

Prolific Peal Ringers

7: GEORGE ROBERT PYE (1872-1945)



Born at Chadwell Heath on June 30, 1872 the son of Daniel and Ann Pye, George Robert Pye was the fourth of six brothers, all ringers. The eldest and the youngest did not proceed very far with their ringing, but the names of the remaining four became household names amongst the ringing fraternity. Albert, the second eldest was less known than the other three as he spent nearly thirty years in the army, the first ten of which were in India. William achieved more than any other ringer, both in number of peals and ringing feats, Ernest, who tragically died early, was described as one of the finest ringers who ever pulled a rope, and then there was George, or Bob, as he was known.

Like his brothers, Bob Pye learned to ring at Little Heath, a ring of five in a church that has since been demolished. Later, they all joined the Romford band, which quickly brought them to the forefront of the ringing scene. Bob first handled a bell in 1888 and his first peal was one of Grandsire Triples at Romford on March 30, 1891: his first as conductor was at St Mary, Walthamstow on December 31, 1894.

Having four enthusiastic ringers in one house offered unprecedented opportunities for handbell ringing and in this Bob excelled. He rang many methods on handbells, including the firsts in London and Bristol Surprise Major and he was the conductor of the record peal of Stedman Cinques. He also rang in non-conducted peals of Stedman Triples and Superlative Surprise Major on handbells.

He was a faithful Sunday service ringer at St Edward's, Romford, nearly always walking the three miles to and from the church twice each Sunday. He did this regularly from 1898 for more than forty years until ill health curtailed his ringing just before the war started.

Bob remained a bachelor all his life, working on the land as an agricultural labourer, as did his father and some of his brothers. In the 1890s he lodged with his eldest brother, John and his young family but around the turn of the century he was back living with his father who was now described as "a threshing machine owner". Bob's occupation was described as "a traction engine driver". When his father died a few years later it appears Bob inherited the threshing machine, his mother also coming to live with him.

His four-hundredth peal was one of Stedman Triples at St Matthew, Upper Clapton on July 4, 1908. He called this after meeting one short for a peal of Cambridge. His five-hundredth was one of

London Surprise Major at Burgess Hill, in Sussex on August 7, 1911. John S Goldsmith, who had started *The Ringing World* the previous March, was also in this band. Of his 500 peals, he had conducted 68 and they had been rung in 150 towers. In 1912 he became the third person to achieve a total of one hundred peals on handbells, the two earlier positions being taken by his brother William and Clement Glenn.

In 1918 the Essex Association elected him to represent them on the Central Council and he remained their representative until 1944, attending nineteen meetings. He also did work for the Council as a member of the Peals Analysis Committee.

He rang his one thousandth peal on April 9, 1927, being the seventh person to achieve this number and the third member of his family. He rang a total of 1,878 peals, of which he conducted 360. Amongst his most interesting performances were 18,027 Stedman Caters at Loughborough, when the clock was rung round for the first time; 15,312 Cambridge Surprise Maximus at Ashton-under-Lyne; 15,264 Bristol Surprise Major at Hornchurch; 11,111 Stedman Cinques at Birmingham; 14,112 London Surprise Major At Kings Norton and two of the "biggest" peals undertaken, the peals of Cambridge Surprise Maximus at Exeter and Worcester Cathedrals.

He died on March 31, 1945 after a long illness, patiently borne. He was taken ill in the opening peal of a Lancashire peal tour in August 1939 and rang only on rare occasions subsequently. He was buried with his parents and brothers and sisters at Aldborough Hatch, Ilford in the presence of many friends.

References

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