The Learning Curve

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Double Oxford

Single Oxford Bob Minor is a method that many people learn as a modest step beyond Plain Bob. It is normally described along the lines of 'Plain Bob Minimus with triple dodging on the back'. Learning the blue line introduces a few extra wrinkles, but the work implicit in the structural description is clearly visible. Many people also ring the equivalent Triples method (sometimes just called Oxford Bob) which is similarly described as 'Grandsire Doubles with triple dodging above'. Most people think of it as the Minor method 'stretched' by the extra hunt bell.

Double Oxford is an obvious step beyond Single Oxford. Double methods are derived from their single counterparts by taking the work above the Treble's path, and reflecting it underneath it. The concept is straightforward, but can produce unexpected effects, as explained in *The Learning Curve* in May 2000 (Volume 1, Chapter 12).

Double Oxford Bob Minor

Figure 1 (left) shows the structure, with the grid extended to a lead and a half to show the over-under symmetry more clearly. The upper grey triangle is clearly recognisable as Plain Bob Minimus, and the grey strip next to it shows the triple dodging neatly filling the remaining space. The work under the Treble is an upside down copy of what is above it. What makes Double Oxford interesting (and subtly different from what you might expect from a knowledge of Single Oxford) is the way the work above and below the Treble combines, particularly in 3-4. Having finished the 'dodge and lie' in 3-4 (like Plain Bob Minimus) you immediately cross the Treble's path and find yourself doing the upside down equivalent of 'lie and dodge', also in 3-4. Making 2nds is flanked by the upside down triple dodging (and the equivalent occurs at the back). These have a profound effect on the blue line, as shown in Figure 1 (right), where there is none of the familiar hunting up and down, just a single, slow progression from front to back to front, which takes the whole course.

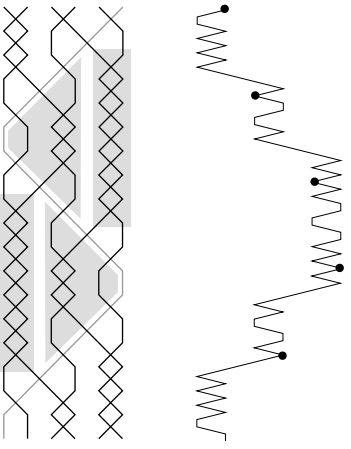

Figure 1: Double Oxford Bob Minor

Double Oxford Bob Triples

Figure 2 (left) shows the structure of Double Oxford Triples. The work in the grey areas is identical to Minor, except that the work over the Treble is 'pushed up' a place by the presence of the extra hunt bell (shown dotted), so the place is 3rds, the dodges are in 4-5 and the triple dodging is in 6-7 (like Single Oxford Triples).

The surprise comes when you look at how work above and below the Trebles joins together. Again the place (now in 3rds) is flanked by dodging on the front, and the matching work (5ths from the back) is flanked by dodging on the back. All well and good, but look at the work in the middle. The 'Grandsire Doubles' work is in 4-5, but its mirror image under the Trebles is in 3-4. They combine to form 'dodge – places – dodge' like in Minor, but the places are in 5 and 3, and the dodges are in 4-5 and in 3-4. Figure 2 (right) shows this in the blue line, which otherwise looks like a stretched version of the Minor.

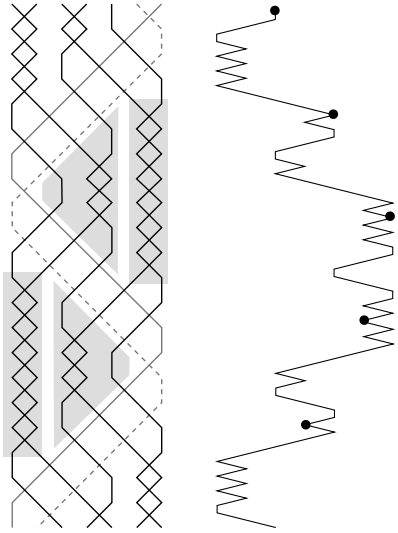

Figure 2: Double Oxford Bob Triples

Double Oxford Bob Major

Moving on to Major presents a different surprise. When simple methods like Plain Bob, Grandsire and Stedman extend to higher numbers, you expect things to happen in more places, but you get used to them looking pretty much the same everywhere. That isn't so with Double Oxford.

The multiple dodging must fill the space between the Treble's path that lies beyond the 'Plain Bob Minimus work' – and the further from the lead (or lie) you get, the bigger the gap becomes. This effect is masked in the move from Minor to Triples, because the hunt bell pushes everything out and fills up the extra space, but in Major there is no hunt bell, so there is a much bigger space. There is room for two sets of dodging (in 5-6 and 7-8 above the Treble, and in 1-2 and 3-4 below the Treble). The dodges in 5-6 and 3-4 are still 3-pull dodges, but those on the back and front must be 5-pull dodges to fill the available space. Figure 3 (left) shows how the work fits together.

The way that over and under work combines is a little more complex too. Look at the transitions across the Treble's path in 3-4 and 5-6. As before, they join together dodging over and under the Treble, but in this case, the dodges are of different length. 'Near the Treble' it is a single dodge and 'farther from the Treble' it is a triple dodge.

Figure 3 (right) shows how this translates into the blue line. As in Minor and Triples, there is a steady progression over the whole course from front to back to front. How do you remember which way round the single and triple dodges are when making places? One way is to note that the shortest (single) dodges are next to the longest (5-pull) dodges on the back and front, while the medium length (triple) dodges are next to each other. Another way is of course to be aware of where the Treble is.

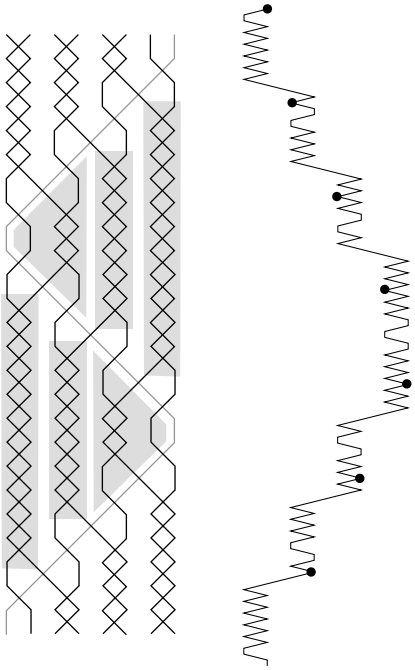

Figure 3: Double Oxford Bob Major

Calls

Calls for Double Oxford Minor and Major are the same as for Plain Bob. At a bob, 4th place is made at the Treble's lead instead of 2nd place, so the only bells affected are those that would have dodged in 3-4 or made 2nds. Likewise, at a single, 2nd, 3rd and 4th place are made, affecting the same three bells.

If you ring Plain Bob by remembering a set of rules of the form 'if I was going to do this, I do that, and then do the other next time' this might be a good opportunity to teach yourself the better way to do it, and avoid having to learn a new set of rules for every method. All you need to know is where the call puts you at the Treble's backstroke. You then do whatever the bell in that place does at the start. So for example, if you were going to make 2nds, then you run out at a bob to become '3rds place bell', and do what the 3 does at the start (make 4ths and then cut under the Treble, which is part way through the 3-4 places).

Calls for Triples are the same as for Grandsire, but their effect is simpler – the back bells aren't affected. Again, it is best to know what place bell you become after the call.

Music

Sets of multiple dodging produce a musical effect because similar patterns repeat at the back (or front) over several rows. Of course that only works if you strike it well, so try to listen.

Tail End

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