

PORTSMOUTH CHIMES

SUPPLEMENT

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A Classic Mini-Ring Restored!

This is a story about the restoration of a very old Mini-Ring that was originally built in the late 1970s by Roger Durrant. These days almost every ringer will know of someone within a 50 mile radius who owns a transportable or a permanently sited Mini-Ring. 25 years ago it was a very different story; there were only a very small handful, and they wouldn't have been of the quality and durability of the Matthew Higby type rings of today. This Mini-Ring, which was never given a name until now, was one of the first and was made using old servants' bells, and what looks like an old school bell for the Tenor.

About a year ago I received an email from Revd Andrew Davey of Clench-warton, Norfolk. He had recently acquired what I knew as Roger Durrant's portable ring of 8. Andrew was enquiring into the possibility of having new clappers made for them. I had rung on these bells a couple of times back in the 80s when the then "Liss Campanile Youths" rang the first Quarter Peal of Surprise Major on them. The LCY also tried to peal these bells on a couple of occasions, but were unsuccessful.



First Quarter of Surprise Major on the bells by "The Liss Campanile Youths" 9-11-86 L-R Back Row: Nick Allingham, Steve Hough, Martin Hough. Middle Row: Martin Turner, Roy LeMarechal, Mark Wilson. Front Row: Glen Poyntz, Toby Arkless.

I was very pleased to agree to make the clappers for him, and it would be good to see the bells after all these years. As many of you will know, as well as creating the infamous Liss Campanile with my brother, Martin (with its ring of 12 galvanised buckets and subsequently flower pots), I am the very proud creator and owner of "The Jack & Jill House Campanile" Gosport, with it's (even if I do say so myself) magnificent 10oz ring of 8. I have also helped Ben Carey create the Midways Campanile in Stubbington with its 11oz ring of 10. In addition I have made a replacement set of clappers for "Matthew Higbys Micro Ring" 6, 7oz. One more job seemed a good idea at the time, but I had slightly underestimated the task I was about to undertake.

Andrew delivered his ring to my Dad's house in January 2007. This Mini-Ring comes in 5 pieces - the bells and fittings in their radial frame and the 4 legs. When I looked at the installation the frame looked in reasonable condition with a few loose cross braces. The wheels were definitely showing signs of age and would need some repairs.



The rather unusual clapper arrangement on the 5th, note the spoke held together with string!

The clappers were amazing in that there were 2 external clappers that were linked together in a cantilever arrangement. Some bells worked better than others, but all in all the arrangement was totally over the top – but very ingenious indeed.

I realised that the outcome was not going to be a first class job for two reasons.

Firstly the bells varied in size so much; the Tenor weighs 2lb the 7th 1lb and the front 6 weigh 7 or 8 oz each. Secondly the wheels were far too large for the bells, larger than Matthew Higby uses on bells 10 times the weight. The outcome was that the bells turn too slowly for the clappers to operate properly; that has been the biggest problem with these bells all along.

I assessed the situation and put forward a package that I thought would be best. After all, the objective was to make a set of clappers that would work properly, but I would need to do a lot more to achieve satisfactory result. Firstly the bells needed tuning - the middle 6 were roughly in tune but the Treble was slightly flat and the Tenor was slightly sharp. The bottom of the wheels needed to be weighted to achieve a decent swing to allow the clappers to function properly. At this point I had no idea how I was going to do this but I knew that a solution would eventually present itself; it usually does! Finally they desperately needed a proper set of ropes with real sallies rather than the pretend sallies that they had.



The Bells and the wheels, note the size of the wheels in relation to the bells!

In February 07, I dismantled the fittings and took the bells to work and tuned them into a proper octave, then got my Dad to polish them up with his set of metal polishing mops, which made them look miles better than the oxidised copper green that they were. In March / April I made all the clapper components, crown staples and bell bolts topped off with locknuts and split washes. My spare evenings were spent making the sallies which suffered a setback when I lost my favourite sally making needle in the sofa. I eventually managed to get another needle but the other one is still in the cushion somewhere!