

Sparks Will Fly in Essex – Harwich & Dovercourt, Friday 18th & Sunday 20th May

The start of the Essex County Council Cultural Olympiad celebration got underway on Friday 18th May. One of the two Sparks Will Fly Champions, Marina Mightier, approached Harwich harbour on a 56ft wooden schooner before stepping ashore at the historic Halfpenny Pier.



Sparks Will Fly Champion, Marina Mightier approaches the Harwich quayside

Marina's arrival was scheduled for 11.30, so the local ringers organised a quarter peal to begin at 10.30 with the aim of finishing just before her arrival. The quarter peal was successful and the timing was just right. It allowed us a few minutes to get the bells down afterwards and make a quick dash to the quayside.

On arrival, Marina was met by local dignitaries including the newly elected town Mayor, who officially welcomed her to Harwich.



Sparks Will Fly Champion, Marina Mightier steps ashore the historic Halfpenny Pier at Harwich

Up to 200 local school children lined the quayside, having made costumes, waving banners and painted their faces. The children led Marina through the streets of Old Harwich and onto The Green.



Local school children lining the quayside

The Harwich Schools' Carnival is a large annual event in celebration of creativity in schools. A local theatre group artistically directed the Schools' Carnival and Marina's arrival.

Once at The Green, Marina and her entourage performed a ceremony to celebrate their safe arrival on dry land.



Marina and her assistants accept the gift of the glass bead from the Town

Fun and silly games followed with the group playing silly games with a member of the audience, and dancing and amusing the children who looked all looked in amusement.



Hundreds of school children welcomed Marina with banners, painted faces and costumes

On the Sunday and to coincide with the Tour de Tendring Cycle Ride, hundreds of riders saddled up and headed off from Dovercourt Swimming Pool for the Tour de Tendring charity cycle ride.

The day started off with a typical sea mist and a distinct chill in the air. While we had a quick cup of tea, we even detected a spot or two of rain. But fear not, all was well and sun eventually burst through to ensure a bright, sunny afternoon.

There was a choice of routes available including a family friendly cycle ride to a more challenging route for the experienced riders. On the route, cyclists enjoyed the picturesque countryside, low hills and quiet rounds around the Tendring District.



For those not taking to their saddles, there was a colourful procession, led by Marina Mightier. This departed from the Cliff Park, Dovercourt and walked along the seafront to Dovercourt to the Tour de Tendring Cycle Festival site by the Swimming Pool. There, she kicked off the start of the celebrations.



Other entertainment for the day included a performance by the Princes Theatre Youth Company, Harwich Brass Band and the Harwich Shanty Crew. We positioned the mini ring up by the bandstand at Cliff Park Pavilion.



Harwich Shanty Crew going through their paces in the Bandstand – having just taken part in a 26 hour singing marathon completing 412 shantys!

After a bit of a slow start, possibly due to the weather conditions, we were kept busy for the rest of the afternoon with a steady stream of visitors having a go on the mini ring and a few younger visitors enjoying trying out lapping on the handbells.



See, the sun did come out!

At the end of the day we exhaustedly packed everything away having enjoyed an extremely successful weekend. Months of planning have gone into these events by the local communities, schools, performing arts groups and us. There are more events planned in the coming days and weeks, all leading up to the Finale and the visit to Chelmsford of Olympic Torch Relay on Friday 6th July.

I must extend my thanks to all the local ringers who helped including Guy and Jackie Nelson, Paul and Anne Bray, Jan Rice, Anne and Richard Turner and of course all the ringers I begged to come and ring in the quarter peal on Friday!

Essex Association

Harwich, Essex

St Nicholas

Friday 18th May 2012 in 44 mins (13,3/4cwt)

1260 Plain Bob Triples

To welcome the ECC Sparks Will Fly in Essex Champion Marina Mightier as she steps ashore the historic Halfpenny Pier at Harwich.

1. Anne Turner
2. Mary Coe
3. Tracey Southgate
4. Stephen A Cheek
5. Janet Rice
6. Neil Avis
7. Bryan Morrissey ©
8. Alasdair MacKenzie

43rd birthday compliment to Bryan and Alasdair's first Triples.

Tracey Southgate
Public Relations Officer

22nd May 2012