The Learning Curve

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Why learn Grandsire?

Last month we looked at methods that seem to be out of favour. This month's thoughts are in a similar vein. Is Plain Bob the only Doubles method you ring? If so, you might be interested in Heather Peachey's thoughts here, about why to ring Grandsire and other doubles methods.

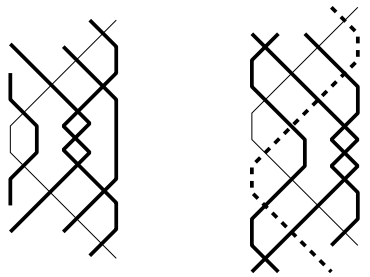
Many bands seem reluctant to deviate from the standard learning path, typically: Rounds, Call Changes, Plain Hunt, Plain Bob, Treble Bob, Surprise. Grandsire and Stedman are added as 'oddities' that are rung in some places.

There is, however, much to be gained from the early learning of Grandsire and other Doubles methods and variations[1].

How Grandsire works

If you examine it carefully, you'll find that Grandsire Doubles is very similar to Plain Bob. In the plain course it has blocks of plain hunting interrupted by single dodges when the Treble is at the front. The main difference is that the Treble has a companion that hunts continually behind it. In the plain course, this bell is the 2nd.

The extra hunt bell affects all the other work. There is no room for the bell that would have made seconds to do so, and it makes thirds instead. This in turn means that the dodges by the working bells are in 4-5 rather than 3-4. There is no space left over for someone to make long fifths either. Figure 1 shows why. Note that in all the diagrams, the thin line is the Treble and the thick lines are the working bells. In figure 1b, the dotted line is the hunt bell.



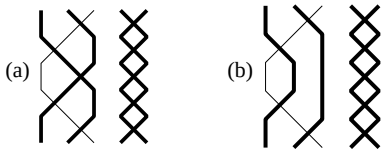
(a) Plain Bob *(b) Grandsire*

Figure 1: Plain Bob v Grandsire

Look carefully - everything happens a blow later. The place and dodges come just after the Treble lead. So what would have happened at handstroke in Plain Bob happens at backstroke in Grandsire, and vice versa. That can have a big effect on what dodges 'feel like'. I have heard it said patronisingly that learners should not be allowed to dodge in 4-5 as well as 3-4, since it will cause them problems. On the contrary, although it might take a little time to master initially, it will help you develop a clearer understanding of the concept of dodging per se at an early stage, and help prevent you having difficulty later trying to adapt to dodging 'the wrong way round' for odd bell methods.

Calls in Grandsire

Grandsire's calls seem complicated at first. As in any method they rearrange the working bells, but in Grandsire the rearrangement causes a different bell to take a turn at plain hunting with the Treble. At a Bob, two bells make thirds, one just before and one just after the Treble leads. This takes all the space on the front, so the remaining pair of bells do a double dodge in 4-5 (Figure 2a). The single is almost the same, but the two working bells stay in the same places (2nds and 3rds) while the Treble leads, (Figure 2b). Look at these patterns and work out which bell becomes the new hunt bell.



Bob *Single*

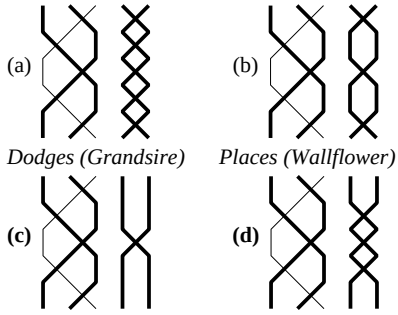
Figure 2: Calls in Grandsire

The building block approach

If you securely learn dodging as a building block to bolt on to plain hunting, and moreover learn to dodge in different places, then you are laying strong foundations for learning more complicated methods. While ringing Doubles methods and variations you can meet a vast number of other building blocks of work too, which will prove invaluable later on. The benefit of learning this diversity of work ringing Doubles is that you can do so in relative security, with just three working bells besides yourself and often a Tenor behind too. You can progress relatively easily like this through a large number of methods and variations. You can have a string of successes behind you in quite a short time. Compare that with the frustration felt by many learners who, having mastered Plain Bob Doubles and Minor struggle for months trying to take the step to Kent Treble Bob or Cambridge Surprise.

Ringing Variations with Grandsire

If you take a Grandsire Bob (or Single) and replace the dodging in 4-5 with something else, you get a different sort of call. Using these alternatives gives a whole host of variations**. (The names in Figure 3 are those of the calls, not the variations produced with them).



Dodges (Grandsire) *Places (Wallflower)*

Long Places (Pink) *Dodge+Place (Antelope)*

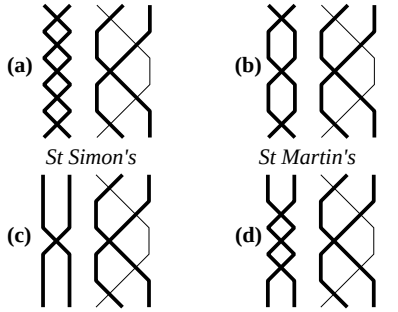
Figure 3: Different calls

More variations

Starting with Plan Bob, you can get an extent by calling three singles, each time one bell makes seconds. This bell is unaffected by the call - the observation bell. The other working bells can ring Grandsire, Wallflower, Pink or Antelope singles, giving four different variations. Starting with Reverse Canterbury (like Plain Bob but with places instead of dodges in 3-4) gives four more - Table 1.

Other methods

The same blocks, upside down with the Treble at the back (ie 'front work') with Plain Bob at the lead ends, give the St Simon's Group.



St Simon's *St Martin's*

Dragon *St Osmund*

Figure 4: Front work

Figure 4 shows names of the front work, also the names of methods with 3-4 dodges (Plain Bob) at the lead ends. The repertoire extends with 3-4 places at the lead end, and any of the front works, as shown in Table 2. This group are all methods in their own right.

It's surprising just how many methods and variations you can ring with just a little knowledge of building blocks and some practice. It allows a real sense of achievement. What's more it's FUN!

If you agree with Heather, why not try ringing some of these methods and variations?

Tail End

Table 1: Variations with four different calls for three base methods

Base Method	Grandsire Single	Antelope Single	Pink Single	Wallflower Single
Grandsire (+ own Bob)	Grandsire	St Helen	Longparish	Newborough
Plain Bob	April Day	Litchurch	May Day	Seighford
Reverse Canterbury	Clifford's Pleasure	St David	Royston	N/A – does not work

Table 2: Methods with different front works and two different lead ends

Lead ends	St Simon's Front work	St Osmund Front work	Dragon Front work	St Martin's Front work
3-4 Dodges	St Simon's Bob	St Osmund	Eynesbury Bob	St Martin's Bob
3-4 Places	St Nicholas Place	St Remigius	Huntley Place	Winchendon Place

1 Variation - A method with the same plain course as another, but using different calls - so you can't ring a true plain course of one.

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