

Portsmouth District goes Cockney!

Monday 7th of May 2007 was not an average Portsmouth District Outing. Catching trains and buses around London were something special for this particular Bank Holiday. The only thing that was similar to other outings was the erratic weather.

“I’m sure I don’t know said the great bell of Bow”

Our journey began at 6am, where we had to catch the 7.15 train to London at Portsmouth Station. The compartment we were in was quiet and we found no other ringers to talk to, or help us navigate once we reached the maze that is London! We arrived at Waterloo station and purchased a Travel Card each and, rather smoothly I think, found our way to St Mary Le Bow. The 42 cwt twelve provided us with mostly rounds and call changes to warm up with, as 9.30 was still too early for some of us!

Next was St Lawrence Jewry, which was only a short walk away and certainly woke the ringers up. Yorkshire Surprise Major was rung at the 24 cwt eight, with some very nice striking, and helped to build up an appetite for lunch.

Everyone set off in groups, hoping to find a nice place to eat. Our own group mostly consisted of ringers from Alverstoke, and the organiser himself: Ben Carey. Ben confidently guided us through the underground; our destination was the Weatherspoons near Tower Bridge. Everything was going smoothly, with our little band of ringers catching trains left right and centre, until someone asked: “Where’s Lee?” Lee, a learner from Alverstoke, had mysteriously vanished, and we did not know for how long! We had no way of contacting him because, due to being underground, there was no signal on anyone’s mobile. So the only thing we could do was carry on without him and to hope that he was alright.

Upon reaching Spoons, we got in touch with Lee and discovered that, as we were passing a station in the Underground, he inadvertently caught a train to Stratford! We all felt for Lee’s predicament, but decided to eat without him as we were all very hungry. Lee eventually turned up after his ordeal and the group walked on to St Anne’s, Limehouse. Everyone found the little ten easily and lunch had defiantly had a positive affect on the District’s ringing. As well as some well stuck Grandsire and call changes, Cambridge Surprise Royal was also rung and a lot of people expressed how nice this tower was.

“Kettles and Pans say the bells of St Annes”

“Old Father Baldplate said the slow bells of Aldgate”

Our London Travel Cards rescued us from the rain as they allowed us to catch not only trains, but also buses. It must have looked very unusual to the locals, having a mass of bell ringers invading a double-decker and discussing the intricacies of strange things like “Plain Bob Triples” and the purpose of a “Single”! The bus took us all the way to St Botolphs, Aldgate, which was the only ring of the day to survive the Blitz. We all rang the 25 cwt ring of eight before having a short tea break.

During this time our Alverstoke group decided to have a look at St Paul’s, since we were nearby and it would be the closest we’d get to ringing there on that day! In typical bell ringer fashion, we arrived and started to interrupt the heavenly aura that surrounded the great Cathedral. Steve Hough decided to film inside, since the view was very nice indeed. As soon as he had got his camera out, a very angry woman stormed up to him and demanded that he should put it away. We were also told off for talking too loud and, when it was suggest that I should ask, we were denied the privilege to see the bells! But that was understandable! And so, we left the Cathedral and its tranquil atmosphere returned.

We headed to St Vedast, the only six on the outing. Some impressive Minor methods were rung by an able band, as well as the usual rounds and call changes, but our time at Foster Lane was short and we were soon on our way to the final tower, St Giles, Cripplegate.

“Brickbats and Tiles said the bells of St Giles”

Bell ringers are said to disturb the peace by ringing church bells, but at Cripplegate, we

were disturbing the people of London with an *alarm* bell! The local who let us in had forgotten the password for deactivating the alarm, so we were left thinking that the Police might drop by and ask what was going on. But thankfully someone came by with the password and dealt with the issue, leaving us to the last tower. By this time, everyone was very tired and the heavy twelve would have been the last thing anyone wanted to ring. But the district managed to pull off some Erin Cinques to end the outing, which was a great surprise considering a lot less was rung at St Mary Le Bow in the morning.



Ringling art St Giles, Cripplegate

And so, after a long day, we headed back to the station and caught a train home. I think it can be safely assumed that the London Outing was a great success. The trains got us to the towers, there were no lockouts and nobody got too lost! Even the weather was nice for a while!

Our thanks go to Ben Carey for organising such a splendid day out.

Lizzie Hough