

A year ago, in *RW* 5960 (p.661), an article called ‘Young teachers for young learners’ reported on a weekend Scouting event held at Cirencester Park, Gloucestershire. The Mobile Belfries Trust had provided the Charnborough Ring and the G&B Youth Team were invited to staff it for the day. We must have done something right, because the Scouts asked us to do it all over again this year.

At 8.30am on Sunday 21st June, we were constructing the Charnborough Ring under the expert instruction of Roger Booth, whilst receiving many quizzical looks from the young scouts passing by on their way to breakfast. We also set up our gazebos, laid out handbells and our promotional materials. At 9.30am the rest of our team turned up for their pre-event briefing and then we were ready promptly at 10am. For the next four hours we were inundated with curious scouts and their leaders. Incidentally, the handbells were just as popular and helped us deal with the peaks and troughs of demand. Meanwhile, Roger Booth reported our activities to the Mobile Belfries Facebook Site.

Referring to the challenges identified and learnings we had taken away from last year’s event, this is how things went:

1. Attracting interest – This was not an issue.

The bells are our advertising tool and the young ringers of the G & B Youth Team did the rest. We received the following message the next day (which also made reference to the RWNYC):

“Thank you so much for teaching me how to ring the bells at the scout camp I enjoyed it a lot but especially thanks to the young 11 year old girl who helped me. Good luck with your upcoming competition!”

The Learning – We too easily underestimate the attraction of bells and bell ringing – even to young people. Also, having young ringers as teachers is incredibly impactful.

2. Longer Term and Lasting Impact – Last year we had nothing in place to help us develop things further. Neither did we anticipate interest from Scout Group Leaders. This year we were ready!

Using CCCBR resources and material, we designed a flyer to be used at this and future occasions, promoting tower tours. We realised that at this kind of event it would be difficult to recruit in any meaningful way and we understood that recruitment needs to be done at the local level, in a realistic setting and a less busy environment. We also designed a “lead sheet” which we asked Group Leaders to complete if they were interested in a Tower Tour which we could use to follow up this interest.

The Learning – Just having flyers and leads sheets does not come close to the full story; you need a team, with members playing to their individual strengths.

We had to be organised. In addition to running the mobile belfry with enthusiastic and energetic teachers, having people looking after the handbells and someone to manage the queue, we needed to have ‘sales people’ to

proactively approach group leaders (customers) and promote the tower tours. Having gained interest, the sales person handed the customer to someone else (management) who had a more in-depth conversation. Management helped with the completion of the form and cemented the customer contact. Meanwhile, the sales people were off out looking for more customers.

3. Measuring Success – Last year the benefits, whilst real, were largely intangible. We considered it a success because everyone enjoyed themselves and, of course, we were invited back. However, considering the level of investment – both financial and effort expended, is that really enough? We thought not.

Completion of the Lead Sheets provides us with a number: 41. Forty-one sheets were completed with 21 from Scout Groups within the G&B boundaries and 20 from elsewhere. The G&B consists of 12 Branches and we had Scout groups from within 10 of those Branches expressing an interest in having a Tower Tour.

The Learning – Well, that is what we now have to find out.

We need to make contact with these Scout Groups and match them up with a tower near to them. That tower will need to agree a time for the tour, provide the tour and, hopefully turn the interest into new recruits. So, the really hard work is yet to be done and we will not know the true success of this project for some time. As we follow through the process, no doubt we will learn more lessons.

Conclusion

If we are going to put in this amount of effort, and make this kind of investment in the future, we have to devise a proper plan taking into account the best use of resources, as well as think about the post-event follow-up before we start. Execute the event plan on the day, then swiftly move on to execute the post event plan. Throughout the process, discuss and debate the learnings so that, the next time, we do even better.

We should not forget or dismiss the positive impact on our team members. Our young ringers grew in confidence throughout the day and they (and also the adults) ended the day feeling a greater sense of belonging within the G&B Youth Team and the Association at large. No single person can do this alone – success is dependent on collaboration and teamwork and everyone has a part to play, even the youngest and least experienced ringers, by showing and telling their peers that ringing is fun.



Top: Peter, William and Megan teaching some Scouts

Bottom: Anya, Lawrence, Toby, Megan, Alma and Oliver practicing Plain Hunt ahead of the forthcoming Ringing World National Youth Contest in Nottingham (both photos Samantha Tillman)