

Ringling Simulators have, in many respects, 'come of age' and their installation has even received attention in the national press this year. They have certainly proven their worth for teaching purposes and for practising at times when most 'real' tower bells would be unavailable, as John Norris points out in his comment article on p.963. So is it time that we revised our attitudes to peal and quarter peal performances achieved upon them?

We invited Tony Smith, immediate Past President of the Central Council and a long-serving Chairman of its Methods Committee, to make an immediate response to John's article. Tony has quite rightly pointed out, first and foremost, that the Council no longer "recognises" peal performances – it simply applies criteria to decide whether any given performance should be included in its annual Analysis of peals rung. Should peals rung on instruments other than true bells now be included in that analysis?

How should we report peal performances rung on simulators in *The Ringing World*? When submitted they are usually printed in quarter peal format and published under the 'Miscellaneous performance' heading. When an exception was made recently for a special performance on The Marches Teaching Belfry simulator (published in normal peal report format under a 'Simulated peal report' heading on p.541), one reader wrote to us in disgust and said that this might herald "the end of bell ringing as we know it". We would be interested to hear the views of more readers on this subject.

## A response from Anthony Smith, Past Chairman of the Methods Committee

John's article is based on a misunderstanding: that the Council "recognises" peals. It has not done so since the Norwich meeting in 2002 when Council agreed that the title of Decision (D) E. be amended from "Recognition" to "Analysis" and that the Decision be amended to read:

"The Analysis shall include all peals published in *The Ringing World* and shall identify peals not complying with parts A to D above".

The minutes of the meeting (RW p.927, [www.methods.org.uk/archive/ccm2002.htm#motionF](http://www.methods.org.uk/archive/ccm2002.htm#motionF)) provide the background to the proposal:

"Tony said this motion addresses Decision (D) E which covers recognition of peals. More specifically what happens when peals do not conform to the Decisions. The perception is that Council decides whether or not to recognise non-conforming peals. In fact if you read the Decision carefully it says that peals that conform are recognised and included in the Analysis, Council only decides whether or not to include non-compliant peals in the Analysis, not whether or not to recognise them. In practical terms the discussion of non-compliant peals is often heated and some people invariably go away unhappy.

"Moreover the affiliated societies concerned, who abide by the Decisions of Council, take differing views over whether they can include non-compliant peals in their own records.

"This motion seeks to remove this source dispute by amending this Decision.

"It is perfectly reasonable that Council should have Decisions covering what is accepted as a method or peal and also reasonable that these change over time. It is to be expected that some bands may wish to methods or peals not covered by the Decisions and they should feel free to do so. Whether a particular peal conforms or not is a matter historical record and it is reasonable that the Peals Analysis should note this. If a particular sort of non-compliant peal or method becomes popular then it makes sense to change the Decisions to codify the development."

Incidentally [www.peals.co.uk](http://www.peals.co.uk) (the RW database), *Campanophile*, *PealBase* and *Felstead* are all independently administered listings with differing criteria for including performances; as such they provide no basis for conformity. As a contrary example, *Dove* does not list simulators.

## Peals on simulators

### Recognition and inclusion

SIR, – I am grateful to Tony Smith for his comments on my article about recognising peals rung on simulators (p.963) but I feel he has missed the point. I chose the word 'recognise' in an attempt to keep the title of the article short and punchy. By 'recognise' I meant nothing less than inclusion in the Analysis, albeit qualified by a non-compliance note. I think this can be clearly inferred from the second paragraph of my article but I apologise for not spelling it out more clearly.

Tony makes the point that the Central Council decided at the 2002 meeting that "The Analysis shall include all peals published in *The Ringing World* and shall identify peals not complying with parts A to D above". However, all peals are not being included in the Analysis because peals on dumbbell rings are being excluded. As Tony himself says: "Council only decides whether or not to include non-compliant peals in the Analysis ...". Clearly Council must have powers to rule on the unexpected but peals on dumbbell rings are no longer new or unexpected and it was, and is, my opinion that the acceptability of such peals (i.e. their inclusion in the Analysis!) should be given fresh and serious consideration.

JOHN NORRIS

Hurstpierpoint, Sussex

SIR, – As a supporter of the proposal at the 2003 Central Council meeting that the Marches Teaching Belfry peal be accepted, it goes without saying that I am in favour of John Norris' suggestion (p.963). But I have to say that if it were left to me to make a formal proposal, I would use different justifications from John's.

Of his five bullet points, none is specific to simulators and one is not even about peal ringing. My justification would be much simpler: ringing is a performing art, and if you ring with a simulator, what you do and hear is identical with what is done and heard with conventional ringing. This is true irrespective of whether the kit above is a silenced bell or a dumb bell or a mixture of the two. Given the level of sound control installed in some towers, I also think that the requirement for the ringing to be audible outside is a red herring. In the old days, it was customary for handbell peals to have an umpire, but that practice went out of use long ago.

I support John's comparison with organs, and would actually go further. I believe it is now the case that some churches and cathedrals have hybrid organs, with some of the sound produced by resident pipes and some coming from digitally recorded pipes on other instruments.

The quality issue is also interesting. In my twenty-one years on the Central Council, I

heard a number of debates about whether a peal was acceptable on technical grounds, but none at all about whether a peal was unacceptable because it was badly rung. Anyone who has a problem about quality should try proposing that all peals should have an umpire engaged from a panel appointed by the Central Council.

A few years ago, the Editor of *The Ringing World* announced, although he subsequently changed his mind, that he was not going to publish quarters rung on simulators, and I think Alan Buswell has not always included them in his analysis. These were particularly futile actions, as I have never specified when submitting quarters from Keele, where we have a simulator on all the bells, whether they were rung with simulated or real sound.

I am reminded of the famous remark from a Central Council debate in the past: "I'm all in favour of innovation, but we've never done this before."

PHIL GAY

Keele, Staffordshire

RW Oct 7, 2011 – 1013

## Peals on simulators

SIR, – My comment on John Norris's article (p.963) was not intended to be a response, I was simply trying to correct the misunderstanding that the Central Council "recognises" peals.

Unfortunately your Editorial in the same issue (p.959) and John's subsequent letter (p.987) contains a further misunderstanding that the Council decides whether or not to include non-compliant peals in the Analysis. This responsibility was removed at the Norwich meeting in 2002 as I explained in my comment on John's article.

The Analysis produced by the Peal Records Committee is only required to identify any non-compliant peals. It is a matter for the Peal Records Committee whether or not they include non-compliant peals in the various statistical analyses that they produce. There are still very few peals on simulators but if the Peal Records Committee did decide to include them in any of their statistical analyses they would doubtless want to identify them separately since they are on neither tower nor handbells.

However I do agree with John that *The Ringing World* ought not to publish peal submissions as "Miscellaneous performances". I suggest that *The Ringing World* introduce a third section, after the tower bell and handbell peals, of "Other peals" for *prima facie* non-compliant peals. This would also assist the Peal Records Committee in their identification of non-compliant peals.

If John believes that the Council Decisions on Peal Ringing should be amended so that they cover peals on simulators as well as peals on bells, then I suggest that he should ask his representatives or other sympathetic Council members to propose a motion at the Chester

meeting next year asking the Methods Committee to prepare the necessary amendments to the Decisions. I do not think it is fair to expect the Methods Committee to take on this significant item of work before Council has had an opportunity to discuss and agree on the matter in principle.

Lastly, I am grateful to Tim Jackson for pointing out that, whilst simulators are not listed in the 9th edition of Dove, rings that have a simulator are indicated on the website ([dove-ccbr-org-uk/dove-php](http://dove-ccbr-org-uk/dove-php)) and will be indicated in the 10th edition. However simulators that do not have a ring, i.e. dumbbells, will not be indicated.

TONY SMITH

Winchester, Hampshire

## Peals on simulators

SIR, – It is something of an anomaly that the Marches Teaching Belfry is recognised by the CCCBR Ringing Centres committee as a teaching centre but that peals rung here are not included in the peals analysis by the Peal Records committee. You can learn to ring here – we got an award for being a great ringing centre but – Oh No, you can't ring a peal here!

JOHN TURNEY

Owner, Marches Teaching Belfry  
Hopton Heath, Craven Arms, "Shropshire

## Peals Analysing! Quiz!

SIR, – Here at Hopton Heath we have two sets of 'bells', neither are standard, both can be heard outside the building which is not a tower.

One set is rung and sound just like tower bells, the other set is rung with a different technique and sound quite unlike tower bells.

Which of these will the Central Council include in their Peal Records?

JAN HERRATY

Co-owner Marches Teaching Belfry  
and The Fire Ring  
Hopton Heath, Shropshire

RW October 14 – 1038

## Peals on simulators

(allied with the use of various combinations of bells)

SIR, – Following on from John Norris' article (p.963) Anthony Smith on the same page points out, that since 2002 Council only decides whether or not to include non-compliant peals in the Analysis, not whether or not to recognise them.

As John asks, I agree the time is right for Council to visit this again.

It was planned in 1994 to ring peals on simulators and various 'rings' – including a ring of dumb bells, a ring of conventional bells with the addition of dumb bells to make a larger ring of bells in the tower, on a conventional ring of bells with the clappers tied; all of these combinations requiring the sound to be generated on a simulator. Those involved in the proposed scheme included at least two members of The Central Council, if all these performances had taken place, a proposal for a change of rule seeking acceptance of such performances by Council as peals, was to be put at the 1995 Central Council AGM.

The proposal was never put to Council as unfortunately only one peal was rung (in Sussex), on a ring of six conventional bells with the addition of two dumb bells, the clappers were tied and the sound was generated on a simulator. To adhere to the existing rules on peals as far as possible, an additional loudspeaker was sited in the porch of the church so that the sound was audible outside the church.

The skill required to ring a combination of dumb bells and conventional bells to a peal is no less than ringing one a conventional peal of bells.

For those who have not rung on a simulator or if they have did not enjoy the experience, fair enough, but please be understanding of those who use them, a large number of ringers have found them a very useful learning tool.

With many towers having to be careful about their neighbours when it comes to peal ringing, I am sure I am not alone in thinking we should be prepared to accept that there is room for all modes of developing our ringing skills, which will stand us in good stead when we ring our tower bells open for the public to hear.

ROY COX

Bexhill on Sea, Sussex

## Not a Formula won

SIR, – May I add to the simulator debate: Sebastian Vettel did not win the World F1 Championship driving a simulator.

R BENNETT

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

## Wake up call from a CC member and worker in the bell trade

SIR, – “Why is it that ringers are their own worst enemy, not looking at the full picture, which can ultimately end the ringing Exercise as we know it!”

I was present at the Central Council meeting in Llandudno, where the issue of simulated quarter and peal ringing raised its head. I was one who strongly advised against allowing peals on simulators, stating the above statement and some of that published below.

That meeting was when it dawned on me that the CCCBR over the years has changed so much, with the advent of computers we have gained and required many people on the CCCBR who are strong in this field, but alas lost many of those who could compose on paper and in their heads, not requiring keyboard technology. These guys were generally known to be the cream of peal ringers. The Central Council was made up of a high proportion of these prolific ringers that had strong views on what counted for a peal. For example when the Central Council meeting was held in Bedford, and I was a young observing lad, 30-ish years ago, a discussion ensued as to whether to allow a peal on the Liss ‘buckets’; it was defeated. Also around that time other rule breaking 11- and 13-bell peals were refused as they had no Tenor bell drumming behind. Subsequently both rules have been changed.

In contrast, many years later at the meeting in Liverpool they agreed to recognise a peal that was rung with three cover bells; this would not have seen the light of day with the old school and cast out by a majority vote. Also they allowed the peal rung at the Bullring that did not consist of a complete blue line. But now with the lack of peal ringers and persons on the Council who do not understand ringing I am sure this just washed over the heads of a lot of persons present.

We are taking the challenge out of ringing, which means the standard of ringing is declining at a fast rate despite computers and simulators which can ‘up’ the skill level. We seem to be taking backward decisions. I feel peal rules are so complicated covering all perceived aspects, yet we allowed a peal that had two blue fines; some rang one, some the other and a few rang both. I was actually in the performance and if you actually rang the method by the rules, rather than the blue line, we all actually rang the same thing. Confused? If so, this to me now shows that there really should only be two rules for peals analysis. Rule one being “all peals shall consist of 5,000 true changes”. The peals analysis and method committee then have to decide what category they fall under, or invent some. Triples can be reduced to 5,000 true changes if the conductor desired. For six bells and under the last extent can be reduced, or the rule is put; For peals of Minor each row must not be repeated more than 7 times, Doubles 42 times, Minimus 209 times,

Singles 834 (of which Singles are not recognised by the CCCBR, yet!). Rule two is a few paragraphs below!

To me the CCCBR is now made up of people that have masses of computer skills, but on the end of a bellrope many are pretty poor in terms of quality of striking and method ability. What’s more, they probably care little for improvement on striking over pushing ahead with technical method ringing. There are probably only 20 persons on the Council which I would class as top notch ringers, if that! What’s more, the good ringers come onto Council for a short period of time and get fed up with its lack of their understanding of the Exercise and leave as quick as they came. For example; Mr Earis’s stance at Cheltenham CCCBR meeting, which shows the farce it has become in certain quarters, but we failed to take note. There were also other proposals made at that meeting which I hope do not get an airing again, as they will make an ass of what ringing is all about.

Granted there are a high number of ringers on the Council who deal with the training of new recruits, which they do brilliantly! They themselves do not need to be top notch or peal ringers to do this. However these people all get a vote and can be easily swayed by others. Quite rightly, a lot have and love the aid of a simulator, therefore more people not seeing the bigger picture, with a vote on whether to allow peals on simulators. In my mind this is another example of how the vote could easily go the wrong way.

At a meeting prior to myself being elected onto the Central Council, they could not agree on what a bell shape was. They decided to agree it was best described as conical in shape, so anything conical in shape that has a peal rung on it would count. Had I the time over the last 20 years I would have put some clappers in Ice Cream cones to become handbells, and hang for full circle ringing a set of traffic cones and ring a peal on them. Both would count, assuming we did not smash or eat the cones in the process! Subsequently the Central Council has agreed to recognise peals on plant pots.

Why did the CCCBR get into this mess on deciding what a bell is? To my mind all European Church bells are made of metal and have a soundbow. The shape that is common to all church bells is that they curve out down to the soundbow from the head of the bell to the soundbow. There are two different handbell shapes. The common handbells which curve outwards as they go down to the lip or rare breed of domed handbells. Neither of these has a soundbow.

As for mini rings, all are either thickened up handbells or a smaller version of church bells. All are made of metal and have a ring sound that is only associated with British/European church and hand bells.

Just to stir it up though, if the bell shapes were made of glass they would ring. I feel it will not be too long before someone orders a glass ring of bells as the Dutch have just produced a small glass bell carillon. How

about replacing the Basildon bells with them!

I personally feel the classification for bell shapes by the CCCBR should be simply: “made of metal and shaped like European church bells or hand bells”. This being rule two for peals to be included in the CCCBR analysis. When glass bells become available we will have to just delete the words “made of and” as they will still be the same shape.

Moving on from bizarre decisions taken to the lack of a rule. The Central Council worried about what a bell is described as, but failed to say how it should be struck. There is no rule that states the clapper should be hung within the bell. In fact you can have more than one clapper! Also no rule states that a bell must be hung for full-circle ringing. So you could hang bike wheels that spin around with bell ropes attached, which trigger a hammer that hits a stationary bell! Therefore I could just fasten

my traffic cones on a beam, or washing line! Peal footnote: 1,000th peal on traffic cones!

So now on to the simulated peals. When this was first raised at Llandudno it was pointed out by Andrew Aspland that simulated bell sounds did not sound like real church bells. The trouble is most bell-ringers (that are not tone deaf, amazing how many there are!) can tell the difference between electric sounding bells and real ones. But as I pointed out at the time, the public does not know this and they are the ones who decide on what bells to have at their church.

Clockmakers in this country are now selling many electronic sounding bell systems for their church clocks. Saving expense on bells and their mechanisms. Nowadays the sounds are vastly improved and they would fool the best of us. This tied with simulated ringing worries me beyond belief. Can you not see that ultimately we will all be replaced by electric bells. Allowing simulated quarters and peals is the start of the downfall upon ourselves.

The bellfoundries will be the first thing to disappear; there being a lack of business.

I can see it all before me now as I did at Llandudno.

At this moment in time it is realised by ringers and the Church that they can buy a simulator for the ringers to aid silent practice.

Then it is realised by the PCC that they could amplify the simulated sound, so they can just be heard on Sundays, the rest of the time it is only made audible to the ringers.

THEN it dawns on the Vicar and Wardens that they could cut out the middle man and just have simulated bells without the ringers, as they are just a pain in the neck to them! (It’s a fact that there are many vicars and wardens that either dislike bells or have had altercations with the ringers).

BANG goes our exercise!

WAKE UP you simulated ringers and please use the tool for what it was intended, as a training one!

The less we ring our bells ‘open’ the more complaints we will have. Simulators were designed for training purposes only, we must stop giving in and installing simulators as an

alternative tool to keep the neighbours happy. It would be better to stick to fixed ringing times agreed with locals in the vicinity. Here in Shelford, we are having fewer services at our church each month, but I am arranging extra ringing for celebrating village events, so that the bells are rung regularly and the village as a whole know we are ringing for them. These are published in the village newsletter and I have nothing but positive feedback.

So for me when the CCCBR goes one step further into the realms of daft decisions, please think of the ringing future that you are about to obliterate, just for allowing technology advancement into the peal ringing side of the art, which has to be put down as a personal whim.

As stated before there are only recognition rules for accepting peals into the Council's analysis. I berated the Editor for even publishing the previous simulated performances in the comic, as this was the start of the rot. Don't get me wrong, I would be quite happy to ring simulated peals and have rung peals on plant pots; my 2,000th being one. But I do not expect the CCCBR to recognise them; these performances would be in my records and that is my choice.

I refer to the John Norris article, September 23rd in The Ringing World. I feared it was only a matter of time. I note the comment one peal rung last year and so far four this year, but I assume all have been rung at the same location! It's not as if thousands of ringers have just started ringing simulated peals.

The very sentence put by John Norris sums it up for me; "The issue of why ringers would actually want to ring peals on simulators is a secondary one" So why does he think it is now necessary?

The advantages he mentioned below this statement in his bullet points are not enough of a reason either to allow these performances.

Point one is an admittance to taking our Exercise from the Church. Our title Central Council of Church Bellringers is a clue here! My simple suggestion for you is why don't you set up your own simulated ringing society that recognises peals on simulators? Along with the to-be-formed Glass and Plant Pot peal society!

I agree to the second point, but this is the learning stage, which is what simulators were invented for, not peal ringing!

Point three, I do not buy this at all. I learnt to ring at the age of 4 on a 12cwt ring of 5.

Points four and five are fair enough, but there are many peals of bells not being rung which they could use rather than shutting themselves in a shed with a simulator. In doing this you are accelerating the demise of church bell ringing, which surely the Central Council of CHURCH bellringers will not back you for!

As for the very few people that ring simulated peals, enjoy them, as surely that is why you do it? I would hate to think that you have an ulterior motive!

To pick up Phil Gay's comment in the September 30th issue. I like to go to listen to peals being rung if they are local to me or I

happen to be passing, there will be no point to this if I am not to hear them when I get there. It also means you could thrash around for two hours and you know nobody is listening. You say quality is not questioned and the possibility of umpires, but, as you are well aware, you yourself suggested to a band on completing a peal on a mini ring which had a fire up that it not be counted, and it was not! The ringers are the judges! The fact these performances could be carried out in silence allows those who feel guilty at the quality of their performance are less likely to question its validity!

Also with regard to the comment about simulated or real sound. To say "real sound" does not make sense as both are sounds that are real! With present day technology the "real bell" sound of course is now in many cases worse than the "simulated" bell sound.

As there are no rules for quarters, I have no problem with Phil ringing them on his simulator, but I do feel he should denote ones rung with the simulator, making it clear for the records some people like to keep.

There are other issues I wish to address with the advent of computers and mini rings, but these can wait until another day.

ANDREW MILLS

CCCBR member for

Southwell & Nottingham D.G.

Shelford, Nottinghamshire

## Simulated peals

SIR, – Following the discussion on p.963 I think the solution is clear: John Norris and other like-minded conductors should submit all their peals rung on a simulator to this 'Journal of Record' under a new Society heading, say 'The Guild of Simulator Ringers'.

I am sure that the Editor would readily allow this as he seems to have bestowed formal recognition on several similar ringing societies that do not appear on the CC web-list nor affiliated to another recognised Society. These unlisted societies appear not to hold any meetings other than meeting to ring peals, just having some special interest in common amongst the ringers – like simulators.

(or were they set up to avoid paying peal fees? Better than "Non-Association" I suppose)

Anyway I believe this would be a good way for peals rung on electronically silenced or dumb-bells to be easily identifiable for non-analysis by the CC, at least until the next review.

ALISTAIR DONALDSON

Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

RW October 21, 2011 – 1061

## Wind Mills

SIR, – I refer to the extremely long and extremely opinionated letter from Andrew Mills (RW p.1039, entitled "Wake up call."). He is positively rude about the Central Council of which he is a member. Does he regard himself as one of the "only 20 top-notch ringers" which he says belong to the Council? He talks about "persons on the Council who do not understand ringing", and bewails the "lack of peal ringers" on the Council. I cannot believe that any member of the Central Council "does not understand ringing", and I do not see why a non-peal-ringer cannot be an effective member of the Council.

I was a member of the band which rang the first peal on John Norris' dumbbells. I have to say that I got as much enjoyment from it as a peal on "real" bells. The striking was good, and would have been audible outside if Mr Mills had "happened to be passing", and there was certainly no "thrashing around for two hours". In addition to that, the bell-sound was superior to the bell-sound from a number of real bells on which I have rung!

I do not agree with Mr Mill's doom-laden forecast of what will happen to ringing as a result of computers, simulators and dumbbells. I cannot see why they are "taking the challenge out of ringing which means the standard of ringing is declining at a fast rate". There is no evidence for this. It seems to me that anything which allows more practice must be good for the Exercise.

Mr Mills is worried that the "vote on whether peals on simulators should be accepted" will go the "wrong way". I hope that he is in a minority as to which way is the "wrong way"!

ALAN GRIFFIN

Bloxham, Banbury, Oxfordshire

## Simulators are here to stay

SIR, – I would like to make a few comments regarding the essay from Mr Mills. I will restrict my comments to the sections regarding ringing on "simulators". I'm sure others will have something to say on Mr Mills' comments about CCCBR rules and the personal qualities of its committee members.

I am not familiar with the history of simulated rings and maybe at the beginning they were intended solely as a training tool. But history shows us that humans are, **and will always be**, innovative creatures. Give a young child a large cardboard box and it will become a car or a house or a spaceship. He doesn't look at the box and say "WAKE UP, mother. This is a box for a washing machine and nothing more." Somehow it seems inevitable that something which started life as a training tool would be used to ring peals and

quarter peals. In response to Mr Norris' comment about "... why ringers would actually want to ring peals on simulators ..." the answer is simple. "Because they can."

Mr Mills creates a Domsday Scenario of which simulated rings are just the thin end of the wedge. Ringers everywhere will be replaced by computers connected to a PA systems and the Exercise will die. This is not a new "problem". My own mother paid £5 in 1938 to have the bells rung at her wedding. Only recently did she discover that she had paid for a recording of some bells to be played through loudspeakers located in the church tower. With the advent of personal computers in the late 70s ringers began to explore this I remember programming my Sinclair ZX Spectrum to ring methods. I feel that the role that simulators will play in the demise of ringing is overstated and I would suggest that a greater threat to the Exercise is the falling numbers of new ringers coming through. When I took up ringing in 1980 at the tender age of (cough, cough) the world had not yet seen the likes of Wii and online gaming. The only other thing competing for my attention at the time was the pub.

I learned to ring in 1980 on a set of traditional church bells. Over the course of the next 15 years I rang almost 100 peals and several hundred quarter peals from Doubles to Bristol Maximus, but then gave up ringing when my local band disbursed due to infighting. I moved abroad with work for several years and returned to the UK one year ago. I wanted to take up ringing again for the camaraderie and the mental challenge but there was a problem. In the intervening period I had become a Muslim. I rationalised that ringing bells for practice nights and other non-religious purposes was OK, but the idea of ringing church bells to call people to Christian prayer goes against the principles of my faith. By a happy coincidence I live only 30 minutes from the Marches Teaching Belfry (MTB) and ring with the band there on a regular basis. I am always made to feel welcome and I feel valued for the experience that I bring to the band. Those same ringers ring at other towers for practice nights and services so the overall experience gained by ringing quarter peals and peals on the "simulator" is exported to a wider community. Simulators, and secular rings in general, provide an opportunity for people who are not of Anglo-Saxon Christian heritage or faith to become involved in the Exercise without feeling that they may be compromising their

As a ringing experience the simulator at the MTB is remarkable. The sound and the ringing action are indistinguishable from tower bells. Many of the bells are odd-struck and require as much skill to ring them in the right place as is required on all but the most exceptional of tower bell rings. I do take issue with Mr Mills' comment: "The fact these performances could be carried out in silence allows those who feel guilty at the quality of their performance are less likely to question its validity!". This strikes me as a somewhat personal attack on the people who ring on simulators, painting us as people

who will happily thrash around for 3 hours and claim we have rung a peal. The satisfaction one gets from ringing a peal is proportional to (amongst other things) the technical skill required to ring it and the quality of the ringing throughout. This is still true on simulators. Mr Mills also makes the point that the word "church" in the title of the CCCBR is a clue as to what should be "recognised" (let's not get into semantics) as a peal by the CCCBR. Does the Central Council audit-check the ownership of handbells before they include a handbell peal in their analysis?

In a separate letter from Mr Bennett he makes the point that Sebastian Vettel didn't win the F1 Championship driving a simulator. But I am sure technology and its usefulness to the Exercise. he is aware that commercial airline pilots spend hours and hours on simulators before they are allowed to fly a real Boeing 737.

The World turns. Innovation is all around us. Simulators have a place in the Exercise and are here to stay. Ringers will continue to enjoy ringing peals and quarter peals on them. I personally don't believe that they pose a threat to either bellhangers or the Exercise. Indeed, the smart bellhangers should see this as a business opportunity to diversify their offerings. I actually don't care if the Central Council includes peals rung on simulators in its records or analysis. I know when I have rung a peal and I will include it in my own records. I do feel, however, that *The Ringing World* should treat peals rung on simulators with the same respect as peals rung on tower bells or handbells. Publishing them as "Miscellaneous Performances" denigrates the effort that has gone into ringing the peal.

LYNN SCALES

Presteigne, Powys

RWOctober 28, 2011 – 1086

## Peals on Simulators

SIR, – I have rung 4 peals on a simulator, and read Andrew Mills' letter with interest.

WAKE UP you bellhangers!

I was aware that at the CC meeting in Llandudno some of the most vociferous objectors were connected with bell-hanging. If it was so clear at the time that the business interests of the bellhangers were at stake, then did the speakers against peals on simulators declare a possible conflict of interest before entering into the discussion.

If bell-hangers actively work against simulators then they are very short-sighted. Bell-hangers exist because of the activities of bellringers, and I expect most people ring because they enjoy it, not because of a sense of duty, or strong religious belief. I ring peals on a simulator because I love to ring, and because I am able to enjoy myself at other times, I am happy to ring for Sunday service – the primary purpose of bellringing. How many restoration projects would happen without the dedication of ringers? I have been involved in fund-raising on many occasions,

and these funds go to the bell-hangers. Surely bell-hangers should embrace the technology, and expand their businesses by selling and installing it to encourage ringing. The argument regarding PCCs deciding to cut out the middle man has been around for many years – in this case simulators are no different from record or tape players – technology that has been around for years.

Simulators allow people to ring whatever, whenever, without disturbing the general public. How many peal attempts are stopped due to complaints from the public? I have rung in one, and know of many more. Simulators are used to improve ringing, I would suggest that unless we make use of them, the ringing population will continue to wither and decline. Peals on simulators can only help to retain and encourage ringers, and if they were accepted by Guilds, would increase funds by payment of peal fees too – I would like to advise Mr Donaldson that we would be most happy to ring peals on a simulator for the Hereford Diocesan Guild, and have been in contact with the peal recorder on this matter. Sadly at the moment the HDG is unable to accept the peals due to its observance of CC rules on the subject.

FRAN WATKINS

Presteigne, Powys

## Our Own Worst Enemy

SIR, – Are ringers really their own worst enemies? Perhaps so, but I am not as convinced as Andrew Mills is.

The human being – at least in this country – is quite an enigma. We (humans) are put on this earth to – amongst other things – evolve, and that evolution is in some things exponentially fast. I speak of the electronic revolution, which has invaded virtually every part of our lives now. So why not bell ringing as well? But, and there is a big but too. Whilst we do embrace it in one way we rebel in another way. We use what electronics offers, but want to keep as a hobby or pleasure what we had before the "revolution." Take as an example museums of yesteryear, steam railways, old vehicle rallies and much more. This nostalgia boom is a huge industry. But it is kept safely in a "glass jar" for weekends and holidays. Who would really want to use a car without synchromesh now on a daily basis, yet we love to look at them.

And so with ringing, we want good going bells on ball bearings that are not odd struck ones that supposedly are now necessary because one cannot teach learners on plain bearings (an eternal cry these days). Yet any one over fifty almost certainly learnt on a lumpy heavy-going plain bearing ring. Why then do we not specify a new ring in a wooden frame on wooden head stocks and plain bearings? After all the country has just built a brand new steam locomotive – Tornado. Why? – because we evolve. Evolve to easy bells, synchromesh gearboxes and computers.

And now we've evolved to computerized ringing.

Mini rings, simulators, we now have them at home, and it's great. It is progress love it or hate it. Would we condemn the local church organist for having an electric organ at home, or the church who uses a recording when they are short of an organist – no! So why condemn simulators and the like? For the first time in our history we can take our instrument home, and just like the musician have an hour or so, and maybe ring a quarter of Stedman Cinques or something when we are no where near a twelve bell tower.

Life has to move on. Just as Meccano gave way to Lego, then maybe our art will give way to other forces to. Fewer “real” bells, more electronic ones – who knows? The Revd Barry Peachey recently suggested that the old large territorial Associations will fall in favour of more small ones. Who knows, but there will be change.

And then I saw a new “comic” (apologies to the Book of Revelation) – *The Ringing World* the Fortnightly Magazine for Campanologists.” Tower bell peals, hand bell peals, simulator peals, mini ring peals. The world is before us all.

ANDREW HOWARD

Wiveliscombe, Somerset

RW November 4, 2011, p.1111

## Sorry Council and Simulated Members

SIR, – Not surprising that both replies to my letter (*p.1039*) come from persons that have rung peals on simulators. Which obviously gives the same opinion. However I did not mean to be rude about the Central Council members or ringers of simulators. It was an overview as to how the change in personnel in the CCCBR has meant the challenge of pealing quality is dropping. Allowing three cover bells in a peal length performance meant a wonderful achievement for that tower to celebrate an important occasion, so yes it was a performance but should not pass as a peal. Two of the three cover bell ringers could have been taught to ring in a day and rung a peal that night. Where is the challenge in that?

The above analogy proves the point when CCCBR members take a vote on peal ringing decisions, many peals are accepted even though they have broken the guidelines, because the majority on the Council are there for other very important purposes, such as much needed teaching advancements (of which the aid of a simulator is one) which are crucial to ringing, but to get to the pinnacle of ringing, peals generally play a large part and the decisions made are making this side easier to achieve. The simulator was brought into ringing as a teaching and learning aid as with training/practising Boeing 737 pilots. They do not claim to have physically landed in New York when carried out by simulation!

So, Mr Griffin, with your short opinionated letter, where you say more practise is good for

the Exercise, I agree and your practise peals on simulators should not get recognised by the CCCBR. I do not send in to the RW my practises on a simulator and suggest, like me, you then do it on the real bells so the Council can accept it. I also pointed out that simulators in many cases sound better than the real bells.me from persons that have rung peals on simulators.

If invited I would love to ring a peal at the Marches Belfry and like Lynn said, “because we can” and it would “count in my personal records”, but I would not expect the CCCBR to accept nor the RW print it.

Ringing peals in silence means that the performance cannot be heard. I agree handbells to be similar here in that people could make false claims and they know nobody else is the wiser. Having rung handbell peals from Plain Bob Doubles up to Orion Maximus and 3-spliced 22, I feel upset that we did not think to physically record them as I would not be up to this standard anymore. Mini rings are much the same and I feel they should have a separate heading alongside handbells, of which I have rung and enjoyed many. Again these are not physically taxing although ringing miniring bells at speed is mentally draining over their tower bell companions.

Sorry to rush the article, but I am off to Turkey now, so lucky for you guys there may not be a response next week.

ANDREW MILLS

Shelford, Nottinghamshire

p.1112

## Mills Goes Boom?

SIR, – I would take a guess that almost no one agree with every aspect of Andrew Mills’ letter (**p.1039**). However, I feel that he makes some valid points that are in danger of getting lost in the noise of outraged bellringerness.

I refer specifically to the assertion that too much reliance on simulated ringing represents a danger to the continued ringing on actual bells, and ultimately a danger to the continuation of our long tradition of bellringing. There is a danger that churches, faced with economic pressures on all sides, could decide to dispense with the expensive luxury of real bells when they start to discover that a cheap, attractive and viable alternative exists in the form of some very good simulators. Andrew Mills is quite right to draw attention to this danger.

Don’t get me wrong. I like simulators and anything that makes teaching ringing easier, and accessing ringing more accessible, is a huge plus in my book. Here in Glasgow we have a considerable challenge training and keeping ringers: our bells are heavy, have a long draft, and there is not a strong ringing tradition up here. We will take all the help we can get. However, I would insist that we keep ringing our magnificent ten as much as we can get away with, and yes, I wish they were

louder outside. I am with Andrew 100% on this: to keep bells ringing, they need to be heard. They need to stay in the public consciousness, and we should give ground on this as reluctantly as possible.

I am completely not ‘evolved to computerised ringing’ (Andrew Howard, letters, p.1086) Honestly, if I had the choice only between computerised ringing and no ringing at all, I would probably go for the latter, ultimately. It would certainly draw neither the same enthusiasm nor commitment I currently give to bellringing.

We have a long and unique bellfounding tradition which is under tremendous economic pressure. We nearly lost one of our bellfoundries. I am sure I am not alone in wondering how many more pressures this traditional industry can survive. So many similar crafts have not. Andrew Mills is right to raise awareness of this, and it is in his own self-interest. But it is all our interest too. Fran Watkins insists that ‘bell-hangers exists because of the activities of bellringers’ (p1086), but misses the converse point that bellringing exists because it is supported by an industry that can keep the bells in working order and make existing installations easier to ring. The point is, we both need each other.

Will increased use of simulated bells ultimately spell the end of ringing on live bells? That is something I am not sure that anyone can answer with confidence. Have indoor climbing walls destroyed the art of climbing outdoors on natural rock faces? On the one hand rock climbing in all its forms has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, which is directly traceable to the fact that indoor walls have increased access to the sport. On the other hand, indoor wall climbing in now a specialist sport in its own right, with its own competitions and sets of rules, and so the tradition has divided. Would a similar thing happen in ringing? Would that be desirable?

Would some sort of official counting by the Central Council actually encourage more ringing on simulated bells? Or would it be another one of those decisions that increased the work of a committee without having any real impact of what people decide to ring? Again, I am not sure we know the answer to that.

We lack evidence. If it were possible to gather further evidence in a way that didn’t prejudice the issue one way or the other, I would be in favour of that. Until that happens, I think we would be wrong to dismiss Andrew Mills’ concerns as just a big rant of naked self-interest. He does make a serious point and we should give it serious consideration.

TINA STOECKLIN

Glasgow

p.1111

## Honking simulators

SIR, – A brief note re my letter published on p.1039 in *RW* No.5242. ‘Sebastian’ is spelt with an ‘i’ not a ‘u’ as printed.

May I also endorse Andrew Mills’ letter. Simulators are great for training but the sound is produced by computer. I bet a computer whizz could substitute the sound of cows mooing, horns honking or any other noise of choice for bells.

I’ll stick to real bells!

R. BENNETT

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

## Time slip

SIR, – Regarding my letter on p.1061, my mother would like to point out that she got married in 1958, not 1938. Mea culpa .

LYNN SCALES

Presteigne, Powys Other Comments:

*RW* November 11, 2011 p.1134

## Another blast of wind ...

SIR, – So Mr Mills thinks I’m opinionated! (*RW* page 1111: *Sorry Council and Simulated Members*) I’m afraid I fall far short of him in this category.

Consider his extraordinary argument for refusing to accept a peal of doubles with three covers. He asks: What is the challenge if two of the cover ringers learn to handle and then ring a “peal” the same day? Well I would consider that to be an immense challenge. I challenge him to teach two learners from scratch on a Saturday morning and then to complete a “peal” the same day. If I were one of the learners, and succeeded in doing it, only to be told afterwards that I could not regard it as a peal, that the Central Council would not accept it, and that it could not be published in the *Ringing World* as a peal, I would feel justifiably upset, and would probably give up my new hobby!

His argument for refusing to call it a peal applies equally to the tenor ringer for any peal on an odd number of bells. Why is it O.K. for a peal to include one covering bell and not three? A full 5040 changes have been rung on the working bells. All the ringers have pulled the ropes 5040 times, taking about three hours to complete the performance. It is hardly “taking the challenge out of ringing” to accept it as a peal.

I did not say: “more practise is good for the Exercise”. I said: “more practice is good for the Exercise”. If we practise on dumbbells by ringing a peal, we get as much practice as we would get from a peal on real bells. Mr Mills says he wants mini-rings to be put in a different category from tower bells – but how do you define a mini-ring. Most of them ring real bells. Do we have to agree on a particular

weight of tenor?

Then he talks about “ringing peals in silence”. Neither mini-rings nor dumbbells (in spite of the name!) ring in silence. As I said in my last letter, John Norris’s dumbbells are clearly audible outside his garage. I would be quite happy for dumbbell peals to be given a separate category in the *Ringing World*. This would include peals rung on silenced Church-bells, but using simulated sound, and there would be no dispute as to what constitutes a dumbbell peal.

I don’t think Mr Mills will get much change-ringing in Turkey! I hope he has a nice holiday.

ALAN GRIFFIN

Bloxham, Banbury, Oxfordshire