BOOK REVIEW

The Core Seven and Beyond

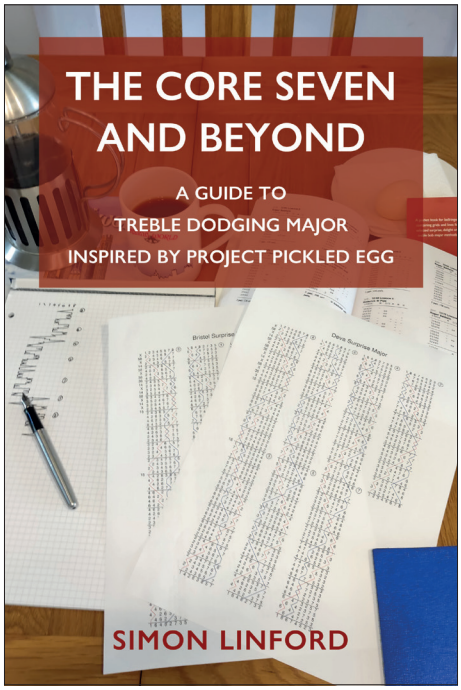
by Simon Linford

Reviewed by Peter Sanderson

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My copy of this book arrived in early December and I only had time for a quick glance through it before Christmas took over. I'm therefore grateful to the editor for asking me to write this review – it's served as a useful prompt to examine the book in detail.

The book title may not give too much away in itself but the sub-title makes things clearer: "A guide to treble dodging major inspired by Project Pickled Egg". Project Pickled Egg (PPE) was Simon's attempt to challenge the status quo of Surprise Major ringing which for the past fifty years has been dominated by the so-called "Standard 8". With the help of many collaborators, the project considered methods more-or-less on their merits rather than on any historical significance. The result was the "Core Seven" methods referred to in the title, which form a more logical, structured and rewarding introduction to treble dodging major methods than the "Standard 8" ever did. It was not without controversy and PPE still has its critics, but this is a review of the book rather than the project.



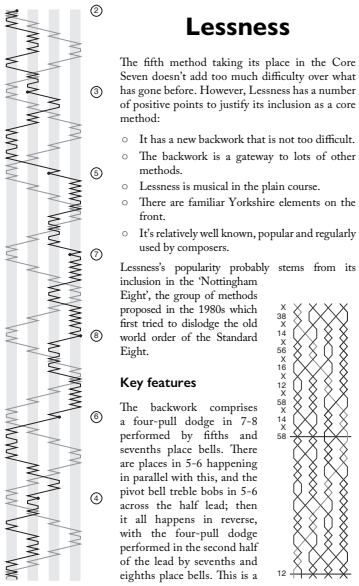
Selecting the core seven methods was almost certainly the easy part of the project. Persuading ringers to adopt them will be much more difficult though early signs are encouraging. This book will be a vital resource in that process, explaining clearly the logic behind the selections and offering a multitude of tips on how to learn, ring and enjoy them either as single methods or spliced together. So many tips, in fact, that ringers embarking on the treble dodging major journey may feel overwhelmed at first, but Simon's style of writing is at all times gently encouraging and goes a long way to overcoming the potential for information overload.

Liberally sprinkled throughout is a first-rate selection of compositions for touches and, especially, quarter peals with an emphasis on ease of calling and music. I was relieved to see the traditional "2 and 1, 1 and 2" quarter peal of Bristol eschewed in favour of the just-as-easy and much more rewarding "1 and 1, 2 and 2".

Of the 220 pages in the book, the first 102 concentrate on the core seven methods, whilst at the same time suggesting some closely related "try also" methods - recommendations to provide more variety but without added complexity. From page 103 we move to the "and beyond" part of the book's title, firstly into the herb garden (methods which are only slightly more difficult and which use the building blocks found in the core seven) and then onwards to the spice rack where the difficulty index is gradually ratcheted up by several more degrees, culminating in the fearsome looking Carolina Reaper Treble Bob. The book concludes with a small selection of peal compositions and also a useful set of quick reference lines covering all of the 52 methods which have been considered within the text.

The quality of the printing is excellent with an easy-on-the-eye type face. The diagrams are exceptionally clear and Simon's text is utterly readable. There are several typographical errors which is a shame, but none affect the meaning of what has been written. I did spot one factual error – at the bottom of page 76 there is a curious assertion that Ipswich Surprise Major shares the same overwork as York (it doesn't). Given that Ipswich isn't one of the PPE methods I did wonder if this was Simon's attempt at sabotage!

In conclusion, I strongly recommend the book to all ringers of treble dodging major – from those just starting to ring Cambridge or Yorkshire to more experienced ringers including tower and branch ringing-masters. If you're putting together a schedule of methods-of-the-month for your branch practices and are about to pencil in Rutland for October, please stop and read this book first.



Lessness

The fifth method taking its place in the Core Seven doesn't add too much difficulty over what has gone before. However, Lessness has a number of positive points to justify its inclusion as a core method:

- It has a new backwork that is not too difficult.
- The backwork is a gateway to lots of other methods.
- Lessness is musical in the plain course.
- There are familiar Yorkshire elements on the front.
- It's relatively well known, popular and regularly used by composers.

Lessness's popularity probably stems from its inclusion in the 'Nottingham Eight', the group of methods proposed in the 1980s which first tried to dislodge the old world order of the Standard Eight.

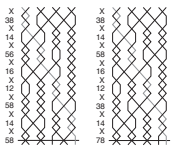
Key features

The backwork comprises a four-pull dodge in 7-8 performed by fifths and sevenths place bells. There are places in 5-6 happening in parallel with this, and the pivot bell treble bobs in 5-6 across the half lead; then it all happens in reverse, with the four-pull dodge performed in the second half of the lead by sevenths and eighths place bells. This is a

very common backwork, and has traditionally been referred to as the Uxbridge backwork.

Learning tips

There is quite a bit of Yorkshire in this method. Every lead starts and ends with Yorkshire as this comparison of the grids shows. Sixths and fourths place bells are Yorkshire as far as the half lead.



Comparison of Lessness (left) and Yorkshire (right) half-lead grids

The double and single dodges in 3-4 in seconds and fourths place bells can be got the wrong way round – if you can see that the single dodge is at the half lead it should help.

Another point of confusion can be the dodge and lead on the front in seconds place bell (lead and dodge in fourths place bell). Which way round is it? One way of thinking about it is to think of that work on the front, and the double and single in 3-4, together. So in fourths place bell, you go from no dodge, then one dodge (on the front), then up to 3-4 where you do one dodge, then two. In the other direction you go from two dodges to one dodge (in 3-4) then one dodge to no dodge (in 1-2).

Learning Cornwall and Lessness together may cause them to be confused. Four dodges in Lessness because there are four S's in Lessness!

What to spot in practice

As you get more adept at the four-pull dodge, try to do it without counting, but by watching or listening for the treble. In the first part of the lead, the last of the four dodges is when the treble is dodging in 5-6. So in sevenths place bell you dodge until your handstroke is over the treble, dodge once more (while the treble does its 5-6 dodge), then pass the treble and head down to 5-6. At the other end of the lead, the dodges finish when the treble dodges on the front, so you are listening for the treble's handstroke snap lead (don't dodge when you hear it).

It is worth looking at the 5-6 places in fifths and eighths place bells carefully, because they catch people out quite frequently. To understand how they work, look at the grid or the numbers. In fifths place bell, the dodge in 7-8 is with the treble before you go down to 5-6. So at the half lead you are moving from sevenths to sixths place. You then dodge with the pivot bell, which has done a treble bob in 5-6, and *turn round.* The treble

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COMPLAINTS HELPLINE
If you need help in dealing with a noise complaint about your bells, contact Robert Wood by e-mail (preferable) at
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or phone **07947 059442**

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