

EACR at the Essex Country Show, Barleylands (Billericay) 10th-11th September 2011

We had more notice this year so advertising for helpers was more straightforward and volunteers were easier to find, thank goodness. The organisers also contacted us before we even asked to register, which was a bonus.

Because the Maplestead Mini Ring has now moved north, we borrowed the Vesty Ring from the Suffolk Guild. My thanks to Vicky and Nick deVries and Bob the dog for helping me to go and pick it up. Also, thanks to Andy Martin for taking it to the show ground.



All set up and ready to go

Andy and I decided to take the Friday off work to go straight to the showground and set things up, which enabled us to finish in the afternoon. Last year we were still putting things together in the dark, which was quite interesting. Andy decided he would camp on the site for the weekend, and proceeded to make himself very comfortable indeed in his new tent with all mod cons. I stayed at my folks again, which saved all the trundling up and down the car park we affectionately call the A12.



Jim Laken doing a sterling job with some eager volunteers

The helpers all found the Vesty ring easy to handle, and in between demonstrations we did indulge in courses of Grandsire and Cambridge that even sounded like they were supposed to!



l-r: Roy Threadgold, David Sloman and Andy Martin indulging in some Grandsire

Each day started off quietly for the first hour which had me wondering if this was a good idea, but I need not have worried. There were definitely peaks and troughs and times when we were rushed off our feet. I was pleased to notice that the majority of the enquiries about learning to ring fell right in the age bracket we had in mind – the 9-14 year olds. We had enquiries for 5 out of the 6 EACR districts which was great news, with the southern end of the county benefiting the most – not surprising given the venue.



Can I have a lift back to my stand please?
I've been on my feet all day!

We also had two people express an interest in returning to ringing after a 30 year gap, and also a grandfather and grandson combo. The grandfather last rung 60 years ago, but given that his grandson was so keen he was prepared to come out of retirement to encourage him. We also had a few enquiries for other Associations and Guilds, ranging from Lincoln, Middlesex, and our neighbours in Suffolk.

Now it is up to people to give these interested would-be ringers an enthusiastic tour of their ringing rooms followed by some lessons on real tower bells. Fingers crossed, some of these turn into long lasting ringers.

My thanks must go to the fab group of helpers – Andy Martin, Janet Edwards, Jim Laken, Hilary Donaghue, Simon Higgins, Roger Hobson, Tony Lowe, David and Penny Sloman and Christine Allman.

Tracey Southgate
Public Relations Officer

17th September 2011