

Strategy was a weekend residential (camping) event for Scouts, Explorers and Rangers based at Cirencester Park, Gloucestershire. This large event was attended by approximately three thousand young people aged from 10 to 18 – exactly the age group Ringing 2030 aims to attract but which we find most difficult to reach. However, the national organisers of the event remembered the Essex International Jamboree last year and how popular the mini-ring there was. They made enquiries to the Mobile Belfries Trust about the possibility of bell ringing being one of the activities available at Cirencester on the Sunday (the final day of the event). Eventually Roger Haynes, Chairman of the Gloucester & Bristol Diocesan Association, was approached about supplying some ringers and seized upon the invitation.

The Charmborough Ring was arranged by the Mobile Belfries Trust and we were keen to maximise the potential of this opportunity. As with the Scout Jamboree in Essex last year, the organisers of the event made it abundantly clear that it would not be permissible to record the personal details of any individual under 18, no matter how keen they might be to learn to ring.

There would be three main challenges:

1. To attract the youngsters to our “stand” competing with all the other attractive options available to them on the day
2. To give them a memorable experience so that they would want to approach their local tower after they returned home
3. To measure success

Roger discussed these challenges with the Association Management Committee and it became clear that the best people to promote ringing to young people would be young people. Simple! The G&B Youth Team embraced the idea with their usual enthusiasm.

At 9.30 on Sunday 22nd June a team of seven teenagers and seven adults gathered at the Charmborough Ring which had been delivered and constructed that morning. The first task was to let the young ringers familiarise themselves with the bells and then give them a pep talk regarding what was expected of them. They were keen but apprehensive, especially when it dawned on them that they were being given the responsibility of giving practical bell handling lessons to people who knew nothing about ringing.

We asked them how they thought they should begin the process and quickly build a



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relationship with their “learner”. Faced with blank faces, we taught them a basic word pattern – “Hello, I am (name), would you like to have a go. Yes! Great. What is your name and where are you from?” We told them that they should give clear instructions and lots of praise. For teenagers, this was quite a challenge but, as the morning progressed it was amazing to hear them do this and to watch their confidence grow.

We opened for business on time at 10am. This is how we did with regard to the three challenges:

1. **Attracting attention:** Well, for the next four hours, we didn’t stop – even during a short but heavy shower of rain. The sound of the bells did the work for us. There is clearly a genuine interest in bells and what we do. There were no wisecracks, poking fun or misbehaviour – just genuine interest.

2. **Taking it up at home:** We may never know how impactful we were but we saw plenty of smiling faces and a lot of determined effort from all the youngsters who visited us. However, what we found really interesting, and raises questions for future activity, was the enthusiasm of adult scout leaders who were eager to talk about how they could arrange visits to their local towers for their scout groups. We had not anticipated this, and we now believe that this is the direction that needs to be developed.

3. **Measuring success:** The immediate and obvious benefit was the impact on the young ringers of the G&B Youth Team. We watched their confidence grow, their interpersonal skills improve, their teamwork and friendships develop, and it was clear that their enthusiasm never wavered. For the adults involved, we learned, yet again, to trust our young ringers and that instead of focussing on the barriers (being unable to take the details of under 18s), we must focus on the opportunities i.e develop relationships with fellow adult volunteers (Scout Leaders etc) who have similar mindsets, priorities and challenges to ours.



Strategy & Evolution

Strategy is a fun filled challenge weekend for Scouts, Explorers, Guides and Rangers.

Evolution is a weekend for Cubs and Brownies with some epic challenges
<https://s-e.org.uk/>