

ART AWARDS 2025

APPLICATION FORM: The SARAH BEACHAM YOUTH GROUP AWARD

Section 1 is common to all awards; please try to complete your answers on one page.

Section 2 is award specific. Please limit the **key information** in this section to no more than two pages of A4 (font 10). Please note, you can also send additional supporting information, such as links to short video clips (maximum 3 minutes), photos or links to websites (e.g. BellBoard) where helpful.

Section 1: Standard information for all awards

Please provide brief background details of the group, centre or individual on whose behalf you are applying. The purpose of this section is to provide some background context for the judges. Please fill in the boxes below each question.

The name of the <i>specific</i> individual or group that you are nominating.
Birmingham Universities Society of Change Ringers (BUSCR)
The location – where does this activity take place?
Edgbaston, St Bartholomew's. And other surrounding towers.
How long has the activity been going on or been in development?
The society is 70 years old, however 2024 has seen significant new and different recruitment, retention and development efforts.
How many people are involved and how has this varied over time?
We began the year with 4 students, as well as 4 local ringers that supported occasionally. We have successfully recruited and retained 15 new student ringers. Our efforts have resulted in an average practice night attendance of 19 (range of 24 to 16).
If relevant, how frequent is the activity?
Weekly normal practice night on Friday. Weekly extra handling / elementary change ringing session on Saturday or Sunday. Weekly quarter peal attempt to solidify and progress the more advanced.

Section 2: Award specific information

Give a brief description of the activity. Please make clear what specific achievements have been made in 2024. Suggested word count is 500 words.

As the academic year was coming to an end we realised nearly all of our ringers were graduating and moving away. We started the 2024/25 academic year with just 4 student ringers. We decided a large scale new recruitment and retention approach was required to save the society. Our plans started early in the summer, considering everything we would need for success. We booked a miniring, produced leaflets, created a social media presence and physically prepared the tower. We needed boxes for standing on while ringing/teaching so researched the options to buy from bell hangers, all were out of budget for us, so one of the committee members made 4 of them at home over the summer. We spent an evening tightening bolts, and adjusting ropes to ensure everything was in good order for teaching. We finished our preparations by giving the tower a thorough spring clean just before the first taster session. Bellringers are too used to their messy dated environments that don't appeal to young recruits! See Appendix A. Lots of hard work and perseverance since has lead to a very successful year.

The nomination will be judged against the following criteria. Please enter any supporting information in the boxes below.

Volume of young people recruited

The mobile belfry at Aston, 5 whole days on an unofficial stall at the University of Birmingham and an advert on the University of Birmingham student guild website resulted in 44 students attending the initial 3 taster sessions. We have subsequently had 6 other interested students come to practice nights, 4 because of seeing our social media posts and 2 were new recruits bringing their flatmates along.

Volume of young ringers retained

21 that came to a taster sessions subsequently came to at least one practice at the beginning of the term. 15 of those now regularly attend, ranging from 8-12 per week.

Development and progression of young ringers

The new recruits have been able to attend a weekly practice night, and an extra focussed session each week. At the start of the year both of these were nearly entirely 1-2-1 handling sessions, we have adapted as they have quickly progressed to the point the sessions are now majority R&CCs and Plain Hunt for the more advanced. Because there are so many keen recruits, they aren't all able to be on the end of a rope at the same time, we have used this time to explain the theory of call changes and plain hunt, and teach them handbells. All of them can ring call changes and plain hunt on one handbell. They have all been taught how to call changes and had a go at doing it with a handbell band, and a tower bell band, even before they could handle a bell themselves. Half of them can ring plain hunt on all pairs of 6 hand bells. They are bright young learners so keeping them stretched, even when we can't provide the rope time for it, has been essential. This also translates in to extremely rapid progress once they have mastered the bell control, because they already fully grasp the theory required. Unfortunately the Christmas break has come just as 4 of the group are ready for their first quarter peal, tenoring behind, so this is already booked in for January!

Level of originality of activities (noting that sometimes simple is best)

Our recruitment efforts this year have been far more extensive than ever attempted before. We booked the new Central Council Touring Tower mobile belfry, for the Aston university freshers fair. Simon Linford and Ian Roulstone assisted us with getting in to this event through their Vice Chancellor connections. The ART University Recruitment package and the St Martin's guild were vital in allowing us to fund the miniring. This is the first time BUSCR has ever made a recruitment effort at Aston, historically only focussing on the University of Birmingham. We used 4 large roll out banners from the Central Council's pool of them, these massively increased our professional look while out in public and at the taster sessions. Leaflets were designed and 1000 (we ran out!) were ordered and printed. See Appendix B. The leaflets call to action was to follow the newly created Instagram account. Over the summer, we created the account and added photos from the last couple of years to demonstrate to recruits the society was not brand new and had many established events. Aston and Instagram have been very successful new approaches for the society. A new WhatsApp group has been setup to communicate with all of the recruits, although it is largely used. This has really helped bond the group, many of them have found good friends amongst the group, some of them are even living together next year. Recruiting at Aston, utilising a mini ring and CC banners, producing leaflets, using social media, advertising on the give it a go page, and a WhatsApp group are all completely new efforts for BUSCR this year.

How well the activities are tailored to young people

We continue to use our new social media presence on Instagram and Facebook, with clear recruitment and retention results. The new recruits love sharing a link featuring them to their families and friends from home, and every other week we receive a message on Instagram from someone new asking if they can come along and try. Shortly after the first practice we added all the interested recruits to a WhatsApp group, this is different to the typical Facebook group used by existing bell ringers in previous years of BUSCR. We use the group to remind about the practices, poll for the extra sessions, and most importantly to crack jokes and be sociable! At the start we had to initiate conversations, most of the recruits being quite reserved, but now the ice is broken they get along well. We have organised a Halloween and Christmas social, quiz night, curry and board games night. We chose these activities specifically to match a slightly nerdy and shy group of recruits, they have been very successful with an average attendance of 21.

How much they've thrown themselves into things
Every week there are at least 3 sessions (practice, handling, quarter) at the student tower Edgbaston, there is normally also a trip to Selly Oak or Moseley practice with a subset of the recruits. All alongside communicating with the church, guild, bell restoration fund, dinner venue, an outing, social organising and ordering branded shirts. The society feels like a full time operation this year! Every time we ask the recruits if they would like to attend another event (dinner, local practice, outing) it is met with great enthusiasm. Unfortunately we don't have any pubs near Edgbaston so we walk to the on campus bar after practices. During these trips many of the new recruits have asked us questions about bell ringing outside of BUSCR, they are fascinated by it all. The highlight being their horror as Oliver explained about the nappy specification of ringing long lengths!
Barriers overcome (personally or in the locality)
We did not have any experienced confident teachers amongst the current students, so we sought guidance from more experienced local ringers (Birmingham School of Bell Ringing) and 3 of us have attended an ART Module 1 course. All current students were encouraged to be involved with the teaching, whether that was handling or handbells. It required us all to upskill quickly to ensure we gave the new recruits a really good experience, this also benefitted our confidence as teachers. At various points we have requested assistance from 12 different local St Martin's Guild ringers to boost the 1-2-1 rope time minutes all of the recruits are receiving. We run handling sessions every Friday, and Saturday or Sunday afternoon. A quarter peal is always organised after the extra handling sessions at the weekend, helping attract the teachers and R&CCs fill ins while also providing a regular schedule to stretch the students that are largely just helping the new recruits at the practice. See Appendix C. Some of the students support local practices at Selly Oak and Moseley on practice nights, Sunday services and weddings. The bands at these towers then reciprocate by making up our numbers for quarters and service ringing, and allowing us to use their bells for more learner rope time. A significant factor in our success has been the considerable support from the Edgbaston church staff. Lucas has met with the vicar 3 times to discuss progress, and our projects to improve the ringing chamber and bells. The vicar has also passed through a few of our practices and commented how nice it was to see the church so lively and fun. This strong relationship has allowed us to use the bells on 3 or 4 days a week to maximise our progress. In recent years we haven't had enough student ringers to support regular service ringing, we contacted the church to ascertain key Christmas services they would like us to ring for so we could focus our efforts. We asked lots of local ringers to join us to make it viable, and our most advanced new recruits joined in too. We are really close to being able to ring regularly on Sunday with an all student band, largely made up of the new recruits, they are all keen for this and looking forward to going for breakfast in the café after! Our lack of affiliation with the student union at the University of Birmingham and Aston University, due to low numbers, has made it significantly more challenging to advertise to new students. We reached out to the union at UoB who (after some arm twisting and begging!) offered us advertising on their website. And we ran a stall anyway on footpath! See Appendix B. Leveraging these collaborations with the church, local towers, the St Martin's Guild, the student union and ringers with university connections have been a key component in our success this year.
Sustainability, applicability, succession of approach over the longer period
We have developed a group of local helpers that are happy to come and support us when we are expecting a short week, and for the extra handling sessions and quarters. We have a template for recruitment – we know what worked best and what didn't. We have also already prepared recruitment materials which just needs to be printed for future years. All the materials and communications have been saved for future committees. With small tweaks and improvements we are confident for a streamlined recruitment process next academic year.
Embracing of continuous improvement and innovation
We were frequently asked on our first week of stall recruiting about the cost to ringing, it hadn't occurred to us before that this was a significant factor to students. Our second batch of 500 leaflets, and social media posts, were updated to make clear bellringing is nearly entirely free. One week we knew in advance was going to be especially low on handling teachers (2 for 10 recruits!), it was near the start of term so we carefully thought about how we could ensure it wasn't an off putting experience for the still very new recruits. We decided to have a hot chocolate and biscuits break, it cost less than £5 but completely distracted from the fact they weren't getting much ringing. This is one example of us carefully considering everything we do and how the recruits will experience it to maximise retention.
Approach to sharing with the wider ringing community
As the learners have become more competent we have been taking them to other local practices, for the extra rope time and variety of experience, and to socially see the wider world of bell ringing. 6 of the recruits have now been to Moseley and/or Selly Oak practice nights. We communicate this with the tower captains in advance and take care of the recruits at the practices to ensure a pleasant experience. Lucas and Jimmy have been invited to volunteer for the newly invigorated CCCBR Youth work group. Sharing our success, failures and ideas for future development, this is then further distributed via the Young Ringers' Hub. We have connected our 2 most advanced recruits with their nearest tower at home, they have been gratefully received over Christmas.

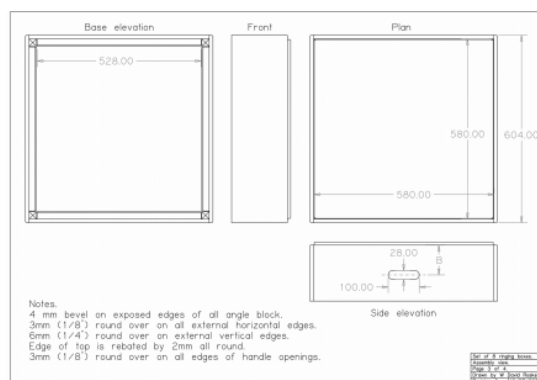
Appendices

A – Our work to prepare the tower for new recruitment and teaching

- The newly cleaned ropes. They were all taken off, brought home and treated with boiling water and fabric softener.



- 4 stackable boxes made by one of the committee members over the summer holidays. They have been essential for our teaching efforts.



Designing and purchasing with precut where possible!



Assembly and finishing

- Purchase of a new notice pin board to display tower notices, progress charts and method lines.
- Replacing old photos and certificates with framed print outs of the more recent BUSCR student successes i.e. the undergraduate coronation peal.
- Thorough spring cleaning of the tower ahead of the taster sessions. Ladders used to get the cobwebs on the ceiling, floor polisher out of the church hall, and the peal boards had their first dust for a few decades! https://www.instagram.com/p/C_sPKHImbA/



B – Examples of social media and publicity - [instagram.com/birmingham_uni_bells/](https://www.instagram.com/birmingham_uni_bells/)

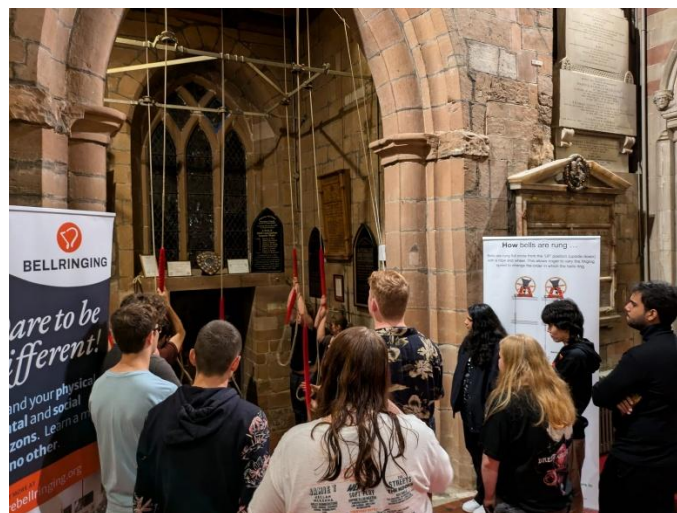
- Due to not having a social media presence before the account was back filled with content from the last couple of years, so any potential recruit could see what we get up to.
- Our stall and miniring at the university of Aston, the first time BUSCR has ever done this.



- 1000 leaflets designed and ordered ahead of freshers fair, a first for BUSCR. Helped us look much more official when approaching people with a stack of glossy leaflets. Including QR codes, photos from last year and bus route guides. In our first week of recruitment lots of students asked



- Article submitted to the RingingWorld's universities edition.
bb.ringingworld.co.uk/issueno/5912#page=4
- Posts on the Bellringers facebook group. www.facebook.com/share/p/1Am6wqNGTx/
- A large information post was produced giving all the logistics about the taster sessions, how to find us with bus routes. This post was deleted and reposted on the morning of each taster session, sending a new reminder notification to all those that have followed the account from our leaflets.
[instagram.com/p/DAJQHT018cU/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DAJQHT018cU/)
 - These materials were then repurposed into a permanently pinned Highlights so anyone checking out our profile can easily find what they need to join us
<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18478655545057325/>
- Stories posted at each stall location so people could find us, this also acted as a reminder notification for those considering a taster session. [instagram.com/stories/highlights/17843734614316050/](https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17843734614316050/)
- The tower setup professionally for the taster sessions, utilising the Central Council's pool of roll out banners.



- Our Halloween quiz night and Christmas curry and board games socials.
[instagram.com/stories/highlights/18045963485330684/](https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18045963485330684/)
[instagram.com/p/DBo-8yCo_qb/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DBo-8yCo_qb/) [instagram.com/p/DDWAa-1okEC/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DDWAa-1okEC/)

- A story is posted after all practice with a particular highlight from that week. This keeps those currently following engaged but also means there will be a good history for recruits next year to judge us on!
[instagram.com/stories/highlights/18054213607823151/](https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18054213607823151/)

C – Student quarter peals

- 29th September – LOST Yorkshire Surprise Major, first in method for our two more advanced students utilising lots of local ringer support. While it was unfortunate to lose the attempt after 30 mins, it was still invaluable practice experience to ring a more challenging method with a strong band to master the striking.
- 5th October – Plain Bob Doubles with one Selly Oak local supporting her through ringing inside. Jo has later helped us by giving us touches at her Selly Oak practices and allowing us to use the bells at other times bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1774947
- 6th October – Plain Bob Doubles first quarter peal for existing ringer, Oscar, that we found on our impromptu stall on UoB campus. A really strong band gave him the chance to receive specific striking tips over an extended period, beyond what he can get in a normal practice.
bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1775288
- 8th October – Plain Bob Doubles first inside for Alejandra after being taught to ring by the society and BSoBR two years ago. bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1775919
- 10th October – Plain Bob Doubles first away from cover for, Jackson, the other existing ringer we found on our miniring at Aston. Also a first as conductor for Ioan, one of our more advanced students.
bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1784590
- 13th October – LOST Double Oxford Bob Minor, first in method for three students and the student conductor. As we have been progressing with handbells this has been a useful method, so we decided to ring it in the tower for method practice and the conductor to see coursing orders. A wayward bob 60 changes from the end lead to the loss.
- 29th October – Spliced Surprise Major (Belfast, Glasgow, London, Bristol) including 4 students/recent graduate supporters, challenging first for 3 of us! bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1780812
- 17th November – Plain Bob Minor (Handbells) rung by one current student and two graduates supporters from last year. First QP in hand for two of the band, and first as conductor in hand for the third ringer. <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1786739>
- 17th November – London Surprise Minor first London for two of the existing students, utilising local expertise to get us through! bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1786596
- 24th November – St Martin's Bob Doubles first in method for two of the band, two of our existing but less expert ringers. This would have also been a first as conductor, however there was a diary error!
bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1789020
- 26th November – Bristol Surprise Major first in method for Ioan, one of the more advanced existing ringers. We organised this attempt a long time in advance so we could secure a really strong band with local guild ringers supporting (and conducting) for us! bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1789694
- 1st December – Ipswich Surprise Minor first in method for two of the band and as conductor, solidifying the most advanced method we have been able to ring at normal practice nights.
bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1792037
- 10th December – Stedman Triples first in method for one of the students, and circling the tower for another. This was our final weekend of term so we made especial thanks to all the locals (many of which were ringing!) that have supported us this year. bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1795393