two already in the form of the College Youths and Cumberlands, but what would be beneficial would be one which provided things of benefit to the ordinary ringer. This would include regular internet communication as well as access to structured training courses to cover the Learning the Ropes syllabus and beyond.

10. Lessons from earlier initiatives

Over the past 20 years, Council has deployed a number of initiatives in the fields of recruitment and training, and to address trends associated with the ageing ringing population.

- The Ringing Centres Committee was established in 1993. This was at a time before Abel, when PC's were in their infancy. There were only a few Cummins and Bagley simulators, and these were quite expensive. During the early days, there was much emphasis on equipment and physical facilities such as teaching rooms, toilets and dumb-bells.

- In the mid 1990's the Founders Livery Company provided external funding totalling £30,000 in order to establish many more ringing centres. Centres had to match funding on a 50:50 basis. The funding was used to purchase equipment and provide centre managers with a weekend's training, using material adapted from the Education Committee's MTM course. The number of ringing centres has remained more or less static since then. Currently 37 are listed on the Council website.

- The Founders Livery Company also sponsored two awards, administered by the Ringing Centres Committee These awards have been in abeyance for a number of years.

  - A young person's award

  - A 'best ringing centre' award.

- In the late 1990's the Education Committee developed proposals for an Instructors Guild, but at the Council Meeting at Lincoln in 1999 the following motion was passed "The Council asks the Education Committee not to pursue the question of certification of instructors until the Central Council Instructors' Guild is fully established nationally and is working well."

- 1999 saw the culmination of the Ringing in the Millennium project. Some Societies enthusiastically supported the project, with many new ringers taught. However other societies were less enthusiastic. Whilst it is estimated that this project may have led to the numbers of ringers increasing from about 41,800 in 1988 to around 47,000 in 2000, many of these 'millennium learners' were in the older age brackets.

- The Education committee established the Network for Ringing Training in 2001, although this is now seldom used.

- The Council established the Ringing Foundation in 2007 to support recruitment and training. This led to the development of ITTS starting in 2009 and the establishment of the Association of Ringing Teachers in 2012.

- The Education Committee launched the website 'Ringing Forums' at the Stoneleigh Roadshow in 2008, although this has now lapsed.

- A recruitment and training conference was held at Wellesbourne in 2011. Subsequently the Admin Committee established a working party to follow up the conference, and this has evolved into the current Forum.

- There is no Committee dedicated to progressing work with young people, although this is a very important area.

The Ringing Centres initiative has not been taken up on a widespread scale, despite receiving £30,000 external funding. It is difficult to measure any major impact.

The Ringing in the Millennium project shows that with the right impetus a significant proportion of ringers can be mobilised at a local to recruit and train ringers. Subsequent research revealed that it added about 5,000 ringers to the ringing population, although since the initiative ended in 2000 the number of ringers has since dropped.

However, this project also shows that some Societies are more receptive than others.

The Ringing Foundation is of the view that there is a high wastage rate, and if average standards of tuition locally could be improved, many more people could be retained. Any funding should be channelled accordingly.

11. **Action plan and timescale**

We need to do the following:

Objective

- Ensure that at least 800 ringers per annum are recruited and trained to be able to ring simple methods such as plain bob & grandsire inside.

Research

- Thoroughly research current recruitment and retention rates

- ITTS retention rates and establish if these are significantly better

- Those who currently carry out teaching

- Succession issues in society officers and Guild/association and District/Branch levels

- Health of ringing in Urban, suburban, town and village environments

- Ringers expectations

Quality of and availability of tuition and leadership

- To raise standards and lower the drop out rate, use Learning the Ropes as the basis of a national training scheme for ringers, based on this curriculum being delivered locally by ITTS trained instructors.

- To recruit and train 250 people to become ITTS accredited teachers each year

- Provide these people with further support and training so that they can take on leadership roles in local towers and societies, to help with succession planning.

- To encourage existing teachers to become accredited teachers through the experienced teacher (mentor) route.

Cluster Working

- To promote Cluster working as a way of improving the quality and availability of tuition and helping with individual progression.

Young ringers

- To develop guidance on establishment and running of young ringers groups

- Establish a national support group for young ringers and provide them with a regular newsletters and details of events targeted at young ringers - an Academy of Bellringing [West Ham fans will know what I mean!]

- Develop a 'young leaders' module to run alongside ITTS.

<u>Recruitment</u>

- To develop guidance on methods of recruitment and groups to be targetted.

- To continue to develop 'Discover Bellringing' as the portal for non-ringers

<u>Advice and support</u>

- To work with relevant Council Committees to provide support and advice to local groups and enable them to deliver the increased amount of training needed.

- To supplement this by employing the equivalent of two full time staff to provide advice and support to local groups in setting up ITTS courses, learning the ropes sessions, young ringers groups and recruitment projects etc. Regional Ringing Development Officers

- Financial support for such projects (e.g. as Milton Keynes and Birmingham Summer Camp) to be available through the Ringing Foundation. Also work with other external funders to tap into programmes and secure other external funding.

12. **Funding support from the centre**

Funding this support will mean increasing the level of finance available to the Ringing Foundation or Central Council from around £10k to around £100k per annum. Some of this funding could come from personal donations, and some from external charities, although both sources would be reluctant to fund on-going (revenue) expenditure over the long term.

To provide a stable long term income there needs to be a regular contribution (subscription) from within the ringing community.

This could be:

1. A capitation fee on affiliated Societies: A level of between £2 and £3 per member would provide the necessary level of funding.

2. Merger of individual affiliated Societies into a new National Society, but retaining local Branches/Districts.

3. Formation of a new national ringers Society, with individual membership,

4. New national Society could perhaps be based around the Ringing Foundation and those ringers who have graduated through learning the ropes.

There needs to be a recognition that over the past 50 years there has been much emphasis on bell restoration. Many societies have raised substantial sums and seen a significant improvement in the bells in their areas. However we now need to divert some of these resources into training the ringers of the future to ring these restored bells. These resources mainly need to be deployed at a local level, although

some resources are needed in order to provide central admin and technical support and advice (e.g the Ringing Development Officers).

Currently about £300K per annum is raised by Societies towards bell restoration. We have been conducting some initial research with Robin Shipp Chair of the CCCBR Bell Restoration Funds Committee on fund-raising for BRF's. The last triennial survey was 15 years ago, but much of the data needed for a survey is now published on the internet, via the Charity Commission and other websites, so it is a relatively easy task to undertake. This has thrown up some interesting results:

- **The capital balance currently held in Guild/Association restoration funds is around £2.5million** which would last 7.0 years with spending at current levels. This was 4.7 years fifteen years ago. Whilst we need to do some more research on how much is currently committed as grants (fifteen years ago it was 24%) to better understand the reasons why capital is building up.

- The average raised per member has increased from £7.89 to £11.55 per annum (46%). However in the same period RPI has increased by 59% and average earnings have increased by 73%, so in real terms less is being raised.

- This average also hides a wide variation in the actual amount raised, from less than £5 to over £25 per member. About a third of societies are raising no more, or even less than they were 15 years ago! If the poorer performing societies could be brought up nearer to the better performing ones, there is potential to raise much more in total.

- Looking back at the 1988 survey of ringing, about 7% of towers with 5 or more bells were classed as unringable. Today both Dove and Towerbase record only 4.7% of these towers as unringable. Of course the definitions of unringability might not be the same as used in 1988, but 50% of unringable towers are five bell towers. For 6 or more bells only 2.6% of towers are currently unringable. Many of these are probably difficult cases to resolve.

One concern is that Societies feel the need to keep money in reserve in order to allow for future projects which might come along. If a fund could be set up, or the terms of the rescue fund amended, it would be possible to underwrite grants, say by one year's fund-raising, so that Societies could become less cautious about keeping money in reserve. In conducting this research we have also looked at the charitable status of Societies. Bath & Wells, Bedfordshire, Chester, Durham & Newcastle, Essex, Gloucester & Bristol, Peterborough, Suffolk, Sussex, and Truro include recruitment and training in their Charitable objects, not just bell restoration. It would be a relatively simple matter for these societies to put part of their annual subscriptions into recruitment and training, as opposed to the BRF, on a temporary or permanent basis.

Therefore there appears to be a case for a detailed review of how the exercise could be funded in future, particularly the balance between bell restoration and recruitment and training,

Central Council

The Central Council itself held £130,574 unrestricted funds in its general fund at 31/12/2011. The General Fund has a modest annual expenditure of around £16,000 with income of around £12,000, so there is scope for the Council to release some of its accumulated capital in order to help Foundation and ART make further progress.

13. Getting the message across

There is a need to explain the problem and consult about the possible solutions. It will take several years to get to the stage where there is widespread agreement, although we will never gain 100% acceptance.

Consultation techniques could include:

- **Open meeting at central Council meeting:** The Foundation's plans were explained to CCCBR representatives at Worcester and at subsequent AGM's. There is a problem in getting the message passed down the line.

- **National conference:** The Wellesborne conference in 2011 was well attended, but not by grass roots ringers

- **Regional conferences:** Two were held, one in Birmingham and one in London in 2009. Now is the time to repeat, perhaps adding Bristol and ether Manchester or Sheffield to the list

- **Newsletters:** The RF circulated an e-mail newsletter to about 800 Guild/Association District/Branch Officers in December 2012. This may have not percolated down to grass roots level, but is worth repeating at periodic intervals. These officers are key opinion formers.

- **Presentation to Guilds and Associations:** Roger Booth and John Harrison made a presentation to the Suffolk Guild AGM in 2012 and this was well received. Speaking to people personally, and being able to answer the questions often allays their fears.

- **Roadshow:** The RF exhibited at the 2008 Roadshow at Stoneleigh. The 2014 Roadshow at Newbury will be a key opportunity to engage with a wide cross section of the exercise.

- **Leading by example and word of mouth:** If we can persuade a few key societies to get fully behind ITTS and then publicise this heavily, this may encourage others.

- **Pressure from below:** We do not promote learning the ropes heavily enough. Whilst we can appreciate the desire to keep this confined to accredited instructors, if it were more widely available to new recruits, there would be pressure on Tower Captains and Instructors to become accredited. As people visit other towers, this is likely to happen increasingly anyway.

- **Partnership agreements with Districts/Branches:** One way to achieve more rapid take up would be to sign partnering agreements with individual Districts/Branches. Provided that they made arrangements for existing teachers in their area to become members of ART, held regular ITTS courses to get new teachers on board and established clusters, they would be able to offer Learning the Ropes to all the new ringers in their area, with those who had enrolled on ITTS overseeing the work of those who had not, until such time as all teachers had enrolled on ITTS.

- **Training days:** A Partnership agreement could also extend to society training days, so that the society offered training to Levels 1 to 5, with ITTS trained instructors. Although individual tower captains might not be ITTS trained, there would be someone at District/Branch level who would oversee tuition and sign off the pupil's logbook at each stage.

- **Residential Training Course:** If an existing course, or a new course could be established with an LTR based syllabus and issuing LTR Certificates, this would also help spread the word.