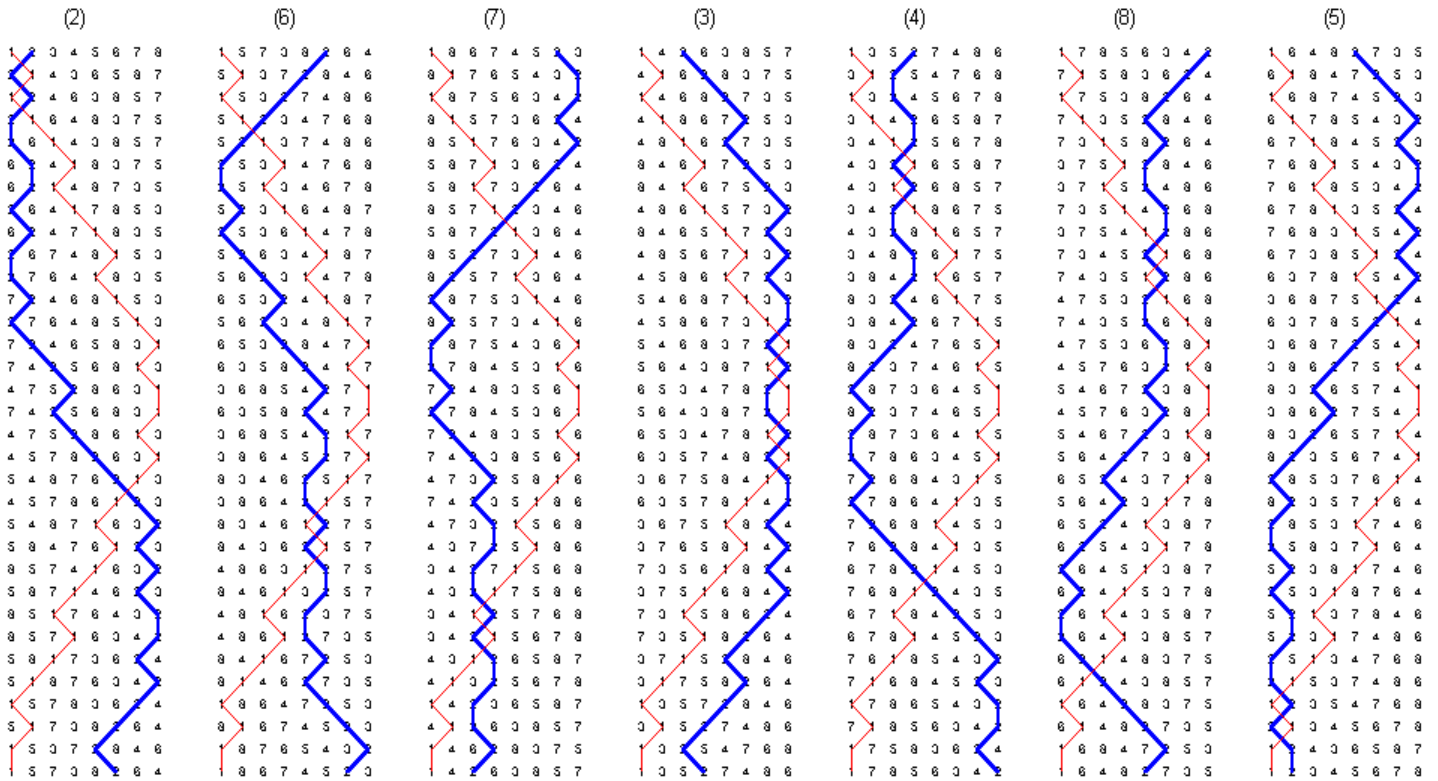


# CAMBRIDGE SURPRISE MAJOR



## INTRODUCTION

Cambridge Surprise Major is usually the first Surprise Major method that people learn, because of its relationship to Cambridge Surprise Minor. And yet, it isn't necessarily the easiest such method for the learner because the ringer meets the other bells in strange orders and there are several places where there are no dodges. These two factors mean that the work of the method must be thoroughly learned, as to rely on too many signposts is to invite trouble. In this article we will look at Cambridge Surprise Major in terms of its structure and see how this can help with its learning and ringing. In doing so we will also be dealing with the general structure of all Surprise Major methods. Some of the ideas will already be familiar to you but, whilst with simpler methods it is possible to get by without rigorous application of them, for Surprise Major they become increasingly important and useful.

Since I am already a bit bored with typing "Surprise Major" we shall use the term "SM" from now on.

## STRUCTURE

SM methods have the usual structure of being divided into sections of identical form in which the Treble moves away from and returns to lead. Thus each section of the method is called a "lead". Each column in the above diagram is one lead. The following terms must be understood.

Within the lead we have:

- "lead head", the first row of the lead, *i.e.* the Treble's backstroke lead
- "lead end", the last row of the lead, *i.e.* the Treble's handstroke lead
- "half lead", when the Treble lies behind
- "cross sections" where the Treble moves to its next dodging position

## PLACE BELLS

When ringing any method you will pass through the starting place of each of the other bells. With simpler methods this may be of academic interest only (or so the learner thinks) and many learners get to the SM stage having neglected it. Thus, if you pass through the starting place of the 2nd you become "2nd's place bell". It is important also to realise that each place bell starts at the Treble's backstroke lead, the lead head and ends at the Treble's next handstroke lead, the lead end. Once this is fully grasped then worries about bobs, singles, starting places and splicing are forever banished.

Looking at the diagram we have the following place bells (pb) for Cambridge SM:

<b>PB</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>
2nd's	the second blow of making 2nd's	the blow in 5th's of 5-6 down
3rd's	the blow in 3rd's of 3-4 up	the blow in 3rd's of 3-4 down
4th's	the blow in 4th's of 3-4 down	the blow in 7th's of 7-8 down
5th's	the blow in 5th's of 5-6 up	the first blow of making 2nd's
6th's	the blow in 6th's of 5-6 down	the blow in 8th's of 7-8 up
7th's	the blow in 7th's of 7-8 up	the blow in 4th's of 3-4 up
8th's	the blow in 8th's of 7-8 down	the blow in 6th's of 5-6 up

Notice that these aren't listed in the order in which they occur in the method. It is important to learn to see each as an independent unit.

## LEAD ORDER

In any method the leads are rung in a particular order. This is called the "lead order". Some people call it the coursing order but this is quite different. For simple methods such as Plain Bob the lead order is hardly vital and many people don't even bother with it for Cambridge S Minor (although they should). For advanced ringing the lead order is a necessity since it helps you to break the method into sections and you can also put yourself right at the next lead end.

For Cambridge (and many other methods) the lead order is 2 6 7 3 4 8 5, as can be seen from the diagram. It doesn't take long to learn this and is well worth the effort. When ringing Cambridge it is important to keep the lead order in mind so that you know in advance what your next place bell will be. Should you get lost you will at least be able to correct yourself at the next lead head.

## LEARNING

We will look at a general approach to learning methods and then apply it to Cambridge SM. After that we will see how the approach allows us to ring bobs and singles and also a different method.

### **Splitting Up The Method**

Many learners want to have an overall view of the shape of a method. This is fine for the simpler methods, including Cambridge, but doesn't work very well for more complex methods so we won't take this any further. If a particular method has some pattern to it then this can help but to adopt a learning method that relies too heavily on this will only make methods such as London and Bristol very difficult to learn.

Don't try to learn the whole blue line as one line and then learn where the starts are. This is too much. The complete line has 224 rows in it. Even worse is to learn half the method and then ring the second half backwards. Those who do this *always* make lots of mistakes. Learn each lead separately as each is only 32 rows; less than a course of Plain Bob Doubles. Even Surprise Maximus has only 48 rows per lead and this is a much more manageable task than learning all 528 rows.

From the diagram you will see that 3rd's pb is symmetrical. Start your learning with this lead (all SM methods have one) because you will learn it quickly and this gets you off to a good start. Next, you will notice that the remaining leads occur in pairs in which one lead is the reverse of the other. By learning them in pairs, but yet individually, you will learn two leads quite quickly. Don't, however, learn one lead and just try to turn it upside down for the other lead. This *does not* work and leads to too many method mistakes during ringing.

You must be able to recite the work of each lead without too much thought. Maybe writing out the lead on paper will help but remember that if you copy it instead of doing it from memory then you won't learn anything. Make sure that you can pick a lead at random and recite it. Don't learn methods in such a way that you need to know what you've already done before you start the next lead. A good technique is to write down each lead on separate cards and put the place bell number on the back. Shuffle the cards with the blue lines downwards and pick one. Then recite the lead as given by its place bell number. Go through all the cards until you can get through them in any order.

## Lead Order

Get this from the diagram. It's the positions that one of the bells (it doesn't matter which) goes through at the start of each lead. Learn this well.

## The Blue Line

Many methods have pieces of work that also occur in other simpler methods. Examples are hunting, dodging and making seconds. They also have new pieces of work and these often have standard names. It is best to use these names so that if the conductor issues proclamations during the ringing the ringers will know what he's on about. Try to be economical and concise. For instance if there are two pieces of work separated by plain hunting or treble bobbing it is adequate to remember this in some implicit way. Use short, snappy names such as "2 and 1" instead of "double dodge in 7-8 up at the back, lie behind, single dodge in 7-8 down at the back".

You may want to learn where you pass the Treble. This is fine if you think you can remember it all. It isn't fine if you intend to *rely* on this to tell you what your next work is. It is much better not to rely on anyone else because if there is a mistake or your ropesight isn't quite up to it yet you will soon be lost.

## CAMBRIDGE SURPRISE MAJOR

We now look at Cambridge SM in more detail, taking each lead in the kind of way indicated earlier.

### 3rd's Place Bell

This is the symmetrical lead. See how it relates to Cambridge S Minor. The back work, which is called "Cambridge Back Work", is best remembered as something like "2 and 1, 7th's, 1 and 2". To get to and from the back work it is only necessary to remember that you treble bob.

The two central dodges and the 7th's place are all made around the Treble. Be aware of this if you like but don't learn the back work with terms such as "2 and 1 with the Treble, 7th's, 1 with the Treble and 2". If the Treble isn't there you'll get it wrong.

### 2nd's And 5th's Place Bells

These leads have two main pieces of work, the "Cambridge Front Work" and a bit on the back. To get from one to the other you can either Plain Hunt with an extra dodge in 3-4 or you can Treble Bob without a dodge in 5-6. The latter version is better because it extends to higher numbers.

So, 2nd's pb is: front work, Treble Bob without 5-6 to 2 and 1 (at the back implied), 5-6 down to become 6th's pb. The front work should be taken as a unit and is dodge, lead, 2nd's, dodge, lead, dodge. More compact is dodge,

lead, 2nd's Treble Bob.

5th's place bell is the reverse of this but learn it on its own as 1 and 2 (at the back implied), Treble Bob without 5-6 to front work. Here the front work is dodge, lead, dodge, 2nd's, lead, dodge, 2nd's to become 2nd's pb. Again, Treble Bob, 2nd's, lead, dodge, 2nd's is more compact.

## **6th's And 8th's Place Bells**

6th's pb starts like the Minor equivalent and is related to Cambridge Minor's 6th's pb like this: Lead (and dodge) and then Treble Bob to the highest places possible on the number of bells, which is 5-6 places for Major. This rule works for Cambridge on all numbers. Thus, all you need to learn here is that you will do places in 5-6 and then dodge 7-8 up to become 7th's pb. The places are the same as 3-4 places in Minor and you'll meet the Treble in the middle. Use this fact to correct the Treble rather than to know how far through the places you are. The places are dodge, place, place, dodge, place, place, dodge. Notice that this is rhythmical. This always makes things easier to remember.

8th's place bell is therefore 5-6 places down, Treble Bob to (dodge and) lead, 5-6 up to become 5th's pb.

## **4th's And 7th's Place Bells**

4th's pb starts as in Minor with 3-4 places down. Again, you'll meet the Treble in the middle if you're lucky. Then it's Treble Bob (on the front implied), Treble Bob (at the back implied), become 8th's pb. You can remember that it's just Plain Hunt to get from front to back with something such as "straight through" or "up to the back".

7th's pb is therefore something like lie and dodge, Treble Bob (on the front implied), 3-4 places up to become 3rd's pb.

## **The Half Lead**

It is often useful to know for each lead what you are doing at the half lead. For 3rd's pb this is easy, it's making 7th's. You can find out the others from the diagram. Often, during ringing, if someone is lost the conductor might shout (amongst other things) "half lead". This is intended to tell everyone at once which part of their place bell they are up to. So, if you know that you are 6th's pb but are completely lost and the conductor shouts "half lead" that tells you that you are just doing (missing) the 5-6 up dodge at the start of 5-6 places up. You can now put yourself right by quickly getting your bell into 5-6 and making 6th's.

## **Patterns in Cambridge SM**

There are a couple of things that can be remembered about Cambridge in order to help you when you can't remember what comes next:

After doing 2nd's pb you do sets of up places in positions starting from the back and working to the lower places until you get to 3rd's pb. After 3rd's pb you do sets of down places starting from the lower places and working to the higher places until you get to 5th's place bell. Taking this a step further, for Cambridge Maximus, after doing 2nd's pb you would do sets of places in 9-0 up, 7-8 up, 5-6 up and finally 3-4 up. After 3rd's pb you would do sets of places in 3-4 down, 5-6 down, 7-8 down and finally 9-0 down. Now you can see the pattern.

On either side of each set of places there are two single dodges before you do any special work or Plain Hunting (except when doing 3rd's place bell). Thus there are two single dodges after 3-4 places down and before 3-4 places up. Also there are two single dodges both before and after each set of 5-6 places. Cambridge S Royal has 3 such dodges and Cambridge S Maximus has 4. You might like to verify that Cambridge S Minor has 1.

These two patterns, along with the obvious extensions of 2nd's 5th's and 3rd's pbs, can generate the whole of

Cambridge on any number of bells. It's not wise to do it this way because you won't know where the starts are but an awareness of them can help when you get lost.

## **BOBS, SINGLES AND SPLICING**

Cambridge is a "2nd's place method" by which is meant that a bell makes 2nd's over the Treble at the lead end and all the other bells dodge in 3-4, 5-6, 7-8.... As such the bobs and singles are exactly like Plain Bob: the bell making 2nd's runs out, the bell in 3-4 down runs in and the bell in 3-4 up makes 4th's.

What happens in Cambridge is that the bell that runs out becomes 3rd's pb (as it does in Plain Bob) and so starts ringing 3rd's pb instead of 2nd's pb. Similarly, the bell that runs in starts ringing 2nd's pb instead of 4th's pb and the bell that makes 4th's starts ringing 4th's pb instead of 3rd's pb. A similar argument can be made for singles

Thought of in this way, bobs and singles should be easy to ring. You do whatever you would have done in Plain Bob and notice which position you are in at backstroke and that is your new place bell.

When ringing spliced, at a change of method you continue ringing the old method until you ring the backstroke at the start of your next place bell and just ring the work of that place bell of the new method. This means that you must know the starts of the new method but of course, if you've learned it properly, you will.

## **A NEW METHOD**

Cambridge is a 2nd's place method but there are also 8th's place methods (on 8 bells). Such a method is Kent Treble Bob. It is perfectly reasonable to ring Cambridge with an 8th's place lead end instead of the normal 2nd's place lead end. When this is done all the dodges that occur at a lead end are omitted and you Plain Hunt instead. By taking notice of where you end up instead of the dodge you will know what your new place bell is. When this is done with Cambridge you ring a new method called Primrose SM. The following tables shows in more detail this is what happens at each lead end:

### **Cambridge**

Make 2nd's and become 2nd's pb  
Dodge 3-4 down and become 4th's pb  
Dodge 5-6 down and become 6th's pb  
Dodge 7-8 down and become 8th's pb  
Dodge 7-8 up and become 7th's pb  
Dodge 5-6 up and become 5th's pb  
Dodge 3-4 up and become 3rd's pb

### **Primrose**

run out and become 3rd's pb  
run in and become 2nd's pb  
hunt to 4th's and become 4th's pb  
hunt to 6th's and become 6th's pb  
lie behind and become 8th's pb  
hunt to 7th's and become 7th's pb  
hunt to 5th's and become 5th's pb

## **CONCLUSION**

If you have understood these notes you should find it easier to learn Cambridge SM and then to go on to Yorkshire, Lincolnshire *etc.*. When you do so, try to use what you already know. For example, Yorkshire places are just half of Cambridge places and Lincolnshire 6th's pb is the same as Cambridge 6th's pb except that the lead and dodge is back to front. Build up your repertoire in an orderly manner. Don't go straight from Cambridge and Yorkshire to London and Bristol without first learning Lincolnshire, Rutland, Pudsey and Superlative (probably in that order). Always learn methods by place bells from the start. Don't learn the whole blue line and then add the place bells afterwards.

Surprise Major methods are hard and require a lot of practice at first. Don't be discouraged if it takes you a while to be able to get through Cambridge. They get easier. For clarification of these appalling notes or any other additional information contact John Heaton on 01332 342061 or [John@heatons.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:John@heatons.fsnet.co.uk)