Call Changes

When ringing call changes the conductor “calls” pairs of bells to change places with each other; they then ring in that sequence until the next call.

Before attempting call changes, get used to looking at ALL the other ropes as you are ringing. Unless the ropes in your tower are spaced unusually, you should be able to see all of them with little or no head movement. You will see later why this is important.

Next, as you ring rounds, as well as watching the rope you are following, notice the rope of the bell that (s)he is following, e.g. if you are ringing bell 3 you are following 2, and two is following 1 (treble). You will see that as you start to pull your handstroke treble has just finished pulling their handstroke. This is how you can identify the bell that is two places in front of you, regardless of what order the bells are ringing, and this is also important.

There are many different ways of calling; we shall look first at the system known as “Calling Up”, and these notes assume that you are ringing on five or six bells.

Calling up

This is the most usual way of calling changes.

To change the order of the bells from 1 2 3 4 5(6)

the conductor will call “3 over 4” (or “3 after 4”) at a handstroke, and the bells affected change places on the next handstroke. 3 must “hold up” on this handstroke to give 4 time to pull in front. (4 must ring sooner and follow 2.)

4 is now “in thirds place” and 3 is now “in fourths place”.

When a bell is called “over” your bell you have to pull in or “check” your bell to ring one place sooner and you must now follow the bell that was two places in front of you.

To show this, from rounds,

the call “2 over 3”, gives:

Here, 3 should know that 2 is following the treble (1) so, as 2 moves over 3, 3 moves down to follow 1. (In the early stages the conductor might add “3 after treble” to keep you right but, with practice, you will see this for yourself.)

Of course, after a few calls the bells may be ringing in any sequence. So it is important, after each call, to find who is two places in front of you. (Unless, of course, you are in seconds place or leading.)

Again starting from rounds, and you are ringing 3; if the call is “Treble over 2” (or sometimes it will be “Treble over 2 lead” to remind 2 to lead),

from 1 2 3 4 5 6

we now have 2 1 3 4 5 6.
You (3) are following 2 but on hearing the treble called over 2 you know that you will now follow the treble. However, do not change the rhythm of your bell because in this case you do not move up or down; you “stay in the same place” while the two bells in front of you change places.

That’s the basis of call changes; the most important thing to watch, as you gain experience, is not only to know which bell you are following, but also to know which bell they are following.

In summary, you may be affected in one of three ways:
- **You are called over another bell.** This is straightforward; hold up and follow that bell.
- **A bell is called over you** (say it’s 2). Check your bell to follow the bell that 2 was following.
- **A bell is called over the bell you have been following.** Follow the bell that has been “called over” - but do not hold up or check; just keep the same rhythm because you stay in the same place.

To ensure good striking in call changes it is necessary to change the pace of your bell for one pull only.
- If you are called ‘over’, hold up for the one handstroke pull then resume the normal ‘rounds’ rhythm.
- If a bell is called over you, pull sooner on the handstroke to ring one place sooner, but at the same time pull a little harder to re-balance your bell so as to resume the normal ‘rounds’ rhythm.
- The hallmark of good call changes is keeping an even rhythm as the bells change.

**Listen for your bell!**

You have been taught to count and listen, so that you can hear your own bell striking. In rounds, if you are ringing 3 you will always be “in thirds place” and you hear your bell on the count of “three”. But, ringing call changes (or when ringing method) your bell is constantly moving to a different “place”. Now, in order to hear your own bell you should be aware of which place you are in. When you have mastered the basics of call changes, start counting which place you are in after each call and listen for your bell in that place. (Remembering also that your bell always sounds as your hands move up past your face.)

**Calling down**

In some towers this is the standard system of calling.

In this system, to change from 1 2 3 4 5 6 to 1 2 4 3 5 6 the call is “4 to 2”. 3 has been following 2 but, if 2 is going to follow 4, 3 must hold up, to make space for it.

5 has been following 4 but, on hearing 4 called down, knows that another bell will take 4’s place. If you are watching who is following who you will have seen that 4 has been following 3 so, as 4 moves down 3 must move up.

When calling down is used it is useful to see who is following you, because this is the bell that can be called down in front of you.