

Proposal for a publicity and recruitment event

Many towers within the Branch have too few ringers to sustain regular ringing without external assistance. Most bands are finding that reliance on traditional approaches to recruitment have led to a steady decline, with increasing reliance on older ringers.

One factor that limits the scope of recruitment is the widespread ignorance among the public of what ringing is about, and in particular that it is a skilled and rewarding activity. This makes it less likely that people will consider taking up ringing, or respond positively if asked.

One way to raise public awareness, that has been successfully done in many places, is to hire a mini ring in a place where there are lots of people and use it to demonstrate what ringing is like and to engage with them - talking to them about ringing and letting them have a go.

As well as helping to create awareness and respect for ringing among a large number of people, such events can also be used to attract recruits. With suitable follow up, the retention rate can be quite high – for example well over half of the 41 people who signed up for an intensive two week training programme at the North Bucks Branch 'Big Ring Pull' event were still ringing two years later.

This proposal is for a publicity and recruitment event within Sonning Deanery, based on the Charmborough Ring, which has been discussed by the officers over the last year.

The Charmborough Ring

The Charmborough Ring is a transportable ring of 6 bells with $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt Tenor. It is the heaviest portable ring currently in existence – heavy enough for the bells to behave like tower bells but light enough to be safe in the hands of complete novices. It has been designed for easy handling and so is ideal for the task.

The ring is based in East London and available for hire. It is transported to and from site in a trailer. Erection takes about an hour and a half and dismantling a bit less.

Venue

Several venues within the Branch were considered, including town centres (Wokingham, Bracknell, Woodley) and various events (Arborfield Village Fete, Hurst Show, Wokingham Summer Fayre, Woodley Carnival or a South Hill Park event). Of these, the Hurst Show was selected as the most suitable.

- Date – last weekend in June (Sat/Sun 25/26 June 2016)
- Numbers – 2,500 to 3,000 paying visitors (plus children and OAPs, who are free)
- Catchment area – surrounding towns and villages (eg Wokingham, Woodley and Twyford) as well as Hurst

Proposal

The proposal is to hire the Charmborough Ring as the centre piece of a presence on both days of the Hurst Show, during which we would:

- Demonstrate ringing to the public – as well as seeing what the ringers do, and hearing the result, they would also be able to see what the bells do
- Talk to members of the public about ringing – vital to convey the human side of ringing
- Provide information about ringing – on display and to take away
- Let people have a go – with mini-bells it is quite safe and a 'hands on' experience can be more convincing
- Provide information on local opportunities to be taught –with contact details to allow for follow up

Resources

The key resource is manpower. The proposal is to operate as four half days, during each of which there would be (at least) 6 ringers present. They would need to be capable of ringing passable rounds on light bells and interested in talking to people to project a positive image of ringing. A few in each session would need to be able to supervise people having a go, in order to help them benefit from the experience.

Before the Saturday morning session, and after the Sunday afternoon session we need to provide 5 able bodied people to assist with erection and dismantling. They do not need any technical skills and would be supervised by a member of the Charmborough Trust. They need not necessarily be ringers but it might be convenient for some or all of them to be the ones manning that session.

The total effort requires is around 90 person hours over the weekend. That could be 24 people doing half day each, including erection & dismantling. It would require fewer people if some of them do a whole day or more if erection and dismantling is separate.

Other resources include displays, posters and handouts.

Costs

The total cost is estimated between £300 and £600, including:

Hire of Charmborough Ring – £200 for two days

Transport of Charmborough Ring – between ~£55 and ~£210. The bigger figure allows for hire of a suitable towing vehicle if the Charmborough Trust (or one of our members) can't provide one.

Exhibitor fee – Probably £0. We have been told the normal £70 fee would be waived for a community activity.

Publicity material – between £20 and £100 depending on whether we invest in permanent display material, for example a pull-up banner, as well as posters, leaflets, etc.

Benefit

The event will deliver a direct benefit to ringing by raising the awareness of people at the event, and by possibly gaining recruits from among them. On the back of the event we should be able to get considerable indirect benefit from additional press and radio coverage.

The Charmborough Ring at previous events

