

## **Groups available on the Hereford Ringing Course**

### **Requirements for all students**

**We expect that you can handle a bell entirely by yourself, and that you have rung rounds competently, safely and entirely unaided on different bells when you apply.**

All students should be able to ring a bell up and down. Please take note of these requirements – if you fail to satisfy us on the safety of your bell handling we reserve the right to remove you from the practical ringing sessions.

To make the best progress, you need good bell control. If you are in doubt as to what this means, let us give you an example. Can you balance a bell at handstroke for three seconds, then at backstroke for three seconds, and then repeat nine times – balancing both strokes (without bumping!) 20 times in a row? This demonstrates your ability to ring very slowly.

If necessary, try practising this (preferably on an unfamiliar bell!) in the weeks before you arrive. Far too often valuable teaching time is spent sorting out poor striking in rounds—even in the higher groups—because students have inadequate bell control.

Try to visit some different towers in your home area before coming on the course, as this will help develop the necessary control.

### **Teaching on the course**

Teaching on the course is done in small groups. For your chosen method(s) you will be in a group with four or five other students, one tutor and a set of helpers who will work with you throughout the weekend. There are six practical sessions, and three group lecture sessions. It is expected you will attend all these sessions. In some cases there may be more than one group learning a particular method (e.g. D1, D2, D3 etc. for Plain Bob Doubles).

You will be told which specific group you are with when you register at the start of the course. Occasionally, due to the mix of applicants, we combine two groups together. The total group size will still be five or six, but may include students ringing something different from you.

Our tutors have wide experience of teaching ringing, and they may approach a subject in a different way to your home tower. Most students see this as an advantage, but occasionally a student has been upset by this. It is best to come with an open mind, ready to accept new ideas.

## **Choosing a group**

To get the most from the course, our experience (and we've been doing this for over 60 years!) is that people do better when they underestimate their abilities, not overestimate them.

The course is quite intensive, and you will be ringing with unfamiliar ringers on strange bells. You won't get the most benefit if you are at the edge of your ability. One key point to consider is that you are completing the form in December/January, and the course is not until the beginning of April. Whilst it is tempting to predict the progress you will make over this time, if you get it wrong you may find you are struggling when you arrive.

It's always much easier to cope with someone who is at the top end of the group than someone who is below the bottom end of the group. We also find that bell control can be a problem. Whilst we try to provide easy going bells for group practicals, these will be of varying weights and draughts. Bells that are heavier or lighter than you are used to, or have the ceiling further away than you are used to, can cause problems.

Once we have allocated you to a group, we cannot change this when you arrive – there are too many interconnections to unravel if we try – so please don't ask us to do it.

## **Elementary groups**

### **General comments about groups A and B**

So that students in these Groups can get the most benefit from the course and leave feeling that they have made real progress we are arranging for them to ring on tied bells on the Thursday evening.

All students who need help with bell control can be given it. Those who need no such help will be given useful exercises or the bells may be untied. Please do not apply for Group C simply to avoid the Thursday tied bell session.

**GROUP A** The starting point for this group is the ability to ring rounds. Depending on the quality of their bell control some students may find that the experience of ringing rounds with a strong band is sufficiently rewarding. Others may make their first steps in call changes and then, possibly, in change ringing on three or four bells. This group is all about improving bell control and timing, with strong bands around you. Please take note of the general comments above.

**GROUP B** A Group for those who can ring call changes confidently and accurately, and who are ready to start plain hunt on 3 or 4 or 5 bells. There will be practice at plain hunting on different rings of bells and in different orders both on the treble and "inside".

You will ring the treble to methods like Bastow Minimus and Doubles and to Bob Minimus to improve your control and timing skills. Please take note of the general comments above.

**GROUP C** For those who want to learn to ring the treble to plain hunting on five bells. “Starts” will be from 12345 at first then from other orders. This group aims to develop bell control and timing skills whilst change ringing. Please take note of the general comments above.

### **Intermediate groups**

**GROUP D** For those who really have timing and bell control when ringing the treble to touches of Plain Bob or Grandsire Doubles (please note Group C’s aims) and are ready to learn Plain Bob Doubles “inside”.

**GROUP E** For those who really have timing and bell control when ringing the treble to Plain Bob or Grandsire Doubles (please note Group C’s aims) and are ready to learn Grandsire Doubles “inside”.

**GROUP F** Plain Bob Minor “inside”. For those who can ring a Doubles method “inside” to touches.

### **Advanced groups**

**GROUP G** Treble Dodging Minor. For students who can ring Bob Minor “inside” confidently to touches. Students can learn to hunt the treble, ring Kent or Oxford Treble Bob inside, or ring Cambridge Surprise. Other methods will be used as stepping stones. One of the aims of this group is to learn methods quickly.

**GROUP H** Stepping up to Triples and Major: This group is aimed at Students who are used to ringing five or six bells and would like the opportunity to extend their abilities to eight bells. A variety of methods may be rung according to need, to provide practice at eight bell ringing – perhaps starting with plain hunting on 7, and working up towards Kent Treble Bob.

**GROUP I** Stedman Doubles and Triples. This group is aimed at ringers who can ring Plain Bob or Grandsire Doubles, who want to progress on to Stedman. As such, no previous experience of Stedman is required (unlike Group J below). The first three practicals will be at six-bell towers, the last three at eights, so those who have mastered Doubles can move on to Triples.

**GROUP J** Stedman Triples and Caters. Applicants should have experience of ringing Stedman Doubles or Triples. Those with some experience of Stedman Triples will have the opportunity to develop it and progress to Caters. We plan for the first three towers will be eight bell ones, the last three at tens. Students can limit themselves to Triples at the later towers if they wish.

**GROUP K** Surprise Major. For those really competent at easier eight bell methods. If you've never rung any Surprise Major, we will start with Cambridge and Yorkshire. Once these are mastered, we can move on to others of the core seven, probably Lessness and Bristol, though circumstances at the time will determine the actual methods chosen.

Sometimes applicants with a broad experience may find they are beyond the 'upper limit' of what we can offer – for example, students applying to learn London to complete the core seven are unlikely to be accepted.