

# NBB Tower Census

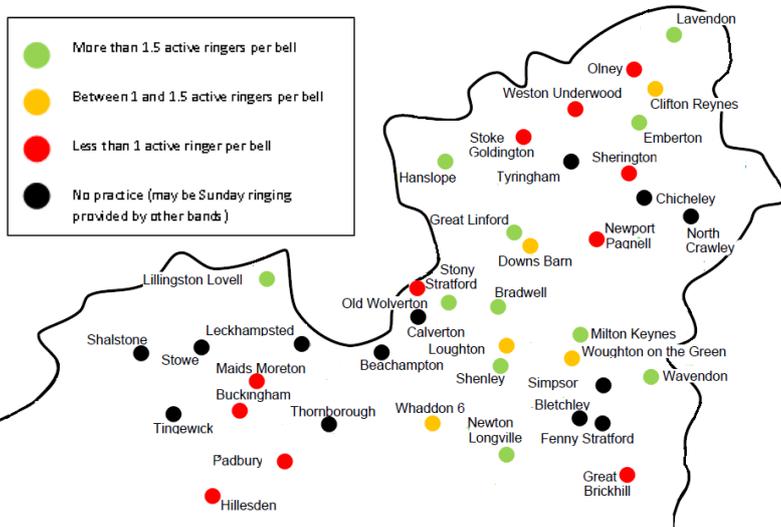
The Big Ring Pull was the start of a recruitment journey and whilst membership records show the Branch is healthier than before the BRP was initiated, membership is declining again. The 2015 tower census revealed some interesting findings and poses some intriguing questions.

## How many ringers are ringing in the Branch?

There are 297 ringers in the branch of whom 228 are ODG members. Not all these ringers are active – 71% of Guild members and 68% of non-Guild members are active in their towers. In some towers there is a large difference between membership and number of active ringers. An active ringer is one that rings on Sunday and at tower practices at least 50% of the time.

## How are these ringers distributed?

Segmenting towers according to the number of ringers (of whatever standard) to the number of bells shows that the Milton Keynes deanery has the healthiest distribution, reflecting the concentration of BRP recruits.



## Will there be enough ringers in 20 to 30 years?

The age profile of the Branch mirrors the national profile and projections here show that the number of ringers will halve in 20 years unless there is a major change in recruitment, retention & training.

## Does the age profile reflect the modern day life style?

Yes. Too many competing demands on younger people's time leading to low recruitment & retention rates. There is a higher proportion of inactive ringers in the 65 plus age bracket where health becomes a critical factor. By far the largest challenges reported by towers was in recruitment & demographics.

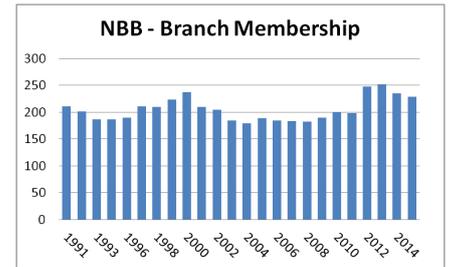
## What can our ringers ring?

The majority of active ringers in the Branch are method ringers – 35% ring non-Surprise methods and a further 31% can also ring Surprise methods. The number learning to handle a bell accounts for 10% of the Branch's active ringers. Development & training needs are to develop their method ringing and conducting skills.

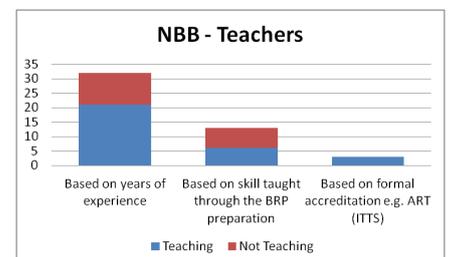
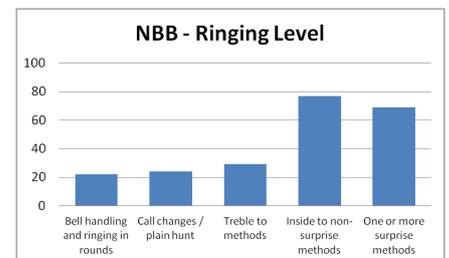
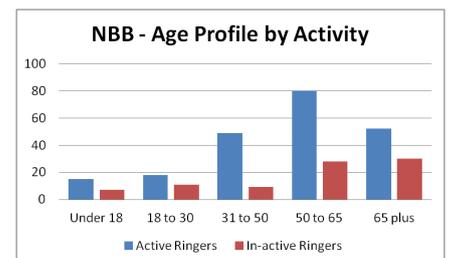
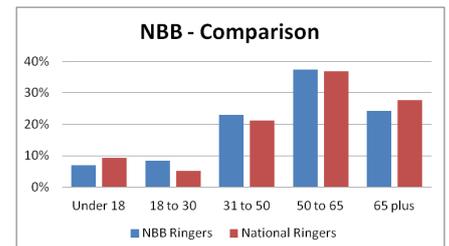
## What about our ringing teachers?

There are 48 ringing teachers in the Branch, 30 of whom are currently teaching. Most of our teachers have developed organically drawing on their years of experience. There are 13 teachers who teach using the skills gained through the BRP. There are 3 ringing towers without teachers.

Every Branch tower with 5 or more bells completed a census return. Many thanks to all the tower correspondents and captains for their time in bringing together the numbers and their comments and suggestions.



Branch Membership is not the same as number of active ringers



# Recruitment, Retention & Training

With the 2015 census complete it is time to think about what the Branch wants to achieve, starting with an ambition that addresses its challenges.

*By 2020 the North Bucks Branch of the ODG of Church Bell Ringers will have retained and increased the numbers of ringers in each of the towers that have active bands in 2015. It will have identified and formed active bands in two more towers within the branch. It will provide a positive learning experience to all new recruits.*

To meet this ambition we need to learn from our past successes and best practice from other areas.

## Retention

For retention and motivation, stepping stones and rewards are needed to mark achievements.

Emphasise to new ringers that they are filling a gap not taking up your time.

There is a need to eliminate intimidation which is very off-putting to new ringers.

Creating groups of new ringers (including across towers) gives a sense of team and allows frustrations to be shared.

Need to motivate people to stay, perhaps by developing the social side of ringing. It doesn't just happen.

Use intensive teaching so recruits master bell handling quickly

New ringers to follow structured learning programme

Change your teaching style to suit each ringer

Use public events to drive interest

Celebrate recruits successes

Develop a waiting list

Team spirit



Think outside the box

Train sufficient teachers first

Don't attempt too much - avoid burn out

Avoid new ringers stagnating at Bob Doubles

Introduce simple exercises into practices to develop skills

Be targeted – ensure you attract the right people in the right areas

Changing the mind set requires faith “this is the way we have always done it”

At the Autumn meeting branch members gave the following thoughts on recruitment, training and retention.

## Recruitment

Recruitment needs to start with the congregation. It helps to have a face which is known in the church.

Recruitment needs to be pro-active. Advertising and promoting ringing at existing events, eg church open days, can reach more people.

Make it easy to have a go at ringing. Open Days are good, but need to be focussed and follow-up is essential not a normal practice.

A recent Open Evening at Bradwell had been a success. It was held on the normal practice night. It was actively promoted by the vicar during the service. There was no commitment involved, just coming along to find out more.

Age groups – the young learn best, but have other calls on their time. At the end of the day, you have to reach and teach who you can.

## Training

Clustering towers together to help each other with training new people is the way forward.

Trainers are doing a good job, but more ringers should be encouraged to have a go at teaching.

New ringers should be encouraged to visit other towers.

Good stander-byers are needed to continually correct and discourage bad habits developing.

Identify role models for teaching and tower captains.

Easier to learn in a group rather than as an individual.

It was felt that the distribution of new ringers from the Big Ring Pull had been patchy.

A lot of training happens after the practice. Cultivate a social side that works for your tower and allows this training to happen.

Plan for the development of experienced ringers so they don't get bored.

# Next Steps

Since the Autumn Meeting we have heard that a number of towers have been inspired to try some of these activities out which is great news.

Some of the stories shared have been developed into case studies and can be found in the recruiting resources section of our web site. The pages in this section provide lots of hints and tips on recruitment and training, why not have a look today?

In addition to the effort being put in locally by towers the Branch is looking for a few pilot towers who are willing to work together to test drive some new ideas with the support of officers and other members of the Branch. You can get involved by getting in touch with a member of the RTR team:

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Lesley Belcher  
Sheila Watts,  
Patricia Rosewell

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*Linda Maycroft*