

Biographical Record

David BEACHAM (1932 – 2016)

Represented the Worcestershire & Districts Association from 1957 to 1975
and attended 17 meetings

David was born at Cheltenham 2nd May, 1932. The family then moved to Twyning where his father worked for the Manor Estate. He was a choirboy at Twyning, and his curiosity was piqued by the sounds coming down to the vestry from the tower above, not just the sound of bells but the shouting and foot-stamping. He was soon invited to ring and was told to bring along some more boys as well. This was 1944 when David was 12, just after the restriction on bell-ringing was lifted. In later years he was proud to be a member of the 43ers – those who learnt to ring when ringing recommenced at the end of the war. He was taught under the watchful eye of Fred Hawkes. He was a fast learner and he rang his first quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles at Ripple, conducted by Charles Hayling.

Ringling at Ripple and Twyning at that time was mainly Grandsire Doubles (with extremes), and he soon increased his repertoire to 8-bell ringling. This involved cycling across the river to Upton on Severn. Here he met George Morris. On leaving school, he became an apprentice horological engineer at a factory in nearby Cheltenham and was required to attend classes at Cheltenham Tech. Needless to say, ringling was more attractive, and classes were often skipped to attend practices at St. Mary's Cheltenham on a Thursday night, where he learnt ten and twelve bell ringling. When he acquired a motorcycle he was able to join the Worcester Cathedral ringers, becoming a member of the Worcester Cathedral Guild of Bellringers in 1954. He was particularly proud of his 64 years of unbroken service there.

David became a renowned heavy-bell ringer, notably turning in Worcester Cathedral tenor to a quarter on the back eight, and ringling Worcester Cathedral's 11th to four and a half hours of Stedman Cinques when, following twenty-five minutes of a false start, the conductor (Alan Ainsworth) immediately called 'go again'. His membership of the Cathedral Guild brought him into contact with Neville Diserens who did his National Service in Worcester. This resulted in David's long friendship with the Diserens family, as well as membership of the Roving Ringers, where he was joined by George Morris and John Slater.

David married his first wife, Kitty (also a ringer), in 1959 and they had two children, Jonathan and Sarah. The untimely and tragic death of his daughter Sarah, and then the death of Kitty were great blows to David, but his subsequent marriage to Jenny, his son Jonathan's wedding and the subsequent arrival of his grandchildren, greatly helped him to recover.

David had an illustrious ringling career in what has become the Worcester and District Change Ringling Association. He held the following posts:- Elected Member 1947; Elected Freeman 1992; Central Council Representative 1957 to 1974; General Secretary 1962 to 1973; Western Branch Chairman 1975 to 1979 and 1995; Western Branch Committee Member 1981 to 1984; Association Master 1986 to 1992; Vice President 1993 to 1998 and 2010 to 2016; and Western Branch Central Committee Representative 2006 to 2011.

David rang 527 peals, two of which were on handbells, and he conducted thirty of the tower bell peals. He was a highly accomplished ringer and conductor and was greatly respected both locally and nationally. Of his peals, there were a number that David considered as particularly significant to him. Three were rung in 1965 – one was Grandsire Triples at Worcester, St John's, which he conducted and which included three first-pealers (all 'inside') and two were of Stedman Cinques; the first being at Evesham Bell Tower and his first both in the method and on twelve as conductor, and the other was at Worcester Cathedral (also conducted by David).

In 1978, after All Saints, Worcester had been augmented to twelve and David conducted the first peal on the twelve: Stedman Cinques rung by the Sunday service band. This was followed a short while later by the first peal of Maximus on the bells, but with a different conductor.

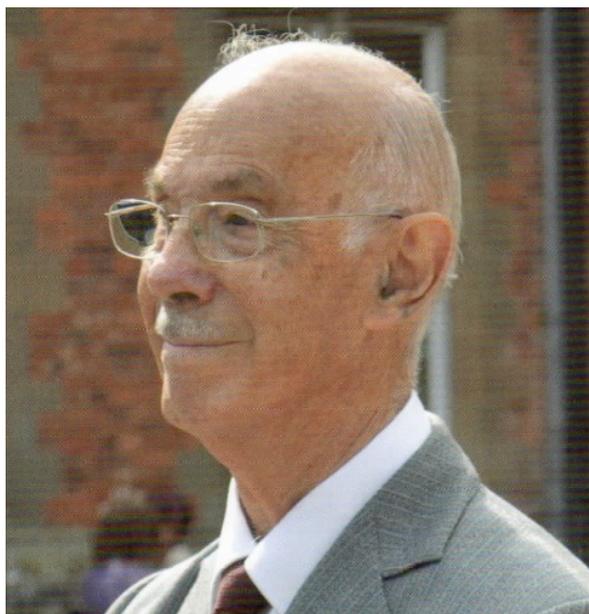
He rang in two other memorable peals, Stedman Sextuples and Stedman Septuples at the Bull Ring, Birmingham, which he found challenging!

Of his many contributions to ringing. David is probably best known for leading the project to re-hang and augment the old, difficult, ten at All Saints Church in Worcester. He described this as probably the biggest DIY job yet undertaken. It came about as a result of a comment by Den Morris, that he hoped to see the All Saints bells re-hung in his lifetime.

David set about the task energetically. He spent countless evenings and weekends, together with David Franklin and others taking out the old bells, installing a new frame and then re-hanging the re-tuned and dramatically improved ring. The work started in 1972 and was completed in 1975.

The many people who have rung their first peals on 10 and 12 at All Saints as well as the numerous record length peals there are a testament to the fruits of his, and his team's labours.

David died on Sunday 30th October 2016. The eulogy at his funeral was given by David Jenkins.



His obituary appeared in The Ringing World 2016, page 1135