
Subject: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [Maren](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 00:17:27 GMT

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One car, eight bells, and a large dark cloud of prospective dread

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [anne_d](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 01:26:50 GMT

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Huzzah for Wolfgang!

I hit the part about clutching the pocket torch in your teeth, and had a sudden epiphany, or at least a small lightbulb over my head - what you need for hellhound hurtles after dark is one of those miners's hats with a lamp on the front. It'd have to be pink, of course, and sparkly, or perhaps covered in roses...

By the way, and for what it's worth, I like reading about what other people are doing, especially when it isn't something I can do or would dare to try.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [athenapallas87](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 02:21:01 GMT

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I can only hope that when my 13-year-old Acura with 153,800 miles on it turns 16, it's only concern is new shocks. As it is, I'm half surprised I've never needed to take it in for anything more major than a clutch replacement.

And for the record, I enjoy reading the bell parts!^ I tried to read the Wikipedia entries on it once, and found that oddly more confusing than anything. Besides, it really is just like reading about magic; there comes a point where you just have to accept the vocabulary as it is, and eventually it'll all make a sort of sense. Like hearing "bob major" the first time and going, "Wow. I've never heard of that before and I have no idea what that means." But, obviously it's something tricky, and difficult, and to do with handbells, not big bells. And if I really can't figure it out, my god, it's not as if I don't have a massive online resource at my fingertips--not that those are often any more comprehensible, but still. YOUTUBE! Yes!

^Also never been able to understand the e-mailing to let someone know you were bored by something you read of theirs. If you're that bored, stop reading, skim, or move along. No one is

holding a gun to your head telling you there'll be a pop quiz later.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [HeiQ](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 03:55:18 GMT

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When I read your stuff about bell ringing, I pretended like I knew what you were talking about, but it really was just pretense. After reading your blog for a few days, I realized that you talk about bell ringing quite often, so I thought that figuring out what it actually is might be a bit of a plus... I read some comments in the blog posts saying that method ringing is mathematical and uses various permutations and combinations, and that made some sense as I have a math degree. Then in tonight's post you suggested youtube, and I was like, "Duh!" Now I know ALL about bell ringing, and even have some idea of what bob major is, haha... Well, not quite, but I think I have a better idea now.

On a sidenote, I think I read somewhere that you hated maths in school... So how on earth did you end up doing something as mathematical as method ringing of church bells AND handbells? :)

On another sidenote, I've started reading the blog in two windows, and now that I don't have to scroll up and down looking for my place, it is SO much easier to read without my brain going crazy, so thank you again to whoever suggested it!

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [jjmCGaffey](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 04:07:30 GMT

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Actually - I roped in one (blog) reader _because_ of the bells. I still don't know if she reads your books - she likes manga, I know - but she rings bells, both tower and hand. I pointed her at one of your interviews in which you spent some time discussing bells, then suggested she might enjoy your blog as well. She's told me she reads it.

I find the discussions of bells fascinating if opaque. Yes, it does feel a lot like the explanations of kelar...except if I wanted to, this I could do. And (thanks to my bell-ringing friend, among other things) none of it is completely new to me.

I'm a middling knitter - I knit stockinette and garter stitch very well, don't ask me to do patterns or increases or decreases...so I've been following those discussions as well, with equal interest and somewhat more understanding.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [HeiQ](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 04:34:17 GMT
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Oh wow. I just read up on change ringing and method ringing on wikipedia and I am even more impressed now. What you are doing is actually very heavily based on group theory, which is university level algebra. And now I know what a quarter peal is (I had been wondering, but didn't want to ask because I knew I could find out for myself).

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [Diane in MN](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 08:35:27 GMT
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Good for Wolfgang! Long may he flourish. But paeans to German durability are falling flat at the moment, as the Audi dealer told my husband that his Audi--a mere 7 years old--should have all its engine seals replaced, among other things, at truly VAST expense. Aaargh.

Of course seeing us may have had nothing to do with his sudden realisation that he hadn't locked his car^ . . . but it sure looked like it did. We're so dangerous.

Ah, the wilds of rural Hampshire, rife with dog-assisted auto thieves . . . :)

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [mgw1979](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 15:08:27 GMT
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Quote:But what someone else said for singing you ARE the instrument. Singing gives you a uniquely mad view of your own body or unique in my experience. And bell ringing is inevitably a team sport (unless you're doing it with your iPhone). What I'm LOOKING FORWARD to finding out is if singing in a group is more like bell ringing.

In my experience, singing in a group is still different from playing an instrument in a group. I've sung in madrigal groups and small choruses (I've never liked singing in a group so large you can't hear all the parts easily) and I've also played chamber music as a pianist/harpsichordist and (when I was very young) in a string quartet. There's something special about feeling the music moving through my whole body. And when you're doing it with a small group (1-5 people/part), you are very aware of what everyone else is doing, respond to each other and really get lost in the music.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [CathyR](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 19:01:00 GMT
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HeiQ wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 03:55 I read some comments in the blog posts saying that method ringing is mathematical and uses various permutations and combinations, and that made some sense as I have a math degree.

On a sidenote, I think I read somewhere that you hated maths in school... So how on earth did you end up doing something as mathematical as method ringing of church bells AND handbells? :)

I don't see bellringing as being based on maths at all. Rather, it's to do with seeing patterns in the numbers (ie when you have a method like Bob Major written out in rows and columns made up of the number of each bell), and patterns in the shapes of the blue lines (ie the line that each ringer follows). If it were to do with mathematical ability, I would have NO chance. :d I know ringers with very visual memories, who can look at the blue line, and see the top/bottom and left/right symmetries of the pattern, and ring it straight away on that basis alone! (That's not me either, unfortunately!)

The only way I understand maths to be involved is calculating the number of rows (unique combinations) of all the bells required in order to complete, say, a full peal. On seven or less bells, this means the bells are rung in $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 = 5040$ unique combinations. Having said that, I've just looked up group theory on Wikipedia, and can see how that would relate to bellringing. Very, very clever people, who compose complicated quarter peals and full peals, and who have brains the size of planets, no doubt use this. But at my level - no maths required, thank goodness! :d

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [Aaron](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 19:54:57 GMT
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Diane in MN wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 00:35

Quote:Of course seeing us may have had nothing to do with his sudden realisation that he hadn't locked his car^ . . . but it sure looked like it did. We're so dangerous.

Ah, the wilds of rural Hampshire, rife with dog-assisted auto thieves . . . :)

Without dogs to run down them down you can only steal autos that are standing still.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [mgw1979](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 19:55:07 GMT

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CathyR wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 14:01 I don't see bellringing as being based on maths at all. Rather, it's to do with seeing patterns in the numbers (ie when you have a method like Bob Major written out in rows and columns made up of the number of each bell), and patterns in the shapes of the blue lines (ie the line that each ringer follows). If it were to do with mathematical ability, I would have NO chance.

Actually, seeing patterns in number *is* math. It's not arithmetic, which is what most people think of when they think of math, but arithmetic is actually only a small (and not the most essential) part of math - like being able to spell is only a small part of writing. I use math for a living, and I can assure you that many - perhaps even most - of the mathematicians I know are pretty bad at arithmetic (just as there are some gifted writers who are dyslexic).

MG

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [CathyR](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 20:58:19 GMT

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mgw1979 wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 19:55

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Oh, OK, that's interesting. I hadn't thought of it like that. Thanks. :)

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [HeiQ](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 21:04:33 GMT

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CathyR wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 14:01

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I read your post and throughout the whole thing I was thinking, "But that is EXACTLY what math is!!!" It's just higher level math, way past the arithmetic stage... even the way the symmetries appear in the number patterns is math. It's a type of advanced algebra called group theory, which is all about how certain functions affect collections of things, to put it simply, haha... Bell ringing is math applied to real life in a very excellent way (so excellent that you didn't even realize that you are actually PERFORMING math, literally).

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [HeiQ](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 21:06:51 GMT

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Good answer mgw1979, by the way... I SO agree that lots of mathematicians are horrible at arithmetic, and that arithmetic is sort of analagous to spelling. Writing is easier if your spelling is good, just as math is usually easier if you have the arithmetic right, but that's not all that's needed. :)

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [mgw1979](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 21:16:36 GMT

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HeiQ wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 16:06 Good answer mgw1979, by the way... I SO agree that lots of mathematicians are horrible at arithmetic, and that arithmetic is sort of analagous to spelling. Writing is easier if your spelling is good, just as math is usually easier if you have the arithmetic right, but that's not all that's needed. :)

Thanks! I have a number theorist friend who complains that other mathematicians expect him to be good at arithmetic - "But I just study number theory, I don't work with actual numbers!"

And calculators/computers have done for mathematicians who are bad at arithmetic what spell-check and voice recognition have done for dyslexic writers.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [Aaron](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 22:14:47 GMT

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mgw1979 wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 13:16HeiQ wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 16:06Good answer mgw1979, by the way... I SO agree that lots of mathematicians are horrible at arithmetic, and that arithmetic is sort of analagous to spelling. Writing is easier if your spelling is good, just as math is usually easier if you have the arithmetic right, but that's not all that's needed. :)

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Being a mathematician doesn't mean that I can add, it means that I can prove it is possible to do so.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [CathyR](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 22:29:31 GMT

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Aaron wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 22:14

Being a mathematician doesn't mean I can add, it means that I can prove it is possible to do so.

So being a bellringer doesn't mean I can ring a peal of Bristol Surprise Maximus (a horrendously difficult method) - but it means I could prove it is possible to arrange ten bells to ring in the true pattern known by that name? :)

This has been a very interesting and enlightening discussion, thanks.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [mgw1979](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 22:34:14 GMT

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CathyR wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 17:29Aaron wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 22:14

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So being a bellringer doesn't mean I can ring a peal of Bristol Surprise Maximus (a horrendously difficult method) - but it means I could prove it is possible to arrange ten bells to ring in the true pattern known by that name? :)

Depends whether you're an applied bellringer or a theoretician ;)

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [blondviolinist](#) on Fri, 25 Feb 2011 22:49:08 GMT

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I love this thread soooooo much :)

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [mgw1979](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 00:30:53 GMT

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Aaron wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 17:14 Being a mathematician doesn't mean that I can add, it means that I can prove it is possible to do so.

My son just corrected me on this - Goedel's Incompleteness Theorme say you can't axiomatize mathematics so, technically, you can't ever prove that you can. ;)

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...

Posted by [Aaron](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 01:22:15 GMT

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mgw1979 wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 16:30 Aaron wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 17:14 Being a mathematician doesn't mean that I can add, it means that I can prove it is possible to do so.

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I think that you will find Incompleteness does not exclude proving things. It is itself a proof about the existence of statements in axiomatic systems which cannot be proved. This does imply that there is no one true set of axioms for arithmetic but within a given axiomatic system proofs about addition remain valid.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [mgw1979](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 01:32:07 GMT
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Aaron wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 20:22mgw1979 wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 16:30Aaron wrote on Fri, 25 February 2011 17:14Being a mathematician doesn't mean that I can add, it means that I can prove it is possible to do so.

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I think he was thinking about proving the larger system of arithmetic. You are absolutely correct about being able to prove you can do addition.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [HeiQ](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 03:05:45 GMT
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CathyR said on Fri, 25 February 2011 17:29So being a bellringer doesn't mean I can ring a peal of Bristol Surprise Maximus (a horrendously difficult method) - but it means I could prove it is possible to arrange ten bells to ring in the true pattern known by that name?

Well, a mathematician would be able to prove that it is possible to arrange 10 bells to ring the Bristol Surprise Maximus, and then, on top of that, they would be able to figure out the arrangement line by line... But knowing how to do that doesn't mean that they would know how to actually ring the bells. That's where the bellringers come in! :)

I've been thinking about bell ringing and the math involved all day (in between the other, slightly more essential things I've been doing), and it is just SO cool. Most of the applications for higher math that I know about are for computer programs and such (which are important, of course), but it's neat that there's such a PHYSICAL application for group theory. The only other one I know is the Rubix Cube. Change and method ringing is so neat. Too bad I'll probably never be close enough to actual bells to ever do it myself.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [Robin](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 03:27:42 GMT
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HANDBELLS. DON'T FORGET HANDBELLS.

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [HeiQ](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 03:59:14 GMT
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I don't think I could possibly find anyone else interested in method ringing with handbells in this super tiny town in the middle of nowhere that I live in right now... Although, that is definitely something to keep in mind for someday. (And I don't own an iPhone, or any other kind of cellphone, so I can't even use a method ringing app, haha).

Subject: Re: One car, eight bells, and...
Posted by [Black Bear](#) on Sat, 26 Feb 2011 04:01:22 GMT
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I was taught back in my museum studies classes about learning styles that music and math use the same parts of the brain. My instant reaction to bell ringing was that it was VERY mathematical, because it's all about timing and patterns.
