

Responses to initial consultation

INTRODUCTION

This report aims to give a summary of the comments made in response to the Methods Committee document published in March 2015. We received 21 replies by email, and in addition Philip Earis published a response in *The Ringing World* (p255). This did not explicitly express opinions on the questions asked, but we think his position is well known so we have inferred his replies to the questions in section 1.

We would like to start by thanking those who responded, they were: Chris Frye, Chris Turner, Daniel Brady, David Smith, Derek Williams, Don Morrison, Graham John, Graham Lay, Iain Anderson, Jonathan Frye, John Harrison, Luke Daniel, Philip Earis, Philip Saddleton, Andrew Johnson, Richard Johnson, Roddy Horton, Richard PJ Carter, Sam Austin, Tony Cox, Tony Smith and Vernon Bedford.

1.0 WHAT ARE THE DECISIONS FOR?

Here we were trying to understand whether people think we need Decisions at all, and if so what they are for and how wide their scope should be.

We started asking about the things that the current Decisions attempt to do, and asked whether they were reasonable objectives or not, ignoring the details of what the current Decisions say:

1. Provide an objective standard definition for peals
Yes: 13 No: 5 No Comment: 4
2. Provide a framework for describing, naming and classifying methods.
Yes: 14 No: 1 No Comment: 7
3. Provide a mechanism for allocating names within this framework
Yes: 14 No: 1 No Comment: 7
4. State some requirements on how peals are to be reported
Yes: 11 No: 2 No Comment: 9
5. Provide rules for Record-Length peals
Yes: 8 No: 5 No Comment: 9

We explicitly asked “Would there be any value in introducing two categories of peal, one for peals that comply strictly with the Decisions, and one for peals that comply only with a smaller subset of the Decisions?”

Yes: 1 No: 8 No Comment: 12

We also asked about other possible objectives. The answers received were:

- Defining standard terms to be used to express ringing concepts (e.g. “change”, “lead-end”)
Yes: 5¹ No: 1

¹ One respondent replied that these terms could be defined in a separate Glossary, not part of the “Decisions” themselves

- Specifying what change ringing is:
Yes: 3 No: 1
- Stating requirements for quarter peals
Yes: 4 No: 6

Discussion

Before reading too much into the results, you should note:

- The number of people who have expressed opinions is very small in comparison to the total number of ringers
- Several of the replies that we received didn't respond to these specific questions. Rather than trying to infer an opinion from their other comments we have shown them as "no comment".
- When people answered yes, they were responding to the principle – they weren't necessarily saying that they agree with way things are at present.

Having said that, the responses show reasonable agreement we need a framework to name and describe what it is that people ring, and to allocate names. This provides for consistency of naming and allows the production of method collections. The biggest difference of opinion is on objectives 1 (definition of peals) and 5 (record lengths). The "No" responses on these are summarised in the reply from Don Morrison, which we quote here:

"There seems possibly to be some implicit belief that it is obvious that we need an objective standard definition for peals. It is not at all obvious to me. Why do we need such a thing? We get on just fine without one for quarters. People keep totals, personal, association and tower, of quarters just as they do for peals. And no problems seem to result. Indeed, the quarter peal community seems healthier and more vibrant than the peal community, as more ringers ring quarters than peals, more quarters are rung than peals, and more quarters are rung at towers by their local bands than are peals.

Far better, I think, would be to start from the position, which seems to work well for quarters, of simply accepting that what ringers submit to Bellboard or the RW as a peal is a peal. If there are cases where this leads to difficulty (there are none I know of for quarters), then perhaps we need whatever minimal decisions will solve those problems, but we certainly do not need the enormous apparatus we have today."

2.0 DETAILS ON PRESCRIPTION AND DESCRIPTION

We received some criticism for including this section, as it has been read as a defence of the status quo and there's also a concern that we are jumping too quickly into the details. However

- It provides a way to find out what things people are most concerned about.
- People want to talk about these things, and if we had not asked about them we could have been accused of being too superficial.

Specific relaxations that were mentioned:

- Allow methods to have more than 4 consecutive blows in the same place, but generally with some limit on how many (7 respondents)

- Allow peals of Minimus on handbells (7 respondents)
- Allow peals on simulators, or have a category of peal that isn't on tower bells or handbells (7 respondents)
- Allow methods to be false in the plain course (7 respondents) – opinions differ on whether they are a new class or not
- Allow jump changes in peals (7² respondents)
- Allow the “null change” (repeated row) in peals (6 respondents)
- Relax requirement for bells to be heard outside the tower (6 respondents)
- Relax the length requirement on peals of Minimus-Major³, e.g. allow you to include one round block that doesn't contain all the rows, so that you can ring a wider range of lengths (6 respondents).
- Allow relay peal ringing (5 respondents)
- Remove “Any shift or error in ringing shall be corrected immediately.” (5 respondents)
- Allow notification of Record Lengths via Bellboard (5 respondents)
- Allow publication of new methods via Bellboard rather than The Ringing World (4 respondents)
- Allow stages more than 1 apart, e.g. Triples and Caters (4 respondents)
- Remove the requirement for a peal to start and end with rounds. (4 respondents)
- Remove ban on external assistance (non-ringing conductors and visual aids) in peals (3 respondents)
- Allow multiple cover bells (2 respondents)
- “No error in calling shall be corrected later than during the change at which the call or change of method or non-method block would properly take effect.” Why keep these if it isn't adhered to?
- Allow peals of Singles
- Remove the implicit requirement that peals be published in The Ringing World
- Remove requirement for interested 3rd parties to be able to listen to handbell record lengths > 10,000
- Allow calls that insert additional changes into a method, rather than just replacing or deleting them
- Allow jump changes in methods, but methods containing jump changes should include the class “Jump” in their title.

² One of these was personally against jump changes, but could see that others would want them

³ Major is mentioned here to allow a peal of Major longer than 40320 and shorter than 80640 to be rung if anyone was so inclined.

- Allow tapped handbell peals

Restrictions that people explicitly requested should be kept (or added):

- Don't allow the "null change" in peals (2 respondents)
- Don't allow jump changes in peals (2 respondents)
- Don't allow concords (deliberate simultaneous ringing) in peals (1 respondent)
- Don't allow multiple cover bells (2 respondents)
- Keep requirement for every bell to sound exactly once in each row (1 respondent)
- Keep the requirement for bells to be audible outside the tower (1 respondent)
- Don't remove the requirement to ring extents of Triples (1 respondent)
- Disallow variable cover peals (1 respondent)
- Disallow mixed stage peals (1 respondent)
- Require at least 3 people (ringers or umpires) to be present at each peal, in order to avoid hoaxes (1 respondent)
- Don't allow methods that are false in the plain course (1 respondent)
- Disallow the use of lots of different calls in a record length composition (1 respondent)
- Raise the minimum length for a peal to 5040 (1 respondent)

Handling of Non-compliance

No need to change from present system. If the requirements on a peal are liberal enough then there shouldn't be many non-compliant peals anyway (5 respondents)

One respondent suggested that any performance not meeting the requirements be described as a "miscellaneous performance". This (or an alternative term if preferred) should not be seen as pejorative – it just means that the performance falls outside the performance "norms". Many may have particular interest or merit e.g. 5039 Grandsire Triples ringing all 5040 rows but without Rounds at the end, a performance starting and finishing in Queens rather than Rounds etc.

One respondent favoured a three-tier system (Compliant, Worthless, In-between)

Mechanism for naming methods

Seven respondents commented on the inconsistency of the requirements to name a new method. Suggestions included:

- Naming in a quarter peal (including spliced)
- Naming by ringing a plain course (need to spell out the reporting requirement)
- Naming by ringing it in any form
- Naming by ringing a 480 in the case of Little minor methods
- Naming by ringing at least 1250 true changes of it (with truth as defined for peals)

One respondent suggested that we allow blocks to be named in quarter peals

3.0 GENERAL

We didn't explicitly ask whether we should start with a completely new set of Decisions, however 8 of the respondents made it clear that they are in favour of a complete rewrite. One suggested a restructuring of the current ones, with a decoupling of the Decisions on Methods and Peals. The remainder didn't comment one way or the other.

Method Extension

The requirement for indefinite extension makes it impossible to prove in general (5 respondents)

The Decision on method extension is complex and hard to understand (4 respondents)

Make the Decision on Extension accessible to ordinary ringers (1 respondent)

Method extensions should be decided by community decision (1 respondent)

Have an online method extender site (1 respondent)

Allow methods with Plain Bob lead ends to extend to methods without Plain Bob lead ends (1 respondent)

What is needed is a means of specifying what a method is intended to be at all Stages to which it sensibly applies, when it is first rung. At the moment is the band that rings the extension/contraction that gets to choose the extension path (1 respondent)

The length of the lead should be allowed to increase in an extension of a little method (1 respondent)

The Decision on Extensions makes bold but simplistic assumptions that covered all known cases at the time it was made but inadvertently prove inadequate when as yet unknown cases arise (1 respondent).

Other

Allow other forms of splicing to be called Spliced (5 respondents)

A Non-method Block should be viewed as a class of method (5 respondents)

The Decision on Compositions is archaic and unnecessary (4 respondents)

Reduce the number of different classes of Method, e.g. remove Differential Hunters, Treble Place, Alliance (4 respondents)

Keep the definition of a peal as simple as possible, e.g. 5000+ different rows (3 respondents)

Disentangle the Decisions on Peals from the Decisions on Methods. (2 respondents)

Tidy up the definition of Spliced (2 respondents)

Peal requirements can be Prescriptive, Method requirements Descriptive (1 respondent)

Should we state a requirement to publish peals in The Ringing World? (1 respondent)

Complexity is somewhat inevitable (1 respondent)

Provide a simplified version for non-expert ringers. This could be included in an Aims and Objectives (1 respondent)

Add preamble to each section explaining aims and objectives (1 respondent)

Methods Committee should be formally responsible for maintaining Methods Collections (1 respondent)

Remove prescription where it has the potential to discourage innovation (1 respondent)

Requirements on reporting should be mentioned, but not made an official Decision (1 respondent)

Make the “provisionally named methods list” official (1 respondent)

Describe them as “Guidelines” rather than “Decisions” (1 respondent)

Improve the precision of the definitions - in particular “true round block” is not well defined (1 respondent). Also “rounds is defined” (1 respondent)

Any historic performance that is compliant with the current decisions should be considered compliant retrospectively. Any conflict so arising in method naming to be resolved by recommendation of the methods committee after consultation with the parties concerned. (1 respondent)

Any long lengths not meeting the additional requirements for long lengths should be treated as “unofficial” i.e. they are still peals, but are not an official (CC recognised) record length. (1 respondent)

Any performance should have equal standing. The definitions and requirements should apply to any performance that the ringers think is worthy of publication. This could be a long length, a peal, a quarter, a touch or a plain course. (1 respondent)