

Biographical Record

Terence Ralph HAMPTON (1928 – 2015)

Represented the St Martins Guild on the Central Council from 1975 to 1986
and attended 11 meetings

Terry Hampton was born on 2nd December 1928 in Birmingham, not far from the church of St Michael, Boldmere, and it was here that he learnt to ring in 1944 after the ban on wartime ringing had been lifted. As many of the pre-war ringers at Boldmere had been called up to serve in the armed forces, a call was made by the vicar, Canon Brown, for boys to come forward and be trained as bell ringers. This resulted in about twenty lads, many from Children's Church including Terry, turning up to see what ringing was all about.

Tuition started under the supervision of William (Bill) Anker and George Swann, both experienced ringers from Erdington Parish Church nearby. After a few weeks, only about a dozen boys remained and they subsequently provided the nucleus of the band of ringers who rang at Boldmere for VE Day in 1945 and post war. Terry learnt to ring very quickly and was soon elected tower captain.

Terry's first peal was of Stedman Triples on an inside bell, conducted by his tutor George Swann, and rung at Perry Barr on 24th November 1945. His second peal, one of Stedman Caters at Aston, followed soon after. Most of his earlier peals up to 1949 were in sporadic bursts, suggesting that he was away from Birmingham a lot, probably doing national service.

In 1948 he came to the attention of George Fearn, Ringing Master at St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham, and a prolific peal ringer and organiser. From then on, George regularly included him in peals at churches in and around Birmingham, and from 1949 onwards he became a regular member of the Thursday night peal band at St Philip's Cathedral, and the Monday night peal band at Bishop Ryder's church in Birmingham, often attempting two peals a week. He also rang a good number of peals at St Martin's, Birmingham over the next few years, including his first peal on 12 – Stedman Cinques on 24th May 1949.

In 1953 Terry married Ann Baxter, who had been a pupil at the same school as him, and in 1956 they had a son Paul.

Terry was elected to the College Youths in 1951, ringing his first peal for them at Walsall in January that year (Yorkshire Surprise Maximus). He continued to ring peals regularly in and around Birmingham up to early 1960. There was a gap in his peal ringing until late 1967, which was largely due to considerable travel on business in the intervening years.

Once he had resumed regular peal ringing, from 1968 onwards he rang a higher proportion of his peals on 12 than before, as he was once again a regular member of the Thursday night peal band at St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham. In particular, he became known for ringing the 8th in peals at the Cathedral, which had the reputation of being a tricky bell to ring - but he rang it well, probably better than anyone else. In fact, from this time onwards virtually all his peals at the Cathedral were rung on this bell and he frequently rang the 8th when ringing 12-bell peals at other towers as well.

Terry was one of a group of three, led by Norman Goodman, who would arrange for ringers to bring all of their old newspapers to the Cathedral where they were stored in the crypt before being sold for recycling, with the profits going to the bell fund.

Over the next few years, most of his peals were of Surprise methods, particularly Surprise Maximus although he rang a good number of Surprise Royal and Major peals as well. There was a particularly noteworthy occasion on 16th October 1976, when he rang in three successful peals of Surprise Maximus on a single day with the same band (Strathclyde at Solihull, Bristol at St Philip's Cathedral, and Londinium at Aston), organised by the St Martin's Guild ringing master, Richard Grimmett. Terry considered this to be probably the finest achievement of his ringing career.

Terry was prominent in the St Martin's Guild and held the posts of Secretary and Treasurer between 1970 and 1973. He represented the Guild on the Central Council between 1975 and 1986, and also became a Life Vice President of the Guild in 1989. He rang in two National 12-Bell contests for the Birmingham team (at Birmingham in 1978 and High Wycombe in 1981). The team finished in first place on both occasions so he is one of the few people with a 100% success record in this event.

For many years he worked for Dunlop Tyres as a tyre development engineer and was active in the marketing team overseeing the tyres used in Formula 1. He used to attend most of the races and it was understood that his work involved assessing the tyre wear after a race, but it was assumed that his work was commercially confidential since he was generally not keen to talk about it. He retired from Dunlop in 1983.

In 1986 he and his wife Ann moved to North Devon and he became a member of the band at Marwood, near Barnstaple. He also became an active member of the St Brannock's Society and continued to ring peals regularly, with a good number being for the Devonshire Guild, although he did return to Birmingham to ring peals from time to time. This continued activity enabled him to ring his 1000th peal (Bristol Surprise Maximus) at Birmingham Cathedral on 9th September 1988. He continued to ring peals until 2002 when he rang his last peal (Plain Bob Major), on 16th November, at Bridgerule, Devon. According to his records his final peal total was 1154, all of which were on tower bells. He conducted none of his peals, which was rather surprising for one who had been a tower captain and called many quarter peals.

Terry had the reputation of being a very calm person and was always sociable when you met him, but this was rarely in a pub since he tended not to socialise after ringing peals. He and his wife Ann regularly attended the Henry Johnson Dinner when they lived in Birmingham.

His last few years were spent in a care home near to where his son Paul lived in Dewsbury, Yorkshire. He died there on 4th August 2015.

