



BEDFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

Ringling Recovery Workshop 1

We've done a Survey ... Now what?!

Saturday 17 April 2021

## Purpose

To consider how we can use the results of the BACBR Ringing Recovery Survey to ensure a positive future for ringing in Bedfordshire.

## Aims

- To look at the results of the survey and see what these tell us about the current health of ringing in our towers.
- Identify issues and concerns to be addressed.
- To compile a list of ideas that we can develop into an action plan.
- To increase awareness of existing resources available to help us.
- To enable wide participation in shaping the future of ringing in Bedfordshire.

# Session 1: What do the survey findings tell us?

Please refer to the Bedfordshire Ringing Recovery Survey (completed March 2021).

<https://www.bacbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Results-of-BACBR-Ringing-Recovery-Survey-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

## Small group discussion **Positives and Negatives**

Delegates were asked to list things which emerged from the results of the survey as follows:

- **Positive** eg anything encouraging; opportunities; .... etc
- **Negative** eg anything disappointing or worrying; barriers; .... Etc

This led on to other points and questions being raised.

## Feedback: Positives from the Survey

- That we're all discussing it!
- Good response to the questionnaire.
- Lots of bell handing teachers out there!
- Good number of ringers expected to return – good retention.
- Towers and ringers do link up with each other.
- Quite a lot of bands/ringers have kept in touch over the year with a range of activities – Ringing Room sessions, phone calls, Zoom and WhatsApp catch ups.
- Lots of ringers have been, and still are, ringing, however limited, when it's been possible to do so during the pandemic.
- Some bands have developed novel solutions to ring and keep to the Covid rules – split levels, ventilation.
- People are still expressing interest in learning to ring when possible.
- Positive community comments (verbal and on Facebook), in response to recent events, such as Captain Tom and DoE tolling.
- Lots of communication in response to recent ringing.
- Vaccinations help people feel safer to return.

CONTINUED ...

## Feedback: **Positives from the Survey** ... CONTINUED

- People want to return because it's their hobby
- Sunday service ringing as a hobby or service to the Church.
- Ringing Room is a useful tool to teach method ringing without the pressure of handling the bell at the same time.
- Biggleswade Ringing Centre is a good resource for moving ringers through bell handling to method ringing and will be useful in the future.

## Feedback: Negatives from the Survey

- Sunday ringing isn't as well supported as practice nights.
- Uneven distribution of bell handling teachers.
- From survey / data in BACBR report:
  - 26% of towers have no ringers.
  - 42% of towers have less than 4 ringers (including those with none)
- 4 people in a band isn't viable to allow growth and development. Need a critical mass.
- We don't really know who is coming back to ringing yet - habits are broken.
- Although experienced ringers will come back, what is their spread?
- Will the less experienced, new recruits, those on the periphery, those struggling to progress, return and, if they do, how will they be able to progress and develop?
- Local community aren't hearing bells being rung.
- Has Covid exacerbated what was already a declining situation anyway?
- The number of towers with no contact amongst ringers during the year – but probably for many different reasons, such as lack of willingness to engage / “no online access”.

CONTINUED ...

## Feedback: **Negatives from the Survey ... CONTINUED**

- Little connection between everybody during the pandemic.
- Loyalty may not be as high as it was because of new conflicting interests / priorities.
- Ringers who think they may come back may not ultimately because of changed priorities.
- People are out of the ringing routine.
- Barriers from the Church.
- Churches may continue to have online services after Covid – less services in church and service times may change - may result in lack of ringers, especially where ringers are shared.
- When can we teach bell handling again? Lots of close contact required. Likely to impact recruitment.
- Training and ringing are low down on some people's priorities.
- Problems of ringing with facemasks, difficult to achieve social distancing in some (most?) towers.

## Feedback: Other unknowns and questions to be considered at some point

- Keen ringers and those who want to progress might be dispersed, how will we get them together?
- The Central Council Roadmap – looks good but what restrictions will still be in place, ringing in facemasks, social distancing?
- Restart District ringing meetings – require 2 vaccinations + 3 weeks, ground floor rings with good ventilation?
- Why do people ring? We need to find out.
- Ringing isn't promoted as an 'interest activity'.
- We need to recruit but where do we get them from?
- People who ring may not be religious or interested in the Church.
- The local community hear the bells and some come to see what it's all about but don't stay long!
- We have nice bells – it's a shame they don't get rung! It would be nice to get them rung more regularly by visiting bands holding a practice night there. A band could decide to hold an 'Away' Practice' at a silent tower.
- Useful to have regular (monthly?) supported practice nights by experienced ringers to help the local band learn and progress.
- Advanced practices for the more experienced to have the opportunity to progress as well.
- Communicating with the local community about ringing is essential.



## Online poll:

What you think are the most important issues/concerns which need to be addressed? (Max 3)

21 delegates responded. The results are arranged from most to least importance.

Rank	Issue / Concern	% of those responding
1	Concerns about coming back to ringing – confidence, fitness, safety etc.	86
2	Loss of ringers over the last 12 months / not enough ringers in general	76
3	Number of towers which don't / can't ring on Sundays	24
4	Lack of interest / willingness to engage	19
5	Not enough ringers are willing to assist at other towers	14
6	Too few teachers of bellhandling	14
7	Lack of cooperation between towers	14
8	Other. Comments were – recruitment, teaching with social distancing, bellringing not trendy.	14
9	Communications	10

## Session 2: IDEAS and ACTIONS

- How do we
  - build on good practice
  - address the issues / concerns identified?
- What resources are available to help us?
  - An introduction to the CC/ART Ringing Recovery Toolkit

Before addressing these questions, a possible vision for the future was presented .....

*(See next slide)*

We might want to consider this further before putting together our action plan.

## **A Vision for the Future!**

What do we want bellringing in Bedfordshire to look like in 10 years time? ...

- Most towers ring regularly for Sunday services
- Successful ongoing recruitment of new ringers
- Very high rates of retention
- Co-operation between towers
- Development of new/future leaders
- Opportunities for everyone to progress
- Interest and engagement ... a new generation with a love of ringing!

To achieve our vision we will need to:

- Do some things differently
- Be open minded about new ideas
- Think positively

**WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A POSITIVE FUTURE!...**

## Small group brainstorming: **Ideas to address the issues/concerns identified**

It was emphasised that all suggestions are valid at this stage.  
Thinking outside the box was encouraged.

### Feedback: **Ideas and Actions** (Grouped by topic.)

- **Immediate back to ringing suggestions**
- Getting existing ringers back is very important!
- A tower cleaning session and check bells over.
- BBQ / picnic.
- Handbells
- Handling session at different levels
- Shorter practices for those who haven't rung for a long time – for ringers and residents to get used to it.
- Develop fitness and stamina.
- Ask towers what their current standard is – rounds, call changes, basic methods advanced.
- Help people complete Covid risk assessment.
- Gradual reintroduction for some, meet for coffee / lunch then have a ring.

## Raising awareness and recruitment

- Ringing needs a higher profile within local communities – use social media to publicise why it's done, including other than Sundays and practice nights, such as for special occasions or visiting ringers.
- Mass leaflet drops to new housing developments.
- Push the features and benefits of ringing – across all age spectrums, what's in it for me?
  - Don't forget the social side of things.
  - For those moving into an area, ringing is a way of meeting people.
  - Musical not just technical.
- We need to sell ourselves more.
- What about a video about learning to ring?
- Attend Church / local community events with a bellringing stand.
- Duke of Edinburgh award scheme (DoE) to raise awareness about ringing as a 'skill'
- Contact school DoE organisers that ringing is a skill and tower where young people would be welcome.
- Links to local school – small group class trips to the tower; there was a bellringing package for schools with curriculum links – can we find it and revamp?
- Push community and skill aspects of bell ringing to Guides and Scouts organisations.

CONTINUED ...

## Raising awareness and recruitment CONTINUED ...

- Use mini rings at local events to demonstrate - Bedford River Festival next year.
- Find out what motivates and engages people.
- Engage 30/40s age group - may take them longer to learn but they are generally in control of their level of commitment.
- Youngsters – get badges, enter competitions, get paid to ring for weddings.
- Link to U3A (University of Third Age) and similar organisations for people looking for a new hobby.
- Opportunity – 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of BACBR in 2022.

## Learning to ring

- Ringing psychology – interesting to find out why, and spot those new recruits who are / are not frightened of ringing
- Find out about why a learner wants to ring and what's going to make them stay?
- Have a 'get to know' social session – 'intro to ringing basics' etc. before actually 'doing' in the tower.
- More flexible teaching opportunities to capture different groups – not just traditionally before the practice, such as:
  - Intensive courses - week-long training, school holidays.
  - After school club
  - Those available in the day and retirees – training and morning coffee / afternoon tea.
  - Group sessions for learners.
- Use RJ Sharp Ringing Centre, try and get another Ringing Centre over to the west of the area to minimise travel.
- National Lottery bid / look at sources of funding (especially for youth groups)

## Teaching bellhanding

- Teach more teachers of bellhandling
- Should teaching be at individual towers or centralised, eg using RJ Sharp Ringing Centre? Needs to be flexible for both teachers and attendees.
- Group teaching.
- Some teachers are more confident about teaching youngsters – need to make sure that we have a group of people who can do this.

## **Retention, Progression, Development**

- Identify and approach lapsed ringers
- Youngsters get paid double for weddings if they ring on Sundays!
- Split tower practice sessions - less experienced followed by more experienced.
- Training days throughout the County to accommodate different levels and more advanced ringing
- New recruits who can handle are then lost as they struggle to progress because towers don't have people who can help them progress.
- Set up a facility to match experienced ringers to a tower and attend practice night.
- Everyone is different - some people have musical interests with ringing not just numbers / technical.
- Continuing use of Ringing Room to teach theory / practice method ringing (especially now that Wheatley is available.)
- Learning to conduct.
- Tower maintenance.
- Midweek ringing for retired people and encourage them to join existing groups.



## **Co-operation**

- Need more co-operation between towers; some aren't able to attend practice nights; it's acceptable to visit other towers.
- Towers form "clusters"
- District (group) Practice Week
- Don't forget the social side of things – throughout the Assoc. helps for couple who have one ringer one non ringer.
- Encourage clergy to engage with their ringers through our 'Ringing Bishop'. (This network was useful in recent initiative such as Captain Tom ringing, the Bishop of Bedford is very supportive, as is Bishop of St Albans, who is a ringer)
- Add ringing to a church stewardship scheme so that ringers can offer their ringing talents as a gift / service rather than just giving money.

## **Association**

- Re-think the Association and how it might operate in the future.
- Don't have Districts!
- Reduce from 3 to 2 Districts – reduces number of people needed to run the Assoc.
- Have a gold standard to aim for - we would like every ringable tower in the Association ringing on Sundays and have enough ringers to be able to cover holidays etc.

## An introduction to the **Ringling Recovery Toolbox**

<https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>

**Some excellent resources ....**  
**The following slides give just**  
**a taster of what's available**  
**Have a look!**



**Survive & Recover**

-  Stay connected  
Virtual Hub
-  Identify Local Recovery  
Champions
-  Communicate with  
Grass Roots ringers in  
your area



**ART and the Central  
Council working together**

# Survival and Recovery Toolbox



**ART and the Central  
Council working together**

This toolbox is provided by ART and the Central Council working in partnership. It is a work in progress and if you think we're missing something or have something that you think would be useful to others then please let us know.

## What's new

- [Care of bells and belfries](#) – new videos. Added 23 Mar 2021 and 11 Apr 2021
- [Return to ringing flyer](#) – for you to customise. Added 20 Mar 2021
- [Yoga for ringers](#). Added 20 Mar 2021
- [Recovery Champions meeting](#) – recording of latest network meeting. Added 15 Mar 2021
- [Getting fit for ringing](#) – series of 10 videos shared by the PDG. Added 12 Mar 2021

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## Survival

### Keeping going

- » [Keeping in touch with other ringers](#) – what are other people doing?
- » [Online ringing](#) – product guide
- » [Online ringing](#) – adding variety to the experience
- » [Organising virtual training courses](#)
- » [Handbell ringing](#)
- » [Ringing for services](#) – making the most of it
- » [Building good relationships](#) – with the church
- » [Building good relationships](#) – with the local community
- » [Ellacombe chimes](#)

## Getting fit for ringing

### For ringers

- » [Getting physically fit for ringing](#) – exercises and classes
- » [Opportunities to practise](#) – before you ring with others
- » [Confidence building techniques](#)
- » [Getting back up to speed](#) – learning opportunities

### For Tower Captains

- » [Helping others to feel confident](#)
- » [I'm a new Tower Captain](#) – help!
- » [I'm a Tower Captain](#) – what's it going to be like after the pandemic?
- » [Getting the bells and tower fit for ringing](#)
- » [Lockdown learners](#) – a successful return to the tower

## Getting fit to ring

Any ringers who have not rung for a long period in the past, might remember the physical problems experienced following the first practice night. The next day they might have sore muscles, raw hands and shoulder pain. It is inevitable they when we do restart ringing we will experience some problems, but we wondered what could be done to help us keep physically fit in preparation for the return to ringing.

### Exercise your ringing muscles

First, what exercise do we gain from ringing? We know ringing is not going to keep us super fit, it is gentle physical exercise otherwise all ringers would look like athletes. What form of exercise is ringing and how can we help ourselves, so when the day comes and we can return to our ropes we are not too stiff and feeble to do so?

What does bell ringing do for us physically?

- Balance – uneven paths, floors, hazards, stairs.
- Lower limb strength – climbing stairs, checking bells, climbing ladders, crouching under bells etc.
- Shoulder flexibility – up and down 5000 times plus.
- Straight posture – allows a good reach at backstroke, which improves rope control.

Words that spring to mind are strength, balance, posture, grip, coordination, spatial awareness, stamina and more. That's without the cognitive effect of mental agility, thinking and concentration. What a brilliant activity!

Here are some suggestions for each. All the exercises can be done standing up or sitting.

Not all of us manage to just jump up and get moving as many will have physical or even mental difficulties. The greatest message to all elderly is to move! No matter how little. Others will have various health conditions, so this is general advice and if concerned at all visit your local physiotherapist for specific advice and ask to have exercises adapted for bell ringing.

#### Balance

- Stand with your feet together.
- Stand in tandem – heel of left foot in front of the toe of the right foot – then the other way round.
- Progression 1 – do this with arms raised in front.
- Progression 2 – do this with eyes closed.
- Progression 3 – do this with arms in front and eyes closed.

#### Lower limb strength

- Sit to stand from a dining room chair (or similar height and firmness). Complete as many as you can in 20 seconds.
- Progression 1 – aim to beat your score.
- Progression 2 – increase time by increments of 10 seconds up to one minute.

#### Shoulder flexibility

- When you walk through a door (provided you are not carrying anything) reach up to touch the door frame above your head and take another step so your arms are stretched.
- Stand with your back against a wall, feet about 3-4 inches in front of the wall arms out to the side with bent elbows. Keep your arms as close to the wall as you can and raise them up so they are above your head.
- Progression – do this 5040 times (only joking!)

#### A straight posture

- Sit up straight on dining chair. Hold still.
- Correct your posture as you pass a window or mirror.
- Reach to touch high shelves (put teabags here).
- Stand up against wall, shoulders back.
- Think posture from your belly.
- Grow tall, walk tall.

#### Movement snacks

Don't sit working for long periods of time, try to break up the sitting with movement snacks selecting ideas from all the above activities for 10 minutes.

#### Dual tasking

Whilst being active why not revise methods lines, compositions, handbell pairs or calling. This enhances memory and recall – just what the Tower Captain ordered.

Remember that there is no substitute for the real thing so be prepared to have some aches once we are able to return.

#### Resources



ART and the Central  
Council working together

### A good straight pull

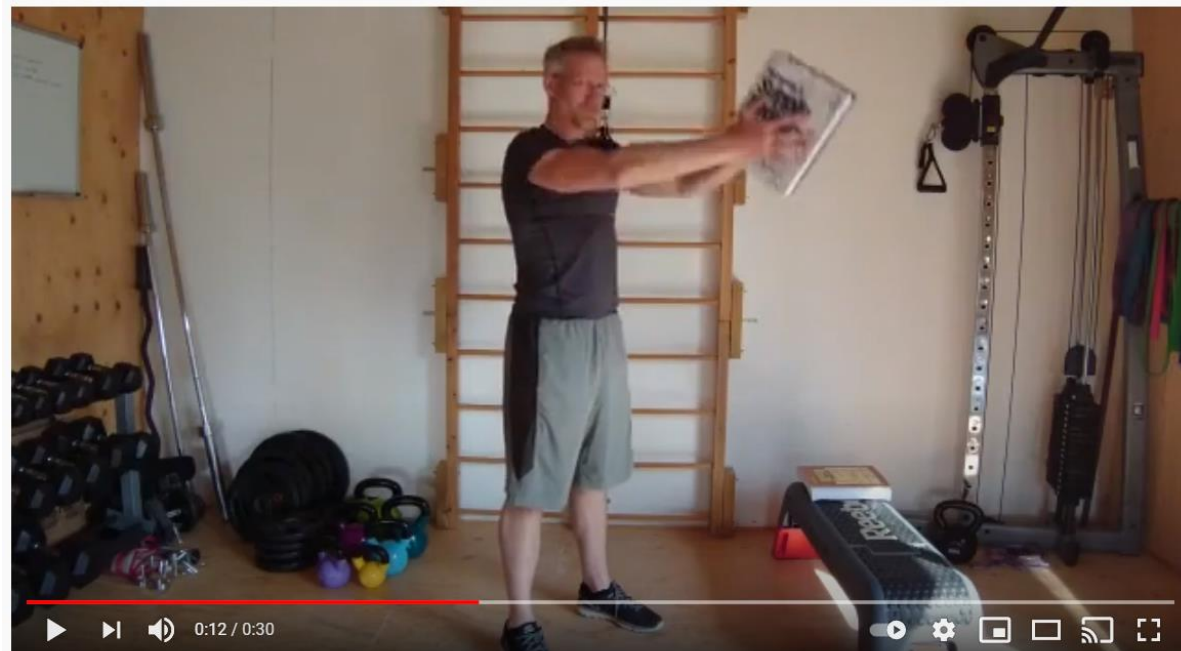
Here's an [exercise](#) you can try at home.



Lucy Gwynne, Warks



Jane Mellor, Wokingham



Book squeeze raises

<https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>

# Getting the bells and tower fit for ringing

## Care of Bells and Belfries

Making ringers welcome and comfortable



Getting ready to inspect and maintain bells



Looking after ringing rooms and access



Maintaining bells and their fittings



These videos were prepared by Tom Ridgman, Ely Diocesan Bells Adviser, and originally presented by Tom as a single one-hour session to the Association and we are grateful to them for their permission to reuse this material.

# Top Ten Tips for preparing your tower and bells for ringing -



CCCBR Stewardship & Management Workgroup

Workgroup Lead - Alison Hodge

24th January 2021



24/1/2021

<https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>

## Dear Resident

The pandemic has resulted in many restrictions on what we could all do over the last year or so. We've not been able to celebrate or commiserate with friends and family, and we've not been allowed to meet in social situations.

The restrictions on gathering has meant that the bells of the church have not been able to ring/not been able to ring fully since March last year.

With the easing of lockdown restrictions, we are allowed to gather in groups for social activities. This includes ringing the church bells again.

Not having rung in some time, we may be out of practice. We hope that our ringing will improve as we brush away the cobwebs.

It has not been possible to mark many occasions in the last year with bells, be they joyful for a wedding or sorrowful for a loss. If you have an occasion in the last year that you would like to mark by ringing, please get in touch and we can discuss arranging some ringing to mark your event.

Starting \*\* June 2021  
Sunday morning from \*\* am  
Wednesday evening from \*\*\* pm

[www.pdg.org.uk](http://www.pdg.org.uk)

## Building good relationships with your local community

Anecdotal evidence suggests that non-ringers are missing the sound of bells. In the short term many towers remain silent as physical church services are suspended and it may be some time before we can return to 'normal' ringing. So it's a good idea to keep reminding our local communities of the presence of our bells and bell ringers. Hopefully it will then be less of a shock when we start making lots of noise again; and recruitment activities have a greater chance of success if there is awareness and appreciation of ringing and ringers among the wider community.

<https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>

# Survival and Recovery Toolbox



ART and the Central  
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## Recovery

### Planning for recovery

- » **The Recovery Champion network**
- » **I'm a Guild or Branch Officer** – what's it going to be like after the pandemic?
- » **A ringing survey** – why and how
- » **Successful PR** – engaging with the community

### The recovery – coming back better

- » **Teacher refresher courses**
- » **Recruitment and retention** – planning for success
- » **Lapsed ringers** – reaching, persuading, succeeding
- » **Teaching bell handling**
- » **Teaching foundation skills**
- » **Ringing clusters** – the what, the why, and the how
- » **Youth ringing** – *to be developed*
- » **Blended learning** – *to be developed*

<https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>

# Recovery Champions

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## What is a Recovery Champion?

As the pandemic continues, towers, branches and guilds are starting to plan for a successful return to ringing. In the face of such a challenge it seems sensible to share ideas and where necessary pool resources to make this return as successful as possible. Obviously, we will have to wait a while longer for any significant return to start, so it's not just about planning for the future but also focusing on the now – staying in contact with people and maintaining their interest in ringing.

To coordinate the flow of ideas and information, the Central Council and Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) have offered to coordinate a network of **Recovery Champions** across the country who will focus on recovery planning within the local area. They won't necessarily be the people doing all the work or dealing with mailing lists; but they will be in the best position to know how that could work in their local area.

Please consider becoming a Recovery Champion if you're planning activity in your local area. Networking with others will give you ideas, help and support – you don't have to do it all yourself. We have asked Guilds and Associations to nominate people who will be good Champions, however particularly for the larger ringing societies it might well be that Champions will work best at Branch level or even smaller than that.

The Recovery Champions will have access to a range of tools and contacts to help them meet the needs of their local area. It's all free and available to be shared with individual Tower Captains, churches and ringers.

If you think this initiative will be helpful to you and ringers around you, please contact Annie Hall who is coordinating the Recovery Champions.

» [Find out more about becoming a Recovery Champion](#)

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Please contact Linda on  
[backtoringing@bacbr.org.uk](mailto:backtoringing@bacbr.org.uk)  
if you are interested in becoming a  
Recovery Champion  
for your branch/local area.

Next Recovery Champions Network meeting via Zoom  
**Sunday 18th April at 4.00pm.**

**Presentations on a variety of topics w/c 8 May**  
The week will end with an online beer tasting



# Loads of stuff on Recruitment and Retention! ...

## Recruitment and Retention

ART and the Central Council have developed a recruitment and retention workshop that introduces you to lots of ideas and guides you through building your personal recruitment and retention plan, whether for your band or your local branch or district. Find out what has worked for others and the pitfalls to avoid. The workshop can be delivered virtually or as a physical event. Why not start planning now for the return to ringing and contact us to discuss running a workshop?

Follow the blue links to navigate around the resource – you'll find lots of advice, ideas and people's stories. We hope you find it useful.

### Planning for recruitment

[Recruitment success](#) – the important things to consider

[Raising awareness](#) – engaging with the church and the community

[What gets people into the tower](#) the first time?

[Who to recruit](#) – the pros and cons

[» Download your recruitment toolbox](#)

### Recruitment activities

[Lots of ideas!!!](#)

[Starting a band from scratch](#)

[The social media thing](#)

[First impressions are everything](#) – welcoming people to your tower and band

[What has worked](#) – stories from teachers and their ringers

### Teaching your new recruits

[The follow-up](#) – keep it personal, make it quick

[What do your new recruits expect?](#)

[Intensive training](#) – why, what and how

[To charge or not to charge?](#)

### Retaining your new ringers

[Keeping your new ringers interested](#) – through foundation skills and early change ringing

[Why do ringers enjoy ringing?](#)

[Learning in groups](#)

[How long does it take to learn to ring?](#)

### Building your band

[Making recruitment work for everyone in the band](#)

[Teacher burn-out](#)

[A very popular practice](#) – when your tower starts to get too crowded

### These resources

There are a lot of pages, so if you can't find something use the search facility.

### After COVID-19

Do take a look! They are a really helpful resource as we start to transition into the post COVID-19 stage.

[» The why, what and the how](#)

[» Preparing the ground - raising awareness](#)

[» Getting new recruits through the \(virtual\) door](#)

[» Keeping everybody happy](#)

[» Key messages](#)

*These articles were originally published in the Ringing World.*

If you like these resources then please share them with your ringing friends.



If you have feedback or something you'd like to add, then please contact the ART Resources Administrator.

Finally a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to these pages, with articles, tips or case studies. Thank you!

# Plenary: Where do we go from here?

## To Do Lists!

Terry and Linda's actions ...

- Collate and circulate comments and ideas from today.
- Put these on the website.
- Put a link to the Recovery Toolbox on the website.

Delegates encouraged to ...

- Look through the Recovery Toolbox.
- Begin to put into practice any ideas from today's sessions, or from the Toolbox, which might already be helpful to you as an individual ringer or your tower.
- Sign up for:
  - Talk next Wednesday: Exploring Bedfordshire Belfries with Chris Pickford
  - Workshop 2! .....

To contact us with any further comments/ideas please email Linda on [backtoringing@bacbr.org.uk](mailto:backtoringing@bacbr.org.uk)

# Ringling Recovery Workshop 2: Looking to the Future

## Saturday 8 May, 10:00-12:30

Sign up via Eventbrite - link on [bacbr.org.uk](http://bacbr.org.uk)

Draft Plan

Session 1:

- Prioritise ideas from Workshop 1, plus any new ideas identified from the Toolbox.
- Begin to formulate an action plan – who, what, where and when.
  - timescales
  - what can be done as individuals, towers, Districts and the Association

Session 2:

- A focus on Recruitment and Retention.