

Biographical Record

Philip Alexander Forbes CHALK (1930 – 2015)

Represented the Cambridge University Guild on the Central Council from 1954 to 1959 and attended one Council meeting

Philip Chalk was born in the second quarter of 1930 in Essex. He learned to ring at Stanstead Mountfitchet and at Much Hadham after the wartime ban on ringing was lifted. In 1949 he was elected a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths and in 1950 he went up to Cambridge. There he rang with the Cambridge University Guild and was Master in 1951-1952. After completing his studies at Cambridge, he went to the London Hospital to study medicine and eventually he became a distinguished obstetrician and gynaecologist. Later he worked at the Royal Free Hospital where he became head of the medical school.

During his time working in London he made a considerable contribution to London ringing. In particular he rang with the ASCY of which he was the Master in 1957-1958. In 1958 he and Jean Doughty were married in Cheshire. They were to have three children, all of whom learned to ring: David, Alison and Hilary.

Philip was in charge of the ringing at St. Michael's Cornhill for many years and was a church warden there too. He was also a member of the band at St. Paul's Cathedral. Philip rang several peals of note including ringing the tenor at St. Paul's Cathedral single-handedly to Stedman Cinqes in 1972. He rang it again, in effect, in 1978, when the strap became detached from the rope after only a few courses of Stedman. He rang over 200 peals in hand, including one of 11,111 Stedman Caters. He was a keen peal ringer and rang a total of 556 peals after 1950; some of these peals had been in methods which were the cutting edge at the time he rang them: Bristol and Strathclyde Surprise Maximus being two such methods. In 1991 he had the idea of arranging that on the College Youths' annual peal day a peal should be rung in every Diocese sponsored in aid of St. Luke's Hospital for the Clergy. Nearly forty of the fifty peals arranged were successful.

Philip was very involved in the Drapers' Company, one of the old Livery Companies of London. He was Master of the Drapers in 1993 and rang a handbell peal in the Drapers' Hall on June 30th that year.



After he retired from his professional life, he moved to Hurstbourne Priors in Hampshire. Here he was instrumental in the project to re-hang and augment the bells. Having got the bells in good order he enjoyed teaching a new band from scratch in time to ring for the Millennium. Living in Hampshire also gave him the opportunity to enjoy his other hobby of fly fishing in the River Test and the River Bourne. He liked to tie his own flies to fish with.

He died on April 4th 2015 and his funeral service took place a Hurstbourne Priors on April 17th .

His obituary appeared in The Ringing World 2015, page 366.