TROYTE RINGING CENTRE

PLAIN HUNTING - THE FIRST STEPS IN METHOD RINGING:

INTRODUCTION:

By about 1650 a significant numbers of tower bells were being rung full circle, possibly in rounds or some other selected sequence, which normally had the tenor ringing last in the row. At this point in the development of full circle ringing a significant separation happened. Bells could either be moved in their position in the row by someone telling the ringers how to change position - which is known as Call Change ringing. Or the ringers themselves would learn how to move from one row to the next - which has developed into Method Ringing. These notes will explore the Method Ringing option in a series of, hopefully, logical steps.

HOW MANY POSSIBLE ROWS ARE THERE?

This question will arise on different occasions and contexts as we explore method ringing in more detail. At this stage we can, I hope, accept that the number of possible sequences in which bells can be placed is dependent upon the number of bells. Therefore:

With two bells the sequences are either 1 2 or 2 1 thus there are two different rows

With three bells there are several ways in which the number of different rows can be obtained, the two most common are as follows:

123	123
213	132
231	312
321	321
312	231
132	213
123	123

Thus there are six different rows available when ringing three bells and more than one way of obtaining these different rows when starting from rounds (123) and with bells moving one place at a time when changing from one row to the next.

So to summarise:

With 2 bells there are only 2 different rows	
With 3 bells there are 6 different rows	(2x3=6)
With 4 bells there are 24 different rows	(6x4=24)
With 5 bells there are 120 different rows	(24x5=120)
With 6 bells there are 720 different rows	(120x6=720)
With 7 bells there are 5,040 different rows	(720x7=5,040)
With 8 bells there are 40,320 different rows	(5,040x8= 40,320)

The number of possible sequences increases significantly as the number of bells is increased. It takes about five minutes to ring all the possible rows on five bells. It takes about 30 minutes to ring all the possible rows on six bells, and about three hours to ring all the rows on seven bells. On eight or more bells it is really not very practical to consider ringing all the possible rows with one band of ringers and with continuous ringing. So for 8 or more bells it is normal to ring a selection of 5,000 or more rows which start and end in rounds and where each rows is only rung once.

GETTING STARTED:

Here is plain hunting on three bells and on five bells:

123	123	12345	12345
X |	213	X X |	21435
213	231	21435	24153
| X	321	| X X	42513
231	312	24153	45231
X |	<u>132</u>	X X |	54321
321	123	42513	53412
| X		| X X	35142
312		45231	31524
X |		X X |	<u>13254</u>
132		54321	12345
| X		| X X	
123		53412	
		X X |	
		35142	
		| X X	
		31524	
		X X |	
		13254	
		| X X	
		12345	

On three bells you will notice that to produce each row ONE pair of bells changes and one bell makes a place (X | or | X). On five bells you will notice that that to produce each row two pairs of bells change and one bell makes a place (X X | or | X X). So we now include in the name of each "method" the number of pairs of bells that have to change position to produce the next row. Plain hunting on three bells is called Plain Hunt Singles, plain hunting on five bells is called Plain Hunt Doubles and plain hunting on seven bells is called Plain Hunt Triples. On nine and eleven bells the names include corruptions of the French for the numbers four and five so plain hunting on nine bells is called Plain Hunt Caters and on eleven bells is called Plain Hunt Cinques.

You will have noticed that plain hunting on five bells produces ten different rows before the row 12345 repeats. You will also have noticed that the possible number of different rows with five bells is 120. So we have several steps to take before we can ring all 120 different rows on five bells. But plain hunting is the essential start of this journey.

COURSING ORDER:

So much for the theory now let us look at some practicalities of ringing Plain Hunt Doubles, which is our usual starting point for method ringing.

Take another look at the sequence of rows in Plain Hunt Doubles.

123456
2**1**4356
24**1**536
425**1**36
4523**1**6
5432**1**6
534**1**26
35**1**426
3**1**5246
132546
123456

In this illustration the path of the treble bell has been shown in bold and we have included the tenor bell which rings in 6th place. Look now at the sequence of the bells in the first column. Leaving out the treble the sequence is 2453. Look at the sequence of the bells which the tenor bell follows. Leaving out the treble the sequence is 2453. Look at the sequence of the bell before the treble as the treble follows its path from first in the row to fifth's place in the row and back again. The sequence is once again 2453. This sequence is called "the coursing order" and this is something we shall talk about on many occasions.

Remember when you are ringing plain hunt doubles the bell you take off the lead is called your course bell, and the bell which leads after you is called your after bell.

THE OPEN HANDSTROKE:

Now we need to look at plain hunting in a different way:

123456**1**23456 **1**23456**1**23456 2**1**4356241536 425**1**36452**3**16 5432**1**6534**1**26
Hand Back Hand Back Hand Back Hand Back Hand Back

35**1**426**3**15246 **1**32546**1**23456
Hand Back Hand Back

With method ringing we change the position of the bells between each row. So we ring one row at handstroke and another different row at backstroke. This illustration starts with two whole pulls (handstroke and backstroke) in rounds before starting to plain hunt. So in rounds the treble strikes **1**23456 at handstroke and **1**23456 at backstroke. Therefore after the treble has struck at handstroke there are five other bells to strike before the treble strikes again at backstroke. Now when the treble strikes again at handstroke it is after five other bells and a gap. This gap is known as

the “open handstroke lead”. It is the responsibility of the treble ringer to set this handstroke gap before starting to ring plain hunt doubles or any other method, so that all the ringers know how big a gap to leave. Normally the gap is the space required for one bell to ring or slightly less. However, if the band rings together over long periods of time they develop the size of the gap which suits their ringing. On practice nights with different bands most ringers don’t pay attention to what the treble ringer is telling them, they have their own idea of the size of the gap, and that is why we seldom get really good striking during practice nights. We need periods of extended ringing, much more than five minutes continuous ringing, in order to get the best striking. But this is another story.

Remember, it is the responsibility of the treble ringer to set the open handstroke lead when ringing rounds before going into changes. The conductor should allow time for the treble ringer to do this.

HUNTING UP:

Let us now start plain hunting. The treble’s first handstroke row is 2**1**4356 followed immediately by a backstroke row 24**1**536. There are six bells to strike before the treble rings again at backstroke 2**1**4356241536. So the treble ringer has to hold up at backstroke to let this extra bell ring. This is what happens when the treble, or any other bell for that matter, is hunting up. So in order to hold up the ringer has to lengthen their rope at backstroke. Now at handstroke the treble ringer also has to allow for the handstroke gap as well as the extra bell. So the sequence **1**536 425**1** illustrates this, there are six bells and one open handstroke to accommodate before the treble strikes at handstroke. This means catching the sally just a little bit lower, or stretching up just a bit more than when ringing rounds in order to get the bell in the correct position..

HUNTING DOWN:

Let us start with the row 543216 at handstroke followed by 534126 at backstroke 5432**1**6534**1**26. Here there are only four bells to strike between the treble’s handstroke and the treble’s backstroke. So the treble ringer has to shorten their rope to get their bell down into the correct place. Many many learners find themselves stranded when hunting down to lead. Unfortunately, this is not their fault they have just not been taught to lengthen and shorten their rope at backstroke sufficiently quickly to get their bell into the right position. Experienced ringers don’t think about the process of lengthening or shortening their rope. This has become a habit and happens automatically during the process of hunting up or down. However, it is a skill which has to be learnt. It is much more difficult to help inexperienced ringers to hunt up and down if they have not been taught to lengthen and shorten their rope properly.

Remember hunting up and down requires each ringer to lengthen or shorten their rope in order to position their bell in the right place.

PLAIN HUNTING ON EVEN NUMBERS OF BELLS:

Let us start with six bells

123456	**1**23456
X X X	2**1**4365
214365	24**1**635
| X X |	426**1**53
241635	4625**1**3
X X X	64523**1**
426153	65432**1**
| X X |	5634**1**2
462513	536**1**42
X X X	35**1**624
645231	3**1**5264
| X X |	**1**32546
654321	**1**23456
X X X	
563412	
| X X |	
536142	
X X X	
351624	
| X X |	
315264	
X X X	
132546	
| X X |	
123456	

So there are twelve rows in plain hunting on six bells and the coursing order is 24653 and the need to lengthen and shorten the rope applies just the same.

There is no simple rule about the names of methods rung on even number of bells. Methods on four bells are called Minimus, methods on six bells are called Minor, methods of eight bell are called Major. These are fairly obvious. But ringing on ten bells is called Royal and ringing on twelve bell is called Maximus and we have no obvious names for methods rung on fourteen or sixteen bells although we have some rings of fourteen and sixteen bells and methods are rung on these numbers of bells.

PLACE NOTATIONS:

Place notation is a way of describing methods by listing which bells make places at each change between rows. All bells not listed in a change swap with the neighbouring bell. On odd numbers of bells at least one bell must make a place at each change. On even numbers of bells there will be occasions when no bells make places, these changes are shown either as an "X" or as "-". Places are represented by a single character. For example if the notation 34 is given for a particular change it means that places are made in the 3rd and 4th places in the change. It is now normal for places made in the first or last place are not stated. For example, it is now normal to use the notation "4" to mean places are made in First and Fourths place and for a six bell method to use the notation "3" to mean places are made in Thirds and Sixth place.

So in plain hunting on five bells

12345
21435
24153
42513
45231
54321
53412
35142
31524
13254
12345

I have highlighted where places are made. When changing from rounds to the row 21435 fifth place is made. When changing from 21435 to row 24153 first place is made and so on.

Therefore we can write these places with a stop (.) between to show where the end of the row is,

So the place notation of Plain Hunt Doubles is:

5.1.5.1.5.1.5.1.5 Lead end (abbreviated to le) shown as 1

There is an even shorter way of showing this which we will consider in a later package.

So let us look at the place notation for Plain Hunt Minor

123456
214365
241635
426153
462513
645231
654321
563412
536142
351624
315264
132546
123456

Between the first row (rounds) and the second row 214365 no places are made when this happens the convention is to use an X and changes between rows where places are made are stated

So the place notation for Plain Hunt Minor is:

X16X16X16X16X16 le16

This can be simplified further and we will deal with this in the next package

NOW SOME THINGS FOR YOU TO DO:

1 Write out all ten rows of Plain Hunt Doubles as shown on page 2 several times until you can do it without making mistakes.

2 Write out all twelve rows of Plain Hunt Minor as shown on pages 4 and 5 until you can do it without making mistakes.

3 Using the knowledge you have gained from this package write out Plain Hunt Triples and state the coursing order

4 Now go one step further and write out Plain Hunt Major and state the coursing order

5 Write out the place notation for Plain Hunt Triples and Plain Hunt Major.

If you can do this you will be ready to try it on tower bells provided you can lengthen and shorten your rope at the appropriate times and by the appropriate amount. Remember after letting go of the sally after the handstroke get your top hand down as quickly as possible so that you can adjust the length of the rope before your hands reach the top of the backstroke.

FURTHER STUDY:

Here are some other publications on Plain Bob Doubles which are also available through the Librarian of the Guild of Devonshire Ringers. His contact details are shown in the Annual Report of the Guild.

Adams, Chris Ringing circles: a guide to learning methods
CCCBR 48pp 2000

Coleman, Steve The bellringer's early companion
Sue Coleman 439pp 2008

Coleman, Steve The method ringer's companion
Sue Coleman 437pp 2008

Copson, Pam One per-learner book
Sherbourne 40pp 4th ed. 1992

Copson, Pam The follow-on book for bell-ringers
Sherbourne 40pp 2nd ed 1988

Copson, Pam The ringers exercise book
Sherbourne 24pp 1987

Copson, Pam Plain Bob Doubles in easy stages
Sherbourne leaflet nd

Grave, Karl Carry on counting, an introduction to
Plain hunting and the plain course of
Plain Bob Doubles
The Whiting Society 40pp 2009

Grave Karl Doubles or quit: or how to conquer
Plain Bob Doubles
The Whiting Society 92pp 2013

Harrison John A & Lewis Catherine The new ringer's book
CCCBR 156pp 2012

Penny Pip — Ringer's guide to learning the ropes
Association of Ringing Teachers 80pp 2nd ed 2017

Powell E.S & M — The ringers' handbook (eight bell edition)
The authors 134p 14th ed. 1976

All the above titles are part of the "Learners' Library" collection which is stored with the Guild Librarian in Tiverton.

Ring me on 01398 331843 or email me on michael.r.hatchett@gmail.com if there are parts of this package which I have not made sufficiently clear for you or if you have any questions.

The next package will extend Plain Hunting into Plain Bob Doubles.