

All Saints Wokingham – 100 for RW100

It seems a long time since the Ringing World launched its '100 for RW100' challenge last June. It would be good to take part, but how? What could we do 100 of that would be both challenging and achievable? 100 peals, or even 100 quarters would be beyond a band that normally rings a dozen quarters and a couple of peals a year. 100 visitors up the tower would be achievable (we had 108 on Heritage Day alone) but not very challenging.

Many heads are better than one, so I asked for ideas via the tower e-mail list. Ideas included:

- Ringing our bells 100 times during the year? (Too easy)
- 100 different ringers on our bells across the year? (No further response.)
- Calling 100 different touches of a method across the year? (That's going some – would you like to investigate feasibility – no response)
- Ringing 100 methods during the year (Sounds ambitious, but could you produce a list)

The last idea came from Richard, who did go away and produce a draft list, but it took us a while to convince ourselves that we could do it. The method repertoire of our band (as a whole, not just a few individuals) was only a couple of dozen methods. The majority of our members can ring Surprise, but a side effect of that is that we tend to ring only a few non-surprise methods 'for those who can't yet ring Surprise'. Like a lot of modern ringers, many of our band had picked up relatively few intermediate methods between Plain Bob and Cambridge.

This might give the impression of a super-band, but we are not. From time to time we manage 8-spliced, but more often we ring the 'Cambridge above' methods.

For many of our members, learning a new method is a significant step, and learning ten in short order would seem a daunting task, let alone around 80. So before committing to the plan, we had to think how we could make the seemingly impossible possible. If this was to occupy us over the coming months, we wanted to involve all of the band, not just a small elite.

Feasibility

We are an 8-bell band, but we routinely ring on lower numbers – either for training or because we are short handed (Sunday evening services being the most difficult). So we decided to include methods at all stages that we regularly ring – from 4 to 8. In fact with a ten bell tower on our outing, we were able to include a few Caters and Royal methods as well. We also agreed that methods rung at different stages would count as different methods.

We felt that this would be a good opportunity to look at methods other than Surprise, not just because they would in general be simpler to learn, but to help to fill the gap in our traditional repertoire.

We still needed to reduce the overall learning. One approach was to ring families of methods with different lead end and half lead changes. For those of us who already think about methods that way, this was a straightforward case of 'buy one get one free'. For those who only learn complete blue lines of each method, we hoped that it might offer a stepping stone to a more flexible style of method learning.

We also decided to include 'variant' methods, where a small piece of work in a familiar method is replaced by something else (eg places instead of dodges). That greatly reduced the learning needed, and also introduced the band to some very unconventional method names.

The next question was how much of a method we had to ring to count it. The obvious length was a course. For methods on lower numbers that's a bit short and doesn't involve many people, so we agreed they should be rung more than once with different ringers. For Surprise Major a course is rather longer than our usual 'half a course' but in the spirit of 'all the work' we felt it was the right thing to do.

What about quality? We agreed not to count any courses that weren't up to scratch, and over the ensuing months we did indeed reject quite a few courses as not good enough, even though they had come round.

Could we integrate all this extra ringing into our existing ringing time? Juggling time in our practices is difficult anyway, with ringers at different stages of development each having different needs. What effect would this large cuckoo in the practice nest have on our other objectives? In particular, we needed to ensure that we didn't detract from the rope time of our least experienced ringers, who would not be able to take part in the method ringing. Was Nigel, our ringing master, happy to juggle these extra balls while keeping the others in the air?

Let's go for it

By the end of June, Nigel was happy, Richard had revised his list, and we decided to accept the challenge. We got off to a flying start at the first practice on 27 June, by ringing Grandsire Major, Erin Triples and St Clement's Minor. With the methods we had already rung during the first half of the year, we were now heading towards 30. It was a comforting start, but with only half a year left, and over 70 more methods to ring, we had to average around three a week. And we had to allow for Bank Holidays when we don't practice, not to mention catching up from any inevitable setbacks.

Richard was appointed scorer, since it was his idea, and he kept track of what was rung when. He produced a graph of our progress with a straight line that we needed to stay above to reach 100 by the end of the year. Every few weeks he updated it to show our progress.

At first we surged ahead by ringing things that either weren't too difficult, or that many of the band had rung in the past but we hadn't rung this year. We lost much of that early lead during the summer, with attendance depleted by holidays and a practice lost to a Bank Holiday.

The long haul

Things were getting harder. Through September and October we just about managed to stay above Richard's line, but by November we were slipping below it. That called for drastic action, and Nigel called an extra practice on a Tuesday (about the only other night we could all manage). We started at 6.30, with the inducement of going for a curry when we had rung the allotted methods. (Would he really have kept us from our meal if we failed to score?) He had given us a list of ten methods to

learn, and he grouped us into two 'teams', allocated five each, which made it easier for those who didn't fancy tackling all ten.

That put us above the curve again, which was just as well, since we lost three practices over the next month (one to erect the Church Christmas tree, and two Bank Holidays). We ended 2011 tantalisingly close to our goal, having rung 97 methods.

The final push

Fortunately, Richard's target line, which we had been trying to stay above, had a safety margin built in (the grey area in the graph) because the centenary challenge ended on 15th January, the birthday of the Ringing World's founding Editor, John Sparkes Goldsmith.

Nigel chose two fairly easy methods, Titanic Triples and Titanic Doubles, each of which we rang successfully a couple of times on Sunday 8th January. That left us one more method to ring, and one practice in which to ring it.

We wanted to go out on a high, with a new Surprise Major method. We had learnt Cornwall and attempted it a couple of times in December, but not achieved a whole course. Our first attempt on 9 January also foundered, but we went on to ring a reasonable course, with a round of applause from those sitting out.

A lap of honour

Having reached our goal (with six days to spare) we decided to try a lap of honour by ringing Wokingham Surprise Major the following week. The method was first rung in November 1990 to mark the 800th anniversary of the church. Only four of that local peal band still ring here, and an All Saints band hasn't rung the method since then.

We had thought of making Wokingham our 100th method, but with time running out that seemed too risky. So we made it our 101st method instead. We attempted it the day after the deadline, but with several of the band away, we didn't quite complete the course. But now it's on the agenda, so watch this space.

The originator's tale

Last June, John sent an email to members of the tower to let us know that the Ringing World had launched its '100 for RW100' challenge. He gave us a brief background and asked for ideas. Without giving it too much thought I replied suggesting that we ring a 100 methods. It was only afterwards that I realised that I might have inadvertently stumbled on a good idea – there's a first time for everything! The idea seemed to catch the imagination of the band. This was helped by the fact that we had an outing in early July during which a number of new methods were rung and this helped get us off to a flying start.

I was asked to look into what methods we could ring and to keep count of the new methods rung. When I started to look at possible new methods, I realised that after nearly half a century of ringing I had barely scratched the surface. I just hadn't appreciated the sheer number of methods available. Indeed, despite producing a list of 150 methods, the Ringing Master (Nigel) kept suggesting methods that weren't on the list.

As the year progressed, I produced regular

reports listing the methods rung, the date they were rung and giving a graph showing progress against target (showing the deadline as the year end to give us a bit of contingency), in addition the current total of methods rung was recorded on the white board in the ringing chamber. All of this helped maintain interest and enthusiasm as we progressed towards our target. I didn't have any doubt that we would get there as it was well within the band's capabilities, but the challenge demonstrated the value of having a measurable target, as it gave us a focus and motivated us to ring methods that we might not otherwise have tried. The question now is, what are we going to do this year?

Richard Woodward

The ringing master's tale

For each of our practices, with the varying levels of ringing expertise in the band, I chose a group of methods that would give each person a chance to have an attempt at ringing at least one of the selected methods. This proved quite successful, creating a renewed interest and enthusiasm in the band to learn new and different methods from those of our usual choices. As John has mentioned earlier in the article, we set ourselves what we considered to be a suitable standard to say that we had rung the method - reasonable striking and very few method mistakes - the judges in many cases being the ringers not involved. Selecting which methods to ring was an interesting exercise, some of the trivial ones we are unlikely to ring again, but there are certainly a number we will add to our repertoire.

Nigel Mellor

The first ringer's tale

When the band agreed to take up the RW's challenge by attempting to ring 100 different methods in the year, I thought that I would be ringing the Treble for most of them! This was certainly true for the Surprise methods, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that many of the methods that I had not heard of before were within my capabilities. Every week we had two

or three new methods to learn and although there were some that I did not master I was able to ring most of the non-Surprise ones. Some were more of a challenge than others, of course. Titanic Doubles and Triples were pretty easy but I found Reverse Stedman more difficult. However, on the whole I found the project interesting and fun, and I hope that we will be able to ring at least some of these methods again on a regular basis.

Mary Spence

The second ringer's tale

I think it enabled people of all abilities to join in. There seemed to be more of a level playing field than usual, as even the most advanced ringers sometimes struggled to learn the methods (perhaps over-confident!).

The extra evening was fun. It was not meant to be a contest, but it soon became one and that helped us concentrate. Olly [our newest recruit] was able to take part as well which was brilliant!

It made a change from our usual practices. As a downside we did not do so much advanced ringing, but for a period of time it energised us, and perhaps made us more of a team.

I hope we do add some methods to our repertoire. Perhaps we will be able to ring full courses of Cambridge, Yorkshire, Superlative, Pudsey and Lincolnshire now!!!

Barbara Smith

The third ringer's tale

As one of the more experienced ringers, the 100 Methods challenge offered some new perspectives on ringing and the All Saints Band: the chance to dust off methods rung 20 or more years ago; having to learn multiple new methods in one go, where normally a new 'method of the month' or for a peal is 'pushing the envelope'; realising that there are many interesting (and musical) methods that aren't in the mainstream but perhaps ought to be (Duffield, Cornwall, but not Reverse Stedman!); the realisation that there are so many different ways people learn - whether the 'blue line' is studied vertically or horizontally, whether it's learnt as a continuous

line or as 'above' and 'below', or as place bells, and the different names people use to describe pieces of work. Fascinating!

But what really stood out was the way many of the Band who normally 'just turn up' threw themselves into the challenge - an opportunity to participate more fully and to demonstrate their potential when others are 'in the same boat'. Initially I was a sceptic - but I was soon a convert for the involvement, enthusiasm, and team spirit that this challenge created. Brilliant!

Jon Tutchter

From the sidelines (the beginner's tale)

Quiet, efficient, matter-of-fact bell ringers - they always seem to take everything in their stride. However, challenge them to ring 100 methods and they become different creatures altogether.

When they decided to split into two teams, things became a lot more animated and verbal. There was plenty of discussion & laughter - mainly done to 'motivate' the opposing team to do better than the achievements of their 'rivals'! Watching the ringers attempt some of the methods was entertaining. There were quite a few 'Mmmms' following not-quite-so good attempts followed by numerous whoops when achieved well, and companionable laughter when it was achieved with effort!

It was lovely to witness the team camaraderie through some of the thick and thin. By all accounts they certainly had fun amongst all the hard work!

Sue James

Post script

At our annual dinner, after the two main speeches by the Foreman and principal guest, we have a 'third speech', given by whoever's name is drawn out of a hat at the AGM. Jonathan's name came out this year. As a stalwart of the local operatic society, he is a regular performer of Gilbert & Sullivan's work, so his 'speech' was a spirited rendition of subtle adaptation of a well know song - ending our year of challenge in style.

John Harrison

Little List of Methods

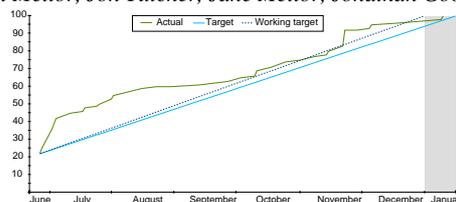
(By Jonathan Goodchild, with apologies to W.S. Gilbert)

As some day it may happen we've a challenge to complete,
I've got a little list - I've got a little list
Of complicated methods we're unlikely to repeat,
And which never would be missed - which never would be missed!
The principles with mythic names that cannot be well struck,
Like Mercury and Saturn and Titanic: they all suck.
I Can't Believe It's Not Cambridge (which almost came for free),
Lou's Carrot Treble Place on top of Percy Straining Tea,
The Ancient Leeds Equire Youths, but the worst was Drivel List.
They'd none of 'em be missed - they'd none of 'em be missed!

There's Beverley and Surfleet, Ipswich, Norfolk, Primrose too,
I've got 'em on the list, I've got 'em on the list
Not forgetting Pinehurst Minor, plenty more did we accrue
Which never would be missed, which never would be missed.
And when it comes to trying to ring Stedman in Reverse,
The result's complete confusion, it is really quite perverse.
There's Minimus Finchampstead, and also Finch. Delight
And Differential Doubles (I'd go on like this all night),
But when we've conquered Wokingham Surprise then I'll desist.
They'll none of them be missed; they'll none of them be missed.



After the 100th method on 9th January, (l-r): Barbara Smith, Mary Spence, Sian Hazeldine, Neil Curnow, Julie Goodchild, John Harrison, Nigel Mellor, Jon Tutchter, Jane Mellor, Jonathan Goodchild



Progress chart

List of methods, with date rung

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Date rung</i>	<i>Stage</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Date rung</i>	
Minimus	Plain Bob	Pre-June	Triples	Norwich Surprise	01-Aug-11	
	Reverse Bob	Pre-June		Primose Surprise	08-Aug-11	
	Double Bob	Pre-June		Ipswich Surprise	15-Aug-11	
	Single Court Place	31-Jul-11		Norfolk Surprise	15-Aug-11	
	Reverse Court Place	02-Oct-11		Beveley Surprise	21-Nov-11	
	Double Court Place	02-Oct-11		Surfleet Surprise	21-Nov-11	
	Canterbury Place	24-Jul-11		Plain Bob	Pre-June	
	Reverse Canterbury Place	31-Jul-11		Grandsire	Pre-June	
	St Nicholas Bob	31-Jul-11		Reverse Grandsire	24-Oct-11	
	Bristol front work	Pre-June		Double Grandsire	04-Jul-11	
Doubles	Plain Bob	Pre-June	Major	Stedman	Pre-June	
	Grandsire	Pre-June		Reverse Stedman	21-Nov-11	
	Reverse Grandsire	24-Oct-11		St Clement's College Bob	25-Jul-11	
	Double Grandsire	04-Jul-11		Single Oxford Bob	11-Jul-11	
	Stedman	Pre-June		Erin	27-Jun-11	
	Reverse Stedman	14-Nov-11		Shipway Place	10-Oct-11	
	Stedman Bob Doubles	22-Nov-11		Titanic	08-Jan-12	
	Bastow Little Bob	22-Nov-11		Plain bob	Pre-June	
	New Bob	22-Nov-11		Little Bob	Pre-June	
	Reverse New Bob	22-Nov-11		Bastow Little Bob	11-Jul-11	
	St Martin's Bob	02-Jul-11		Grandsire	27-Jun-11	
	Reverse St Martin's Bob	22-Nov-11		St Clement's Bob	13-Nov-11	
	St Simon's Bob	02-Jul-11		Single Oxford Bob	14-Nov-11	
	St Nicholas Bob	04-Jul-11		Double Oxford Bob	26-Sep-11	
	Winchendon Place Bob	17-Jul-11		Double Norwich Court Bob	11-Jul-11	
	Erin	02-Jul-11		Duffield	02-Jul-11	
	Shipway Place Bob	17-Oct-11		Shipway	24-Oct-11	
	Saturn	22-Nov-11		Shipway Court Bob	07-Nov-11	
	Banana	01-Aug-11		Pinehurst Bob	31-Oct-11	
Union	08-Aug-11	Mercury	05-Dec-11			
Wokingham Differential Bob	18-Dec-11	Treble Place	Cambridge	09-Oct-11		
Titanic	08-Jan-12		Percy's Tea Strainer	10-Oct-11		
Plain Bob	Pre-June		Ancient Society of Efqwire Leeds	17-Oct-11		
Minor	Reverse Bob	22-Nov-11	Treble Bob Surprise	Youths	26-Sep-11	
	Double Bob	22-Nov-11		Drivel List	05-Dec-11	
	Little Bob	02-Jul-11		Lou's Carrott	Pre-June	
	Bastow Little Bob	Pre-June		Kent	Pre-June	
	Grandsire	07-Nov-11		Cambridge	Pre-June	
	Stedman Bob	22-Nov-11		I can't believe it's not Cambridge	12-Jan-12	
	St Clement's Bob	27-Jun-11		Yorkshire	Pre-June	
	Single Oxford Bob	02-Jul-11		Quedgeley	12-Sep-11	
	Double Oxford Bob	02-Jul-11		Superlative	Pre-June	
	Single Court Bob	04-Jul-11		Pudsey	Pre-June	
	Shipway	10-Oct-11		Lincolnshire	Pre-June	
	Pinehurst Bob	22-Aug-11		Rutland	04-Jul-11	
	Kent Treble Bob	02-Jul-11		Bristol	11-Jul-11	
	Oxford Treble Bob	18-Jul-11		London	Pre-June	
	Cambridge Surprise	Pre-June		Cornwall	12-Jan-12	
	Cambridge Treble Place	04-Dec-11		Caters	Grandsire	02-Jul-11
	London Surprise	04-Jul-11			Stedman	02-Jul-11
				Royal	Plain Bob	02-Jul-11