

Steve and Sue Coleman 's Course on Conducting

Last year, a friend of mine attended a course on Conducting by Steve and Sue Coleman, and she was so excited about how much she'd learnt that I decided to invite them down to run a course here. As we could only accommodate a small group of students, I asked just around and found eight people who would like to attend, without any effort at all.

The day began at Haselbury with coffee and introductions, and then we had half an hour's theory. I think I can safely say that none of us were expecting what followed! Our day include four hours of ringing, at Haselbury and Merriott, and by the end every "student" had made huge progress – beyond their wildest dream I would think.

During the ringing, each person had a go at calling a touch of a method of their choice. Steve asked what they would like to call, stuck them on a bell and told them what to call. At the same time, he had Sue standing behind someone else, and they had to tell her quietly where they thought the calls ought to go. After each student had had a go at calling a touch (all successful!) the next challenge was for each to try to say what work the other bells were doing as they passed them. Never have we seen such concentration as Les Perry saying "Double dodge with me, then stay up and double dodge with Brian and go in Quick. Anna, go up and double dodge with Brian, lie and double dodge down with Rosemary and go in Slow" etc!

For the finale, a duet was proposed! Two people at once had to tell everyone they met what their next piece of work was. It got quite noisy!

Typical of Steve's way of teaching – he said "Well done, that was a very nice bob, but it was in the wrong place"!

I think it will be difficult to resist inviting Steve and Sue back for another course sometime. Many thanks to them both, and to the towers that allowed us to use their facilities, and to the helpers and the students who worked so hard to support each other and make the most of what was on offer.

We learnt so much that it was hard to write it all down, but here as far as I can tell you are the points that he made;

- ♣ "Be nice!" Nobody wants to ring with someone who conducts aggressively, and when they do, they are so nervous that they are quite likely to go wrong. A friendly smile is a big help.
- ♣ Say "Rounds please if things go wrong. We had a variation on this, when someone called "That's all please"! Another call, which you may find useful was "That could be all"!!!!
- ♣ If someone is going wrong in the same place each time, a quiet word after the touch might be best.

♣ Say you are coming out of the super market and you meet George going in. Poor George has forgotten what he is doing there, but you can help him by suggesting that he might be going shopping. Of course, he might not be, but it's quite likely to be right. Similarly, if no one comes down to take you from lead, and George is striking somewhere near you and looking lost, you can suggest that he might try leading. You might be wrong, but on the other hand there is a good chance you might be right. No one will mind if you're wrong and if you're right you will have saved the day!

♣ If you are leading on the Treble, observe the bell making 2nd's over you. Get ready to help if he disappears in the wrong direction – say "Make 2nds, and lead again". Do the same everywhere else where you know what the bells around you should do. Don't wait till they go wrong to form the words – have them ready in your mouth!

♣ Learn from fire ups. Work out what went wrong and be ready to put it right if it goes wrong next time.

♣ Concentrate on where YOU are. Don't bother watching the Treble. Learn the calling positions for the inside bells and rely on them.

♣ If you miss a Bob, don't panic! Let the ringing carry on, through a whole course, until you come back to where the call should have been. No need to confess – most people won't even notice! If they do, they will think you intended doing it for a bit of extra practice.

♣ Never apologise if you miss a call. Fred had a stutter. He used to call "S - s - s - s sod it, I've missed it!"

♣ Think ahead. Plan where the next call will be, and work towards it. Don't just float on till the right calling position looms up – anticipate it.

♣ To get nicely struck Rounds at the end, call "That's all" at the Handstroke. If you leave it till the last Backstroke, the people on the back bells will already have prepared to carry on, and may not get their bell nicely into Rounds.

♣ Make up a mnemonic to help you – IOM for **I**n, **O**ut and **M**ake it, or BIO for Make the **B**ob, **I**n and **O**ut.

♣ You are calling Call Changes, you've got the bells all mixed up, and you can't think how on earth to get back to Rounds. Look around and see who is looking LEFT. Call the bell they are following to ring after them. By the time you have got everyone ringing after the bell on their Right, you have Rounds. (At an anti clockwise ring, please do the opposite or you will end with Back Rounds!)

♣ If your Plain Bob doesn't come round, wait until you have 2 and 5 or 3 and 4 dodging together in 3-4. Then call a Bob and it will come round.

♣ To keep count of the number of 120s you've rung in a Quarter Peal, imagine that you are ringing one for each ringer in the band. Start with Treble ringer, then ring one for

the 2, the 3, the 4 and the 5. Then ring one for each of them again, and you will have rung 10. Add a 60 and you've done it!

♣ A nice touch of Stedman Doubles: Call a Single at the backstroke before you lead, when you go in quick. Do it twice and it will be 120.

♣ In Stedman Triples, call a Bob on your last blow in 5th's when you are dodging 4-5 down before coming in Quick. This is called "In Q". Then call another Bob on the way out, at your second blow in 2nd's. Do it again and you have a 168 called "2 Qs". (If you are calling this from the Treble the calls come in a different order.)

♣ Any Minor method, including Surprise, you can call a Bob every time you dodge 5-6 Up and 5-6 Down.

♣ Another calling for any Minor method is Make The Bob Twice.