



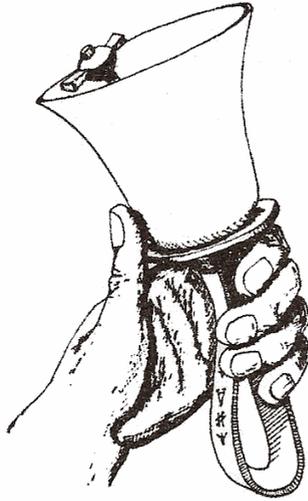
**OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS**

**Educational Leaflet**

**No. 10**

**LEARNING CHANGE RINGING ON HANDBELLS  
Some Basic Guidelines**

Diagram 1



Handstroke

Backstroke



## 1. INTRODUCTION

This booklet is aimed at the complete beginner to hand-bell ringing.

It gives hints on how to learn the 'lines' as well as some general advice about how to ring together as a team. It then covers in some detail each of the pairs for Plain Hunt on 6, Bob Minor and Bob Major.

If you get this far you have passed the major hurdle of learning to ring hand-bells and you should find that progress on to more advanced methods is relatively painless.

Good luck!

## 2. HOW TO BEGIN

### Some practical points:

- Always ring clockwise i.e. the lighter bell in your right hand.
- Unlike tune ringing, for change ringing you need to have a different stroke for hand-stroke and for backstroke. Hand-stroke is rung by flicking the bell upwards against the thumb.

Backstroke is the reverse – flicking downwards on to the middle of your first finger. It should be a wrist movement rather than an arm movement. (Diagram 1)

### Mastering change ringing:

The best way to learn is by practice - lots of it, but in fairly short bursts particularly at first.

However, it is possible to do quite a bit of homework on your own, in the following ways:-

- a) If you have access to a tape recorder, the Central Council Cassette 'Teach Yourself Change Ringing on Hand-bells' is an extremely good self teaching aid.

What it does is to go through the basic Bob Minor positions in turn, allowing you to ring along with it in the gaps, either with your own pair of bells or just with thumbs.

The benefit is that practising with this perfect ringing instils a strong sense of rhythm in you. It also of course enables you to practise just when, and for as long as, you like.

b) Write out the (double) lines for the basic positions and learn them parrot fashion. The patterns are often quite easy to learn but the problem is to translate them into practice.

So a couple of hints for how to learn:-

- actually imagine yourself ringing, by counting 123456 over and over again and emphasising the two numbers for the positions in which your two imaginary bells are 'striking' each time, preferably lifting your thumbs up and down as you do it.

(Anybody who sees you doing this will probably think you quite mad!)

- learn as a pair rather than trying to split your mind between two individual lines. This means learning the basic positions (i.e. coursing, 2-3, etc).

### **3. A RECOMMENDED ORDER OF LEARNING**

1. 1-2 (or 5-6) to Plain hunt on 6 - COURSING position throughout
2. 3-4 to Plain Hunt on 6 - OPPOSITES position
3. 2-3 position
4. 5-6 to a course of Bob Minor — COURSING except for middle lead which is 2-3 POSITION
5. 1-2 to Bob Minor — all 3 Positions
6. 3 4 to u course of Bob Minor OPPOSITES and 2-3 positions
7. Touches on 3-4 or 5-6 — all 3 positions
8. If you have the chance to ring on 8, you can progress on to ringing all of 1-7 above on 8 bells (Plain Hunt on 8 and Bob Major) as soon as you have mastered the equivalent on 6 bells.
9. Kent (Minor and Major) is a particularly good method for hand-bells.
10. Various plain methods such as Reverse, Double, Little.

#### 4. GENERAL HINTS FOR ACHIEVING FAST PROGRESS

1. Practise ringing rounds for a good number of pulls before saying 'go'. This helps you to settle down into a good rhythm. Make sure that you leave a good sized gap before the hand-stroke lead.
2. Try not to hesitate or leave large gaps — i.e. make a conscious effort to keep your bells moving at the same rate as in the rounds. (Unlike tower bells, in hand-bells it is all too easy to just stop when you are not sure when to ring — with chaotic consequences.)
3. Once you have struck your bell, treat that as a *fait accompli*. The temptation to have a second try after striking too soon is very strong but must be resisted! Instead, correct yourself in the next change.
4. Sit in a good circle and not too spread out. You need to be able to see all the bells clearly.
5. As in tower bells it is very useful to be able to listen/watch for where the treble is striking so try to practise doing this. the
6. Don't try to do too much at once. At first your mind quickly becomes 'boggled' and you are likely to ring much better after a break to sit back and think about it. and

#### 5. PLAIN HUNT ON 6

1-2 to Plain Hunt on 6

('Coursing' Position)

This position is called Coursing because one bell immediately follows the path of the other bell. The effect is that (a) one bell strikes between your bells as your bells are hunting from front to back and vice versa, and (b) your bells strike consecutively, described as 'coming together', when the bells reach the back and the front of the change.

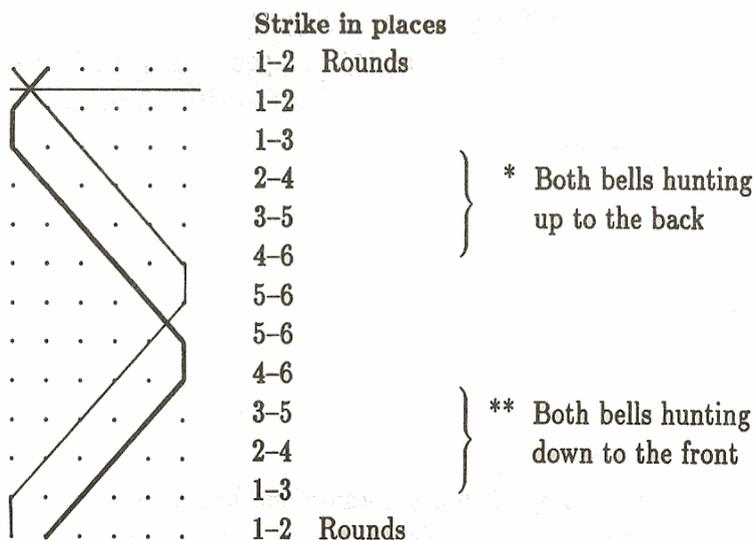
The gap is never larger than just one bell between your bells, and for this reason most people find this the easiest of the positions to ring.

It should be obvious that 5-6 to Plain Hunt on 6 is also in the coursing position, but starting halfway through the diagram. It is worth practising the position on 5-6 because it is then a fairly easy progression on to Plain

Bob Minor, in which 5-6 are in Coursing Position throughout the course apart from one lead in the middle.

### Tips

1. When both bells are hunting up to the back\*, concentrate on two things:
  - i) The 2, the bell in your left hand, always strikes first
  - ii) You should be moving your hands up and down more slowly than in the rounds (just as you have to hold up your bell when hunting to the back on tower bells).
  
2. Conversely, when both bells are hunting down to lead\*\*, concentrate on:
  - i) It is now the treble (your right hand) which always strikes first
  - ii) You should be moving your hands up and down more quickly than in the rounds (equivalent to pulling your bell in on tower bells).



### 3-4 to Plain Hunt on 6

#### (‘Opposites’ Position)

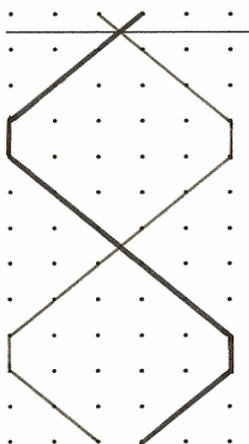
The reason why this Position is called Opposites should be clear from the diagram below. In every change your two bells strike symmetrically about the middle of the change; or, in other words, in every change there is the same number of bells striking below your first bell as there are striking above your second bell (i.e. 2 bells in the rounds and the first change, 1 bell in the second change, 0 bells when leading and lying).

This symmetry makes this position quite an easy one to ring, despite the large gaps between your bells at certain parts of the lead.

#### Tips

1. Note that the backstroke lead follows immediately after the first blow in 6th place (hand-stroke lie) with your other bell; this means that your bells are striking consecutively but at opposite strokes.

You will probably find it quite difficult to ring this without breaking the rhythm, so practise by imagining yourself ringing it.



#### Strike in places

3-4 Rounds

3-4

2-5

1-6

1-6

2-5

3-4

3-4

2-5

1-6

1-6

2-5

3-4 Rounds

## 2-3 Position in Plain Hunt on 6

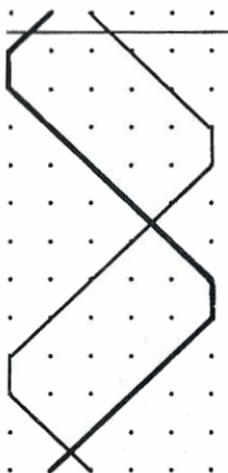
This position does not occur in any of the 3 normal pairs rung to Plain Hunt on 6. However, it is an important position because, when you come on to Bob Minor, you will find that it is rung at some stage in the course by each of the three pairs.

2-3 position can be described as coursing with 3 bells between your bells. Unfortunately, when ringing on only 6 bells the gap of 3 is only achieved for 2 consecutive changes before the gap narrows as one or other of the bells reaches the front or the back. On 8 bells, however, the gap of 3 is maintained over 4 consecutive changes and so the parallel coursing effect is more noticeable.

It is possible to practise the position by ringing Plain Hunt on 6 but with all the bells shifted so that you ring 2-3 and the other two ringers ring 4-5 and 1-6. However, most people find this too confusing and prefer to ring the position by going straight into Bob Minor.

### Tips

1. Note that one bell leading is followed immediately by the other bell lying (in the first half of the lead) and that one bell lying is followed immediately by the other leading (in the second half).
2. Note that when you come together in 4-5 there is only one bell behind you (in 6th place). It is sometimes easier to count from the back of the change like this than to count 3 bells below you.



### Strike in places

#### 2-3 Rounds

1-4

1-5

2-6

3-6

4-5

4-5

3-6

2-6

1-5

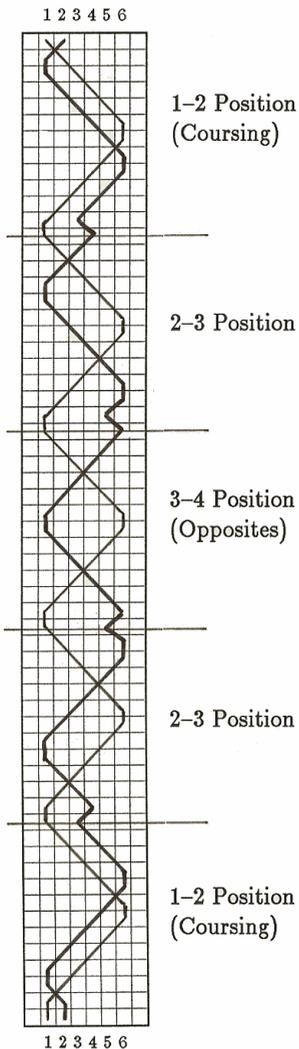
1-4

2-3

#### 2-3 Rounds

## 6. PLAIN BOB MINOR

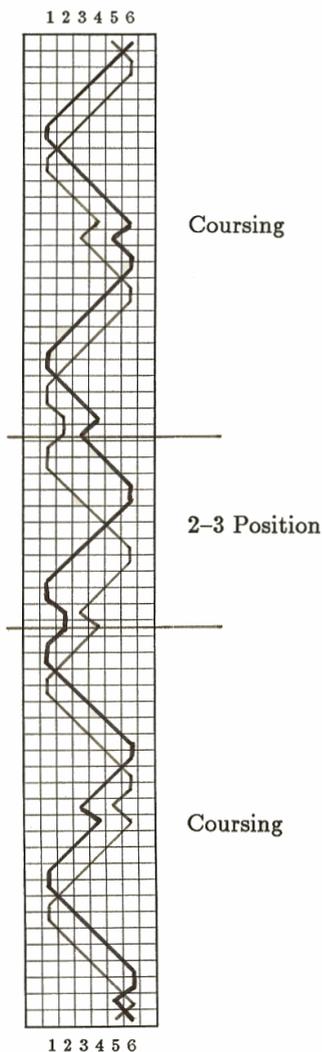
### 1-2 to Bob Minor



### Tips

1. Learn the order of the positions ie. Coursing, 2-3, etc.
2. The change of position is caused by the 2 dodging at the treble's backstroke lead.
3. When ringing, concentrate hard on keeping the treble in the right place, and in particular try not to cross it over with your other bell. People tend to ring Bob Minor by listening or watching for the treble lead, so you can imagine how confusing it is if you get the treble in the wrong place!

## 5-6 to Bob Minor



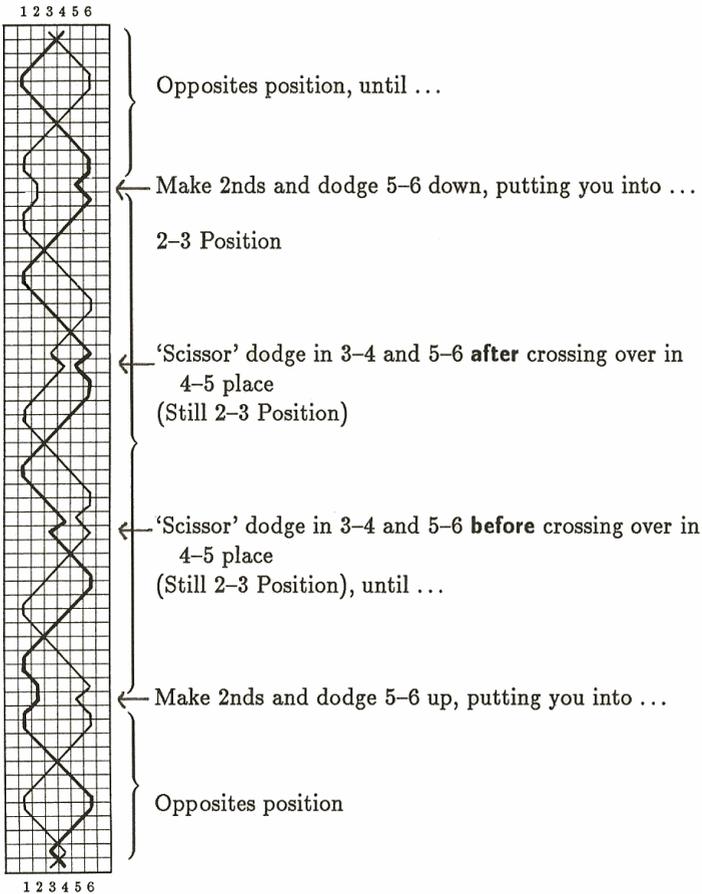
### Tips

1. Concentrate on looking/listening for the treble lead. This tells you when you have to do something different from just coursing up and down i.e. dodge or make seconds!
2. Learn the middle lead very thoroughly as this is bound to cause the most difficulty. Concentrate on the exact point at which you enter the 2-3 position (5 makes seconds and 6 dodges back into 3rd place so you strike 2-3, and in the next change you move apart to strike 1-4). And concentrate on where you get back into coursing (you come together in 2-3 but instead of crossing your pair over the 6 makes seconds and the 5 dodges back into 4th place. You then course down on to the front.)
3. You can give yourself extra practice at this lead by calling a Bob at the end of the lead (a Bob Before). The 6 runs out and the 5 runs in, and you therefore repeat the lead in the 2-3 position. Two more consecutive Bobs will bring the bells back into the plain course as well as giving you two more chances to get the lead right!

### 3-4 to Bob Minor

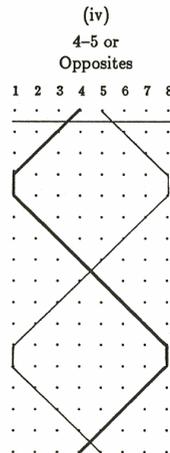
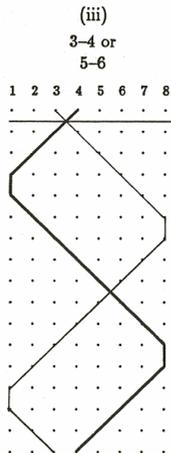
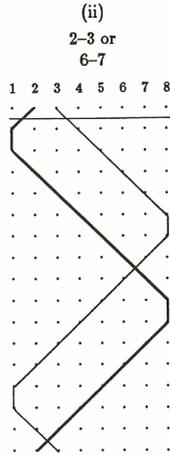
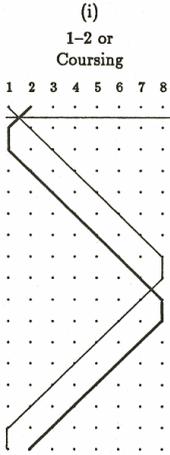
The easiest way of ringing this is by the treble, i.e. plain hunt until the treble leads and then either dodge or make seconds as appropriate.

However you will probably find this difficult at first, and obviously you must not rely on this method in case the treble gets lost itself! To have to learn the whole course parrot-fashion might seem rather daunting, but in fact it can be summarised into a fairly simple structure as shown below:-



## 7. PLAIN BOB MAJOR

Study the 4 Basic Positions. The Coursing and 3-4 Positions can be practised by ringing Plain Hunt on 8.



## **The Pairs to Bob Major (Diagram 2)**

- 1-2** As for 1-2 in Bob Minor, this pair rings all the basic Positions, and changes Position at each lead end.
- 7-8** This pair follows the same patterns as its equivalent (5-6) in Bob Minor insofar as:-  
- it is in Coursing Position throughout except for the middle lead which is in 2-3 position.  
- it comes into and out of the middle lead in exactly the same way.  
- at the lead ends either side of the middle lead the bells are doing parallel dodges.

### **3-4 and 5-6**

Unlike 1-2 and 7-8 these pairs do not have a simple structure and are thus very much more difficult to learn. Tackle them by a. Combination of the following:-

- (i) Ringing by the treble, i.e. plain hunt until the treble leads and then dodge/make seconds. (Hopefully by this stage you will have got used to looking/listening for the treble while you are ringing.)
- (ii) Knowing which basic Positions you ring, and in which order.
- (iii) Having some idea of the relationship between your two bells at the lead ends, e.g.
  - when one bell makes seconds, where is the other bell dodging?
  - when both bells are dodging, are they parallel (i.e. both dodging 'up' or both 'down') or scissor (i.e. one dodging up and the other dodging down)?

**Lines for PLAIN BOB MAJOR**  
 (Numbers at the sides refer to the basic position)  
**Diagram 2**

