

Notes from Basingstoke 2017

Learning points:

### **Nowhere to Plain Hunting / Plain Bob**

1) The issue of screening “newbies” for rhythm was opened up with a view that rhythmically poor people should either be excluded, or pay the price for improving their rhythm; the latter either short term with extra lessons, or longer term in learning difficulties. (We didn’t do this screening in Hull in 2016).

2) Helen used a “Tell and Sell” teaching style based on the logicity of a pair, and then drove through to immediate practise. This is a maker or breaker of barriers. Either the learner then knows he or she can ring hunting in that pattern, or believes they cannot. This was shown in the workshop group where the two tune ringers failed to master a coursing pair. The tower bell convert managed to ring all three 6 bell patterns.

The above two issues were also reflected to some extent in the two 2016 failures in Hull.

JC was very musical, had difficulty learning patterns, learned tunes very quickly, learned words in preference to tunes. It is possible that a more directed teaching style would have overcome her problems.

KT gave up because she didn’t have sufficient time for memorising stuff. (She may also have stopped in sympathy with JC). Again, a more directive teaching style might have produced a better outcome. [Then again, when you are not a professional teacher, and your pupils are both retired teachers . . .]

The only rhythm lessons we gave were in ringing R&C on higher numbers, which produced mixed reactions.

### **Summary learning points.**

There is a huge investment of effort in teaching so it is worth-while either sorting wheat from chaff, or running separate pre-learner lessons.

Non-ringers need extra lessons (as was done in Basingstoke) to introduce the concepts of bell handling, changes and change ringing, handstroke, backstroke, etc., before embarking on learning Plain hunting. Skimping on this slows progress quite quickly.

### **Band cohesion / specialisation.**

Duncan talked about falling into the trap of having a specialist 1-2 ringer, and a specialist coursing pairs person, and how this can make difficulties. We are exactly in that situation in the Hull project, and need to accept that spreading the skills and experience more evenly will slow us down, but produce a better long term result. It was valuable to have an independent verification of my instinctive reaction.

### **Beyond Plain Bob**

Duncan’s input on this was interesting . It is an area I am working on in the Hull project. We have a dispersed set of ringers 5 of which are on the point of ringing quarters of Plain Bob Minor any pair, or tenors to Plain Bob Major. So I am planning a “Beyond Plain Bob” workshop for early July.

In preparing for that I have been looking at method learning issues.

I almost entirely disagree with Graham's "blue line and pass the treble = crutches". For the majority of towerbell ringers, those "crutches" enable a lot of enjoyable, advanced, ringing. It was certainly all the technique I used to ring peals of Glasgow, Belfast, and Bristol on higher numbers. Funny sort of "crutch".

However, I agree that for handbells, further techniques are available, and some of those techniques are more useful than others, depending on your learning style.

I have so far identified 6 different, (but very much inter-related) aspects of method learning. There might well be other techniques, but my handbell experience is sadly rusty and lacking in advanced ringing. The 6 I am running with and documenting are: Overall Method Structure, Rules, Lines and Artefacts, Pictorial Grid, Place Notation, Pictels. (A pictel is a picture element extracted from the grid to enable visual memory of a sub-section).

Duncan briefly talked about Place Notation. Some people love it, some hate it. There is a big pit to fall into, that is, to learn the first half (to Half Lead) and think you can reverse it at the same time as ringing a pair of bells; there are brains that can do that, but most people need to spend time making sure they know the PN from Half Lead to Lead End just as well as from Lead End to Half Lead. (I use Lead End to mean the Handstroke and Backstroke of the Treble's lead).

I will copy my work on this for your comments if I may, it will be before the end of March..

And then there are a series of "execution techniques", the Seven Steps to Heaven.

The seven: Track the Treble; Develop awareness of position; Ring all necessary structural elements; Use multiple approaches to learning (see above); Use double place bells, pivot leads, and staging posts; Develop awareness of other bells, Develop the use of coursing order.

Helen and Duncan's input ventured into some of the above, and it would have been impossible to tackle the fullness of it at Basingstoke.

### **For me, there were three things missing at Basingstoke.**

#### **Learning process.**

Recognition of the learning process. Underlining how important the practise element is in bolting the information down into long term memory, so that the basics become automatic thereby freeing the brain for sorting out the tricky bits.

#### **Workshops.**

The use of workshops for people who are struggling. Getting together on a regular basis is a good booster for morale, especially for isolated individuals.

#### **Handbell Manager.**

Use of Handbell manager as a front end to Abel or belltower. This has been the most significant development in handbell ringing in living memory and I did try to mention this at the end of the session, but we were declared finished. There is a kinaesthetic element to handbell ringing which is different from towerbells; handbell manager gets very close to replicating this.

The point was made that Abel is relentless, it won't wait. True. But if a user is struggling and Abel needs to wait all the time, then the method hasn't been learned well enough, or the skills for the method are lacking, or if the skills have been learned, maybe the speed is just set too fast.

Another factor for retired folks is tiredness, it fogs the brain.

On the upside: Handbell Manager / Abel gives immediate reports on quality of striking including ringing early or late; the ability to restart at any point, the ability to ring without trips being made by other ringers. Further, you can slow the ringing down whilst learning a bit of structure, and then gradually speed up to a realistic speed.

I have seen step changes in ringing ability following the adoption of practise using Handbell Manager / Abel.

**The use of the simulator is so significant that I was amazed that there was no demonstration made in Basingstoke.**

### LtR Handbells

I am ambivalent about certificated structures overall but other people might not be. My real experience of ringing is now very dated, so my comments un usefulness could be quite wrong.

My reactions that I recorded in December stand, and are documented separately.

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Hull. 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2017