

EDUCATION OFFICER'S REPORT

This has been another excellent year for the Association, with progress being made on many educational fronts. Firsts included participating in the National Youth Striking Competition and running an Association Inter-Branch Youth Striking Competition; while growth continued in areas where development began last year with the opening of another Association Ringing Centre, another 255 Association members beginning to train as teachers of ringing and the continued extension of programmes of courses in many branches.

One of the most exciting developments this year was the decision made by the Education Officers to take our young ringers to the National Youth Striking Competition in York. Jan Wyatt agreed to organise this event. Practices were

held regularly to which all young ringers in the Association were invited. One of the notable outcomes of this was, of course, the improvement in everyone's striking! Thanks are due to all the ringers who helped to coach the young people at their practices, and well done to all those young ringers who attended the practices whether they rang in the eventual band or not. Thanks are also due to the Association, The Edna Grabham Trust and to the other individuals who supported the day financially which allowed the team to travel by coach to York. Everyone agreed that they had had a great day out, had been able to ring at four other towers in York besides St Lawrence's where the competition took place and had become much closer together as friends. As well as all this the team achieved an outstanding joint 5th out of the sixteen teams taking part. Thanks to all the leaders, parents, friends etc, who supported the young people for this event. The team – Kaitlin Jarvis 1, Lily Carswell 2, Krystyna Masny 3, Tobias Dando 4, Marcus Ham 5, Tom Mitchell 6, Jon Chapman 7, and George Wyatt 8.

In another new development this year the Education Officers decided to organise an inter-Branch Youth Striking Competition. This was held at Priddy in September. This proved to be an excellent venue with the nearby school field used for games between ringing, and the village hall for the barbecue. Teams took part from the Axbridge, Cary, Ilchester and Taunton and Dunster (combined) branches. Besides the main competition the young ringers organised an extra competition between a boys team, a girls team and a mixed team while they were waiting for the last team (that had had to ring for a wedding) to arrive. The main competition was won by the Ilchester Branch and the mixed team won the extra competition. The Ilchester Branch team – Matthew Gill 1, Nathan Bartin 2, Mark Bartin 3, Suzanna Harvey 4, Jon Chapman 5, and George Gill 6. Matthew Higby very kindly donated a trophy for the competition and also judged it, very ably assisted by Tim Peppard.

A lot of very hard work is being done to increase the number of teachers of ringing within the Association. The national Integrated Teacher Training Scheme is being used. This scheme is designed to produce teachers of ringing who use modern teaching methods. They do a two part course. The first part includes handling, rounds etc, and the second part method ringing. Each part of the course is introduced by a one-day course. They are then guided through their work by a mentor who works closely with them. The initial aim of the Education Officers was to get a mentor and one or two new teachers started in each branch. This has been achieved in most of the branches and many branches now have many more people training. This year another 8 new teachers and 2 mentors passed the first part of the course, making a total of 14 new teachers and 6 mentors. The new teachers were – Bob Boulton (Taunton), Tobias Dando (Cary), Emily Feldberg (Dunster), Andrew Giegel (Bridgwater), Pearl Jeanes (Taunton), Ray Jones (Axbridge), Roger Price (Cary), Jan Swan (Dunster) and Paul Yeomans (Taunton); and the mentors were Paul Ebsworth (Axbridge) and Susan Mew (Dunster). Unfortunately two of the mentors – Pam and Paul Ebsworth have now moved to Suffolk. Another 34 new teachers and 9 mentors are working towards the first part of the course. This is a total of 47 new teachers and 15 mentors. The second Module 2 Course has just been held and was attended by 5 new teachers and 6 mentors, making a total of 15 new teachers and 12 mentors working on this second level. More Module 1 Courses will be held next year and very pleasingly there is a continual waiting list for this course. It is hoped that some of the people who began the course first will complete the course and receive their accreditation at the 2014 AGM.

As part of the ITTS course the new teachers and their mentors have to teach new ringers. The ringers that they teach are able to take part in a progressive scheme called 'Learning the Ropes'. This is divided into five levels which take the learner from basic handling and raising and lowering a bell in Level 1, to ringing a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor and calling 120 changes of a chosen doubles method in Level 5. The new teachers have been very keen; and together with their mentors, have been teaching a large number of new ringers. Last year 40 Level 1 certificates were awarded in the Association and this year at least another 10 Level 1 certificates have been presented as well as 33 Level 2 certificates, 3 Level 3 and 2 each of Level 4 and Level 5. Lily Carswell from templecombe and Kaitlin Jarvis from Lympsham are the first ITTS taught ringers in the Association to achieve Level 5.

The number of courses organised in the Association by your Education Officers during the year continues to increase. Having been doubled from 60 to 120 last year, a total of over 140 this year is evidence of their popularity. Once again the courses cover a complete range of skills from handling to Surprise Minor. Several of the branches now have a very well developed programme of courses throughout the year. The popular listening skills course was once again held in the Frome Branch at Chilcompton.

With all the extra teaching and courses happening within the Association the need for Ringing Centres to facilitate this became very apparent. The Education Officers completed a survey of the facilities available, and the only accredited centre was South Petherton. Obviously the Education Officers felt that it was essential to increase this number, and therefore to support financially towers wishing to become ringing centres, in order for the tower to obtain the necessary equipment. Thus, the first new Ringing Centre whose equipment was partially financed by the Association was used for the first time last year and a second, at Horsington in the Cary Branch, was completed this year. We now have at least seven more towers keen to develop in this way and we hope to be able to support four of them next year. If you would like to develop your tower as a ringing centre please let your Branch Education Officer know.

Each year the number of young ringers' practices and outings has increased. The Axbridge and Chew branches continue to hold joint monthly practices throughout the year, and the Taunton and Dunster branches have both held regular practices and sometimes these have been joint practices. Young ringers are also very active in the Cary and Ilchester branches.

Last year the Education Officers introduced a new Association Award for Young Ringers. This was intended for younger ringers at the start of their ringing lives to encourage them to progress and to build the skills necessary to enter the Young Ringer of the Year Competition. It provides graded tasks in three modules which take the young ringer from being a complete beginner to being able to raise and lower a bell in peal and plain hunt to a variety of methods. The first year 20 young people took part, and this year that has been doubled to 41, with the young people completing an average of eight tasks each.

The number of young ringers in the Association continues to increase. It is especially pleasing to see them becoming involved in activities within the Association and particularly to see some of our young ringers running and helping to run events. Tobias Dando continues to be very active in the Cary Branch and is now Education Officer for the branch; Tom Mitchell from St Decuman's is Deputy Ringing Master in the Dunster Branch and Andrew Bawden from Hawkridge is Deputy Education Officer in the Dunster Branch. These are excellent achievements, and we look forward to seeing more of our young ringers' active in this way in the future. For this to happen it is very important that we all continue the good work of encouraging more young people into our towers.

Again, the lack of basic maintenance knowledge in many towers prompted the Education Officers to suggest that each branch should appoint a Basic Maintenance Officer. These would be trained if necessary, and would then be able to train a person or people at branch towers where no-one at present had the knowledge to carry out basic maintenance. Roland Backhurst and Mike Hansford agreed to action this for the Education Officers. Obviously it will be a long process, but gradually there will be more towers able to undertake their own basic maintenance.

Your Education Officers are meeting four times a year. If there is something that you would like them to address please tell them! I would like to finish by thanking the Education Officers for their hard work and the progress that they have achieved in their branches throughout this year.

JILL HANSFORD