

Learning a Method

In the mid 19th Century, there were only a few methods. These were ones which were fairly simple in construction, and were learnt by the order of the work. For example, Plain Bob Minor was learnt by knowing that the second bell dodged in 3-4 down, 5-6 down, 5-6 up, 3-4 up then made seconds place. It was also rung by knowing where the treble was passed, so pass it in 3-4 up and the next dodge is 5-6 up.

As methods became more complex, a new concept was developed in the publication "Diagrams". This showed the "blue line" and the path of the treble as well as the starts for each bell.

To learn a new method, the following steps are needed.

1. Obtain the "blue line".
2. See how the treble fits in.
3. See the blocks of work such as front work, back work, 3-4 places etc.
4. Learn the starts for each bell.
5. Learn the bobs and singles.

These are now set out in more detail.

1. The "blue line".

This can be obtained from books, other people, or on the internet. www.cccbr.org.uk and follow links. A very good source is Method Master.

There is no better way to learn the blue line than by writing the method out on squared paper. One lead is all you need, and then the paths of each bell can be seen as well as where the treble is. This can also be obtained from the "place notation" of the method. This shows the change made from one row to the next. Most methods rung are symmetrical about the half lead place, so that twice in the course the work reverses (these are called pivot places). In place notation, a "-" or "x" means all pairs change between the rows. "14" means that the bells in 1st and 4th's place stay there, the others change places. The advantages of place notation are that it is a very concise way to show many methods, and you can see how they are related to each other.

An example is Double Oxford Bob Minor:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
X	2	1	4	3	6	5
14	2	4	1	3	5	6
X	4	2	3	1	6	5
36	2	4	3	6	1	5
X	4	2	6	3	5	1
56	2	4	3	6	5	1
X	4	2	6	3	1	5
36	2	4	6	1	3	5
x	4	2	1	6	5	3
14	4	1	2	6	3	5
x	1	4	6	2	5	3
12	1	4	2	6	3	5

Note how the order is reversed after the row "243651".

Cambridge Surprise Minor is: x36x14x12x36x14x**56**x14x36x12x14x36x**12**

Primrose Surprise Minor is: x36x14x12x36x14x**56**x14x36x12x14x36x**16**

Ipswich Surprise Minor is: x36x14x12x36x14x**16**x14x36x12x14x36x**12**

Norfolk Surprise Minor is: x36x14x12x36x14x**16**x14x36x12x14x36x**16**

2. Where the treble fits in.

Draw in the path of the treble. You can now see how the other bells relate to it. In some methods this is very useful, and it can confirm what you should do next if getting lost (assuming the treble is in the right place of course).

When you look at several methods it becomes clear how closely they are related, for example Cambridge, Primrose, Ipswich and Norfolk are identical except for the places made when the treble is leading or lying. They can be rung knowing this, although it is not easy until you have experience of them all.

3. The Blocks of Work.

Some sections of work are common to several methods, and are often referred to as such. Here are a few:

Cambridge front work (lead, seconds dodge lead dodge). Cambridge back work (double dodge, lie, dodge, fifths, dodge, lie double dodge). Cambridge places (dodge, fourths, thirds, dodge, fourths, thirds, dodge). These are places going up, for down places reverse the order. Sometimes half of this work is called Yorkshire places (from higher numbers of bells).

Stedman whole turn (lead, one blow in seconds ("snap"), lead). Long London (backwork), (lie, 5-6-5, lie). "Fish fork": (one in sixths, one in fifths, one in sixths).

These are fairly universally used, although there are some local variations.

4. Place Bells.

In learning a method it is essential to know where each bell starts in the lead. This will enable you to catch hold of any bell, it will allow a conductor to correct you ("fifths place bell now"), it will help keep you right so that at least once in the lead you know where you are, and finally it will let you ring spliced methods.

It is also useful to know the order of the place bells, so that you know where you should be next. Plain Bob is 2 4 6 5 3, Cambridge and Single Oxford is 2 6 3 4 5, and St Clements, Double Oxford, Ipswich and London Surprise are 2 3 5 6 4.

5. Bobs and Singles.

All commonly rung methods have either seconds place or sixths place made at the lead end.

A seconds place method has a bob made in fourths place, and a single in 1234. The bell that runs out at a bob becomes thirds place bell, the bell that runs in becomes seconds place bell, and the bell "making the bob" in fourths place becomes fourths place bell.

A sixths place method has a fourths place bob, and a single is 1456. The bell in fourths makes fourths place to become fourths place bell, the two bells at the back that would have dodged make fifths and sixths respectively to become those place bells.

You can now see how important it is to know your starts (place bell), as there are only two common systems of calls. Plain Bob, Cambridge Surprise, Single and Double Oxford, Little Bob etc have all got the same bob and single.

One interesting fact about the methods Cambridge and Primrose (and the same for Ipswich and Norfolk) is that as these two methods are identical up to the lead end, and a bob called every lead for five leads results in exactly the same 120 changes rung in the same order. Noticing things like this makes the task of learning methods easier.

Summary.

To learn a method thoroughly you need to spend time away from the tower with pencil and paper. Learning a method should be more than just knowing the order of the work – the more you know the better as this means that you can then concentrate more on how things sound outside.

One excellent software package is ABEL (see cccbr website and links), which allows you to practise ringing methods on your computer, watching the changes or putting you bell in place. You can practise calling touches as well.