

Introducing Place Bells

'Place Bells' is a concept usually associated with more advanced methods, but it has its uses in many ringing situations. In its simplest form it is a short way of saying, 'Knowing where every bell starts from rounds' in any particular method.

To illustrate this – look at Plain Bob minor in the 'Diagrams' book. Ringing the 2nd you start as 'Seconds Place Bell' because you were in seconds place in the rounds. At the first treble lead you dodge 3–4 down and at the treble's backstroke lead you are in fourths place. This makes you 'Fourths Place bell' for the next lead and what you are ringing now is the same as 4 starting from rounds. At the next treble's backstroke lead, as you dodge 5–6 down, you are in sixths place so you become 'Sixths Place Bell' and ring as 6 starts from rounds. And so on for Fifths Place bell and Thirds Place Bell. You become a different place bell every treble lead and what you ring through that lead is what that (place) bell would have rung from rounds. Probably not many ringers think of place bells in Plain Bob minor but this shows how the system works and how it can be used in the more complex methods, of which more later. Before moving on from Plain Bob minor, look at what happens at a bob.

If affected by a bob you will do one of three things...

- Run in – which makes you seconds place bell – ring as 2nd starts from rounds
- Run out – which makes you thirds place bell – ring as 3rd starts from rounds
- Make the bob – which makes you fourths place bell – ring as 4th starts from rounds

So, at a call, in any method, if you know the method by place bells, you ring as for your new place bell. No extra rules to learn of 'What to do after the bob'! There are different types of bobs – and singles – in different methods, but these rules will work in the same way. Just be certain which place bell you become at a call.

Learning a more complex method, if you learn it 'by Place Bells' you can learn it a lead at a time. Consider Cambridge minor – even if you don't ring it yet! In the Diagrams book, 2 is blue line bell. It starts by doing some of the 'front work', hunts up, double-dodges in 5–6 up, lays and single dodges in 5–6 down as the treble leads full, where it becomes Sixths Place bell. (Follow the blue line!) Learn this – and you have learnt the work of Seconds Place bell in Cambridge minor! You can then start learning the work for Sixth Place bell, and so on until you have learnt the method in five distinct chunks which join up to make the plain course. This breaks down the learning process into smaller steps. Note that different methods have different place bell sequences. Plain Bob is 2–4–6–5–3, Cambridge is 2–6–3–4–5. Other methods may be different again. Look at the Diagrams book. At each lead end is a ringed figure, indicating the place bell for the next lead. So, reading down the page, you have the place bell sequence for that method. Always think of the place bell sequence as a circle – the end joined to the beginning. (If you use the RW Diary you will see that 6 is the blue-line bell in minor methods. The same system applies to these diagrams, but starting with Sixth Place bell.)

If, at any time, your ringing has become a little disorientated (!) think about what your next place bell will be and position yourself for this as the treble leads. (A low trick, but it often works!) Sometimes a conductor might call, 'Lead end here' to assist if the ringing is rocky, which helps you to start on the work of your next place bell. And some really switched on conductors might be able to tell you that 'You are Fourths Place bell', which can be most helpful – provided you know what Fourths Place bell should be doing!

All in all, it's well worth the extra time and effort to learn to ring by place bells as soon as possible.