



It's all double dutch

Ringling has its own special language. Special words are bad enough, but at least you know you have to learn them. When people use ordinary sounding words with funny meanings it gets much more confusing. It wouldn't be so bad, but ringers aren't very good at explaining the funny words to new ringers. They just assume you will magically absorb the meanings without being told.

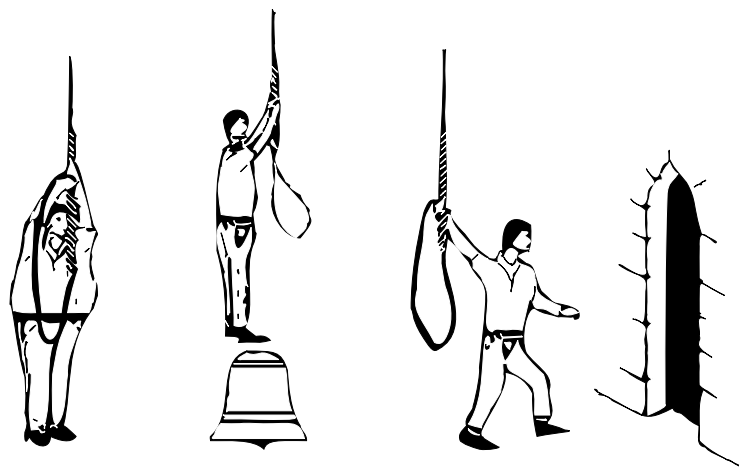
Ringling by numbers

Not content with words, ringers also use numbers in several confusing ways. Most of us are told that bells are numbered in order, which feels comfortingly simple until we realise that we count 'up' from 1 to 6 (or however many bells there are) as we work 'down' the scale. If you are a musician, used to notes labelled going up the scale, that must be even odder.

By the time we start ringling methods, we take the numbers for granted, but then there is an even bigger shock in store. Ringers use numbers for places as well. That doesn't sound too bad, since in call changes we know that the 4th bell can be called down to ring in 3rd place.

The trouble starts when we are ringling and people start calling out 'helpful' information. If someone yells 'third' (or was it 'thirds') does it mean 'follow the third [bell]', 'you should be in thirds [place]' or perhaps it wasn't for you at all, but an attempt to wake up the [ringer] of the third [bell]. If you can work out that, then all you need to worry about was whether it applied to the blow you have just rung, or to the one you are about to ring next.

Some times lots of numbers are too much. If your brain gets swamped, ask for a little less!



In and out, and all that

Some people try not to swamp you with numbers (how thoughtful) but do you understand the words they use? The commonest are: up, down, in, out, over, under, behind, in front, after and before. They are all nice homely words, but they only work when you know intuitively what they mean, without needing to think.

These words are all about position and direction, not surprising, considering that change ringling involves continually changing the order of the bells, so that you spend most of the time 'moving' earlier or later in the sequence. You can visualise this in terms of position in the row. You might expect to see words like 'beginning' and 'end', 'sooner' and 'later', but not so. 'Before' and 'after' get a look in, but most of the others seem more concerned with vertical movement than with position in a sequence.

One possible reason for this is that as two bell sallies or rope ends come down at each stroke, the one that is after the other (in time) is also physically above it. Another possible reason is that the later places have 'higher' numbers. Some people actually turn their method diagrams through 90 degrees compared with the

normal way (eg as in *The Ringling World Diary*) so that first place is at the bottom and the 'higher' places are indeed higher on the page.

The table shows terms that are used, gathered into two groups, since for most terms that describe being early, there are corresponding ones that describe being late (or later).

Overheard

The scene is a local district practice. A couple of Inquisitive Youngsters come into the church to see what is going on and climb the tower stairs curious to know about the ringling.

The ringling chamber is spacious and the door stands open. The two Inquisitive Youngsters look inside. One of the ringers gives a friendly nod and they enter and sit quietly on the seats by the door.

They realise that everyone is sitting attentively to the ringling, and so they do the same. They can see the ropes moving up and down, but don't understand what is going on.

One of the ringers occasionally calls out to someone called Bob, but he seems to be staring into space, and they can't work out which one Bob is, or what he was supposed to do. After a few minutes, the ringer who had been talking to Bob said 'that's all', but the ringling didn't stop. Everyone kept going. The tune seemed to be different though. Then he told everyone to 'stand' so respectfully they stood up!

This story is half true. It happened a long time ago (when young boys were respectful to their elders) but these two mischievous youths were not quite as ignorant as they seemed. But then who would blame them if they had been?

Let us know if there are any ringling terms or expressions you find particularly baffling.

Tail End

The table is reproduced from 'Ringling Jargon Made Easy: No 1 - Basics', available from CC Publications, see advertisements in *The Ringling World*.

Other glossaries of ringling terms are in *The Tower Handbook* (section 15) also from CC Publications, and *A Dictionary of Campanology*

Early, earlier, etc.	Late, later, etc.	Comment
Pulling or cutting in	Holding up	A significant change to the time of the next blow
Hunt (or go) down, Down to the front, Go in	Hunt (or go) up, Up to the back, Go out	A sustained progression, moving one place each time.
Lead, At the front	Lie (behind), At the back	Striking first or last
On the front	On the back	Striking in or near first or last place
Under, Before, In front of	Over, Above, After, Behind	Position relative to another bell
Too low	Too high	Striking too early or too late by a large margin and so out of sequence
Close, Quick, Clipping	Wide, Slow, Leaving a gap	Striking too early or late, but not enough to be out of sequence