

Training days: February and March 2021

Training! “Now I’m reinvigorated to do more!” :: February and March have been busy months for training, with a two-weekend conducting course attended by six SACR students, followed by a full training day this weekend with about 34 students, helpers and tutors... This is one of the most heart-warming comments: “Best day of my lockdown!” ... Here are some reports from participants.

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The “Roving Ringer’s” enjoyment of Surprise Minor and brand new methods:

I am progressing to Surprise methods and today has enthused me at just the stage when I was getting weary of memory learning and worrying that similar patterns with small variations would just muddle my brain and in any case it probably wouldn’t transfer to the tower!

Jonathan was honest, that we must commit Cambridge to memory, but then gave us a range of helpful tips to make it easier both to learn and to keep accurate. I made notes and I now intend to focus on each of his points as I ring on Abel so that when I go back to the tower they will be the signposts that lead me to accurate ringing. I now realise that being able to ring from memory on Abel is just not enough. I must work at recognising these extra elements and actually I think it will make it more interesting for me too.

But the best thing about all this effort I intend to expend is that it will pay dividends (I will hold you to that Jonathan!). As I progress to other Surprise methods the learning will not be so intense.

The breakout ringing sessions were great with steady helpers and Ian ensuring each of us had the practice we wanted. I didn’t need to have learnt Norwich and Primrose but I tried to and I always get a thrill when the conductor shouts “Go” and it is a new method for me. I managed them with help and even had a go at a touch of Norwich. Best day of my lockdown!

Lynne Sydes, Roving Ringer, Dumfries

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Miranda doubles down with Double Bob:

The day started off well for me. Ruth had made it foolproof to login to zoom meet and to group ringing rooms (essential for me), and there were no technical difficulties. We were all made to feel very welcome, and it was nice to see lots of new faces as well as familiar ones.

The day was extremely well organised into groups wanting to learn different things. Initially after being flung right out of my comfort zone with Double Bob, I was given the encouragement and support I needed to have a go, with success! Despite the range of skills in our group of learners, Tina had no difficulty tailoring the day to challenge and support each of us. I learned a lot and really enjoyed myself. It was nice not to have to worry about handling a bell as well as learning a new method.

Thank you for organising this terrific day of virtual ringing. Thank you teachers and helpers: it was a great way to learn.

Miranda Jones, Dunblane

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Irene moves on to methods:

I am fairly new to bell ringing and prior to 2020 lockdown measures I had been making steady progress; this was due to the experience of the Glasgow band and the high standard of teaching. Although practice has continued via ringing room, my employment has impacted on my attendance and progress to the extent that I thought I would really struggle with Saturday's course. However, due to Ruth Marshall's style of teaching (and patience), by the end of the training day I had advanced from ringing "call changes" to ringing Plain Hunt Doubles, Bristow Bob Doubles and Plain Bob Doubles.

I thoroughly enjoyed the training day and would like to send my appreciation to all of the organisers/trainers and helpers. I look forward to any further training opportunities.

Irene, Glasgow

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Clyde orders his report well with all types of "courses" in this piece on intermediate conducting:

A small group of averagely competent SACR ringers recently signed up for Simon Gay's Intermediate Conducting course. I was one of them and the course really was excellent.

Over the course of a couple of afternoons (8 hours in total), Simon gently introduces you to coursing orders – where and how to spot them, how to transpose them and a whole host of other useful info locked away in them. The key to the course's success is of course Simon's gentle coercion into realms unknown for the participants. Each theoretical part of the course is reinforced by a practical session using just a couple of methods – Plain and Little Bob – as illustrations of the theory and to give us all the opportunity to try out what we'd learned. Simon was his usual patient and tolerant self, allowing time for information to soak in and effortlessly fielding tangential questions without letting us stray too far from the essence of the coursework.

It's an ill wind... and the pandemic-driven online resource Ringing Room turned out to be the ideal training space. Plenty of opportunity to consult helpful scribbles of relevant coursing orders, which the physicality of tower bells would perhaps not allow. For anyone vaguely familiar with the superb "On Conducting" by Wilfred G. Wilson, Simon's course fulfils an invaluable role by filling in the interim rungs of the learning ladder. My only word of caution is that an effortless command of Plain Bob Doubles, Minor, Major and Little Bob Major using Ringing Room is essential for steering a steady course since relentlessly lumpy ringing greatly detracts from being able to observe what you're supposed to!

Everyone came away from the course with a fistful of extra tools to use on virtual practice nights and hopefully, in the near future, in the tower. Huge thanks to Simon for structuring and delivering a brilliantly eye-opening course, and to the rest of the Gay family for allowing him the time to do it!

Clyde Wallbanks, Glasgow

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And from other snippets heard over the weekend: Aside from all the learning and enjoyment with virtual bells, in Inge's words, "it's just nice to see lots of familiar faces" during these weeks of lockdown. And Iain said "Now I'm reinvigorated to do more!" It was good fun and there was a great sense of community from across Scotland.