

Prolific Peal Ringers

40: J MARTIN THORLEY (1930-2001)



James Martin Thorley was born on October 5, 1930, the eldest son of Mr and Mrs James Thorley, of Thorne, Yorks. He was educated at Thorne Grammar School and was the fourth generation of his line to take up ringing. At fourteen he was a couple of years older than previous generations when Thomas D Leask

taught him bell-handling; perhaps because of the ban on ringing and also the fact that his father was away serving in the Royal Artillery! For his first peal he rang the second to a peal of Plain Bob Minor at Everton, Notts on June 8, 1946, conducted by Frank Reed. He enjoyed peals of Minor and retained a fondness for them throughout the rest of his life.

For his National Service he joined the RAF and served in Suffolk (shades of things to come!) and then moved on to the Middle East. Here he managed to catch typhoid, which he barely survived, and eventually arrived back in the UK to train as a teacher at Saltley College, Birmingham. Whilst here he rang peals with other students such as Wilf Moreton, Brian Warwick, Michael Staniforth and Birmingham stalwarts such as George Fearn and Frank Haynes. In fact, hand bell peals and practices were held in Wilf Moreton's room, which from time to time tended to upset his neighbours!

He married Patricia M Reeves, only daughter of Mr and Mrs A N Reeves, of Heworth, on August 11, 1954. The wedding took place at Heworth parish church and the best man was W Eric Critchley. Martin also managed to fit in a hand bell peal during his honeymoon in Ireland!

He began his career as a teacher in his hometown of Thorne in Yorkshire and pursued it through several other towns in Yorkshire before moving to Lincolnshire. Jobs followed in Yorkshire, then Rutland, Suffolk, - for his thousandth peal - and Lancashire. With Marcus Sherwood and Geoffrey Fothergill here there were many peals! He was the Head teacher of four separate schools before a severe illness caused him to take early retirement and move to Suffolk.

Living in different parts of the country had made more rings of bells available and increased peal opportunities and in 1972 his one thousandth peal came up at Framsdon, Suffolk, on Sunday, July 30. It is interesting to note that four other members of this band were to ring one thousand peals in the future, i.e. Cecil Pipe, Leslie Brett, John Loveless and Stephen Pettman. Fifteen years later he rang his two thousandth peal at Southwold, Suffolk. This was one of Reverse Canterbury Triples, conducted by David G Salter, on November 21, 1987.

Ringing was a family hobby and his three daughters all learned to ring. He called a peal of Surprise Major with each of them and rang more than 250 with his eldest daughter, Katharine, who is, I believe, the youngest person to have rung one hundred peals. Other of Martin's notable peals include: over 100 peals of Spliced Surprise Major; peals in more than 250 different Surprise Major methods; the first peal of Bristol Surprise Royal in the Eastern Counties;

Martin was very proud of the six generations of his family, including his grandchildren, who were ringers. His friends referred to him as an individualist with very little regard for snobbishness in method ringing: a good peal was a good peal whatever the level of expertise required. Another regarded him as the quintessential Yorkshire man despite his long periods in exile.

He died on September 20, 2001, aged 70, his last peal being the day before and 999 peals after his previous heart attack. Total peals 2,958.

References

Ringing World 1946/295; 1954/ 553; 1972/655, 682; 1987/1091, 1098; 1993/5; 1997/506; 2001/ 982, 1031, 1104, 1228, 1292