

# The Education Column

## 2. What is Bastow? Why is it useful?

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- This second article deals with Bastow. It has many uses, just one of which is to introduce the learner to changing places in a regular and continuing manner after the 'Go!' call, but with these changes being kept as simple as possible – thus easy for the learner to understand, to hear, to see and to execute.
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There are lots of useful 'practice methods', used to assist the learner to progress instead of (or, in some cases, *as well as*) being rung in quarter peals or for service ringing. Sadly in many towers they are seldom rung. A particularly effective practice method is Bastow.

### What is Bastow?

The treble makes seconds, then leads again, and keeps on repeating this. In Bastow Minor (*Diagram 2.1*) the other bells start with a **dodge**<sup>1</sup>, and always dodge in 3-4 and in 5-6 (the same dodges that are made in Plain Bob Minor; in Bastow there is no dodging in 1-2 and no making seconds). So in Bastow Minor, the **working bells**<sup>2</sup> dodge in 3-4 and in 5-6, both **up and down**<sup>1</sup>. The equivalent exercise on an odd number of bells involves four blows **at the back**<sup>1</sup>, so on five bells (shown in *Diagram 2.2*) the working bells dodge 3-4 up and down, and make long fifths. This leads us on to an unfortunate uncertainty about this method, which is...

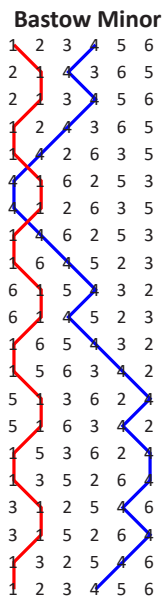


Diagram 2.1

### What is the method called?

Everyone calls it **Bastow** for an even number of bells. Pragmatists call the 5-bell version **Bastow Doubles**, just as Plain Bob Minor and Plain Bob Doubles are both called 'Plain Bob' (with four blows at the back in Doubles). Purists use a different name (as most methods, if changed in this way, get a new name – such as St Clements' Minor and St Simon's Doubles). So they call the 5-bell version **Bistow Doubles**.

Of course (think of Shakespeare, roses, and 'by any other name') this exercise is just as effective whatever you call it. So, whether or not you understand the niggles about the name, let's move right along to considering why it is so useful.

### What does it achieve?

There are any number of stages in ringing where a particular step forwards can appear to the learner as more of a gigantic and perhaps unachievable leap. One such leap is from call changes to Plain Hunt. Let's assume our student has got the hang of controlling the bell, and can ring rounds. He or she is able to lead with the correct rhythm, and can cope quite well with call changes and with the physical skill of moving the bell one place earlier or later. Often the next step is to Plain Hunt, and for many this can be a huge challenge. Suddenly the student is expected to change position at every blow, to keep track of their position right up to the back, to see many ropes descending in front of their rope, to hear their bell anywhere among the 5 or 6 bells being rung, and to be able to see who they are following, which could be pretty much anyone!

If the student copes easily with this, that's fine. But many struggle, and difficulties here often lead to long-term problems, such as an over-reliance on learning by rote the order of the bells that one follows, and an under-reliance on hearing one's

bell. The solution is to split the leap to Plain Hunt into a number of smaller steps, and Bastow/Bistow is a great tool for this.

If our student rings the treble to Bastow, they change place only every other blow. The change is always at handstroke (which will be familiar from call changes). They never move beyond second place. In terms of rope sight, they only ever have to find one bell to ring after, and can ignore the rest. If they get lost, they can easily be put right again ("Lead now!").

You may decide to start them with Doubles, if they are happier leading after a **cover**<sup>2</sup> bell. You may wish to teach them the order in which bells come down to the lead and which they follow for two blows (2, 4, 6, 5, 3 in Minor), or you may not. If they do learn this order by rote and then rely on it too much, you could repeat the exercise after calling a change from rounds before you start, so that the order is no longer what they are expecting.

The result of all this is a much smaller and simpler step forwards for our student; they are still changing places in a regular pattern after the 'Go!' call, but in a much simpler pattern than in Plain Hunt, and one which makes both rope sight and hearing much easier.

### But more — free steak knives!

Well, maybe not steak knives, but as with many useful exercises there is more than one potential benefit to this exercise. Another of those huge leaps comes with the introduction of ringing inside to a method, and Plain Bob Doubles is often the first such. The problem here is that the student needs to grasp simultaneously both **how** and **when** to dodge or make places.

Dodging accurately is not easy, and even the long fifths often comes out not as an exact 3, 4, 5, 5, 5 but more like 3.0, 4.0, 4.8, 5.2, 5.1, 4.7. It's a bit much to expect the student to be accurate with this work while also struggling to remember the order of work and when to make those wretched dodges or places. Bastow to the rescue again! The work in Bastow/Bistow Doubles for each working bell does not involve 2nds, but has the 3-4 dodge both up and down as well as long fifths, but without the added problem of remembering when to do this work. You ALWAYS make long 5ths at the back, and you ALWAYS dodge in 3-4 both up and down. So there's lots of practice at the dodges and long places without the added brain-strain of working out when they occur. Better than steak knives any day!

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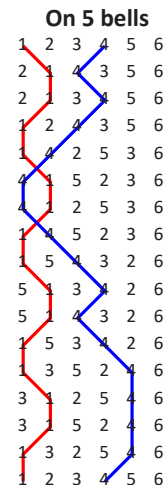


Diagram 2.2

### Jargon Box

#### 1. Up / Down / In / Out / Front / Back / Dodge

Plain hunting involves changing your bell's position by one each stroke. If the alteration is to ring one position later (such as moving from 3rd place to 4th place), we call this moving **up** or **out**, towards the **back**; if we ring one place earlier, this is moving **down** or **in**, towards the **front**.

Hunting from 1st place up to 6th place involves moving out, ringing successively in positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. A **'dodge'** involves making a step in the opposite direction. So doing a '3-4 up dodge' means ringing in positions 1, 2, 3, 4, 3, 4, 5, 6. You are moving up, but then dodge from 4 back to 3 before continuing to hunt up to the back. Equally, a '3-4 down dodge' means that instead of hunting down 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, you instead put in a step in the opposite direction and so ring in positions 6, 5, 4, 3, 4, 3, 2, 1.

#### 2. Working bells / Cover bell

Typically, when ringing a method, the treble rings something simpler than the other bells. In Doubles on six bells, the tenor **covers**, meaning it always rings in last place. We refer to the other bells as **'working bells'**. So in Bastow Minor the working bells are all the bells except the treble (which has simpler work); in Doubles the working bells are the 2, 3, 4, and 5 (but not the 6, which is covering).