

## Notes on Ringing Cambridge S Minor, written for a blind person

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Why do we ring Cambridge on handbells? - Mainly because we ring Cambridge on tower bells.

Why do we ring Cambridge on towerbells? - Basically it's a flowing, fluid method which makes it a logical progression from Plain Bob and Kent. If you have learned how to memorise a blue line as an ordered list of things to do, and you have the bell control to do what's on the list, then coupled with good concentration you have what it takes to ring a method. Pretty much any method, but right place methods are a lot easier. Cambridge S Major is an elegant method, along with London, Bristol and Superlative; (the rest are either frivolous like Yorkshire, or sordid like Glasgow and Wollaton).

So why doesn't the tower-bell approach translate to handbells? Well, it could do; it is perfectly feasible to learn the double blue lines; and for simple structures like Plain Hunting, that's exactly where we start. (And in some cases cannot and should not be avoided; the reason people have trouble with Kent places is because it looks like it should be easy to ring two bells, when it is anything but easy, and the solution is to memorise the spacings like you did for Plain Hunting). But as you move to ring methods with more and more work, the memory load starts to grow and it becomes a treadmill. Hence I look for easier ways in to a method via structure and character. This is just to get me in there; once I am in I start to see other stuff and get a better understanding of a method.

### So, what's the structural feel for Cambridge?

Like Plain Bob, it's right place, always hunt to the handstroke, and react to or make a place at backstroke.

The stepping stone method from Plain Bob should be Double Oxford Bob (NOT Oxford Treble Bob) because in Double Oxford you get:

- 4-bell hunting boxes
- places where a bell runs through – e.g. 3rds place bell two blows 4ths, two blows 3rds and treble passes through
- maximum dodging half lead and lead end

All these features are typical of Cambridge, and Cambridge is structured to include the maximum amount of forward hunting whilst complying with the rules for right place Surprise. In Surprise Minor the biggest hunting box is 4 bells, in Maximus it's 10 bells. In Cambridge Minor the placement of hunting boxes enables certain bells to hunt all the way from lead to lie and certain bells to hunt all the way for lie to lead EVERY lead. In fact the only place bells that don't do that are treble and 3.

So Cambridge is a method made up of hunting boxes and flying bells and it's glued together by Cambridge Places snuggling up to the treble. (Cambridge Places all numbers: Dodge – Far – Near – Dodge with Treble – Far – Near – Dodge)

This semi-static semi-fluid nature makes Cambridge into a challenge on handbells. The experience of ringing Cambridge by blue line in the tower makes it even harder because the tower bell skill is not so useful (too much to remember), and many a good tower-bell Cambridge ringer gets frustrated by a pair of handbells.

So what is the structure in relation to the treble?

It's a Surprise method, therefore a lot of it is pre-defined. All 41 Regular Surprise Minor methods have:

4ths when treble hunts 2-3 (1-2-3-4 box)

2nds when treble dodges 3-4 up

3rds when treble hunts 4-5 (3-4-5-6 box)

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And in the second half of the lead  
3rds when treble hunts 5-4 (3-4-5-6 box)  
2nds when treble dodges 3-4 down  
4ths when treble hunts 3-2 (1-2-3-4 box)

Which leaves:

1-2 Sections: (3-4-5-6 box)  
5-6 Sections: (1-2-3-4 box)  
Half Lead 5ths, like Double Oxford Bob  
Lead end 2nds, like Double Oxford Bob

The above “rules” are sufficient to ring Cambridge if you have a lot of handbells experience, but it’s ever so easy to get into trouble, here’s some tips:

- Get a feel for Cambridge by ringing Double Oxford, it has the hunting boxes that are essential to Cambridge, and dodging half leads and lead ends.
- Cambridge frontwork and Cambridge places extend from the lead end to the half lead, and vice versa. (eg 2nds place bell and 4ths place bell; and 5ths place bell and 6ths place bell), and the work is nearly but not quite symmetrical, the key to success is the position of the treble which dictates when places are made. (If you need/want the detail let me know)
- There’s always a bell making places because 4ths place bell finishes its places with a dodge with the bell starting places and due to become 3rds place bell at the lead end.
- There’s always a bell doing frontwork because 2nds place bell dodges with 5ths place bell at the half lead.
- ABOVE ALL, watch the treble like a hawk ‘cos it tells you exactly what to do in the method.

Verdict: Norwich is easier!