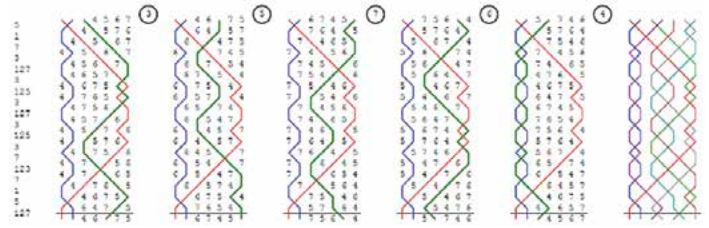


# Replacing the Central Council Decisions – Part 2

By *Tim Barnes* (on behalf of the task group)



## Introduction

In the 26th January issue of the *Ringing World*, John Harrison provided an update on the project to develop a new framework to replace the current Decisions. He recapped the mandate we've been given (simple and permissive, while ensuring historical continuity) and named the people involved.

He also outlined the challenge we've faced. One team member estimated, after reading an early, partial draft, that he would have in the region of 300 comments to make. Such comments from team members frequently generated extensive debate and several different views on what to do.

This challenge results from the primary purpose of the framework – that is, to provide a common language for ringers to describe and communicate about what they've rung. Because method ringing is so rich and varied in scope, it's difficult to create a succinct and unambiguous set of terminology that covers all possibilities, while also staying within our three-pronged mandate. There are also a number of different ways in which the framework could be structured and organised, leading to differences of opinion on the best approach.

## Timing

Still, progress is being made, and the purpose of this article is to outline some of the key features of the proposed framework. However, it's now clear the framework won't be finished by the Central Council meeting in May. The CRAG mandate rightly calls for us to consult widely across the ringing community, and this will still be in progress in May. But we expect to have a well-developed draft by the meeting for Central Council members to review and ask questions about. And we now expect the framework to be implemented later in the year by the Executive under the CC's proposed new structure, subject to Council members' power to 'call in' any decisions deemed to require further debate.

## What does the new framework affect?

If you're wondering "how will I be affected by the new framework", one answer would generally be "not at all unless you want to be". Everything that today is recognised as a peal or a method will continue to be. With a goal for the framework of providing a common language to describe all kinds of method ringing, our starting point was to define the boundaries of what, with a permissive mindset, would reasonably be considered method ringing. Using these boundaries, we then derived what we

thought should be considered a peal and a method, and we also did the same for many other method-ringing terms. There were no cases where we concluded that something recognised in today's Decisions shouldn't be recognised in the future.

But the defined boundaries encompass a wider range of method ringing than today's Decisions, as outlined further below. The framework also standardises the treatment of different lengths and stages, standardises the process for naming new methods, and eliminates the "non-method block" category that was introduced in 2014, among various other updates. In addition, examples and explanations are provided to make the framework as clear as possible.

## Method ringing boundaries

The boundaries we defined are covered in Section 2.B of the framework ([https://ccbr.github.io/method\\_ringing\\_framework](https://ccbr.github.io/method_ringing_framework)) so I won't repeat them all here. But I will touch on four items:

1. **Truth:** Today a quarter peal of Doubles frequently involves ringing 10 extents and a true 60 to give 1260 changes. This concept of 0 to n extents plus 1 optional partial extent is applied in the framework as the generic test of truth for all lengths and at all stages. However, performances of Doubles and Minor and other adjacent stage ringing continues to be recognised as having what we've defined as Accepted Truth.
2. **Cover bells:** It's already well-established that a cover bell is excluded when determining truth (unless it's a variable cover bell). For example, a performance of Doubles with a cover is tested for truth at Stage 5, not Stage 6. The framework recognises more than one cover bell in performances, and cover bells may be at the back of the row or the front of the row (or, as explained further below, even in the middle of the row). They are all excluded when testing for truth.
3. **Methods:** An area of longstanding controversy in the CC Decisions is what is recognised as a method. For decades this had a knock-on effect in that peals could only comprise recognised methods. So if you rang a peal that included a method that wasn't recognised, it also meant that your peal wasn't recognised, even if it comprised a true block of rows. Under the framework, any sequence of changes can be named as a method. Some consequences of this are discussed further below.

4. **Jump changes:** These are changes where one or more bells move further than an adjacent place between one row and the next (e.g. ring in 2nd's place at hand-stroke, and 4th's place at backstroke). The framework recognises jump changes in both methods and performances. While we don't expect the use of jump changes to become commonplace anytime soon (ordinary 'adjacent' changes provide plenty enough interest and challenge for many ringers), these are occasionally rung and can produce true blocks of rows, so the framework should include them. Any methods with jump changes will include 'Jump' in their method title so they can be easily identified.

## Disclosure not rules

A key change in the requirements for peals is that any deviation from established practice doesn't necessarily lead to a peal (or any performance length) not being recognised. Instead the framework includes disclosure requirements for performances that don't follow established norms, such as the use of physical aids to memory, a performance conducted from outside the circle, or a performance rung by more than one band in relay. The idea is to give readers of performance reports sufficient information to enable them to decide what they're interested in reading about.

## What else is new?

The framework also clarifies other terms. Have you ever rung a touch of around 1900 changes and been asked if it's too long to send up as a quarter peal? Have you ever tried to organize a half peal and been asked "Do they exist", or even "Are they allowed?" I have. The framework sets out ranges for the various performance lengths.

## Progress against the mandate

To date we have been more successful in increasing permissiveness while preserving historical continuity than we have in increasing simplicity, and this is mostly because the latter two are often opposed to each other. For example, the current method classification system (which leads to Cambridge being a Surprise method, Plain being a Bob method, etc.) is undoubtedly complex. Determining that a method has a classification of Differential Little Treble Place involves multiple steps, and even more if the method has two or more hunt bells. However, any simplification of the classification system leads to some method titles changing (method title = method name + classification + stage), which means records of historical

performances, perhaps including peal or quarter peal boards, would require a mapping table to interpret.

While the task group agreed on some simplifications to the classification system, we couldn't agree in other areas of classification. While debate is still in progress, we may develop two proposals and ask the ringing community to provide input on which is preferred. The first proposal would simplify the classification system but require about 2-3% of the 20,000 methods in the method library to be retitled (this doesn't include any widely rung methods), while the second proposal would keep most of the existing classification system in place and require very few changes to method titles.

### Simplification

Still, simplification has been achieved in some areas. Notably, peals are standardised under the framework as having 5,000 or more changes on all numbers of bells. As mentioned above, there is a single definition of truth for all lengths and at all stages, and the handling of cover bells (both fixed and variable) is standardised across all stages.

### More on methods

As mentioned earlier, any sequence of changes can be named as a method under the framework. So, what are the implications of this?

First, the restrictions on what can be a method have already been relaxed in recent years. The current Decisions recognise methods that are false in their plain courses (true leads from such methods have been used to create very musical compositions of spliced), and they also recognise methods with an unlimited number of consecutive blows in the same place, unless that place is the leading or lying place, in which case the limit is one blow less than the length of the lead.

The framework relaxes the four remaining constraints on methods so that any sequence of changes can be named as a method:

- 1. One-lead plain course:** Under today's Decisions, if a method's plain course isn't divisible into two or more leads, it isn't recognised as a method. The framework recognises one-lead methods so that, for example, a Doubles method whose plain course produces an extent, but which is non-divisible, can be named as a method.
- 2. Use of the identity change:** The identity change keeps every bell in the same place from one row to the next. This isn't permitted under today's Decisions, but can be useful in some circumstances. For example, an extent of Plain Bob Doubles can be turned into a true 240 by calling a single with place notation 12345 at two points 120 changes apart. This 240 has the nice feature of every row appearing once at handstroke and once at backstroke. While this is an example of the identity change being used as a call, it can also be used as part of a method to give similar results.

- 3. Rotations:** Under the current Decisions, rotations of a method are not considered a separate method. Since a composition can use a subset of a method's changes to start and/or finish the method in a different place, it's usually unnecessary for a rotation to be separately named. However, there are a few situations where separate naming is beneficial. A commonly-cited example is New Grandsire. This is a rotation of Grandsire where the unaffected hunt bell courses after the affected hunt bell (rather than the other way around in Grandsire). Many who have rung this say it seems like a different method. It has also been spliced with Grandsire, so separate naming facilitates the calling of changes of method. The framework recognises the separate naming of rotations, though discourages it unless there is good reason.
- 4. Consecutive blows:** The framework removes the remaining restriction on consecutive blows – leading and lying bells now have no restriction. Of course, this leads to potential overlap between cover bells and bells that are part of a method. For example, the same rows could be produced by a Doubles method rung with a cover bell, and a Minor method that holds the same bell in 6th's place continuously. Rather than trying to eliminate potential areas of overlap with rules (which almost invariably also results in outlawing other things that can be valid and useful), we believe the better approach is to give bands and composers the flexibility to describe their performances in the manner they consider to be the most natural. An example of this is given below under "Interior cover bells".

### Side by side ringing

When seeking to find the boundaries of method ringing, a question that arises is the ringing of more than one method in the same row. For example, on 12 bells, a Minor method could be rung on bells 1-6, and another Minor method could be rung on bells 7-12. Since this approach can be used to generate a true block of rows, we concluded that it is within the boundaries of what is considered method ringing. The truth of such a block is determined in the same way as for any other block, in this case treating each row as a Maximus-stage row.

### Interior cover bells

A variation on the above is to ring a Doubles method on bells 1-5, have a cover bell in 6th's place, ring another Doubles method on bells 7-11, and have another cover bell in 12th's place. Truth would be determined by excluding the two cover bells and testing the uniqueness of the remaining 10-bell rows.

The same rows could be generated by describing the above as a Cinques method with the bell in 6th's place making 6ths continuously, and rung with a cover bell in 12th's place. This is an example of where bands are given the flexibility under the

framework to describe their performances in the manner that is the most natural to them. A bell that is kept in the same place continuously by a method is excluded when determining truth, in the same way that a cover bell is excluded.

As with jump changes, we don't expect side by side ringing to suddenly become commonplace – its inclusion ensures the framework can describe the full range of method ringing that falls within our defined boundaries.

### What is the downside?

This permissiveness isn't without potential downside since nonsensical outcomes can result. For example, a Maximus method could be defined where the treble and 2 dodge continuously and bells 3 to 12 stay in the same place, in effect 10 cover bells built into a method. But the problem is that any absurdity that you try to rule out often results in something sensible also being ruled out. The task group's view is that it is better to be permissive and trust ringers to use the framework sensibly.

And we can be fairly sure this permissiveness won't cause problems because today's Decisions already provide plenty of opportunity for mischief. One task group member demonstrated that an ordinary peal of seven Minor methods can be turned into a peal of 700 Minor methods by taking fragments of the seven methods' changes and naming them as separate methods. Ringers generally don't abuse the system, and if they do, the CC retains the power under the framework to decline to add a new method to the library.

### Next steps

The task group now hopes to be ready to start a ringing-community-wide consultation on the new framework in late March or April. We will provide more details on this in a subsequent *RW* article.

We hope that as many ringers as possible will review the new framework, either now or when a more complete draft is ready at the start of the consultation. This article hasn't covered everything that's being proposed, but you can read the full framework at [https://ccbr.github.io/method\\_ringing\\_framework](https://ccbr.github.io/method_ringing_framework)

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