

PORTSMOUTH CHIMES

SUPPLEMENT

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I reassembled the bells and fittings in the frame and calculated how much weight was needed to get the bells swinging with enough momentum to not only allow the clappers to function but to aid the handling without causing so much G-force to tear the tower apart. The bad news was that it would require a significant amount of extra weight to achieve this and there was nowhere to fix this extra weight without hitting the frame. I was beginning to regret getting involved with this project at this point.

3 or 4 months passed and Andrew sent me the occasional email to ask how things were progressing, I was getting desperate! Suddenly I hit upon the idea of using lead flashing, cut to cover the shrouding at the bottom of the wheels. To my delight it worked splendidly; each wheel was fitted with 2 strips of lead on either side covering roughly a quarter of the bottom of the wheel (depending on the size of the bell) to make each bell swing at the same speed.

Then I hit another problem. The clappers on the front six worked well enough but the back two were far from satisfactory. The clapper balls were made of plastic to deliver a mellow sound, which works fine on bells less than 10oz, but on the bigger bells the clappers bounced for no apparent reason no matter how they were adjusted. So I experimented with different materials, wood and lead made no difference at all. Steel was slightly better but too harsh. In desperation I smeared a bit of silicone over the balls and I was amazed by the outcome. The clappers on the 7 and Tenor went from being bad to brilliant. I tried to replicate similar clappers on the front six bells, but.... Guess what? It didn't have the same effect – The plastic balls were much better, so they went back in. This was all due to the vast difference in sizes, faced with this it was very difficult to get a decent sound balance.

The frame and fittings were then painted and things were beginning to look and sound great. By late August I had the Mini-Ring set up in my garden with the rather splendid new ropes. One Friday evening I managed to twist a few of our ringers at Alverstoke to come round for a tryout. We were alarmed about the amount of tower movement. In fact, while trying to ring half a course of Yorkshire, some bells dropped in certain changes as the tower shook violently. It was obvious that the telescopic wooden legs were not stable enough at full extension. However it worked ok if you lowered the legs and rang the bells sitting down. We called it "The Wobbly Ring" after that!



Back in one piece!

I contacted Andrew to tell him that the bells were ready and we arranged for him to pick them up on 10th November, and we also arranged for him and Emma Southerington to ring a peal at Jack & Jill at the same time. But some of the band wanted to ring a peal on Andrew's "Wobbly Ring" as well. This meant ringing the peal on Andrew's bells in the open air. It was going to be very cold and possibly wet and windy, but we would have to take our chances.

On the day I was pleased to meet Andrew and Emma for the first time, after so many emails it was nice to put a face to the name. We rang our peal at Jack & Jill first, and a very nice peal it was too. Andrew & Emma were very impressed by my bells, which are very different from the Higby blue-print - they are a lot lighter with stays (yes stays!) and a sweet sound all of their own.

After refreshments we put on our coats, hats & scarves (and some had gloves as well) and settled down to ring a peal on the Wobbly Ring.

The bells, with their big wheels, were slower turning than Jack & Jill so we

were in for a slower peal no matter how hard we tried to push them along. I had rigged up some fairy lights for us to ring by which shook as the tower wobbled. One distraction was that our neighbours were watching us through their bedroom window. Another distraction was the frequent bangs of fireworks being let off in a local garden.

After an hour or so one of the nuts that holds one of the leg supports worked loose and then fell off, shortly after followed the bolt. Fortunately the support was caught by the fairy light wire and didn't fall down and hit anyone. Unfortunately the tower did shake a lot more violently afterwards; I had to put my foot down very firmly on the leg to try and stop it shaking too much. Eventually the peal came round in 2hr 6min which was quite a respectable speed, considering. We were all very cold and in need of a hot coffee!

Andrew decided to give the Wobbly Ring a name at last. Henceforth it is now known as "The Rector's Loose Ring". After we had thawed out we dismantled the ring and loaded it into Andrew's car, with the actual frame going on the roof rack. It was nice to have my space back although I will miss "The Rector's Loose Ring" after so many months.

All in all it has been an interesting project for me, I tried to make a "silk purse out of a sow's ear" and didn't quite succeed, but at least I have restored a classic old Mini-Ring without losing too many original features.

Steve Hough

**Winchester & Portsmouth D.G.
Gosport, Hants
The Rectors Loose Ring
Sat Nov 10 2007 2h6 (2lb)
5056 Cambridge S Major
Comp. C Middleton
1 Andrew J Davey
2 Stephen N Hough
3 Sarah E Hutchinson
4 Ian J Carey
5 Lizzie J Hough
6 Emma J Southerington
7 Lee Pinnington
8 Benjamin J Carey (C)**

**The First Peal on the Bells.
First in the Method - 5.
"You really don't have to stop even
if the tower does fall down..."**