

***INTERIM REPORT OF THE  
RECRUITMENT AND PUBLICITY COMMITTEE  
GUILD REVIEW***

NOVEMBER 2008

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**BRIEF**

1. **What can the Guild do to help towers and branches in local recruitment?**
2. **What additional publicity is needed to support this at county level (in conjunction with the Association)?**  
  
e.g. by developing:
  - a model recruitment strategy for towers
  - further publicity materials (posters, fliers) and a means of distribution
  - publicity resources for loan (display boards, demo bell, mini-ring)
3. **What further opportunities are there for disseminating information about ringing to the public?**
  - media
  - events
4. **How can the Guild ensure that people interested in learning to ring, and new learners are well supported/retained?**

**Present situation and thoughts for discussion**

Using the Aylesbeare Deanery as an example the Committee agreed that it was probable that only about half the towers in the Guild had as many ringers as bells. Suggestion that an ideal would be 1.5 ringers x number of bells in each tower so that Sundays are covered and everyone gets a good ring on practice night. However a CCCBR Ringing Trends Summary Report ([www.cccbr.org.uk/admin/wg/trends/trends2.html](http://www.cccbr.org.uk/admin/wg/trends/trends2.html)) quotes an ideal of 2.5 x the number of bells, which the committee felt was unlikely in this area.

On the BBC Devon/faith website on 7 August 2007 Roger King states 'Most church towers in Devon require more bell ringers and it's estimated at least 1,000 new ringers need to be recruited and trained over the next 10 years to reverse the decline that has already taken place across the Exeter Diocese'.

One of the joys of ringing is that participants come from all walks of life across the social divide and from all age groups. Ringing is a great leveller. Recruitment strategies should aim at retaining this rich eclectic mix.

**Questionnaire**

The Committee produced a questionnaire that was emailed to branch secretaries to forward to members on their email lists asking 4 questions:

1. What drew you into ringing?
2. What keeps you in ringing?
3. If your tower has held an Open Day, were you pleased with the attendance – if not have you any idea why it was not successful
4. Any thoughts on how the Guild could help your tower recruit new learners or publicise ringing in general.

A similar questionnaire was circulated to the Devon Association Publicity Officer, Mike Webster who emailed Association members. Some 70 questionnaires were returned from Guild members and 9 from Association members. They make very interesting reading and have therefore been collated and presented in Appendices 1 and 2. In due course it would be nice if they could be released for publication in *Ringing Round Devon* with an acknowledgement from this Committee. Experiences and suggestions have all been considered in this report.

The results show that the majority of ringers were introduced to ringing by family or friends and the reason they continue ringing is because of the social interaction and the challenge. Interestingly a mini-poll on the Devon Ringers site produced very similar results.

Whilst the Committee recognises that the family/friends source of recruits could remain the most productive, there is little scope for influencing it. The Committee's main concern, therefore, has been the scope for advancing recruitment via publicity.

## **Current recruitment practice**

Active seeking of new recruits via publicity seems to vary from tower to tower which suggests that enthusiastic individuals make a difference. There are several possible reasons why local recruitment may not be taking place:

- Lack of teaching capability
- Making the commitment – extra pressure for teachers in the group to attend all practices and maybe put in extra time
- Past disappointments – the effect of the high dropout rate
- Comfort zone – not easy to contemplate bringing in newcomers while the existing band is a close knit happy group
- An acceptance that nobody is interested
- Rural villages face difficulties with lack of numbers to recruit from

Local publicity that has been tried includes the following:

- Publicity campaign where leaflets were distributed to 240 houses in one area where there were people known to be under 70 years of age. Outcome – no response so far.
- Stand at the Mid-Devon Show which had generated interested but as yet no new recruits
- Open Days – 1 had been very successful (resulting in 4 new recruits who are still ringing after 9 months and the return of 1 lapsed ringer) - others had not been so successful.
- An annual 'Parachuting teddies from the top of the Church tower' event was good PR but had resulted in no new recruits.
- Articles/reports of ringing events in local press<sup>i</sup> raises awareness but no recent new recruits known
- Regular news items in some Parish magazines from ringers/Tower Captain but committee was unsure of the success here.

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<sup>i</sup> Need to be aware how the press may edit these (proofs not usually submitted)

## **Recommendations for future Recruitment and Publicity**

### **Back to Basics**

These simple ideas may be obvious but have been known to work. They are easily effected by individual towers or local branches.

- Ask the Vicar to make a plea to the church's own congregation – as these people are already committed to coming to Church on a Sunday
- Poster in the Church porch or notice board where it can be easily seen<sup>ii</sup>
- Advertise in parish magazine
- Regular news items in Parish Magazine from ringers/Tower Captain emphasising social aspects as it is thought that magazines are read by a wider readership than just the congregation.
- Posters in village halls/community centres
- Posters in libraries
- Strategically placed leaflets
- Open day/event
- Entry in local library and local newspaper list of hobbies/societies – check what category it will be listed under – 'Music' may not be appropriate!
- 'Bring a Friend to practice night' event

### **Further Possibilities**

These ideas are likely to require some expertise which it is hoped could be found in the Guild.

- Presentations to schools – ideally Year 6 if the bells are easy to ring or years 8/9 if not. Suggest the timing of this should coincide with the end of the Summer term so that intensive training can take place during the summer holidays. If really keen then there will be more likelihood that students will attend practice nights and Sunday service ringing as part of their normal activities<sup>iii</sup>
- Presentations/talks to societies - although this is another good PR exercise no one had any evidence that this had resulted in new recruits.
- Entry on the Facebook website – The University of London ringers already use 'Facebook' successfully to advertise forthcoming events and report on past events. Their entries can be seen by their non-ringing Facebook friends and is therefore good publicity. The Education Officer's Report (Guild Annual Report for 2007) indicates that the possibilities of a youth internet message/chat site and clips on YouTube are already being considered. Time constraints have prevented the Committee obtaining an update.
- Encourage churches and villages with websites to provide a link to the local tower website and the Guild websites

### **Use of internet**

Cheap form of advertising

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<sup>ii</sup> Posters suitable for the Church can be downloaded from the [www.cccbr.org.uk](http://www.cccbr.org.uk) website or ordered for the cost of postage. Home designed posters for other venues.

<sup>iii</sup> Consideration should be given to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act which is due to come into force in October 2009; current CCCBR and Diocesan guidance notes on child protection; awareness that Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) checks will replace the current Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks

## **How the Guild can help**

### **Provision of recruitment publicity material**

Recruitment pack containing all available material so towers can choose what is most appropriate for their own needs. Items suggested:

#### **In pack**

Leaflets – including the ones used by Bampton for their door to door drop

Posters

Refined list of members' suggestions in response to Question 4 of the questionnaire (See Appendices 1 and 2)

DVD – The Craft of Bellringing

New DVD specifically for young people – (comprising several short items which could be used alone or together)

Website details - an appraisal of the CCCBR and related websites is attached at Appendix.3

#### **For loan** (including contact numbers)

Demo copy of Abel for loan

Display boards

St Petrock practice bell which rings like a real bell – not like the mini-rings

Packs to be accompanied by details of merchandise available to raise the profile, for example T-shirts, bags

### **Initial Training Support**

- Offer Teach the Teacher courses to improve confidence and ability for teaching in the tower
- Create a register of ringers who would be willing to help struggling towers and help at the ringing centres
- Increased use of Ringing Centres as Training Centres – Wolborough, St Marks, Tavistock, St Petrock, The Troyte Ringing Centre (Huntsham and Bampton)
- In particular, use ringing centres for the training of young recruits. The CCCBR Trends in Ringing Report identified this age group as requiring special attention both in terms of their future contribution (it is they who will achieve the highest technical standards, lead the most prospering bands and make the best teachers); and in terms of the difficulty of maintaining their interest in the early stages. Appendix 4 is the full extract from their report on this subject.

## **What more can the Guild do?**

### **Events**

- A couple of ideas featured under Best Practice Case Studies on the Council's website [www.cccbr/learn2ring](http://www.cccbr/learn2ring) were:
  - A mini-ring demonstration in Barnsley town centre
  - Taster sessions – a weekend of intensive bell handling, talks and social activities
- Consider repeating the 'Ring for the Millennium' appeal but instead 'Ring for the Olympics 2012'

## Media

- Ensure the website constantly reflects an attractive image of ringing as fun, sociable, challenging and healthy.
- Establish what key words should be used to make sure the site is included in google search results
- Until the entire membership is internet-versed *Ringing Round Devon* remains the best medium for dissemination of information. Regular reminders of the need to recruit and the help that is available should be featured.
- *Ringing Round Devon* is the Guild's best publicity material. It reflects many of the reasons given in response to the questionnaire's 'What keeps you ringing?' And yet, it is only seen by members. What happens to all the old RRDs? Why not suggest that when tower members have read them, they are placed in local libraries, health centres, village hall notice boards or at least left in the church or alongside the recruitment poster?

## And finally...

In conclusion, it must be said that successful recruitment to the Guild is entirely dependent on its existing membership. Already, huge amounts of time are given up by dedicated individuals, within towers, within branches, within the Guild, and from time to time, without naming names of course, this should be acknowledged by the Guild. It gives an opportunity to raise everyone's awareness of the part they should play by lending their support and encouragement. Even new recruits should be encouraged as early as possible to "give something back".

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| Appendix 1 | Questionnaire results – Guild members                            |
| Appendix 2 | Questionnaire results – Association members                      |
| Appendix 3 | Website details – an appraisal of the CCCBR and related websites |
| Appendix 4 | Extract from the CCCBR Trends in Ringing Report                  |