

## Minor Infringements

### Background

If a non-ringer asks what constitutes a peal, it is not too hard to provide a superficial explanation but, if you are pressed to go into detail, you can easily find yourself digging an ever-deeper hole.

The only definition that the Central Council would have us accept is that a peal is a performance on bells that conforms to a host of rules that they have laid down.

As with any regulations, there will be some who would lobby for the rules to be tightened and others who would urge for them to be made more liberal.

It is said that the late Peter Border did not recognise peals on anything less than seven bells since all such performances involved repetition and were necessarily false. Few ringers take such a puritanical line and for many decades the general trend has been towards relaxing the constraints.

The intention of this article is to contribute to the discussion by describing some recent performances by members of the Cambridge University Guild which depart from the usual rules governing peals on six bells. Readers can judge whether or not the possibilities illustrated have any merits.

### The Thin End of the Wedge

The recent history begins in September 2002 when Jonathan Shanklin called a peal length of Jump Minor at S. Bene't's Church in Cambridge. By coincidence this took place two days before Frank King retired as a Proctor. Holders of this office are charged with enforcing University Regulations which, happily, have nothing to say about peal ringing.

Our efforts were published in *The Ringing World* of 18th October 2002 (p.1073) as a Miscellaneous Performance and consisted of one extent of Double Oxford Jump, a 2160 of London Treble Jump, and a 2160 of Cambridge Treble Jump.

Only the treble did any jumping. In the case of Double Oxford the treble's path was 1-2-4-3-5-6-6-5-3-4-2-1 and in the cases of London and Cambridge the same idea was used with the treble being in third's place when it would normally have been in fourth's and vice versa.

Apart from these adjustments, the methods were identical to their regular counterparts. The treble ringer has to be rather more energetic than usual but for the other ringers there are different novelties. One has to get used to being over the same bell two blows in succession but in different places and there is a triple dodge in the middle of Cambridge places which involves working with three different bells.

### Mersey Ferry

The next development occurred at the end of 2002 during a Guild get-together in Liverpool to see in the New Year. While on board a ferry crossing the River Mersey, Ander Holroyd and Richard Smith wondered what methods might be possible if the treble's path was 1-3-5-6-4-2 and all the other bells moved conventionally.

It turns out that there is just one method where the treble has this path and certain other constraints (which are given later) are satisfied. The method was quickly christened Mersey Ferry. The first lead is:

123456  
231465  
324615  
236451  
326145  
312654  
136245

This comes round after five such blocks of six, giving a plain course of 30 changes. The blue line manifests glide symmetry, a property much admired by Philip Earis who played a part in the construction of this method.

The third and sixth changes of each lead have a conventional place notation X but all the other changes involve the treble jumping. The only call is a single when the final X of a lead is replaced by a 56. One snag about Mersey Ferry is that it is obviously impossible to avoid 65s at backstroke.

Andrew Tibbetts called a quarter-peal of Mersey Ferry in June 2003, again at S. Bene't's, and the band wondered what it could get up to next.

### Seven Extents with Seven Different Illegalities

By this stage Ander had suggested we investigate ringing a peal length of seven extents but with each extent having a different illegality. Naturally this band of renegades received the proposal with enthusiasm but it turned out to be more challenging than we expected.

One problem was that we were fussy about what we regarded as an illegality. For example, we wouldn't be satisfied by ringing something that was illegal simply because of nomenclature. Ringing an extent of Cambridge and calling it Harvard would not do.

Candidate illegalities for our extents of Minor included:

- Jump changes
- More than four consecutive blows in the same position
- Falseness in the plain course
- Two apparently different methods actually being the same
- Too many (three) hunt bells
- Calls that alter the length of a lead

Unfortunately it is curiously difficult to design seven extents in which the violations are unambiguously distinct.

An illustration is provided by a proposed extent which involved splicing Arlesey and Helen where:

Arlesey is x 16 x 16 x 1256 LE 16  
Bob 14, Single 1456  
Helen is x 16 x 16 x 16 LE 1256  
Bob 14, Single 1456

Subject to a half-lead rotation these are the same method and so cannot legally be spliced. One way to fix this illegality would be to settle on Arlesey (the officially recognised method) and use a call which skips half a lead. Such a call introduces a different illegality since a call which changes the length of a lead is not permitted.

We decided that Spliced Arlesey and Helen is the most natural way to describe this extent and such a description is clearly illegal. Our own brand of puritanism allowed us to count only this illegality and we denied ourselves the use of the other in a different extent.

After much discussion, most of it driven by Ander and Richard, we settled on five extents and a 1440 which are detailed below.

### Extent 1 – Mersey Ferry – uses Jump Changes

A lead of Mersey Ferry has been given above. Mersey Ferry and Inverse Mersey Ferry (whose

plain course is a head-to-tail reflection of a plain course of Mersey Ferry) are the only minor methods with the following properties:

- treble rings exactly once in every place per lead
- treble never jumps more than one place
- working bells do not jump
- no bell rings more than two consecutive blows in one place
- five leads long

### 720 Mersey Ferry Treble Jump Minor by Alexander E. Holroyd

1	2	3	2345
s	s	s	3524
s		s	5342
	s		4352
s		(s)	3425

6 part, omitting (s) in parts 3 and 6  
Single = 56 as treble hunts 2-1

### Extent 2 – Double Stromboli – Five Consecutive Blows in the Same Place

It is not hard to discover methods where there is an illegal amount of leading or lying. Richard generated a list of possibilities, one of which was a double method which appealed to Philip:

36.16.1256.16.14.56 LE 12 135264  
Bob=14, Single=1234

This method gives new meaning to the term "Sixth's Place Bell". For 10 of the 12 blows of the lead you really do ring in sixth's place, dropping to fifth's only to let the treble lie behind for two blows.

After this spell of inactivity the blue line turns violently spiky. The tricky part of the line includes 2-3 places and 4-5 places, work which cannot occur in conventional methods.

Frank noted that this property of being quiescent for a long time and then erupting pointed to the method being named after a volcano. Jonathan duly proposed Stromboli. The attribute Double is required since it is possible to construct a Single variant of this method.

Double Stromboli is unexpectedly hard to ring. It can definitely be recommended to six-bell bands who are running out of challenges. Indeed our first attempt at the Illegal Peal came to grief when Stromboli erupted!

### 720 Double Stromboli Bob Minor

W	H	2345
–	–	4523
–		3425

6 part, s at two places 360 changes apart

### Extent 3 – Richard's False Course – Falseness in the Plain Course

Richard came up with a number methods which are false in the plain course but for which there are true extents. Unfortunately none seem to lend themselves to a simple composition. We chose a right-place method which we called Richard's False Course:

x 14 x 36 x 36 x 1236 x 14 x 16  
LE 16 152346 Bob=14, Single=1456

In this method, sixth's place bell functions as a hunt bell until a bob is called. This bell hunts down only to third's place but it does treble bob work at the back.

The method is easy to ring but the best composition Richard could find was a rather complex one part:

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**720 Richard's False Course Bob Minor**  
*by Richard A. Smith*

1	2	3	4	5	23456
–	–	–			23654
–	–	s	s		43265
–	s	s			23465
–	s	s	–		54632
	s	s	s		43652
	s	–	–		32654
s	s	s	s		35264
s	–	s			54236
s	–	s	–		46532
s	–	s	–		43256
–	s	–	–		32456
s	–	–	s	–	23456

**Extent 4 – Spliced Arlesey and Helen – Two Names for the Same Method**

Arlesey and Helen have been described above. Our illegality was to treat Helen as a different method from Arlesey. In both methods sixth's place bell functions as a hunt bell until a bob is called. The hunt bell does exactly the same work as the treble but six changes out of phase.

This was probably the easiest of the five 720s to ring and is comparable in difficulty with ringing Double Bob. It is a quirky consequence of the rules that the composition cannot be made legal by introducing special calls since these would have to change the length of a lead.

**720 Spliced Arlesey and Helen Bob Minor**  
*by Alexander E. Holroyd*

	4	23456
AAAA	–	23564
AAAA	s	23654
HHHH	–	62345
HHHH	s	36245
HHHH	s	23645
HHHH	–	62354
AAAA	–	62543
AAAA	s	62453   X
HHHH	s	46253
2X		23456

**Extent 5 – Great Grandsire – Method with Three Hunt Bells**

Great Grandsire is simply Grandsire Doubles with an added hunt bell so that, instead of third's place being made when the two hunt bells cross on the front, fourth's place is made at the treble lead when the other two hunt bells cross in 2-3. This makes the plain course identical to a bob course of Plain Bob.

We could have rung an arbitrary extent of Plain Bob and simply interchanged the meanings of plain leads and bobs, but a much greater Grandsirish feel is achieved by arranging for fourth's place to be made at a bob two changes either side of the lead end as well as at the lead end itself.

Accordingly, we deemed Great Grandsire to be:

x 16 x 16 x 16	LE 14	123564
	Plain LE	16 x 14 x 16
	Bob LE	14 x 14 x 14
	Single LE	14 x 1234 x 14

This extent was perhaps the closest to being legal. Some might regard it as consisting of spliced Plain Bob and Single Court with modified calls. In practice, ringing this feels a very natural extension to ringing Grandsire and the method can definitely be commended to bands who would like to try something just a little different but not too difficult.

**720 Great Grandsire**  
*by Alexander E. Holroyd*

1	2	3	4	5	23456
–	s	s			52364
–	s	–			54362

6 part

**Final 1440 – Plain Bob – Using the Null Change 123456**

The five extents still left us 1440 changes short of a peal length.

There was much deliberation about further possible illegalities and whether their use would satisfy our own criteria for the illegalities being distinct. As noted, the Arlesey and Helen extent denied us the use of calls that change the length of a lead.

One illegality which we certainly hadn't used so far was to exploit the null change which leaves every bell undisturbed, place notation 123456. Since this necessarily results in immediate falseness it clearly couldn't be used in an extent. Notwithstanding our lax principles, we wanted true extents!

We were quite happy to use the null change in an otherwise-proper 1440 and the reasons why such use is illegal are somewhat subtle. The requirement that "No row shall be struck more than once before the next change is made" would not, by itself, make the null change illegal if one could regard a null change as a special case of a change but another rule precludes that possibility. A change has to involve an interchange of bells and the null change does not.

Accordingly, we decided to finish with 1440 Plain Bob ornamented by this novelty which we treated as a special call (in addition to normal bobs and singles). We termed this call a Bernard in honour of one of the Guild's more distinguished ringers, Bernard Taylor.

By way of additional interest, the 1440 concludes with a Bernard providing an unusual composition which comes round one change before it ends. Frank suggested that we should call "That's All" one change early and finish after 5039 changes. This would add an extra illegality, but he didn't get much support for this proposal!

**1440 Plain Bob Minor***arranged by Alexander E. Holroyd and Richard A. Smith*

1	5	23456
s	f	54362
s	f	63425
s	f	24356
(–)	f	53264

6 part, omitting (–) in parts 2, 4 and 6

Bob = 14

Single = 1234

Bernard (f) = 123456

**The Ringing**

If deciding what to ring was hard, settling on a conductor was easy. Some of the extents were a major conducting challenge so we needed an ace conductor. Robert Johnson was happy to rise to the occasion and it is hard to imagine anyone doing a better job.

There was still one logistic difficulty. Ander lives in Vancouver which gave us limited windows of opportunity for arranging dates to attempt all his and Richard's compositions.

The first opportunity was in August 2003 when, on almost the hottest day of the year, we met at Cherry Hinton Church but the attempt fired out when Stromboli blew up.

The next opportunity was in December 2003 when, on almost the coldest day of the year, we met in S. Bene't's, the venue for our earlier illegalities. On this occasion the performance was successful and was published (as a peal) in *The Ringing World* of 23rd January 2004 (p.81).

**Concluding Thoughts**

It is unlikely that many bands will wish to follow in our footsteps. It is even more unlikely that there will be any changes to the Central Council regulations, at least in the short term. In the longer term, these regulations evolve and future historians may like to record our efforts in a marginal note when documenting the evolutionary process.

Both the Spliced Arlesey and Helen and the Great Grandsire extents could be made legal now by referring to each as Plain Bob and employing unusual calls. We believe that the descriptions we have used are more in tune with the way ringers naturally think but we recognise that adapting the rules to accommodate such descriptions is not straightforward.

It will probably be a long time before jump changes are permitted but when they are Mersey Ferry will, by its uniqueness, quickly establish itself in the repertoire.

Present historians of course know that jump changes were frequently used in the 17th century in what were then described as peals. Who knows when they might return to favour?

PHILIP EARIS  
ALEXANDER HOLROYD  
ROBERT JOHNSON  
FRANK KING  
JONATHAN SHANKLIN  
RICHARD SMITH

**ODG AGM**

The AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Guild took place at Monks Risborough on Saturday May 15th after a traditional service of Evensong at the ancient parish church: St Dunstan's church is in the oldest parish in England and holds its charter of 903 AD in Canterbury to which place there was a recent parish pilgrimage and Holy Eucharist in recognition of this.

The meeting was held in the village school after the service.

We were pleased to note that Graham Clifton, against his better judgement, has decided to continue as Master. As he gets busier with Whites of Appleton, he will have to delegate the work-load more, something which he is very good at!

Most of the officers were re-elected with the following exceptions. Rex Agg stood down as Newsletter Editor and Lorna Smale took over. Anthony Cole retired, as a 'new dad' but nobody was found to replace him as a Guild Steward. The duty of finding a new Steward was passed to the Guild Officers. Anthony also stood down as an elected committee member and, after a brief discussion, Chris Wells was elected to represents the views of young ringers on the committee. Existing Central Council representatives were mostly re-elected for the new Triennium, beginning next May with Pat Newton standing down in favour of Bobbie May.

Many thanks to the Monks Risborough ringers and congregation for making us so welcome, for playing the organ and for supplying the teas. It was a pleasure to visit your beautiful historic church.

BOBBIE MAY