

Sparks Will Fly in Essex – Waltham Abbey Town Show, Sunday 24th June 2012

The third and final Journey Stop that EACR is involved with took place this weekend, and was planned to coincide with the Waltham Abbey Town Show. The Show is an annual two day event, but we decided to just focus on the Sunday. As with the Saffron Walden event, there were other things going on ringing-wise within the Parish which made this a particular challenge.



The Abbey Church of Holy Cross & St Lawrence, Waltham Abbey

We hired a demo bell from the Ely Diocesan Association and Jane Walters made arrangements to collect and deliver the bell to site, for which I'm incredibly grateful. Jane also had to arrange for a band to ring for the Ordination Service at the Abbey the same afternoon of three priests, one of which is now the Abbey's own new Rector, Rod Reid. The service was being taken by The Rt Revd David Hawkins, Bishop of Barking. So the pressure was on to support this service by ringing, while also being able to man the stand at the show.



Waltham Abbey ringer Sue John, eagerly gets to grips with the demo bell

It all came together on the day, which just left us one thing to worry about - the weather. The conditions leading up to the show can only be described as typical British weather. Blustery winds and torrents

of rain during the week running up to the Show had us seriously questioning whether the event would even take place. We just went for it on the day and were pleasantly surprised. The field was a bit soggy in places, but we were able to pitch the demo bell and display gazebo without too many problems. The only concession was parking my car strategically so that it acted as a wind brake, and not erecting the gazebo at full height otherwise there was a danger of it taking off!



Battening down the hatches, we managed to secure the gazebo and handbells proved to be good weights too

To begin with the conditions probably kept people away, but as the day brightened up, the crowds came out. We did have to shelter for a couple of quick sharp showers, but they soon passed. The show ground began to fill up and people enjoyed the lively fun fair, stalls selling a variety of goods, a food court, displays and demonstrations. The Town Mead Sports and Social Club was also open during the event.



The Waltham Abbey Glass Bead – focussing on the historic charter Towns' links with Lee Valley Regional Park and Epping Forest

People of all ages and abilities from around the district were involved in 'Make a Move', coming up with dance moves and preparing for the huge, en-masse performance that was organised by Epping Forest Arts and linked with Sparks will Fly, as the Make a Move dancers joined the procession led by Marina Mightier.



Marina Mightier aboard her 'Chariot'

During the afternoon we had some visitors having a go on the demo bell and also lapping on the handbells. We hope that we've managed to entice one ringer out of retirement, and some others who have always been fascinated by it and who want to give it a go. For my part too, I particularly enjoyed catching up with ringers of all abilities from the other side of the County from where I live, to find out about the issues that they have in their towers at grass roots level. So it was great to see such local enthusiasm and effort being put into recruiting and training new ringers.



Ringling for the Ordination Service Barry & Mary Fisher, Jim and Jillian Laken, Roger Collins, Carol Wilkinson, Jane Walters, John Cousins, Liz Griffith-Jones, Margaret and Perry French

This effort was characterised by the fact that a couple of learners at the Abbey were able to ring on 12 for the first time at the Ordination Service which is an outstanding achievement. The other members of the band also enjoyed ringing Stedman Triples and Grandsire Caters for the service. The NW District is making a huge effort with its recruitment and training, for which they deserve a huge amount of credit. Everyone sincerely hopes that in years to come the District will remain a very healthy and vibrant ringing community.

It just remains for me to thank everyone for their help and support for the events; Jane Waters, Joan and Steve Miller, Sue John, Margaret and Perry French, Nichole Young, Roger Collins, Carol Wilkinson, Barry and Margaret Fisher, Jim and Jill Laken, John Cousins, and Liz Griffith-Jones.

The next 2012 Olympic themed event we will be supporting will be the Sparks Will Fly Finale on Friday 6th July, which will coincide with the overnight stay of the Olympic Torch in Chelmsford. The event takes place in the grounds of Hylands House, on the outskirts of Chelmsford, near Writtle. It will be pretty similar to those we've taken part in so far, except on a much larger scale. There will be a visit by the Red Devils and they will be bringing with them the final Glass Bead to enable the game to begin at the Finale.



The two great champions Boreas Zephyr and Marina Mightier will complete their marathon journeys across Essex and come face-to-face for the first time. Marina and Boreas will compete to become champion of the great Glass Bead Game. There will be an astonishing performance that mixes giant characters and a carnival atmosphere with stunning pyrotechnics and special effects to create a breathtaking showdown. EACR will be there with members of the SE District, and I hope you have been lucky enough to get a ticket to the event. The ticket ballot has now closed but the event goes on from 4pm – 10.30m (gates open at 3.30pm).

Tracey Southgate
Public Relations Officer

25th June 2012