



## It depends how you look at it

In May 2000 *The Learning Curve* discussed single and double methods. In March 2002 it discussed variations based on Grandsire. This month we look at some more ways of dissecting methods to help understand them and make learning easier.

### Why bother?

Once you get beyond Plain Bob, new methods get more complex, so why complicate things further by worrying about ways to chop them up? Won't it make things worse?

It's a fair question if you find learning new methods difficult, but paradoxically it can make things easier! There are lots of examples in everyday life where we describe and remember things in terms of components rather than as unique named entities. Think about remembering where shops are. You could remember detailed instructions about how to get to each, but in practice, it is easier to group them, especially when explaining to other people. You might say: 'Jones Hardware is next to Boots', or 'At the far end of the arcade near Woolworths', or 'Go as if you were going to the Post Office, but turn left at the previous traffic lights and it is half way along on the right'.

Each of these exploits partial similarities between the ways to different shops - some well known to most people already. Exploiting this existing knowledge is simpler and more reliable than describing how to get to the required shop than just using distances and turns, with no mention of other known landmarks. This is not a perfect analogy for the relationship between methods, but there is a lot in common in how it works. In both cases there is a route (along the streets or along the blue line) and in both cases you can re-use parts of existing routes when learning new ones. The difference is that because of the way methods are structured, the opportunity for re-use is much greater. Whereas in a town, once you leave the familiar route, you are unlikely to pick up another that you know (unless you are being taken round a new one-way system) in method ringing you normally keep coming back to pieces of work with which you are already familiar. In many cases, almost all the pieces might be familiar, but joined together in a different way.

### Bobs and Singles

Let us start with something very simple. There are two ways to learn about calls. Perhaps you started by learning whole pieces of work to do at the call and also what to do at the next lead, for example 'If you were about to dodge 3-4 up, make 4ths and back to lead, and next time make long 5ths'. That is two things to learn for every affected bell - six things for a Bob in Plain Bob Doubles. If you then learn another method (say St Clements) you have to learn more different things. Even for Plain Bob Minor, you need to change the

rule above.

There is a better way, based on understanding what actually happens at the call. In most methods calls affect one change only, and everything else stays the same. You just need to learn what happens at that change, providing you know how to fit it into what you already know - and that is the key skill to develop.

Figure 1 shows the difference between a plain lead (a) and a bobbed lead (b) - it's all within the box. The bells affected by the call emerge from the box at the three positions marked 2, 3 and 4. You already know what comes after this if you know what 2, 3 and 4 do at the start of a plain course, without learning it again. For example, the 4th makes long 5ths at the following lead in Plain Bob Doubles. In Plain Bob Minor, this is no longer true, but you learnt that when learning the plain course, so you don't need to learn it again. Knowing what to do for the next lead, starting from any position at the lead head is called 'knowing the place bells'.

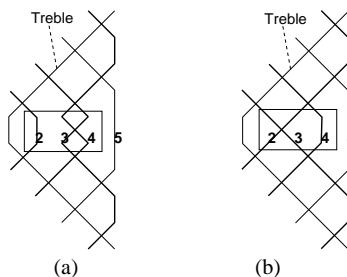


Figure 1: Plain Bob Doubles

### Short leads

Little Bob is closely related to Plain Bob. - everything except one change comes from Plain Bob. That different change is when the Treble makes fourths and turns round. That forces all the bells behind (5-6, 7-8, etc) to dodge, as shown inside the thick box in Figure 2, and shortens the lead - effectively chopping the middle out of a Plain Bob lead.

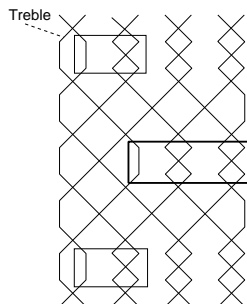


Figure 2: Little Bob Major

The effect on the blue line is pretty drastic, as you might expect. Look it (in *The Ringing World Diary* for example) and you will see that there is a lot of dodging. You would expect that since there are dodges at both the lead and half lead, which as Figure 2 shows are only four blows apart. In methods with a lot of dodging, it is often more helpful to learn where the dodges are missing (and do one everywhere else). This is true of Little Bob. The only places that dodges are omitted is near the front. They never occur in 1-2 and they do not occur in 3-4 either side of making 2nds. Look at the structure in Figure 2 and you will see that the places where dodges are missing all occur when you are beneath the Treble, which is all plain hunting, just like Plain Bob. The dodges that do occur in 3-4 occur at the lead end (which is like Plain Bob). Dodges in 5-6 and above are

everywhere - at the lead end and the half lead.

The calls come at the lead end (inside the thin boxes) and are identical to Plain Bob, so you shouldn't need to learn anything new about calls if you learnt Plain Bob as described above

### Front and back

St Clements is another method that has a lot in common with Plain Bob. Everything above the Treble is the same, and the only difference is inside the thick box in Figure 3. Two bells dodge on the front for the whole lead, forcing the others to turn their hunting around in 3rds place instead of reaching the front.

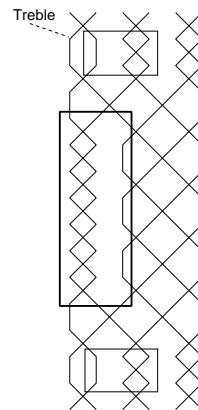


Figure 3: St Clements Minor

The bells dodging on the front takes up all the space available between the Treble's leads (allowing a couple of blows at each end for them to get on and off the front). In Minor, this means 3-pull dodges, as in Figure 3, but the number depends on the number of bells, and hence the space available. It is 2 for Doubles (St Simons), 3 for Minor, 5 for Major, etc.

Look at the structure in Figure 3 for clues to help you ring the method. All the bells that have to make 3rds (in the thick box) are under the Treble when they get there. Outside the thick box all is the same as Plain Bob, so if you reach 3rds from the back while above the Treble, you dodge and go onto the front.

If you are in the box, happily dodging (and possibly lost count), the end of the thick box is signalled by the arrival of the Treble. It strikes directly over you if you are dodging up and therefore need to leave the front.

Turning the bells round early in 3rds place affects where they get to at the end of the lead, compared with Plain Bob, so the lead end work comes in a different order. If you look at the blue line, you will see that the order is the reverse of Plain Bob. The reason is that the dodges in Plain Bob add two blows to each lead, so the bells get progressively behind the Treble, but turning round in 3rds subtracts four blows, so they get two blows ahead every lead instead.

Like Little Bob, you don't need to learn anything new for the calls, as they also are like Plain Bob (inside the thin boxes).

### What next?

If you can begin to think about how methods are put together, as well as about the blue line, you should find there is less to learn when you try something new, and that you have more clues to help sort yourself out if you make a slip while ringing. It takes a little effort at first, but it is worth it.

A future article will look at other useful ways to look at separate parts of methods.

Tail End