



# The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Education Committee

---

## *Network for Ringing Training (NRT) summary October 2003*

---

Welcome to the 23<sup>rd</sup> summary of postings from the NRT. This month was really a continuation of existing threads.

*John Harrison* made a request for anyone using **Simulators** in the tower to get in touch if they use a different one from the ones listed, or use them in a different way. A lot of towers use Abel and a lot use David Bagley's \*BELLS kit for converting a BBC-B. A few have RingLeader, and there must be the odd Cummins machine still in use. Does anyone use Beltower? The blurb says it can be used as a tower bell simulator, so someone quite possibly does.

Does anyone know if it is? Are there any other types out there not mentioned? Uses were for developing rhythm, but they have not been so well accepted by existing learners compared to brand new learners. *John Norris* has his own program 'Stringing' running on Risc OS; this can be used with 1 bell. Ringers taught primarily on simulators seemed to have problems learning to look to ensure the correct stroke etc. The 'inflexibility' in rhythm seemed to be the most off-putting thing for existing ringers, making the point that the band of ringers ring with everyone but the simulator waits for no man. It was agreed that both should always be used to complement each other not just to use one and expect the other to fall easily into place. **Looking around** was picked up on from the thread and the point made that peripheral vision will normally suffice and that serious problems can be caused by rapid eye movement for long periods of time.

The thread **When training fails** came back with a tale of one gentleman having quite a bad accident through bad handling. The point was raised that quite a few times something told by a stranger sinks in whereas the poor TC can try to correct errors till they are blue in the face to no avail. The suggestion was made that other districts should follow the Northern District of the Essex Association and set up a band of trainers to help when requested. It was thought this would be more beneficial if people could volunteer to go out to the tower practice night rather than hold a separate session as, 'difficult' learners always seem to have reasons for not being able to attend extra practices. It was also suggested that we shouldn't have to put up with antisocial behaviour, the feelings of everyone

*NRT summary No 23 October 2003*

should be considered including the tutor, not just the learner. The decision to ask a learner to give up is obviously a hard one even from a safety point of view but the whole band must be considered and given reasonable time for advancement too. Quite a few people have sent in stories of bad behaviour and bad ringing practice, *available by request*, and these highlight that it does happen and you are not alone. *Rodney Stevenson* had encountered safety and non progression issues and finished his posting with 'It's amazing how much stress is relieved by taking the hard option of telling someone they are not going to make it. I didn't realise it was wearing me down so much until I did what I had to do.' Teaching is even more rewarding than ringing, so let's not destroy that for ourselves by refusing to be responsible tutors.

### **Moving onto Surprise! (Cambridge Minor)**

How do we move a band on from Kent Treble Bob to Cambridge Minor? With not many experienced ringers to help, this is a big step. Ideas received were, to learn the work in blocks, parrot fashion learning one place bell at a time, then ringing one lead at a time, calling freeze at the lead end. Splicing it with Little Bob, or to get used to the random bell order; try something with a slightly simpler blue line; not to get bogged down with the 'expected progression' route, try instead Single Oxford or Single Court first. Trying the sequence: Plain Bob then treble bob hunts and Bastow, leading to Kent Treble Bob, then Oxford Treble Bob and St Clement's, leading to Norwich Surprise which it was suggested was easier to ring and a natural step to Cambridge. Spend time ringing other things to gain confidence before rushing straight in. Methods suggested were: Plain Bob Doubles. Observation bell work for Grandsire (plain course comes later). Southrepps (Reverse Canterbury Doubles with Plain Bob bobs, then its own). Observation bell to Grandsire using Pink, Wallflower and Antelope calls. For those who are unfamiliar, these are variations where the double dodge is replaced by alternative work i.e. Pink = 4 blows in 5ths, 3 in 4ths, Wallflower = 5ths/4ths/5ths, Antelope = 3 blows in 5ths, dodge, 2 blows in 4ths. Plain Bob Doubles using Grandsire, Pink, Wallflower and Antelope singles (you call 3 singles, with

*page 1*

the unaffected bell making 2nds). St Simons group of Doubles methods where the double dodge on the front is replaced by the same set of variations as described for the double 4/5 dodge above. The whole set is doubled by ringing them with 3/4 places and Rev Cant bobs. Plain Bob Minor/Triples moving on to methods where dodges are replaced by Kent places. St Clements Bob Minor & Double Oxford, plus variants where the dodges are replaced by alternative (longer) blocks, work as before. Then of course Stedman Doubles. Learning place bells so knowing the 'starts' was a 'must' it was agreed. Various ways to help this were discussed, mostly involving calling bells to different positions before starting the method. A common one being, '2 to 3 - Go Cambridge'. It gives a 'half' course that comes round. Double Norwich CB Major was also put forward as a great method to develop plain hunt on 8. The only problem is that many (most?) ringers rely too much on the treble being right. The difficulty for learners here though would be the way the bells come at you with no noticeable pattern. This led on to **Teaching Cambridge** where different methods of learning/teaching the blue line were discussed; this again fell back to learning places and ringing one stage at a time, starting with the 'difficult' leads, moving on step by step. With the places usually being the stumbling block, another idea was for everybody to make a Cambridge start, but the ringer of the fourth makes Cambridge places continuously - 3rds, 4ths, dodge etc. The others, including the treble, always dodge in 3-4 up, double dodge in 5-6-up, lie behind then double dodge 5-6-down before hunting down to double dodge in 1-2, lead, double dodge 1-2 again and hunt out to dodge 3-4. This is good practice for neat double-dodging too. Learning the blue line seemed to cause some people problems and other means like understanding the construction or visualising different patterns were suggested. Being flexible was the key, and remembering that what worked (or didn't) for us may not be the right way to help the learner. Here again, bringing in help and support if available so not just giving one point of view, would help a learner to understand more easily, and making sure they understand from the start all the terminology involved was a must.

*Raymond Kefford has written some notes on the way the bells run through Cambridge, if anyone would like a copy, please contact me.*

**Training on recruiting.** We all desperately need more recruits. One Guild is proposing to run a Guild Seminar to help the tower captains in their recruiting drives. There are a (very) few youngsters around, and as a generalisation about half the local towers have one or fewer longer standing ringers. Not many millennium

learners would feel competent to teach handling from scratch. The training officer has been allocated the job of organising the seminar on the basis that it is intended to teach the tower captains how to recruit. Does anyone have experience of organising anything along the lines described? Ideas that came in were to have a very well advertised (posters in shops etc) open day with a mini ring at the back of the church. One tower uses recruitment as a useful link when children aged 11 leave the Sunday school. Going into the local primary school and giving handbell demos and tower visits, and maybe setting up an after school club to get the interest going. Having a youth coordinator to assist with all legal requirements would also be very useful. It is important to understand all the child protection issues and maybe get a police check done on all trainers.

**Handbells.** Although pretty experienced on the end of a rope, I'm still a novice when it comes to handbells, wrote *Heather Peachey*. We manage Bob Minor, Major can be fragile and Royal is just possible when the most experienced member is home from uni. The trouble comes when a bob is called. Are there any really useful publications or is it just many hours of practice that are needed. Any shortcuts to how to 'see' it would be handy. Answers to questions like those below would be a good start: - Should I see 2 separate blue lines, or sets of interlocking 'patterns' such as coursing or opposite? What are the 'correct' names for the various patterns/positions in Plain Bob - I have heard 3-4 in Minor called both 'split' and 'opposite' and have also heard 2-3 called 'split'. If it's patterns I should see, how can this be taken forward beyond Plain Bob - the number of combinations for Cambridge must be vast? Does anyone use the coursing order to keep their bells in place? When plain hunting 1-2 on 10, I did find myself concentrating on my lead bell following the coursing order round the circle and the following bell simply tagging on behind that. How do you prevent your pair going over? It seems very easy to forget which way round they should be especially if there is a bit of an 'argument' in the change.

The answers that came back were, practise, practise, practise until the different positions become second nature; try to keep to the rhythm, always keep to the same bells, You will soon notice certain 'landmarks' of bells in different positions. Keep relaxed (the same goes for tower bells). (Go to the pub before rather than after!!) To see things as many different ways as possible. 'Split lead' refers exclusively to the one lead in the 2-3 pattern that a coursing pair performs in Plain Bob or similar methods, between when one bell makes seconds and when the other makes seconds at the next lead end.

The pattern of a coursing pair is referred to as 'coursing.' All the other patterns are usually referred to by the lower numbered pair of places in which the bells come together and cross (the 2-3 pattern, 3-4 pattern, etc). The one major exception is that on every even number of bells one pattern is symmetrical, and that seems to be more frequently called 'the symmetrical pattern' or 'opposites,' though it's still not uncommon to have it referred to by number (3-4 pattern in Minor, 4-5 in Major, 5-6 in Royal, etc). An additional complication is sometimes people use these numerical 'patterns' to describe not the particular hunting relationship of a pair of bells, but rather the coursing order relationship. So, for example, after a bob Wrong in Major the 5-6 are in the 3-4 course, even though in simple methods they'll be swapping back and forth between the 3-4 and 2-3 patterns, just like the 3-4 do in the plain course; and similarly after that bob Wrong the 3-4 will be in the 5-6 course, where they'll be in the 5-6 and symmetrical patterns. These patterns are mostly useful for simple methods like Plain Bob and Treble Bob. Note that in Kent, apart from when one of your bells is in the slow (which is sort of like ringing the trebles to Bastow) your bells are in the same pair of patterns that the same pair would be in Plain Bob, they just (a) do a lot of dodging and so repeat pairs of positions in that pattern, and (b) switch between the two patterns twice per lead instead of twice per course. Little Bob is similar. But when you get to something like Cambridge that mostly breaks down. It is a big help to understand 'how' a method is put together, which is closely related to the place notation for it. Even if your primary tool is ringing two blue lines, knowing what's happening globally (the place notation) helps you understand those blue lines and how they fit together. Different people think more or less consciously about the place notation while they're ringing. But over the course of a peal or something even those that do use the place notation as their primary tool probably learn the relationships of two bells in a course of the method and do a bit less on the fly generating of their positions and more remembering patterns and pieces of pairs of blue lines they've rung in the recent past. When learning something like Cambridge, it's a good idea to get out a nice, big piece of grid paper and draw out the two blue lines of whatever pair you're trying to ring, accurately so they interlock correctly. You learn a lot that way. Of course, if you're ringing an inside pair to an arbitrary touch you need to know the patterns of all the working pairs (on N bells that's N-1 different pairs). And even there the patterns do help, you just use them for short bursts. For example, at the beginning of a lead of Cambridge Royal you know there's treble bob hunting going on at the

back. So if you find yourself starting the lead in, say, 8-9, you know you'll stay, treble bob hunting, in that 2-3 pattern for a while, and can relax a bit for the next eight blows or so. You don't have to sweat a lot until one of your bells makes a place or passes the treble. This is one reason many people find Norwich, particularly on Major or higher numbers, significantly easier than Cambridge in hand: there's a lot of treble hunting and getting to stay in a single pattern for a relatively long time, compared to many other Surprise methods.

#### **NRT 04 conference**

Dear NRT member

The first NRT conference, held in November 2002, was very successful and we are now planning a second conference.

The date is as previously announced, and we have now booked the venue:

- Saturday 8th May 2004 at St Nicholas Warwick

This is reasonably central and easily accessible by motorway and rail. It has considerably more room than we had last time, and we are anticipating more participants.

The detailed programme has not yet been finalised and will be issued shortly. We expect it to include a mixture of discussion, presentations and practical sessions, all focused on issues of interest to the ringing training community.

- What type(s) of session would you most prefer?
- What particular topic(s) would you like to be included?

Please let us have your ideas - This is your conference.

We will send out application forms with the draft programme in a few weeks. In the meantime, if you haven't already done so, please put the date in your diary now.

Regards,  
John Harrison

This is a brief summary of October's postings. If you would like any greater details on any of the points raised, please contact me.

*Alison Barnett (NRT Information Manager)*

76 Summerfields Way  
Shipleigh View  
Ilkeston  
Derbyshire  
DE7 9HF  
0115 944 7503