

Prolific Peal Ringers

50: MICHAEL JOHN FELLOWS (1947-1975)



Michael J Fellows was born at Stourbridge, West Midlands, on December 3, 1947, the second son of Arthur and Evelyn Fellows. Arthur was a

ringer at St Thomas, Stourbridge, so it was only natural that Michael and his elder brother Martin should have been introduced to ringing at an early age.

Michael was only ten, and was taught to handle a bell by the local tower captain, Frederick V Nicholls. He quickly learnt how to handle a bell and the elements of change ringing. He rang his first peal on November 14, 1959 at St Peter-de-Witton, Droitwich. This marked the start of his ringing career that was to take him into the realms of Spliced Surprise Major, Royal and Maximus and also into the art of conducting, in which he became a true expert.

He was educated at Edward VI Grammar School, Stourbridge and in 1964 went to a Teachers' Training College in Derby. This led to him ringing quite a large number of peals for the Derby Diocesan Association whilst he was there! In 1971 he married Stephanie Buckley of Kidderminster and became a member of the teaching staff of Harry Cheshire High School.

Peal ringing was not his only ringing hobby; he was also Master of the Northern Branch of the Worcestershire Association, and had earlier represented the Dudley and District Guild on the Central Council.

His rang his one-thousandth peal on October 3, 1974. It was 5057 Grandsire Caters, rung at Stourbridge; and was his 523rd peal as conductor. With this peal, Michael became the youngest

person, at twenty-six years and ten months, to have rung 1000 peals, surpassing Bernard Groves' previous record by one month!

Of the thousand peals, 71 had been rung on handbells, of which he had conducted 35.

Most of his peals on twelve bells were rung with the St Martin's Guild, Birmingham. They include two record peals, one of Stedman Cinques and another of 16,368 Cambridge Surprise Maximus, both rung at St Philip's. Michael was only seventeen when he rang the latter in 1965! Over half his peals were in Surprise Major methods. His last peal was on December 4, 1974 at St Mark, Pensnett, W Midlands. He rang a total of 1012 peals.

He entered Kidderminster Hospital in the middle of January 1975 and underwent two major operations in a week and from the results of these and a blood infection he died on February 8, 1975 at the age of 28. His obituary in the *Ringing World* summarised his loss and concluded with: *"He was a man whose qualities as a ringer and a friend will be remembered by many with gratitude and admiration. As a person he was honest and forthright, with a bright "impish" and jovial personality, always ready to help anyone in need. With such a gifted and unique personality, we may never see his like again. Rest in peace."*

References

RW 59/720; 74/855, 882; 75/60, 327