

Learning Yorkshire and Cambridge Surprise Major

What makes Surprise?

The particular treble path ('treble bobbing') means it must be one of Treble Bob, Surprise or Delight. It cannot be Plain as there is no dodging in that treble path, nor Alliance which is less regular with missed dodges or extra dodges. Nor can it be a Hybrid method, as they have asymmetric treble paths.

Treble Bob	Surprise	Delight
No internal places made at any cross sections.	At least one internal place is made at every cross section.	At least one internal place is made at some cross sections.

'Cross sections' are where the treble moves from one dodging position, e.g. 3-4 to another, e.g. 5-6. An 'internal place' is a place not at lead or lie, and it is these that are counted when determining the class. But that's probably about all you want to hear on the subject, other than there is a good reason for the convention. (More information is available from: http://www.cheltenhambranch.org.uk/publications/Determining_Method_Types_Demystified.pdf.)

What makes it hard?

Things I found hard when first ringing Surprise Major.

- There seems to be a lot of method to learn, especially when compared with Cambridge S. Minor.
- The rope sight gets harder; there are plenty of bells doing odd things that are not just plain hunting.
- Getting back on the line after a mistake. So where am I on the line then?
- Taking instruction to get right again. Potentially there is more to be told before you are really back on that **blue line**.
- 5-6 down places. Hunting down has always been harder than hunting up, remember learning Plain Bob Doubles? So many bells below you and few crossed off as already passed.

Prerequisites

- Be able to ring both Plain Major and Surprise Minor.
- Can you *hunt to a rhythm*? And in spite of a fellow ringer being wayward, can you hunt confidently through the wake of their destruction? Or do you hold up at hand-stroke for a really good look around the change? (More information is available from: http://www.cheltenhambranch.org.uk/publications/Rope-sight_v_Rhythm.pdf)
- Can you *dodge accurately*? Or do you drop your backstrokes when dodging down?
- Can you *lead accurately*, even without a tenor behind to look at?
- Advanced bell control. You need to be able to ring to a rhythm in spite of a multitude of dodges and places that make up the method.
- Reliability. Can you concentrate hard enough on the striking, the rope sight and the method at the same time? Can you confidently recite the **blue line** to yourself and recall the place bells quickly? Are you confident enough to stick to your line when others trip around you and try to put you off?
- *You are entering the world of expert ringers*. Those who ring Surprise Major can consider themselves to be ringing some of the harder stuff available. But there is an infinitely long range of experts...all the way to wrong place Surprise 16 methods!

Learning a Surprise method

A topic that now becomes your sole responsibility; after all you are now an expert! But a topic that often lacks guidance and teaching. You may not get the opportunity to ring Surprise methods very often, so when you do, make sure you maximise your chances, learn the method properly. A last minute reminder is good to ensure the method is fresh in your mind, but they are not good enough for unfamiliar methods. Please do good homework, and here are some suggestions:

- **Place Bells.** These divide the methods up into manageable ‘chunks’. It’s even better if you know where every bell starts on the **blue line**, and what place bell you become at the next lead end.
- **Building Blocks.** Some sequences of work are given names, e.g. ‘treble bob’, ‘Yorkshire places’, or ‘2 and 1 at the back¹.’
- **Meeting the Treble.** It’s particularly useful to know where you dodge with the Treble. e.g. If you are ringing Cambridge, and you have just dodged with the treble in 3-4 or 5-6, then you are in the middle of your places. Additionally, you can also note where you will pass it without dodging.
- **Symmetry.** A useful guide when learning a method from the book, but please do not think you will have enough brain power left on the end of a rope to reverse an unfamiliar method whilst ringing it.
- **Practice.** This is less about ringing the method (although that definitely helps) than it is about practicing learning new methods. It’s a skill than can be acquired even if it’s painful to start with.
- Your second Surprise method? In addition, consider learning the similarities and differences between the two methods. For example, in both Cambridge and Yorkshire 8th place bell starts with 5-6 places, but they are longer places in Cambridge. Lincolnshire 8th place bell is the same as for Cambridge, except its lead then dodge not dodge then lead.

More information is available from: http://www.cheltenhambranch.org.uk/publications/Learning_Methods.pdf

Ways to stay right

Course bells

You will meet your course bells when dodging in 1-2 and 7-8 on the front and back in Yorkshire. In Cambridge, it’s the same above the treble, but not below. This means you lose the dodges with your before and after bells on the front. You can use this information if you are aware of who your course bells are, as it tells you where to look after leading or making 8th. If you can’t remember who your course bells are but you are presently on your line correctly, you can use this information to identify who they are for the next time. (Hint: the plain course coursing order is ‘7532468’.)

Music

‘Roll ups’ are a significant run of (usually 4 or more) bells in numerical order. Hence examples are ‘5678’ or ‘54321’. They don’t always occur at backstroke in all methods or all compositions. But ‘5678’s do in plain courses of Yorkshire and Cambridge, take a look at the numbers, its when 7 and 8 are dodging together in 7-8. Yorkshire has an extended roll up at precisely the half course, ‘87654321’ after the half lead dodge in the middle lead.

¹ Shorthand is often required for brevity when being put right, so as to get the message across with minimum distraction to all. Some might just say ‘dodge’ as you sail past them without dodging. Can you put yourself right?

Useful method structure

(But we're not training conductors here...) Apart from course bells, there are two other useful bits of method structure that will enable you to help yourselves. The first is the 'lead end dodge'. This happens when someone makes 2^{nds} over the treble, and everyone above dodges (just like in Plain Bob). Do not expect your conductor to be a 'demi-god' of ringing that can put anyone right in an instance. But if a knowledgeable member of the band does shout 'lead end now' use it. This means, having worked out what place bell you will become, dodge at approximately the right height in the change. You might just be a dodge (couple of blows) out, in which case dodging when 'lead end' is called gets you back on the **blue line** quickly. Note that the actual lead end is on completion of the dodge, so you might hear 'lead end dodge' followed quickly by 'lead end now', just to ensure there is no ambiguity about when the dodge actually was.

The second is the half lead dodge, very similar to Reverse Bob. At the half lead 3^{rds} place bell makes 7^{ths} under the treble and everyone else below dodges. You may well not know the exact location of the half leads on the line, but it does tell you that you have finished the first half of the lead, so narrowing down which bit of **blue line** you are on. It does also tell you that you should be dodging, so look around for someone helpful trying to catch your eye!

The calls

Actually these are the same as Plain Bob. It's perhaps what happens between the calls that is the hard part! If you don't already, its time this material was learned by place bells.

Plain Lead	Bob	Single
Would have made 2 ^{nds} over the treble to become 2 ^{nds} place bell.	Run out to 3 ^{rds} place bell, hunt up to 5-6 (no dodge in 3-4 ☺).	2 ^{nds} unaffected
Would have dodged 3-4 up to become 3 ^{rds} place bell.	Make the bob to become 4 ^{ths} place bell, start with making 3 ^{rds} in 3-4 down places.	
Would have dodged 3-4 down to become 4 ^{ths} place bell.	Run in to become 2 ^{nds} place bell, dodge with the treble.	Make 3 ^{rds} , repeat 3 ^{rds} place bell again, so go up to a 5-6 dodge.

More information is available from: http://www.cheltenhambranch.org.uk/publications/Bobs_and_Singles.pdf.

Where next?

- Greater variety of right place surprise methods, e.g. Rutland and Superlative.
- Quarter peal for an extended practice.
- Bristol for some action packed fun.
- London for a significant team challenge (if you want to score a quarter peal).
- Right place Surprise Royal (if you can find somewhere to ring it).

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