

Biographical Record

Frank Benjamin LUFKIN (1910 – 1997)

Represented the Essex Association on the Central Council from 1946 to 1996, was a Life Member from 1996 to 1997 and attended 49 meetings

Frank Benjamin Lufkin was born on Christmas Day, 1910, grew up in Southend-on-Sea, Essex and on leaving school, went to work as a coach painter. He remained in this job until 1935 when he became verger at St Mary's, Prittlewell. He knew that church well, for he was taught to ring here in 1928 by William Judd, a well-known ringer from this part of Essex.

Frank was a cheerful optimist, admired and respected by fellow ringers. He was involved in all aspects of ringing, nearly always to the benefit of those involved. After ringing at his own church, peal ringing was a great pleasure. His first peal was one of Oxford Treble Bob Major at Prittlewell on July 27, 1927, and his first as conductor was at Purleigh on July 20, 1946.

The war intervened between these and he joined the National Fire Service. He enjoyed the service and in 1947 made it his career, retiring as a Station Officer from Clacton-on-Sea in 1975. This was also the year he retired from being Guild Master of the Essex Association, having been elected in 1967. He was unanimously elected a Life Vice-President to mark his service. He was elected a member of the Central Council in 1946 and represented the Essex Association until 1995 when he was elected a Life Member, a post he retained until his death.

He was interested in long lengths, his first being a record 9,000 Plain Bob Royal in 1947. He followed this with a 12,740 in 1950. In the next few years others followed; 11,568 Double Norwich Court Bob Major in 1950; 18,000 Minor in 25 methods in 1957; 22,400 Plain Bob Major in 1960 – “the greatest number of changes by one set of ringers on church bells.”

He took part in the race to ring the extent of Major. In 1961 he conducted the attempt to surpass the existing 32,704 changes. After passing this record both in time and changes a miscall resulted in “a glorious failure” after 32,912 changes.

He was always willing to help others and guided over 110 ringers through their first peal. He finally achieved his 1000th peal with one of 5003 Grandsire Caters on the bells of St Mary the Virgin, Prittlewell on November 2, 1975. He had conducted 731 of these peals. His grand peal total was 1074, conducted 765.

Frank died on January 9, 1997 aged 86. Many commented at his passing. From a eulogy at his funeral. “We will miss his wise council, gentle humour and honest integrity. We will miss his mild admonishments when we have uttered ill-conceived statements. We will miss his staccato bobs and long drawn-out singles. But most of all we will miss the man, Frank B Lufkin, unique and irreplaceable.”

His obituary was in The Ringing World 1997, pages 202-4.

