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## A red tape bonfire

By Tim Barnes (with a little help from Steve Coleman)

*In The Six Bells last night, talk turned to all this business of the Central Council changing the rules about ringing. To several it was something they weren't bothered with at all. "Who needs rules," they said. "We'll just ring what we've always rung – mainly Bob Doubles – and nothing will change that." But a couple of us are really quite interested – or at least, we would be if someone would explain it in ordinary language. So, since you're the chap in charge, how about it?*

S.T.

*The Home Counties*

What a good challenge! And yes, those of us involved with 'the rules' do tend to get caught up in technicalities and details that most ringers find rather bewildering, if not a complete turn off. So, as straightforwardly as possible, what are these recent changes all about and what have we tried to do?

To put it simply, we've had a big bonfire of many of the existing rules. 'Decisions' they've been called, and they'd grown bit by bit over more than a century. They weren't *wrong* exactly because the original idea behind them was to provide consistency throughout the ringing community. But they weren't exactly *right* either because although they largely reflected ringing traditions, they didn't reflect all ringing traditions. They also reflected personal prejudices of people-shouldn't-be-allowed-to-do-that, making them unnecessarily restrictive and not allowing for innovation and flexibility.

So instead of Decisions we now have a framework. It's a system which simply lets people ring what they like and be able to describe it in a consistent way. The descriptions apply to all kinds of method ringing – from Plain Hunt on 3 to peals of spliced Maximus and beyond. And in case you're wondering, the Central Council (CC) – which is a body of entirely ordinary and sensible ringers – asked us to do this. Quite likely that's all you want to know and you can now turn to the letters page. But if you'd like to know more, read on.

#### Peals and methods

So, the idea behind much of the framework is the move from a rules-based approach to a descriptive one. Let's look at what this really means:

Under the Decisions, you can ring a touch of 5,000 or more changes, but you haven't necessarily rung what the Decisions define as a peal. Other rules also need to be satisfied to qualify as a peal, such as starting and ending in rounds, and a row not having more than one cover bell.

For many decades, one of these rules was that peals could only be rung in methods that the Decisions recognised as methods – the

Decisions also have rules on what is and isn't considered a method.

While these rules were well-intentioned, they were problematic because there was never agreement on where the boundaries should be drawn for what constitutes a peal and a method. Countless hours of CC meeting time over many decades were taken up debating this – in fact, these debates became quite a legendary feature of CC meetings. The debates often followed a band ringing something new or innovative, but which fell outside the rules. When ground-breaking, highly musical new peals (such as peals with link methods that produced cyclic part ends) were not considered to be peals under the Decisions, this harmed the CC's reputation, especially among experienced ringers, detracting from all the other good work done by the Council. The Decisions gradually became less restrictive over the years, but the underlying approach remained the same.

The framework alters this approach by defining a peal simply as a touch with at least 5,000 changes. Similarly, a method is simply a defined sequence of changes, with no further built-in constraints. However, there are clearly 'normal' ways in which peals are rung – e.g. without the use of visual aids, with the same person ringing a given bell throughout, and so on. The framework lists these norms that peal ringing usually follows, and asks for peal reports to disclose (i.e. in the footnote) if any of the norms weren't followed. This removes the CC from the role of arbiter of what is and isn't considered a peal and a method, and leaves it to ringers to decide what they think of peals that are published.

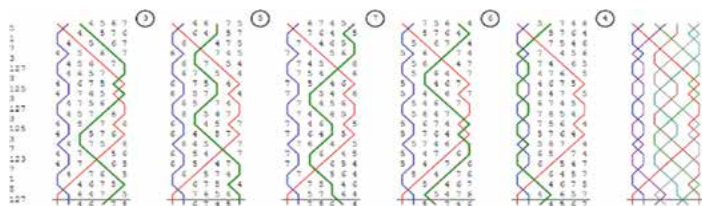
#### Changes

Another underlying alteration in the framework, as compared to the Decisions, is that the definition of a change has been expanded to recognise bells moving by more than one place from one row to the next. For example, a bell might ring in 2nd's place at handstroke and then in 4th's place at the following backstroke. These are referred to as jump changes. Jump changes are only occasionally rung today, mostly by experienced bands looking to do something different, and we don't have any expectation that ringing jump changes will suddenly become popular or widespread. But their inclusion in the framework is consistent with the framework team's 'permissive and descriptive' mandate.

#### Other alterations

A number of other alterations in the framework follow from the above:

With a method being any defined sequence of changes, this removes limits on the number of consecutive blows in the same place. Methods may have just one lead in their plain



courses (under the Decisions they must have two or more). Methods can use jump changes and identity changes. The latter is where every bell remains in the same place from one row to the next – clearly this will often result in falseness, but the identity change can be useful in certain situations, such as producing a true 240 of Doubles where each row appears twice.

Methods can also be ‘dynamic’ under the framework. This is where the method’s next change is not necessarily pre-determined. Dixon’s Minor (see <http://www.cambridgeringing.info/Methods/Minor/dixons.htm>) is a fairly well-known example of this – its normal next change is modified if the current row has certain bells in certain places.

Non-method blocks, a concept introduced into the Decisions in 2014 to cover methods that fall outside what the Decisions define as methods, are no longer needed, and these become methods under the framework.

Method ringing is occasionally performed with more than one cover bell, such as a quarter peal of Doubles rung on 8 bells with 7-6-8 covering. In the interests of consistency and permissiveness, the framework has removed the constraint in the Decisions of a single cover bell for peals. A peal could also be composed using two (or more) methods side by side – e.g. on 12 bells, ring one Minor method on bells 1 to 6, and another Minor method on bells 7 to 12. The framework defines how truth is determined in all these cases.

### What about quarter peals and other lengths?

Under the framework, performances of all lengths are treated the same, i.e. described using the same terminology and reported using the same norms. This doesn’t mean the framework is introducing rules for quarter peals because there are no rules for what may be rung at any length, just conventions for how what is rung should be described.

A quarter peal is defined as a touch with 1,250–2,499 changes. The framework also defines a half peal as 2,500–4,999 changes, and a touch of less than 1,250 changes is defined as a ‘short touch’, following the parlance established on *BellBoard*. Peals of at least 10,000 changes have the additional moniker of ‘long length’. Finally, date touches are defined in the framework, and record lengths continue to be defined.

### So, what rules or requirements remain?

The Central Council maintains the methods library as a shared resource for ringers. It also maintains a register of the record lengths rung in single methods and sets of methods. To ensure the orderly maintenance of these shared resources, and to respect method ringing traditions, there are still requirements in the framework for naming a new method in

the methods library, and for claiming a new record length. Naming a new method can be affected by its classification, and possibly by whether there are related methods at other stages (the area of method extension), and, like the Decisions, the framework has definitions and requirements in these areas. As described in earlier framework articles in the *RW*, the classification of a very small percentage of the methods in the methods library will change in the interests of simplifying the classification system. The framework website is located at <https://framework.cccb.org.uk> and the earlier *RW* articles are available in appendix G.

As noted earlier above, the framework states what should be included in performance reports (i.e. what is published on *BellBoard* / in the *RW*), and it also sets out a few requirements for annual analyses of performances to be prepared by the Central Council.

### What isn’t altered?

Simply put, all standard ringing that is done today is unaffected by the move from the Decisions to the framework. The framework recognises a wider range of possible forms of method ringing than the Decisions, but it doesn’t restrict anything currently in the Decisions.

### Is there any downside to the new framework?

The framework describes some forms of ringing that not all ringers will want to take part in. Anyone with such concerns may want to ask a few more questions as to what the ringing will entail when invited into peal or quarter peal attempts and similar. We expect the vast majority of ringers will mostly continue to ring the same things that are rung today, so this is unlikely to be a problem in practice.

### Definitions and examples

One of Sir Arthur Heywood’s motives for forming the Central Council was his view that, “Of all the sciences, ringing is possessed of the most indefinite, most ambiguous and most inadequate phraseology.” The Decisions provided welcome central definition of terms, and the framework takes this further by ensuring that all specialist ringing terms used are also defined, and by including examples, explanations and diagrams throughout to aid in understanding.

### Implementation

As reported in the Mar 8th 2019 *RW*, the CC Executive has now implemented version 1 of the new framework, to be effective from Jun 1st 2019, and replacing all existing CC Decisions. The notice of implementation by Christopher O’Mahony, CC President (*RW* p.225), reviewed various aspects of the framework project and

*Continued overleaf*

## Editorial

The Editor hailed the creation of the new Framework for Method Ringing as ‘an exhaustive (and exhausting) process, which has entailed an impressive degree of consultation’ (p.223). Another survey of this work now comes with help from Steve Coleman, making it yet more transparent why he and the Framework team believe it matters. Our published comments on the framework have generally been from those with strong opinions and long experience with the concepts involved, but we invite comments and questions from all ringers to our Letters page.

From ringing mats to boomwhackers in this issue ... John Eisel (p.350) traces early evidence of fractious relationships between ringers in Devon, while David Smith (back page) suggests some training steps for ringers and bands getting to grips with ringing on higher numbers. We also celebrate longevity in ringing, from 50 years of advanced handbell ringing in the ODG to Cyril Galbraith of Dublin’s 80 years as a ringer. Perhaps a goal for the North West 12-bell, ‘here to stay’ (p.352).

WTB

### First Peal Congratulations

Francis L Herne (St Ives, Cambs)

### 1,000th Peal Congratulations

Andrew J Davey (Sproxtton)

### Late delivery of *The Ringing World*

It would be appreciated if you leave any enquiries to our administrative staff concerning failed deliveries until the **Thursday** following the scheduled delivery day.

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## A red tape bonfire

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also covered the implementation process under the new CC rules.

### Second consultation

The CC Executive implemented the framework following completion of the second ringing-community consultation. 9 people provided feedback in the second consultation, compared to 35 in the first. But the second consultation submissions were generally quite a lot more extensive than the first, resulting in a similar number of points being raised in both consultations – around 70 in the first and approximately 60 in the second.

Like the first consultation, the feedback was of a high quality and it was clear respondents had put much time and effort into their submissions, so thank you very much for that. The FAQ page of the framework website now includes second consultation submissions together with responses (see section M of the FAQs page). As before, no names are attributed to any submissions made. We made around 25 alterations to the framework as a result of the second consultation, and the FAQ responses also describe these updates. One alteration to highlight is that the framework now includes a requirement for the composition to be provided for a performance that names a new method. This will normally be done by entering the composition with the performance on *BellBoard*.

### Who is the framework most useful to?

While the framework will most often be referred to by composers, conductors and the more experienced method ringers, it should also be useful to anyone familiar with the basics of method ringing who would like to learn more about the technical underpinnings of our art. To get started, begin reading the framework website at section 3 – Fundamentals of Method Ringing. If something isn't clear, many items have a '+' button that, when clicked, will display an example and/or give some further explanation. If you're still not clear on something, feel free to send your question to [methods@cccbr.org.uk](mailto:methods@cccbr.org.uk). Alternatively, try posting your question to one of the ringers' email lists or Facebook groups – there are many knowledgeable people in these groups who are almost always pleased to help.

If you'd like to learn more about the history of the Decisions and the challenges involved in replacing them, see a series of eight articles written by John Harrison that were published in the *RW* between 2nd February and 1st April 2016. These articles are available on the framework website – see appendix G, item 1.

### Thanks

Finally, a big thank-you to everyone who helped in the development of the first version of the framework – those in the core team and the review group, those who sent in consultation submissions, and everyone else who otherwise provided suggestions and feedback along the way. This has been very much a team effort.

## A striking difference

### The Kildwick MiniRingers go competitive



*Plain Bob Doubles, on the mat*

Every March (the week sadly coincides with the Branch AGM so I can never attend that) the Skipton Music Festival takes place. If you happen to be married to the Secretary of the Festival, you tend to find out a good deal more about it than you might have expected ...

There are some 100 classes for all manner of performers: piano and piccolo, accordion and alto, oboe and something-else-that-starts-with-'o'. There are individual performances, duets, trios and larger groups. Surely, there's an opportunity here for the MiniRingers?!

And indeed, there is! Class 501 (Instrumental Group, Year 7 and under) and Class 401 (Small Ensemble, Year 7 and under) would seem to fit the bill. In either of these classes, we could be pitched against any instrumental group but, over the past year or two, the bells have taken the stage uncontested.

The Instrumental Group is the forum for tune ringing. Two teams competed; the MiniRingers played two tunes (Tallis's *Canon* and *She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain*) while the girls from Trinity and All Saints, Bingley rang three, including *Ode to Joy* on the day of a significant Brexit vote! Bingley deservedly won that one with some well-struck playing. We were just pleased to get through *She'll be Comin'* without *comin'* to grief. We were delighted with our second place – because (like Bingley's) it was judged to be of Distinction standard.

The other class (Small Ensemble) is limited to ten players and this was where we ring changes. We do this a bit like handbell



*The mat used for change ringing performances*

lapping, except that the children move up and down a marked-out mat. The treble ringer wears a contrasting yellow shirt so we can see how the changes develop. With a limit of ten, the original idea of plain hunt on twelve wasn't going to work. So we split into two teams; the MiniRingers and the even smaller MicroRingers. Plain hunting is quite easy. Methods aren't! The Year 6 MiniRingers tackled Plain Bob Doubles. We ring quite slowly, so a plain course of that is about right for this sort of occasion. (They actually fired out on the last change, but no one really noticed!) The MicroRingers are smaller – Years 3 and 4 – and I expected they'd be limited to three or four courses of plain hunt. But we discovered Penultimus Doubles. No dodging; just make four blows at the back over the treble. They stormed it! No firing out, good rhythm, and it came round safely. For my money, they beat the Big Boys hands down – though the adjudicator hedged his bets with a "First Equal". And another couple of Distinctions to go with an enormous cup.

If truth be told, Distinctions were rather more easily earned than they have been in other years. None of the performances was perfect but all four teams of youngsters brought different aspects of our art to the Festival audience. The tune ringing is delightful and to a non-ringing audience is immediately accessible. The change ringing blows their mind! It is so different from anything that they've seen before. Even for a ringer, watching tower or handbells ringing can be a fairly meaningless jumble but with the "dancing" pattern of the changes with the highlighted treble, a little of the maypole-like pattern begins to emerge.

CHRIS WRIGHT



*The tune ringers: "She'll be comin' round the Mountain" complete with a train whistle*