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RINGING CHANGES

The Dorset County Association's Monthly Newsletter

Learning the Ropes: Our Members' Experiences

Following our recent article about the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) Learning the Ropes scheme, we invited members to share their own experiences. We're pleased to have received several responses, and we thought other members would enjoy hearing how Learning the Ropes has helped different people in their ringing.

Bell Ringing

Who hasn't heard church bells ringing, somewhere, in England? After returning to England from years away, my husband and I thought we'd like to learn how to ring. No instrument required, special clothing, nor supplies, just a church with a ringing group, right?

Well, not quite. Although I began learning from an experienced bell ringer, (using a dummy bell), I progressed slowly.

Fortunately, another ringer invited us to a "Ring Something Simple" session where we were introduced to ART (Assoc of Ringing Teachers). Not only did we meet other new and novice bell ringers, more importantly, we met a number of ART instructors. And from that session, we were invited to join a weekly beginners practice, led by ART teachers at Pimperne.

I think the last time I had skills ticked off in a book, (I'm referring to the Learning the Ropes logbook) was for my Swimming Challenge Awards for Bronze, Silver and Gold honours!
I've come a long way since my first attempt at 'pulling' a rope, learning in a logical, systematic way, thanks to Learning the Ropes provided by the ART.
~Karen

Next Newsletter: We welcome contributions from all DCA members.
Please submit articles, news, photographs and other items for inclusion by 26th November 2026 to the new newsletter

inbox via

dca-newsletter@googlegroups.com

Why I Took Up Bell Ringing — And Why You Might Love It Too

I took up bell ringing through a mix of curiosity and fortuitous timing. I'd often wondered what really went on behind those tower doors, and when a friend mentioned that they rang bells as a hobby, it sparked something in me. That curiosity grew when I discovered that a regional trainer regularly visited my local church. Suddenly, the mysterious world of bell ringing felt accessible, and I decided to give it a go.
What I found was far more rewarding than I ever expected.
Bell ringing has opened the doors to some truly beautiful historic churches. Many of these buildings are centuries old, full of character, craftsmanship and stories. Being part of a bell-ringing team means you get to see parts of the church that the public rarely sees: winding staircases, ancient ringing chambers and the bells themselves, each with its own character and history. It's a privilege to step into these spaces and feel connected to generations of ringers who came before.
As well as the actual learning, one of the biggest joys has been the people. We are very fortunate to be taught by a brilliant teacher, and the other learning ringers at my local church are some of the friendliest and most encouraging individuals I've met. Whether you're a complete beginner or a more advanced and experienced ringer, there's always someone ready to help, explain or cheer you on.
Bell ringing isn't as easy as it appears! It requires coordination, timing, concentration and a surprising amount of perseverance. There are moments when it feels like everything is happening at once – rope, bell, rhythm, teamwork – and at times I have wondered how anyone ever masters it! But regular practice truly is the key to success. Week by week, things start to click, movements become smoother, timing becomes more natural, and that sense of achievement when it all comes together is incredibly satisfying.
Practice sessions aren't just about technique; they're genuinely enjoyable. We often take part in Learning the Ropes games, which make learning fun and help build confidence.
Some favourites include:
Whole Pull and Stand – ring one whole pull cleanly, then stop and hold the rope steady. It sounds simple, but it's a brilliant test of control.
Switcheroo – where ringers swap places or roles mid-practice, keeping everyone on their toes.
Fade In and Out to Rounds – one person starts ringing for a whole pull, then another joins in, then another, building up to rounds. It's a lovely exercise in timing and teamwork.
These games bring laughter, focus and a real sense of shared progress.
If you've ever been curious about bell ringing, even just a little, I'd encourage you to take that first step. You don't need experience, musical ability or any special skills. Just curiosity, patience and a willingness to learn.

In return, you'll gain:
* Fantastic tuition
* Access to historic churches
* A welcoming ringing community
*A mentally and physically stimulating hobby
* A sense of achievement and plenty of fun along the way

Bell ringing is more than a hobby; it's a tradition, a team effort and a wonderfully rewarding challenge. And who knows? Like me, you might find yourself falling in love with it.
~Kerry