**Silsden Bell Extravaganza 12-13 July**

It started when one of the Churchwardens informed me that the Mission and Outreach group had decided that the church could hold a bellringing event as part of Bradford City of Culture. I stupidly agreed to organise this!

My first email, after agreeing a date for the event, was to contact the Mobile Belfries Trust to book a mobile ring for the weekend. The Touring Tower was offered, and since this had not been seen in Yorkshire, I accepted the offer. The Churchwarden had asked that handbells be included in the weekend too, so my next email was to the North East Regional Secretary of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain. The Bingley Handbell Ringers responded to say that they would be able to give a concert on the Saturday night.

Initial publicity was circulated via the church newsletter, social media and emails. When the timings for the weekend were agreed, a more detailed poster was circulated using the same channels, and posters printed and distributed around the town. A separate poster for the handbell concert was also distributed. One set back was the loss of the Touring Tower due to damage, but we were offered The Charmborough Ring as a replacement.

The weekend started on the Friday evening with the erection of The Charmborough Ring by a small group from church. This was advertised on the local facebook page, Silsden Buzz, as ‘look what has landed in the church car park’. Saturday dawned very hot. The day kicked off with a coffee morning in the church hall and open sessions on the Charmborough Ring. The hall was decorated with bell bunting (made from retired choir robes), there was a quiz to try and match towers and bells, and there were bell shaped biscuits and buns decorated with bells available to eat with the tea/coffee. A variety of people of all ages came to have a go on the bells, each receiving a sticker to show that they had ‘rung the bells’. Several local members of the Yorkshire Tykes came along and we were supported by other local ringers. One ringer from Lytham came over to ring with us as he passed on his Saturday bike ride.

Saturday afternoon was used to introduce people to tune ringing on handbells and also for a small group from the church congregation to practice for a performance at the Sunday service. Saturday evening saw the concert by the Bingley Handbell Ringers. This was excellent and the audience also enjoyed learning about the history of tune ringing on handbells from Jane Lynch between the tunes.

On Sunday, we just had one service, which was bell themed. The church was decorated with more bell bunting, the hymns were selected from those listed on the Bell Sunday website, the handbell performance went off without any major mistakes, and the sermon was a brief history of the bells at Silsden followed by a showing of the YouTube ‘It’s Harder than it Looks’ which was filmed at Silsden. The weekend concluded with a peal attempt on the tower bells, which unfortunately came to grief in the fifth extent. However, this did result in positive comments about the bells ringing on Silsden Buzz.

A weekend like this does not happen without help and support from others. I would like to thank the church members who helped with the coffee morning, who provided refreshments for the handbell concert, who co-ordinated the publicity, and who helped to put up and take down The Charmboough Ring. I would also like to thank the local ringers who came along to have a ring and show people what ringing is all about. Thanks also to the Yorkshire Association of Change Ringers for their grant towards costs.