

What are the Bobs and Singles for this method?

In the early stages of ringing, you are likely to be told, and simply accept, what the bobs (and singles) are for Plain Bob or Grandsire. This will keep you happy for a while, until you meet new methods, and discover a colourful world of calls. Some of the standard calls, e.g. 'bob' or 'single', are sufficiently different between methods to keep you guessing on the end of a rope. Then throw in some "doubles" or maybe a "big bob" what then? This article is aimed at explaining the commonly encountered 'bob' and 'single', and how and why they vary between methods.

Diagnosing Diagrams

'Diagrams' does the courtesy of defining what the Bobs are for a method with a short 'diagram'. It's a pity that, having gone to the trouble, too often people are heard to complain that the information is unhelpful or not enough. Indeed, a little knowledge is required to interpret the information given, and then you will find that actually more than enough information has been supplied, but only once you know the tricks!

A short section of the method illustrates what happens at the lead head when the call is made. The trick is to superimpose the lead head over the top of the equivalent plain lead, usually the first lead head printed, and see what is different. From this comparison, it is intended that you are able to follow what you were doing before the lead head, and then see what you would do after the call compared to what you would have done if the call was omitted. Unfortunately this mapping, whilst it does work, is hard to follow, and it's easier to ask someone knowledgeable instead.

Actually the explanation is much easier when using the concept of 'place bells'. You only need to know the method starts on those bells around where you are made to do something different at a call. Usually this means place bells 2, 3 and 4, but as you will see later, that won't help you with Norwich S. Minor or Double Norwich CB Major¹. Take Cambridge S. Minor for example; this is in fact very similar to Plain Bob around the lead end. Compare the two changes when the treble is leading full. These changes are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – Calls for any 2^{nds} place methods.

The first column shows that at a lead end, a bell makes seconds over the treble leading. The second column shows that at a 'bob', a bell makes 4^{ths}, and in addition to this, the bells in 2-3 cross, instead of the bells in 3-4. This is why, in Plain Bob, and also in Cambridge, you 'run in', 'run out' and 'make it' at a bob. More importantly for Cambridge though, is which place bell you become. Run out to become 3rds place bell, run in to become 2^{nds} place bell and make it to become 4ths place bell. Now you just continue with the work of a different place bell – like splicing! This works just as well for Plain Bob but is less obvious, and is unlikely to be the introductory explanation given! In order to determine what happens at a call, you simply need to compare where you end up at the second, or backstroke, blow of the treble lead to see what place bell you become. Now you can look at the full line of the diagram provided to see where this makes you 'jump' to on the plain course line. The treatment for the 'single' is no harder, just different.

This explains quite a lot of the methods you will encounter, but not all. Another common 'set' of methods is the 'nths place' methods, where *n* denotes the number of bells the method is rung on. Take for example a 6ths place method like Norwich S. Minor.



Figure 2 – Calls for any 6ths place methods.

¹ The name 'Norwich' appearing in both names is purely coincidental!

Here, when you compare the plain lead with a bobbed lead, you will see that the bells affected by the call are in 4, 5 and 6, since the bells in 2-3 run in and out at both the plain lead and the bob. So, this time it's the bells above 4th place that have to do something different, and are forced to dodge by the place being made in 4th. Instead of hunting down to become 4th place bell, dodge and become 6th place bell. Instead of hunting up to become 5th place bell, 'make the Bob'. Instead of lying behind to become 6th place bell, dodge and become 5th place bell. Note, in Norwich S. Minor you end up repeating a lead, but this is not true for all methods, e.g. Annable's London S. Minor. The description given of how you are affected works for all methods, the consequences of how you are affected, e.g. repeating a lead, are dependent on the lead head order.

From the above figures, you can see which places are made at the lead end. Therefore, it is easy to describe the work in terms of 'place notation'. In Figure 1, the plain lead has place notation "12", the bob "14" and the single "1234". The plain lead place notation gives rise to the concept of a "2^{nds} place method". In Figure 2, the plain lead has place notation "16", the bob "14" and the single "1456". The plain lead place notation gives rise to the concept of a "6^{ths} place method", where a place is made by lying behind as the treble leads full².

Standard Calls

It is actually easier to describe 'standard' calls on eight or more bells so the following discussion uses Major for the example. Figure 3 shows an 8th place lead end, and you can see two types of calls defined in this case. An example of a method using the 6th place calls is Double Norwich, whilst Kent and Bristol use 4th place calls. Many years ago, it would have been standard practice to use 6th place calls in 8th place methods, but relatively recently composers have chosen 4th place calls for 'better' music. There are some methods where you simply cannot be expected to know which calls are going to be used, e.g. Cornwall and Glasgow S. Majors³. It is safe to assume that for all 2^{nds} place methods, the given bobs and singles will be used. Depending on whether the call is made in 4th place or 6th place you may find more bells affected.

Method	Plain Lead	Bob	Single
2nds place	 12	 14	 1234
8ths place method with 6ths place calls	 18	 16	 1678
8ths place method with 4ths place calls	 18	 14	 1234

Figure 3 – A more comprehensive comparison.

The same derivation may be applied on higher numbers. For 10th place methods you would have 8th place calls, and for 12th place methods you would have 10th place calls. It is both limiting and slightly misleading to work with only six bells, as it does not differentiate between calls made in 4th place and those in '(n-2)th place.

Limitations

These methods just about work for Grandsire and Stedman, but it's less obvious. Grandsire has two hunt bells, and the calls affect one of those hunt bells, hence Grandsire belongs to a different class of methods. Stedman is a principle, and in principles anything goes, but happily Stedman calls are similar to those of Double Norwich (!), just with the added complication of having to know which way to enter the front work. (Stedman is addressed in a separate article of its own.) There are only few truly popular odd bell methods, those being easily listed as Stedman, Grandsire, Plain Bob and

² Or more generally an "nth place method".

³ It may not surprise you having seen the plain course that a 6th place bob causes two bells to dodge in 4-5 at the lead end, not bad for Surprise Major!

occasionally Erin and Oxford Bob⁴. A quick glance at the method collections would indicate our favourite type of method is Surprise Major. Hence, this article will not deal with the more ambiguous world of Triples.

Extensions

Other Types of Call	Place Notation
Double, Big Single, Bingle, Jingle	123456
Big Bob (10 bells)	16
Big Bob (12 bells)	18
Example funny 'single'	1256

Watch out for conductors *redefining* the 'single' in order to get silly length quarter peals!

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⁴ a.k.a. 'Single Oxford'.