



## Beyond the blue line

In *Diagrams*, Jasper Snowdon drew a red line through the Treble's path and a blue line through another path, creating the term 'blue line' and changing the way we think about methods. These days most of us ring by the blue line - or do we? Raymond Kefford caused a stir when he told NRT members that he doesn't ring Cambridge by the blue line. So what does he do? Here is his (shortened) description. Don't worry if some of the detail goes over your head - try to follow the thought processes.

### Background

"Before starting Surprise I had rung quite a few less advanced methods: Plain Bob Major, Stedman and Grandsire Triples, Kent and Oxford Major, St Clement's, Double Oxford, Double Norwich etc. I had learnt to see when I passed the Treble, to know if I was above or below it and to watch where it was. I could understand what the blue lines in *Diagrams* represented but didn't use them to ring by. I was taught rules for Plain Bob that relate where you pass the Treble (on the way out) to the next dodge. I found that St Clements works to the same rules if you can also see whether the Treble is in front of you as you come down to 3rd place. Simple rules work for Kent too, but by then I could tell whether to dodge or make places from the Treble's position. Gradually I found that while ringing the methods the structure became apparent, and the rules I used to get going become less important."

### Starting Cambridge

"I couldn't find a set of rules but there are blocks of work, so I memorised important chunks and made a sort of work cycle, Figure 1.

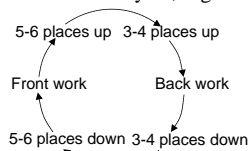


Figure 1: Basic work circle

Linking the blocks with the front to back and back to front runs, and a few dodges, gives a complete plain course but it doesn't separate neatly into seven leads. I rang a few quarters with this level of understanding, using these rules for bobs:

- Middle of front work: *Run out to back work*
- Done back work: *Run in to rest of front work*
- 3-4 places up: *Make bob & places down*

I expect many ringers learned this way before seeing that bell 5 becomes bell 3 instead of bell 2, bell 7 becomes bell 4 instead of bell 3 and bell 3 becomes bell 2 instead of bell 4. (Now I just see it as a Plain Bob bob - much simpler.)"

### Further realisations

"Treble bobbing was familiar from extensive use in Kent and Oxford. In Cambridge you notice that treble bob keeps recurring - at the front and

back between sets of places each way and at the start and end of the front work. In the middle of the front and back work there is the 'reverse treble bob'. Before going into the front work the treble bob at the back has an extra dodge added (and afterwards in reverse). The back work starts and ends similarly.

At first, I thought that the structure of Cambridge depended mainly on the work in the places, supplemented by the front and back work, with the runs from front to back and vice versa serving only as links. Gradually I realised that the bells doing place work were just hovering about and that the structure really depended on the bells running through the places, holding it all together."

### Structure

"Figure 2(b) is the first lead of Cambridge Major showing the places and the bells sliding through them. The pattern is much clearer in Royal, Figure 2(c), and blindingly obvious in Maximus. It is absent though in Minor, Figure 2(a), as there are only places in 3-4.

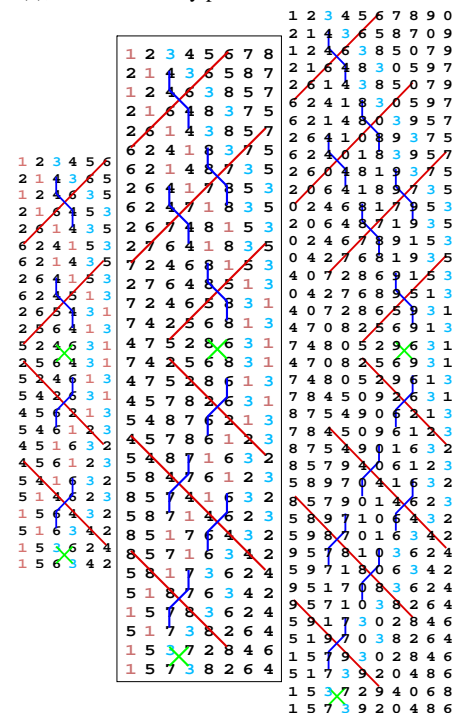


Figure 2: Structure

Figure 2(b) shows how the lead kicks off with 'Cambridge places' in 3-4 (bell 4) and bell 6 sliding through (always bell 6, even on higher numbers). The next higher set of places starts four blows later (the time the Treble takes to move from the dodge in the middle of one set of places to the same dodge in the next set of places, in this case 3-4 to 5-6). It looks different because the dodge at the start of 3-4 places down is in the previous lead.

Bell 7 slides through the 5-6 places and then down through the second half of the 3-4 places, thereby tying them together. On larger numbers of bells this is repeated in higher positions but it only happens the once in Cambridge Major. Lastly bell 5 slides through the remaining places (the second half of 5-6 places).

We are now at the half lead where a bell makes an odd place immediately under the Treble (7th place in Major) and everyone else dodges. At this dodge, the bell that is just finishing the highest places (5-6 down in Major) hands over to the bell

that is starting the corresponding 5-6 places up, and bell 2 slides out through the first half of them.

Four blows after the start of the 5-6 places, 3-4 places are kicked off, with bell 4 sliding out through both sets of places, tying them together. Lastly bell 8 slides out through the remaining place (the second half of the 3-4 places up).

At the lead end a bell makes the even place (2nd) over the Treble and everyone else dodges. At this lead end dodge the bell ending 3-4 places up hands over to the bell starting 3-4 places down, and the sequence begins again. See that bell 3 stays above the places, 'enclosing' them."

### Fuller work cycle

"Referring to Figure 2(b), you can match each bell (ie where it is at the lead head) to the work it does, and to the work it does afterwards [detailed description omitted] and from this form a proper work cycle to enable you to ring the method, as shown in Figure 3.

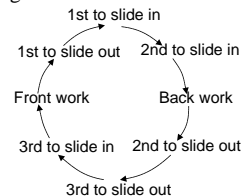


Figure 3: Work cycle

Relating this to the blue line of Cambridge Major, you can add the starts of each lead, roughly as shown in Figure 4, and guess what - they come out in the order of the leads that the blue line ringers use.

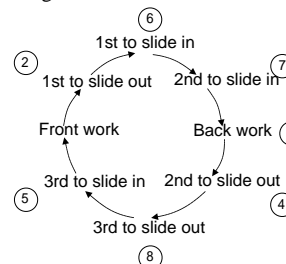


Figure 4: Work cycle

So now you know what is meant by being, say, 7<sup>th</sup> place bell without using the blue line!"

### What can we learn from this?

We will look in more detail at different learning styles in a future article, but here are a few thoughts to be going on with. It would be easy to look at the fragments of work, the sequences, etc and say 'that's just the blue line made more complicated by using lots of words to describe it in a funny way'. Of course there is a lot of overlap - otherwise it would not be Cambridge - but to dismiss the approach out of hand would miss several important points.

- This method works for at least one person.
- The knowledge about how the structure hangs together is the same knowledge that conductors use to put other people right.
- If, having learnt the blue line, you 'fall off it', what do you do then? With a deeper knowledge of the structure, you are much more likely to be able to put yourself right.

Tail End

*Diagrams* [was not available in June 2011]

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