

PORTSMOUTH CHIMES

SUPPLEMENT

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Dragon Boat fever

I was just minding my own business at the District 10 pin bowling evening when Mark Esbester accosted me. He asked "Would like to take part in a Dragon Boat race for charity?" My initial reaction was "What on earth is a Dragon Boat race?" But before I could think of a good reason to say no, I found my self saying "Oh alright then!". Mark was putting together a team of Portsmouth District ringers to enter the annual Rotary club of Portsmouth and Southsea Dragon Boat Festival. It sounded like fun, so why not? I think that on that evening Mark had secured the vast majority of his team.

Within days Mark emailed me with details and most importantly the sponsor forms. So we all set about getting as many sponsors as possible. For my part I didn't find it easy at first. My first sponsor was a work colleague who only put down £2 which meant that the following sponsors tend to follow suit. I passed the form around my shop staff and then a colleague suggested I put it on the counter for the customers to try. My initial reaction was that it wouldn't work, but I couldn't have been more wrong; I eventually raised £125.

When the big day came we arrived at the course, which was almost ideal apart from the fact that the spectator area was a ten minute walk on the other side of the bank that hardly anyone chose to do; instead they rested and took in the sun to dry off their clothes between races and listen to the commentary on the loud speaker.



*"Going like the Clappers?"
Not Quite!*

Each team had three races, then the fastest four teams competed for the overall winner. Mark had thought of a brilliant name for our team "GOING LIKE THE CLAPPERS". We sadly did not quite live up to our name, but we did win two out of the three races. The third race was like a photo finish but we just managed to lose by a gnat's whisker. Either way, our speeds were not enough to get to the final, and most of us drifted off half way through the afternoon when we knew we were no longer needed.



*Some of the younger members of
"Going like the Clappers"*

There was just one injury with our team. Jerry Mather got slightly carried away with his paddling and hit Sylvia's hand on the up-stroke, dislocating her thumb. A retired doctor managed to pull it back into place (ouch!), but it needed further treatment later at the hospital.

All in all it was a most enjoyable day out, if a little exhausting, but it was worth it to be raising such a substantial amount for several local Charities.

Steve Hough

Young Ringers day at Soberton by Mel Richardson

A damp Saturday afternoon in June saw the coming together of eight enthusiastic young ringers from the Portsmouth District for one common purpose; To Get Better! It is so easy to stay in the comfort zone of ones own tower, with ones own bells and friends. These youngsters were prepared to put all of that aside and answer Ian Hunt's call to come and have some fun improving their skills at Soberton's eight-bell ground floor ring.

The youngsters who were aged between 11 and 15 came from 4 surrounding towers and the theme for the day was simply 'To Get Better', what ever that meant to each individual.

Support, advice and bucket loads of encouragement were provided by eleven experienced ringers whose mission was to help in whatever way they could.

The first hurdle was to manage the long draught at Soberton, which quickly magnified bell-handling issues. Once these were put right, each participant had many opportunities to be surrounded by an experienced band to try anything they liked. This included methods they were struggling with, new methods, plain courses, touches, tenor behind, raising/lowering and calling. The less experienced ringers were encouraged to attempt something called Plain Changes; this had the delightful effect of initially confounding the oldies too. This must have been intended to show the youngsters that the most experienced amongst us still have things to learn. Practical ringing was supplemented by one to one theory all delivered with humour and fun.

Firsts included simply ringing at another tower without handling help, ringing the tenor behind, ringing on eight bells, touches of Plain Bob Doubles and Minor, touches



of Stedman Triples and calling. The enthusiasm of everyone involved was a joy. Refreshments arrived in the form of home made cakes kindly donated by Marie Boniface and Blanche Hunt, and entertainment was even laid on by Allan Yalden. He taught the youngsters knotting skills when they needed a break from ringing. As well as improving their bell ringing, they can now all tie a Sheet Shank, Clove Hitch, Reef Knot AND make a Farmers Seat – most useful if you get stuck down a well!

This was a great day, which brought youngsters together from the district – they know they are not alone. They left with new friends, improved confidence and invitations to come and ring at other towers. As a District, we are lucky to have such a great team of keen young people who will all be a credit to our art.



*Five of the promising youngsters
having enjoyed their practice*