

# Biographical Record

## **George Walter HUGHES (1912 – 1991)**

Represented the Staffordshire Archdeaconry Society on the Central Council from 1957 to 1965, and attended 8 Central Council meetings.

George Walter Hughes was born on 30th June 1912 in Walsall. He qualified as a Mechanical Engineer (AMIMEchE) and joined the small engineering firm established by his father (Walter) in 1934, who was also a ringer and engineer. He remained there for the whole of his career. He died aged 78 on 25th February, 1991, and his ashes were interred near the lychgate and tower at St. Matthew's, Walsall.

George learnt to ring in his teens at St Matthew's, Walsall, in 1929, shortly after the bells were restored and augmented. He rang there for the rest of his life, the last time being during a spell at home during his final illness. He served as ringing master and tower keeper at St Matthew's for 35 years, from 1956 until he died, and he taught many other people to handle a bell and ring changes. He was the driving force behind the project that used a legacy to install a sharp second to the twelve in 1981, thus creating a light octave more suitable for young learners.

He rang his first peal at the age of 19 – Stedman Cinques at St Peter's, Wolverhampton, on 12th September 1931 – and he conducted his first peal, also Stedman Cinques, at Walsall in 1939. He kept no ringing records, but his peal total is believed to be around 220. 214 of them were for the Archdeaconry of Stafford and the Lichfield Archdeaconry and he rang a few others including one in Sussex when on holiday, and one in Birmingham. He rang his last peal, of Grandsire Triples at Walsall, on his 75th birthday, 30th June, 1987. He rang many quarter peals, many of which were to help the numerous learners that he taught over the years. As well as being committed to his home tower, George was ever willing to help when other towers needed assistance, and for several years he served as ringing master of the Society for the Archdeaconry of Stafford,

Outside the tower, he rang carols on handbells for Christmas performances. Through his work, he became well acquainted with similar small firms all over the Black Country, and with the Black Country itself. His engineering skills and craftsmanship found practical application linked to ringing. He made several model bells, and gave two of the larger ones to St. Matthew's, the last being moved into the tower after his death, as a memorial. He also made a set of handbells. He had a keen interest in steam trains, and his comprehensive slide collection included many steam engines as well as churches.

*The Ringing World for 1991 includes his obituary (p 480), and a report of memorial ringing, with a picture of the band with one of his model bells (p 467).*