



Guided by the Treble

You probably first learnt Plain Bob as a 'sequence of work' (2nds, 3-4 down, etc) or a 'blue line' showing this as a picture. Later, perhaps someone told you to watch where you pass the Treble. Perhaps you groaned at more rules to learn. But understanding how the Treble affects the other bells is very useful. 'Knowing where you pass the Treble' is just the beginning. With experience, you will find more ways that the Treble can help you. And as you learn more, things will fit together, so it becomes easier to remember them.

Where the action is

Look at figure 1. It shows the lines for a lead and a half of Plain Bob Minor. The thick line is the Treble. The only place there is anything other than hunting is when the Treble leads.

In fact, only one change is not plain hunting, from the Treble's handstroke to backstroke lead (see square brackets). A dodge might feel longer than this, but the only bit that would not happen in plain hunting is the 'reverse step' that provides the kink. So for 11 of the 12 changes in a lead of Minor (or 15 out of 16 in Major), wherever you are, you just keep plain hunting.

Knowing where to dodge

To start with, just learn some simple rules. Look at figure 2 which shows the work above the Treble in Plain Bob Doubles. (There is only plain hunting below the Treble so it is simpler to leave it out). Look at the bell that crosses the line of the Treble between 1st place and 2nd place (we call this 'passing the Treble in 1-2') and see that it then makes seconds.

Each bell passes the Treble at a different point so you can predict what to do at the lead end from where you pass the Treble. From figure 2 you can see the rules are:

Pass Treble in	Work at lead end
1-2	Make 2nds
2-3	Dodge 3-4 up
3-4	Make 4 blows in 5ths
4-5	Dodge 3-4 down

The rules on different numbers of bells

You could just learn all the rules, but there is a pattern to help you, and it is easier to see first with more bells. Look at the bells with medium thick lines in figure 3. Notice that the ones that pass the Treble earlier get progressively further from the front by the time the Treble leads. The bell that passes the Treble in 1-2 cannot get further than 2nds place, whereas the bell that passed it in 4-5 gets all the way to 8ths place.

Now look at the bells shown with thin lines, starting with the one that passes the Treble just as it leaves the back, ie in 7-8. It follows hard on the Treble's heels and reaches 3rds place by the time the Treble leads, so it dodges in 3-4 down. Each succeeding bell doesn't get quite so far and dodges nearer the back accordingly.

This principle works on any number of bells. The bell that passes the Treble in 1-2 always makes seconds. The other bells that pass the Treble near the front dodge up, in sequence (3-4, 5-6, 7-8, etc). The bells that pass the Treble near the back all dodge down, also in sequence (3-4, 5-6, 7-8, etc) starting with the one that turns the Treble from the back. Of course, for those bells passing the Treble above the half way point (shown with thin lines in the diagrams) you need to interpret 'last place', 'next to last', etc, since the numbers of the places will vary with the number of bells.

Figures 4 and 5 show the equivalent diagrams for Plain Bob Minor and Triples. Look at them and see how they fit the pattern. See also if you can work out what happens on 10 or 12 bells. (We haven't included the diagrams.)

Knowing when to dodge

Some people just rely on knowing when the Treble leads. So they dodge (or make a place) in the position they have reached. For example, if you have hunted up to 6ths place at the Treble's handstroke lead, you cut into 5ths at the backstroke to do a dodge in 5-6 up.

Some people do this by seeing the Treble lead and others by listening for it. Many people (especially novices) would find this too hard, but with practice it can be done, and provides yet another way to keep yourself right.

If you forget where you are

Some people use another trick on higher numbers. It might help if you find it hard to see exactly where all the places are in the middle.

As soon as you pass the Treble, count off what each bell that you meet will do. The first is on its way down to dodge in 3-4, the next is heading for 5-6 down, and so on. If you meet the bell that is going to dodge where you are now (say in 9-10) then you know that you must dodge with it. If you get to the back without having met your dodging partner, then count yourself as the next in the sequence. So if the bell you turned from the back was heading for say 5-6 down, then you must be due to dodge 7-8 down. See how this works on the diagram.

On the way back down

You can also look out for the Treble on the way down. Look at the diagrams and you will find similar (but reversed) rules apply.

You might think that having successfully negotiated the lead, you can coast along until the next lead. But coasting can be dangerous. Your concentration might lapse and things could go wrong.

There is another reason why knowing where you meet the Treble will help. You might know that when ringing Plain Bob, you keep meeting the bells in the same order until there is a call (it is called the coursing order). But it is not quite the same order, and the Treble appears at a different point in the order every time. So the one place where you are most likely to be caught looking at the wrong bell is where you meet the Treble. Now you see why it helps to know when to expect it.

We will return to coursing orders, and look at how the Treble drives more complicated methods another time.

This article is adapted from an idea by Peter Wenham (author of *Change Ringing by Instalments*).

Tail End

