

## Ringling on Higher Numbers

It's not just another two bells added to the coursing order! Some people are inclined to think so when bobbed courses of Grandsire are usually rung at their local tower. What makes 12-bell ringing significantly harder than 10 (or 10 harder than 8) is placing one's bell more accurately and hearing the effect. You may think you are following the correct bell, but actually you can be ringing too wide and the bell following you may have little choice but to clip you as a result.

If all the bells strike too wide whilst desperately scrabbling with the rope-sight, then bell after bell will be too slow, the change will elongate and the leading encroach on the end of the last change. When this happens the team is a step away from a fire up. The more bells there are, the less tolerance that can be accepted to inaccurately placed bells. From Table 1 you will note that what would have been a clip on 6 bells, say an error of half a blow, is very nearly a whole place on 12. If someone tries to correct you when you think you are right, perhaps you are correctly counting your places, just not placing your bell sufficiently accurately? This in turn will lead to the confusion of others, as the already difficult rope-sight is made harder! In fact, rope sight becomes less useful on higher numbers, as bells are now required to be placed more by rhythm, with rope sight being more of a useful after check for confirmation.

With such a wide range of bell sizes from treble to tenor, the treble will now have to ring unbelievably wide over the back bells, making hunting through them accurately a nightmare and remember to get back to being really close again over the little bells. The back bells conversely will appear to be pulling off before the little bells and still manage to sound afterwards! A safe bet is to grab a middle bell, where ringing close of little bells is no worse than ringing the tenor over the trebles on 8, and ringing over the back bells is no worse than ringing the treble over the back bells on 8. Be aware that when the trebles are hunting through the tenors and you are looking for one of those to follow next, the rope sight is incredibly hard because the order of the bells is not easily determined due the effect just described.

Often people become so pre-occupied with desperately finding their next rope, there simply is not enough mental effort left to consider listening to the quality of the ringing. Even when people sitting out try to listen, it is still difficult to understand what is wrong even if it is clear the ringing is not even. Part of this could be an unaccustomed ear; another part that there are simply so many bells it is so much less obvious and requires significantly more mental evaluation!

The only way to work through these points is to try, making sure you already possess sufficient bell control to finely tune your timing. Pay particular attention to the striking before getting ambitious with the method. Do not be put off if someone asks you to change something about the way you are ringing. The best time to tell someone is whilst they are actually ringing when the evidence is present, and there is an immediate opportunity to try the change out. The requested changes will be fractional due to the higher level of accuracy required. Try it even if you do not understand, you might even hear an immediate benefit and come away feeling you have learned something.

Remember that there are 10 or 12 bells to fit into the change and ringers accustomed to lower numbers tend to drop their backstrokes. So push the hand-strokes close to keep the bells moving, but pull them slightly in order to elevate the backstrokes to compensate for the natural tendency to drop them. This will keep the pace of the ringing in check. When the ringing is good, you will experience different rhythms ringing on 8 versus 10 versus 12.

Number of Bells	Approx. Peal Speed	Strike Rate (Changes / Min)	Length of Change (s)	Bell Spacing (s)
6	2:45	30.5	1.96	0.33
8	2:55	28.8	2.08	0.26
10	3:10	26.5	2.26	0.23
12	3:20	25.2	2.38	0.20

Table 1 – Various statistics for ringing on different numbers of bells.

Philip Abbey  
Consulted by Mark Davies  
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