

Essay for the Friends No. 13

Andrew James Corrigan and his publications on Surprise methods

Andrew Corrigan was an Irishman, and learned to ring in Dublin, being taught by no less a person than Gabriel Lindoff. For many years he was a member of the band at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, where he rang a number of peals. Later he moved to England, living for a short while in Norwich and Southampton before settling in Bristol about the year 1938. He lived in Bitton, where Ellacombe had been vicar. During the last war he had health problems and did not take up ringing again until afterwards. He died in 1952 at the age of 67.

Andrew Corrigan was a printer by profession, and it was through this, and his theoretical work, that his name became so well known. His publications of collections of Surprise methods in place notation were the foundations on which others have subsequently built, and the various editions of Corrigan's collections are of interest to the serious collector. Some insight to the process of publication can be obtained from a series of letters that he wrote to Nolan Golden, with whom he was very friendly. However, his first publication was a small collection of peals of Grandsire Triples. During the war he lost some of his papers, and on 27 December 1946 he wrote to Nolan Golden asking about the figures of two six-part compositions of Grandsire Triples, the figures of which he had sent to Nolan Golden but which he had lost in his missing papers. A booklet containing seven compositions of Grandsire Triples, described as 'Parkerised', was published in 1947, and this contained three six-part compositions, presumably including the two of which he had lost the figures. The preface is dated February 1947 but the first notice of the collection in the *Ringing World* was in Belfry Gossip

on 28 March 1947, where it was noted that a new collection had been printed by Andrew Corrigan, and that it was hoped to publish them in the *Ringling World* in due course (this did not happen).

Later in 1947 he published a collection of 100 Surprise Major methods, mostly supplied by Nolan Golden, but with others from H.G. Cashmore. The initial print run was evidently small, as the collection was advertised on 4 July 1947 (cost 1s. post free) and was sold out in five days. A fortnight later a letter and advertisement announced that a second impression was then ready (1s. post free, three copies 2s. 6d., six for 4s.). The most noteworthy thing about this collection was the use of place notation to concisely define the methods. In a letter about the collection, published in the issue of 4 July 1947, Andrew Corrigan calls attention to the fact that place notation was used, mainly for reasons of economy, and states that it was 'an adaptation of place notation which was used by Carter in his table of methods published in the *Ringling World* some 30 years ago, and which is freely used for the exchange of methods between ringers.' Despite this, he found it necessary to place an explanation of place notation on the inside of the last page of the collection. The article to which he refers appeared in the *Ringling World* of 26 December 1919 in which he gives various methods in a form of place notation (and sparked off a furious debate as to whether Bristol was a Surprise method!). Actually, the origins go further back, to some of the work of that argumentative genius the Rev. H. Law James, who in 1907 published in *Bell News* (13 April, 4 May and 17 August) tables which effectively used the principles of place notation, a fact pointed out by J. Armiger Trollope in a letter in the *Ringling World* of 2 January 1920.

The next collection to be published by Corrigan was one of 160 un-named Surprise Major Methods which was first

advertised on 2 October 1947 (1s. post free, 3 for 2s. 6d.). It was stated to be first published in October 1947 and printed at the Bell Press, Bitton. It was no doubt this collection that Corrigan referred to in a letter that he wrote to Nolan Golden on 9 December 1947:

'E.C.S. Turner has just deflated me with a list of about 30 of my "unnamed" methods which have already been baptised. None of them rung, however, so the mistake is not very deadly. If and when they are rung they'll probably get new names anyway.'

Corrigan's publications were listed at the back of the booklet, and this shows that a few copies of the publication of 100 Surprise Methods were still available, as well as copies of his peals of Grandsire Triples (9d. post free). What is also interesting is that it was stated that 100 Major Surprise Methods Series II would be published in December, while in the following Spring a collection of Royal and Maximus would be published. However, there are no advertisements in the Ringing World for the 100 Major Surprise Methods Series II and it must have been subsumed into a collection of 370 Surprise Major Methods which was advertised on 18 June 1948 as being ready on 26 June and 'containing all named methods ever rung or published. 2s. post free.' In a letter to Nolan Golden, dated 14 July 1948, he gives information about the print run:

'About 250 of each part is the number I am at selling. That is what I printed of the 2/- one, and 150 have gone already. I have also printed another batch on better paper from which to supply a bound library edn. Later.'

A footnote was added to a letter sent a week later, and he commented ruefully to Nolan Golden:

'I have received just £16 for copies of the 370, over and above postage & envelopes. That would not cover commercial cost, so it's certainly not a paying proposition.'

In a further letter of 3 November he expanded further on the same theme:

'I couldn't dream of getting out the SM parts if I didn't set the type for them myself. The 370, in place notation, that is 28 to the page, had not yet brought in enough to pay the normal printing bill, not to mention advertising, postage, etc. And it was the best-seller so far-...'

Despite this, on 26 November 1948 a revised edition of the collection of 370 Surprise Major Methods was advertised in the *Ringling World*.

Meanwhile, he had been collecting material for a collection of Surprise Royal and Maximus methods. On 4 December 1948 he wrote to Nolan Golden:

'Am in the midst of the 10 and 12 bells issue. It's going to be even bigger than my recent fears suggested, but will be interesting. Speed, who is now in the Near East on military training, has put in a bunch of the best Maximus you ever saw – I enclose notation of some. Cashmore has given a large bunch of new Royals and has promised some Maximus as well. How about Nolan Golden's bunch? You haven't much time, as I hope to publish in January.'

Despite Corrigan's intentions, in May 1949 he was still corresponding with Nolan Golden to sort out various queries, and his booklet on 350 Surprise Royal and Maximus Methods was not published until July 1949, again at a cost of 2s. This was announced in a front-page article in the *Ringling World* of 12 August, written by Nolan Golden, but was not advertised until

the issue of 16 September. The advertisement also mentioned the second edition of 370 Surprise Major, but stated that the 160 un-named methods was sold out.

The next publication by Corrigan gave the dates of first peals and progressive lengths in all published Surprise methods on eight, ten or twelve bells, up to 31 December 1949. However, this was not what had been intended. On 9 October 1948 he wrote to Nolan Golden:

'If I print 10 & 12 bells for one issue, - Part D - then Part E will consist of (a) List of Performances 8, 10 & 12 bells; (b) Short article on extraction of f.c.h. based on Hodgson's grouping of 60 f.c.h. but written by E.A. Barnett (who is at present in a sanatorium); (c) - possibly also a short list of selected Major Surprises, say the 50 Best Methods, on the lines suggested by Taylor in the R.W. but not adopting his Carterish idea of cutting out all methods making extreme places at the lh and hl.'

However, only the work on first performances was published in May 1950, and this despite his serious ill health in the early months of the year. Because of the more limited nature of the work, sales were poor, and when Corrigan wrote to Nolan Golden on 7 August 1950 he added a note to his typed letter:

'Dates of Performance has been a floppum flopporum. Sales have not reached £1. Sickening I calls it.'

The small sales precluded a corrected reprint that had been promised, and so an errata slip was subsequently produced.

His final publication was a booklet on the half-lead method of producing False Courseheads in Treble Bob Methods which had been intended to publish as an integral part of Part E. Although this was published in September 1950, he had been

gathering material for some while. In a letter to Nolan Golden, written on 15 April 1948, he wrote:

'Turner reminds me (as if I knew!) that there are more up-to-date and shorter methods of getting out f.c.e.s than those described by J.A.T. in the Collection. I shall have to tackle this question soon...

From Lindoff's notebooks it seems likely that he was able to obtain, by transposition at the half-leadhead, the leadhead itself. In other words, he didn't have to work out the whole lead, as I must, to find whether it was going to be 352, 426, or whatever it might be. If this is so, how is it done? And was it common knowledge, as Kewsett wrote in RW recently, that inspection of the half-leadhead told whether or not Bob Major leadhead would result? The reason I asked is that Stephen Wood didn't know it shortly before his death, when I was discussing place notation with him.'

The other suggested section of Part E, a selection of methods, also does not seem to have been published. The reason seems to have connected with opposition. On 3 November 1948 Corrigan wrote:

'By the way, H.G.C. has just sent me a long protest against any attempt at printing a selection of 50 or 100 Methods. If his attitude is anything like typical I will certainly have to reconsider – and very seriously too. I shall send you on his letter in my next.'

With the publication of the booklet on extracting false course ends the series of productions came to an end. In the file in the CC Library there are one further letter from Corrigan to Nolan Golden, dated 1 September 1951, and in this he mentions that he is trying to get another printing press for the Bell Press, but was having difficulty in arranging transport from Buxton to Bristol. He died on 25 February 1952 after a short illness. His

obituary in the Ringing World of 7 March ended with the following paragraph:

'A printer by profession, he rendered valuable service to the Exercise by his publications of Surprise methods, which are widely known. The Gloucester and Bristol Association have lost a good friend who, through his professional and practical assistance, had made it possible for the Association to continue to issue its annual reports, despite the high cost of printing in these days. In fact he was working on the report for 1951 when he had the seizure from which he never recovered and this report will be his memorial. The work and time that Andrew Corrigan spent in the interest of ringing and ringers had made him loved and revered throughout the Exercise.'

But what about the use of place notation, which these publications did so much to publicise? It seems to have taken a little while to catch on, as until 1956, when a new method was rung, a half lead of it was published in the *Ringing World*, a fact pointed out by George Morris in the introduction to his book on place notation, published by the Central Council in 1984.

Title	Publisher	Place	Date	Ed	Pgs	Notes
Some peals of Grandsire Triples	The Author	Bitton	Feb 1947		8	
One Hundred Surprise Methods in Place Notation. First series (Major).	The Author	Bitton	July 1947		8	
One Hundred Surprise Methods in Place Notation. First series (Major).	The Author	Bitton	July 1947	2nd imp	8	
160 Unnamed Major Surprise Methods. Section II.	The Bell Press	Bitton, nr. Bristol	Oct. 1947		9	Pages 29-37
370 Surprise Major Methods. Part C.	The Collector, The Bell Press	Bitton, nr. Bristol	June 1948		16	Pages 17-32 Printed landscape
370 Surprise Major Methods. Part C.	The Collector, The Bell Press	Bitton, Bristol	1948	2nd	16	Pages 17-32 Printed landscape
350 Surprise Royal and Maximus Methods. Part D.	The Collector, The Bell Press	Bitton	July 1949		12	Pages 33-44. Printed landscape
Details of First Peals and Progressive Lengths in all published Surprise Methods on 8,10 or 12 bells. Up to December 1949. Part E.	The Bell Press	Bitton, nr. Bristol	May 1950		6	Pages 47-52 Printed landscape
Half-lead System of extracting False Courseheads in Treble Bob Methods.	The Bell Press	Bitton, Bristol	Sept. 1950		16	Pages 55-67 Printed landscape

Sources

Letter file, Andrew Corrigan to Nolan Golden CC Library Cat. No. 2727.

Publications of Andrew Corrigan, in CC Library. The holdings include all of these except the first impression of the *One Hundred Surprise Methods in Place Notation* (July 1947).

Thanks to Bill Butler for the loan of his collection of material for purposes of cross-checking.

For George Baker
a/c

First Series

ONE HUNDRED
SURPRISE
METHODS

IN PLACE NOTATION

One Shilling

Section II

160 UNNAMED MAJOR

SURPRISE
METHODS

IN PLACE NOTATION

Collected by A. J. Corrigan