

CC 2018 meeting – Framework remarks

SLIDE 1 Good afternoon, introduction, etc.

SLIDE 2 It's very near the end of a long and intense meeting, so I'm aiming to keep this to about 10 minutes or so, and will also keep things at a fairly high level.

We'll cover 5 areas. I'll start by recapping the mandate we were given by last year's CRAG motion on the Decisions. The motion has the four elements shown on the slide, so I'll then talk about how we've applied each of them in developing the new framework.

SLIDE 3 This slide shows the key parts of the CRAG motion.

We put together a team of 13 people last September to develop the framework, and we've been working on it continuously for the past 8 months.

It's certainly been difficult work – thousands of messages were exchanged between group members, there were lots of different views that needed to be debated to a resolution, and the framework moved through dozens of different versions. We covered what makes this task so difficult in our recent Ringing World articles, so in the interests of time, I won't cover that here.

This difficulty meant we weren't able to keep to our original goal of completing the project before this meeting. But we have now reached the stage of starting a consultation on the draft framework to get feedback from across the ringing community. I'll come back to the consultation at the end to let you know how you can take part.

So, let's move on to the four elements of the mandate:

Two very key words are 'permissive' and 'descriptive'. The aim is to describe what people ring, rather than to limit it, and to take a permissive view of what is considered method ringing.

We all know the history of the Decisions – they limited what was considered a method and what was considered a peal, and every time a band rang something new that was outside these limits, the method or peal weren't recognized by the Council, and controversy often followed.

SLIDE 4 It's important to recognize that the Decisions have already become much more permissive than they once were. Variable cover was introduced, partial extents for lower stages were added, limits on the number of consecutive blows in the same place have mostly been removed, methods that have false plain courses are now recognized, and peals can be rung with simulated sound.

So, I think it's fair to say that the additional permissiveness in the new framework is just completing a process that's already well under way.

So, let's take a look at the increased permissiveness that we've included in the new framework.

SLIDE 5 First, we've introduced a norms and disclosure approach to performances. For example, today you can't ring a CC-compliant peal that is conducted from outside the circle. The new framework would recognize this as a peal, but asks for disclosure in the peal report that the normal way of conducting wasn't followed.

Secondly, peals can have more than one cover bell. This has been done for years in QPs, so it's nothing particularly ground-breaking.

The remaining limits on the number of consecutive blows in the same place have been removed, so method designers are now free to use as many consecutive blows as they wish.

Side by side ringing is recognized – for example on 12 bells, you could ring Cambridge Minor on the front 6 and Plain Bob Minor on the back 6. Truth would still be determined by whether the 12-bell rows are unique.

SLIDE 6 A method can have a single lead in its plain course – today, at least 2 leads are required. This could be used, for example, to create a Doubles method whose plain course is an extent, but which doesn't divide into 2 or more leads.

Rotations of methods can be separately named – this solves the New Grandsire problem, which some of you will be familiar with.

Dynamic methods are recognized – these are methods that don't have a fixed sequence of changes. Some of you will be familiar with Dixon's Bob Minor, where the next change depends on what the current row is.

The identity change is recognized – this is where every bell stays in the same place from one row to the next. This can be used, for example, to turn a 120 of Bob Doubles into a true 240 by calling a pair of singles with place notation 12345.

And finally, jump changes are recognized – for example, a change where the treble rings in 2nd's place at handstroke and 4th's place at backstroke. Ringing jump changes is certainly an advanced skill as it requires very good ropesight, and we don't have any expectation that jump changes will become widely rung. But we don't think they should be outside the definition of method ringing.

So that's the list of the main increases in permissiveness. I doubt any of these will be used in peals very often. But including them in the framework will prevent objections that the Central Council doesn't recognize things that some people would like to ring.

I should add that there's a rationale behind these 9 changes. We started out the project by defining what we thought were the most likely boundaries of what could be considered method ringing. The items above are what need to be added to the current Decisions to be able to describe everything within those boundaries.

SLIDE 7 Ok, let's move on to simple part of the mandate:

We have a single definition of truth that applies to all stages and all lengths of ringing, as shown on the slide.

But we've also maintained recognition of adjacent stage ringing – for example, Doubles and Minor, which we describe as having accepted truth.

SLIDE 8 There's a unified treatment of cover bells, as shown on the slide.

SLIDE 9 We also have standard performance lengths for all stages, as shown.

Now we know the idea of a peal of Triples being able to have less than an extent will be controversial to some – this is a very good example of permissive and simple being in conflict with maintaining historical continuity. We already know from previous debates that there are strong views on both sides of this, so we're now waiting to see what else comes out of the consultation on this point.

SLIDE 10 And we have a single set of requirements for naming a new method. Today there are slightly different naming requirements for different stages, and also differences between naming methods and naming non-method blocks.

SLIDE 11 There are two further ways that we've hopefully aided simplicity:

The first is that all terms used in the framework are defined.

And the second is that examples and explanations have been included throughout the framework to try and make things clearer.

SLIDE 12 Ok, so moving on to historical continuity:

We believe we've achieved continuity in that the vast majority of ringers won't see any change from this framework going into effect, unless they choose to take advantage of some of its new features.

SLIDE 13 But we do have one open question on historical continuity, and that relates to method classification.

As you probably know, method classification is what drives the words in method titles, as shown in red on the slide.

The current method classification system evolved over many decades and is quite complex. If we were starting from scratch, we'd probably come up with a much simpler system.

But these classifications are now part of ringing's heritage. And if we make significant changes to the classification system, lots of method titles would change, and we'd need mapping tables to interpret historical ringing records, including peal and QP boards.

But perhaps we could make some smaller changes to the classification system that only affect a small number of method titles, and make the classifications easier to understand.

The framework team discussed classification at length, but ultimately we couldn't agree on a single approach to bring into the consultation.

SLIDE 14 We've therefore included two versions of classification requirements in the draft framework, which are sections 4A and 4B:

4A mostly keeps the existing system in place and focuses on making it clearer to follow.

4B makes some relatively small changes that simplify things, but it results in 2-3% of the 21,000 methods in the library having a different method title.

We'd welcome input from anyone who has a view on this topic – we've included a separate question in the consultation for feedback on this.

And there was a lively debate on this subject in the bar on Saturday night that was still going at 1:00 am, and a view emerged that the best answer might be somewhere in between 4A and 4B.

SLIDE 15 Ok, the final part of the mandate is that the framework will be the responsibility of the Executive.

As we know, much time has been spent in full Central Council meetings over the past 125 years discussing the Decisions, often with reports afterwards that members weren't always fully clear on what they were voting on.

SLIDE 16 So, I think it's a very good plan to delegate responsibility for the framework to a technical group via the Executive, and have Council members oversee the process at a higher level, rather than voting on every change.

SLIDE 17 Ok, I'll wrap up with three final points:

The first is that there's never a completely free lunch. Additional permissiveness may mean that some ringers will want to ask more questions of an organizer before agreeing to take part in a peal, to make sure it's something they want to ring in. But I think that's a better state of affairs than treating some types of ringing as being non-compliant or similar.

Secondly, the more permissive the framework, the more it can be abused, for example, by ringers naming lots of trivial methods. But there's plenty of scope for doing that with the current Decisions, and ringers don't – they've shown they can be trusted to self-police.

SLIDE 18 And finally, no one framework solution will achieve anywhere near unanimous support -- there are lots of different ways in which a framework could be written.

But we think we're heading in the right direction with the new framework we've drafted, and it will no doubt be improved through the ringing community consultation that we've just started.

SLIDE 19 We launched the consultation in a Ringing World article the Friday before last, and we'll be publicising it through the email lists, Facebook groups and other channels later this week.

We'd very much welcome any feedback that Central Council members would like to provide. We do know this is a specialist area – it will take time to review the framework and provide comments, so we're not expecting large numbers of ringers to take part. We're guessing we may get in the region of 20-50 responses, and that would be fine. Ringing has lots of different areas that need work, and many people will rather spend their time on other ringing projects.

But for anyone who would like to take part, the new framework website address is on the screen, and Section 16 of the website has the instructions for the consultation.

SLIDE 20 I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the framework team members for all their help over the past 8 months. I'd also like to say thank you in advance to anyone here who takes the time to be part of the consultation, and thank you to everyone here for your time today.

SLIDE 21 Ok, Q&A. I can't imagine that anyone has any questions...