

St Albans District Newsletter

Volume 30 Issue 2 – October 2024

District Outing - 15th June

By Alison Evans, St Michael's, St Albans

A very select band of ringers joined the District Outing on 15th June. The weather didn't look very promising as nine of us met in the rain outside the church at Whipsnade. Still, at least we could go inside, unlike the volunteers tidying up the churchyard who probably got quite wet. The day's itinerary on the Bedfordshire-Hertfordshire border took in three ground floor rings of six and one upstairs eight. At Whipsnade, the first of the sixes, the bells are rung from a compact area down a couple of steps at the back of the church. Although they are quite light (tenor 3 cwt) and the ropes are quite long, they went very nicely. We received a very warm welcome and were pleased that our hostess and her daughter - who was on the final day of a visit from Australia - rang with us too.

The second set of bells was the well-behaved ring of eight at Totternhoe (tenor 9 cwt). The sallies in use were blue but there was a complete set of ropes with gold sallies hanging on the wall above the window. Perhaps the Totternhoe ringers have not read Rob's Ringing World article, "Money for Old Rope"!

It had still been damp and drizzly as we waited in the churchyard on arrival but by the time we finished an enjoyable ring, the sun was starting to make an appearance to cheer us as we made our way to lunch.



L-R: Mary, Neil, Anne, Alison, Graham, Vivian, Rosemary, Rob, Dianne.

After a tasty meal at The Red Lion in Studham and posing for a group photograph, we made our way to Studham church (tenor 10 cwt). They were a bit weightier than the morning's bells but had a nice, rich sound.

Rob, Alison, Vivian and Neil ran the ringing at the four towers, and we rang a variety of different methods over the course of the day. At the six bell towers, the repertoire included rounds and calls, Cambridge Surprise Minor, a touch of Stedman Doubles, Plain Hunt (Doubles and Minor), Grandsire Doubles and London Surprise Minor, while at the eight bell tower, we rang a selection of Triples methods including Plain Hunt, Grandsire and Plain Bob.

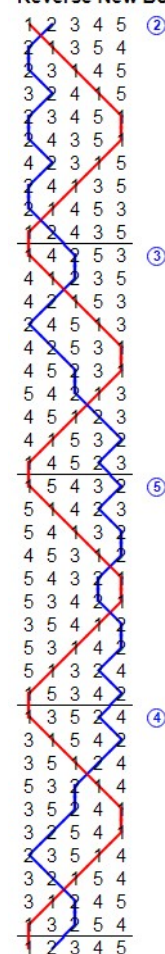
Over lunch, there had been a discussion about ringing Reverse New Bob Doubles which had been featured in the Ringing World in its Method of the Month column: we had been trying it at St Michael's, St Albans, when Rob and Mary visited on a recent practice night. Some of the company consulted their phones to study the blue line and, in the afternoon, we rang it several times, including touches with bobs and singles, which felt like quite an achievement!

The last tower of the day was Little Gaddesden (tenor 6 cwt). They went smoothly but I've written in my notes that they were very loud.

At the end of the ringing, we rewarded ourselves with some delicious home bakes provided by Dianne.

On the whole, we achieved some creditable ringing on some very nice bells, and thanks are due to those who came, although it's a shame that so few people supported the day. I find the outings are among the most enjoyable District ringing events and I'm already looking forward to next year's.

Reverse New Bob Doubles



Success in Sheffield by a Sandridge Ringer

From the Ringing World 16 August

Earlier this year Hana Booth and Carys Hughes Blagden were winners of ART's Sarah Beacham Award.

This is a very edited version of how they've turned Sheffield student ringing around (it is based on an article in the Ringing World pp 756-757 on 16 August 24).

Student ringing in Sheffield had declined to a point where there was no regular student band or tower and only four ringers at the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year. Hana (who learnt to ring at Sandridge) and Carys (who learnt to ring in Belper, Derbyshire) have re-established SUGCR (Sheffield University Guild of Change Ringers). They ran a number of campaigns to attract students and other young ringers to SUGCR using Facebook, Instagram and a lively stand at the Freshers Fair. The numbers went from 4 to 20 in just a few months.

Hana and Carys formed good relationship with local bands at ST Maries's Walkley, Ranmoor and Sheffield Cathedral. They arranged practice nights in collaboration with the local band and secured a Sunday afternoon practice and service ringing prior to the 6.30pm Mass. This proved very popular with the church as the bells were not previously rung for this service. Although Hana and Carys had never taught anyone to ring before, they attended an ART Module 1 Day Course and they used the Learning the Ropes scheme to teach and track progression. They also both attended a conducting course to allow them to teach and they worked hard to cement friendship groups within SUGCR to try and ensure the guild is set up for future years.

The full story of Hana and Carys' success in Sheffield runs to two pages and can be downloaded for free by anyone even if they don't subscribe to the RW via this link:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/issues.php>

Hana has now conducted a peal of
Superlative Surprise Major.

Well done to Hana and Carys for their hard work

Society of Royal Cumberland Youths

Welwyn, St Mary the Virgin

Saturday, 31 August 2024 in 2h 45 (8–1–14 in A)

5088 Superlative Surprise Major

Composed by Nathan J Pitstow

1. James W S Crawley
2. Roger Baldwin
3. Hana Booth (C)
4. Christine M Carter
5. Thomas W Green
6. Richard Sales
7. John P Loveless
8. Thomas B Mack

First for the society: 5.

First peal of surprise as conductor.

Bellringing and Education – a route to recruitment

By Anne Pegum

Did you know that visiting and finding out about local places of worship is part of the National Curriculum for key stage 2 in Junior schools? Did you know that bell ringers can be involved? At Radlett, for the past couple of years, the bell ringers have become an integral part of these visits each year and we now have visits from all the local junior schools. We usually have four to six ringers there to support the activities.

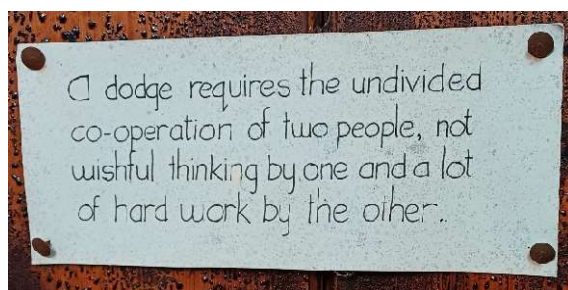
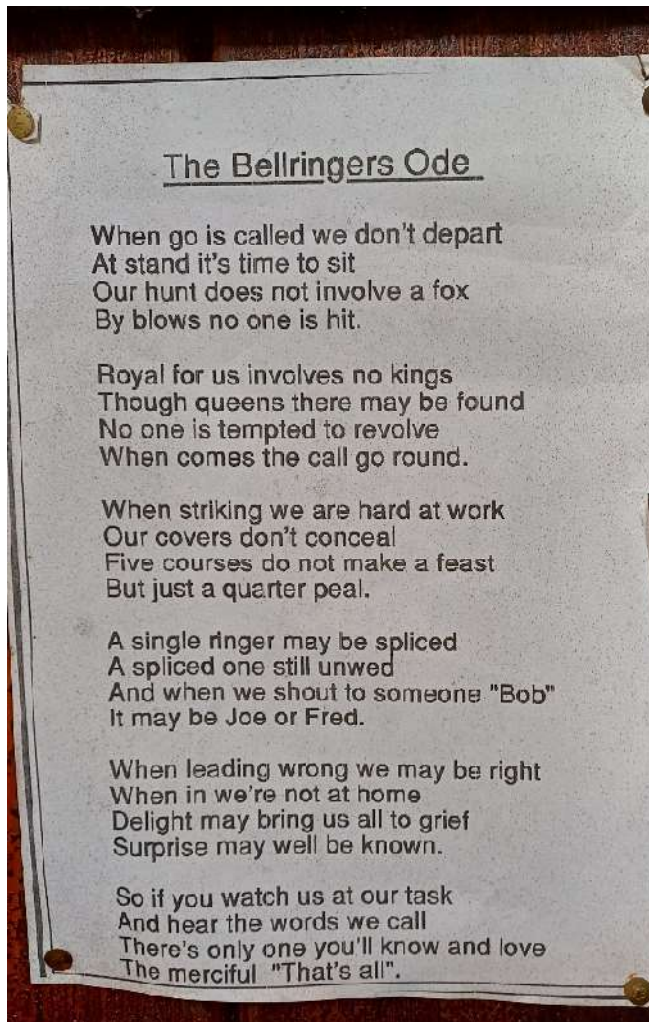
Working with the Vicar we divide the children into three groups and have three activities for them. The vicar covers the church part including vestments, services and parts of the church. Meanwhile we have another group who will have a brief introduction to bell ringing and then be shown how to ring handbells. We usually manage rounds and changes such as Queens and Kings. Some groups even manage Plain Hunt if there is time. For the third group we set up a webcam in the ringing chamber (linked to a tablet or laptop in the ringing chamber) which focuses on a raised bell so that we can show them a bell being rung full circle, although this is not necessary. They all have the chance to chime one of the lowered bells. If there is time, they can also be taken up to see the bells so they can see how big they are and how they are hung so pulling on the rope makes more sense.

The enthusiasm is great to see and usually we have several who say they would like to ring so we always say come back when you are ready and we will teach you.

If we can do this so can you, talk to your incumbent and offer to support the school visits. Remember young legs climb stairs very quickly and they always have teachers and helpers with them. It really is good fun and might gain you a recruit or two at some point. No guarantees.

A Collection of Ringing Notices

During various outings, we've been taking a note of some witty Ringing Chamber notices:
If you have any more – please send them to the Editor!



'Loud church bells make idyllic village life a misery'

Ask a Lawyer



Dear Gary

My wife and I and our toddler recently moved from London to a lovely village in Suffolk. It's great, apart from the fact that we live next to the parish church and the bell ringing is loud and frequent.

Are there any laws about how often the bells can be rung and how late it can go on for? Bell ringing practice seems to be on a Tuesday night. We put our two-year-old to bed at 7pm, but the bells crank up at 7.30pm and carry on until 9pm.

Now the summer wedding season is under way we also get long bell ringing sessions at the weekend as well. It really is driving us to distraction.

- Jasper

Dear Jasper

The sound of church bells is not just a country pursuit, given many city centre churches also ring out to call the faithful to worship. Indeed, under Canon Law of the Church of England it is stated every church shall be provided with a bell for that purpose. Canon law is the internal law of a religious group for their own self-regulation.

Canon law is not the law of the land per se, although as it is the Established Church, many internal rules of the

Church of England have passed into English Law. It would be wrong to say a church has a legal right to ring a bell, but it is certainly a well-established custom from time immemorial. And, where possible, the law of land likes to respect customs so long as they are not inherently dangerous or have the potential to harm others.

Control of the ringing of church bells vests in the vicar and churchwardens of the parish, so any complaint should be addressed to them.

While this explains why there are church bells and who is responsible for them, there is no unfettered legal right to ring out church bells without consideration of the legal rules which apply to all of us. The custom of bell ringing therefore does have legal limitations.

Under both Common Law (the law created by Judges in His Majesty's Courts & Tribunals) and under statute (law created by Parliament) the making of noise to a degree considered "unreasonable" is a potential claim in nuisance. An actionable nuisance is one which interferes with a person's use and enjoyment of their property. You may feel that is the case here, but you feeling disgruntled and having a solid case in law are often two different things.

The so-called "statutory nuisances" are set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. One statutory nuisance is noise arising from neighbouring premises which is prejudicial to health or causes a nuisance or which interferes with the comfort and convenience of neighbouring occupiers. Local author-

ities have a responsibility to investigate alleged statutory nuisance. For noise issues they can provide you with noise monitoring equipment, or they may monitor it themselves. If it is found the noise is excessive, they can issue a Noise Abatement Notice and, ultimately, they have powers to prosecute the offending parties in the magistrates' court.

So, there is a legal framework to protect you and your family from excessive noise. But the word "reasonable" is key. And I have to say I do not consider church bells being rung for a short time before a Sunday service or for a wedding to be unreasonable. Likewise, regular practice sessions are part of a reasonable pattern of activity, including to ensure the quality of the striking of the bells is maintained.

Added to this, any court or tribunal considering a claim by you would inevitably take into account that you chose to buy your house knowing it was next to the parish church. In that sense you were on notice of the potential hazard, although in the case of *Sturges v Bridgman* which was heard in 1879, it was no defence that the complainant "came to the nuisance" - namely, they moved close to it and knew it was there.

Most church bells ringers have a set time for practice and, of course, services also follow a fixed pattern. A considerate tower captain (the person "in charge" of the ringers) will also publicise special ringing events like a "peal" to mark a special occasion.

There is no legal curfew for bell ringing, but the doctrine of acting in a reasonable manner means ringing after, say, 9pm would be exceptional.

All of which means unless you can evidence unreasonable behaviour on the part of the church bell ringers, it will be hard to put together a claim with much chance of success. What I would recommend is you approach the vicar and ask for a list of services, so you can be on notice and work around them. Or maybe join the bell ringers? I believe it is a rewarding skill to acquire, and it may help you integrate into the village.



Gary Rycroft is a solicitor at Joseph A Jones & Co. His column is published every week online.

Email questions to

askalawyer@telegraph.co.uk



Under Church of England Canon Law every church has a bell to call faithful to worship

Ringling the bells of London

By Diego Diaz (Sandridge)

Last month I had the amazing opportunity to attend the Ringing World National Youth Contest in London, as a representative of Young @ Herts. We had an incredible day ringing in many London towers before finally going to the awards ceremony at St. Paul's Cathedral. Our team rang call changes at a church called St. Olave, which is a beautiful small church with 8 bells. After the contest, we had a great day of ringing throughout the city of London and I got to know places I had never seen before. The first church we went to was called St. Magnus, which was a very special church with 12 bells. It was hidden behind London Bridge, so it took some time to find it. That was the first time I rang on 12 bells, which was a bit challenging at first, but also great fun.

The rest of the day we rang on many splendid churches. We went to St. James Bermondsey, St. Mary Rotherhithe, and Spitalfields Church, each with its own charms, and great sounding bells, of course.

Our last church was St Mary le Bow, whose 12 bells are one of the most famous ones in the country. We climbed the stairs up to the belfry which was full of bellringers; there must have been about 50 of us. We had to take turns and pick a bell fast, because everyone was eager to ring, especially the heaviest bells. I rang the tenth, which was at about a ton a lot heavier than I expected, but eventually with some help I managed to ring it. It was great fun and an unforgettable experience.

At the end of the day we went to St. Paul's Cathedral. A picture of all the teams was taken on the steps and then we went inside for the awards ceremony. The trophies were handed out (our team came fourth in the country), and each of the more than 300 young ringers who participated received a medal. After we went outside, we heard the sound of the bells at St. Paul's Cathedral, and this extraordinary day came to an end.

Well done to our Young@Herts team

Celebrating Bell Sunday

By Alison Evans

Bell Sunday is a collaboration between the Central Council and the Guild of Clerical Ringers which was introduced in 2023 as a day on which it is hoped that the contribution of bell ringers to the life of the church can be marked and celebrated. The idea is for the day to raise awareness and emphasise the importance of the sound of bells in our communities and how it can help bring church and community together, strengthening the relationship between clergy and bellringers. I have to admit it passed me by last year but this time I saw something about it in The Ringing World and thought it could be a good way of raising the profile of our band with the congregation. We take a turn on the rota for serving coffee after the family service about three times a year but it's good to do something different every now and again.

There is a specific website about Bell Sunday which states that the intention is to hold the event on the Sunday nearest to 19th May, the feast of St Dunstan, the patron saint of bell ringers. However, this year, 19th May was Pentecost so it was held on 12th May instead.

I was a bit slow off the mark in approaching the vicar so I only asked him if he could mention that it was Bell Sunday and remind the congregation that we would welcome anyone interested in learning to ring. However, his reply was much more enthusiastic than I anticipated, and we agreed that, instead of stopping ringing five minutes before the scheduled service start time (which we normally



do to allow the organist to play some introductory music), we would carry on ringing for an extra five minutes so that everyone attending the service would hear us, not just the early arrivals. At the vicar's suggestion, the congregation gathered in the churchyard at the base of the tower and once the ringers had descended, some special prayers were offered for the bells and the ringers before we adjourned inside. The liturgy that day also included some prayers and choral anthems which mentioned bells.

Overall, I felt it was a worthwhile exercise. Next year, Bell Sunday falls on May 18th. If you are interested in marking the date in your parish, the Bell Sunday website contains information, including suggestions for bell-related poems, hymns and readings: <https://bellsunday.org/>

John R Mayne

By John Hughes D'Aeth with contributions from Dorothea Mayne, Chris Kippin and others

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John was born in Harrow on 3rd June 1933. He was the only child of Cecil and Phyllis, who were both well known and accomplished ringers. His mother was the first lady to call Holt's Original composition of Grandsire Triples.

John first learnt to ring on handbells during the Second World War ban on tower bell ringing. He practised at home with his parents during the 'Blackout' and the family regularly attended handbell meetings held in Bushey.

John's father was stationed at an airfield in Suffolk during part of the war, so John and his mother used to visit. As a result, John learnt to handle a tower bell in Suffolk and he became acquainted with the Pipe family, he and George becoming lifelong friends.



John rang his first peal (Cambridge S Major) at Ufford, Suffolk on 10 August 1945 at the age of 12 and only 6 months later called his first peal, Plain Bob Minor on handbells with his parents.

John was elected to the ASCY (Ancient Society of College Youths) in February 1945, when he was only 11 and thus was a member for over 79 years. He was very proud of his membership and that he had been seconded by the great Albert Hughes. John called many of the early peals in the Stedman handbell series rung by the Society at Cornhill Vestry, which started in 1977 and continues to the present day. He was also a supernumerary member of the St Paul's Cathedral Guild from 1979 to 1999, attending regularly on Sunday afternoons and often ringing the tenor to Stedman Cinques.

John spent most of his working life as a research engineer at the Building Research Establishment at Garston, Watford. His colleagues at BRE included Roger Baldwin and Steven Chandler. It was during lunchtimes in the bar there that the seeds were sown for Steven's groundbreaking composition of 23 Spliced S Major, which is still rung regularly today.

In October 1969 John was invited to join the band and become Tower Captain at St Stephen's, St Albans, a post he held for over 40 years. During this time, he taught countless people to ring and encouraged and inspired the band to achieve a quite remarkable standard of both method ringing

and striking. His first priority was service ringing, but practice nights were also important and became a magnet for capable ringers in the area to enhance their Surprise Minor repertoire.

Although John took his ringing seriously, he was very kind and patient with less experienced ringers who came under his wing. Many of the tributes to John which have flooded in since his death speak of his help and encouragement for numerous ringers in their early careers, how supportive he was of young talent and of his passion for getting the best out of people.

In 1993, John became the first person to ring 3000 peals and, in 2000, the first person to ring 4000. His records show that he rang a total of 4460 peals, conducting 3783. Of these, 2868 were on tower bells (conducted 2270) and 1592 in hand (conducted 1513). John and Dorothea rang a total of 2816 peals together, of which John conducted over 2600 and more than 500 of which were at their home in St Albans.

John's peal statistics are fascinating, and for those who are interested they are well worth studying in detail. They contain many fine performances and show the extent to which he was at the forefront of ringing developments. A few elements are particularly worth mentioning.

John was always very interested in Spliced, and in the 1960s and early 1970s he conducted many record performances on all numbers of bells. These included 22 Spliced Surprise Royal and 16 Spliced Surprise Maximus on handbells; the first peals ever rung on 14 and 16 bells; and the first peals of Spliced Surprise Fourteen and Sixteen.

He took a great interest in the number of regular Surprise Minor methods which could be included in a standard length peal. When changes to the CC Rules made it possible to accommodate all 41, John eagerly took this development on board and rang well over 100 peals in those 41 methods. In addition he rang single method peals in all 41, both on tower bells and handbells - an unusual achievement.

John was also a noted heavy-bell ringer and turned in most of the bells over 40 cwt to peals, including York Minster, Southwark Cathedral (three times), Wells Cathedral and Beverley Minster.

Outside ringing, John found time for many other interests and hobbies. He was a talented artist and especially enjoyed oil painting, producing many beautiful paintings over the years. He combined his artistic gifts and practical abilities to design and make many peal boards, carefully carving the wood and adorning them with exquisite sign writing. He was a keen gardener; the stripes on his lawn were legendary and he loved growing vegetables. He had a great knowledge and love of music and owned a large collection of vinyl spanning a range of genres, from classical to Elvis Presley. He enjoyed watching or listening to cricket and was very knowledgeable about astronomy, able to pick out many stars and constellations in the night sky.

John died peacefully on Sunday 23rd June 2024, at the age of 91. At his funeral The Rev Becky Leach, who conducted the service and had been Vicar of St Stephen's for many years, described John as "gentle, kind and generous; intelligent and knowledgeable, self-assured and conscientious; a true gentleman, with complete integrity; highly respected and regarded by those who knew him; a man of deep faith." He will be remembered by ringers as a true giant of the Exercise. Rest in peace, John.

A number of peals and quarters etc were rung for John and a selection of these are printed here...
Holt, Norfolk, St Andrew

Sunday, 21 July 2024 (7–0–8 in A)

60 Plain Hunt Triples

1. Sue Montgomery
2. Adelene Clifton (C)
3. Brian Faulkner
4. Helen McKenzie
5. John K Norman
6. Karen Tester
7. David McNeight
8. Jon Clifton

Rung especially for Theo Crowder who used to ring at South Mimms and wishes to be associated with this in memoriam of John Mayne, who taught Theo everything she knows about ringing...

Radlett, Hertfordshire, Christ Church

Sunday, 30 June 2024 in 2h 29 (3–0–16 in G)

5040 Minor (8m): (1) York; (2) Carlisle; (3) London; (4) Beverley, Surfleet; (5) Norwich; (6) Ipswich; (7) Cambridge

1. Daniel R B Gregory
2. Emily J Mills
3. Paul M Mason
4. Adrian P Sweeting
5. Richard Sales
6. Andrew B Mills (C)

Rung in memory of John R Mayne.

100th together 2 and 6.

1234th tower for a peal 6.

St Albans, Hertfordshire, Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban

Sunday, 30 June 2024 in 50m (21–0–19 in E)

1280 Bastow Little Bob Royal

Composed by David B Wilson

1. Stuart Brant
2. Angela Blackburn
3. Andrew M Reeve
4. Claire C Nicholson
5. Julie R Grimwade
6. Hana Booth
7. James W S Crawley
8. Bjørn E Bradstock (C)
9. Roderic K Bickerton
10. Brian D Crawley

Janet Penney would like to be associated with this quarter.

First Bastow Little Bob Royal for all.

Rung in thanksgiving for the life of John R Mayne.

Les Harland

By John Williams

Sadly, in June St Mary's Welwyn lost their longest serving Bell ringer Les (Leslie James) Harland, after ringing the bells for over 48 years.

Les was born to Moyra and Ronald Harland on the 12th May 1952, the elder brother of Ann and Jackie. He was educated at St Mary's school and was in the first 6th form at Monks walk. He subsequently worked at Warren Springs' laboratory on water pollution and later at ICI plastics, again in the laboratory, then spent the last 18 years of his working life as an engineer for BT.

Les was a proud member of Mensa and was in the top 2 % of the population for intelligence so very good at quizzes. He was also a keen member of U3A, having a wide range of interests. Les was a qualified square dancer and had qualifications in sailing. A keen gardener, he was very generous in sharing seedlings - particularly tomatoes - which never failed, and he often ended up with 100 or more plants.

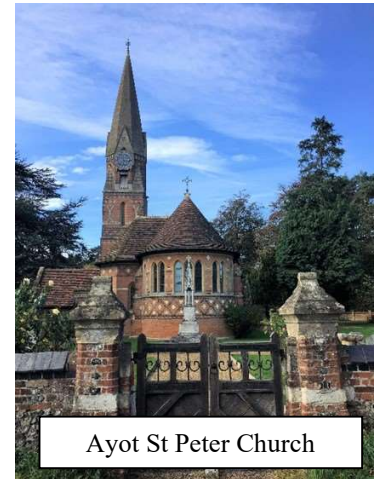
Les was passionate about steam engines and in particular steam trains and rode on many throughout the country, attending many exhibitions and meetings with family and friends.

He was also fond of pocket watches - Georgian and Victorian were his favourites. In fact, his view was that any timepiece made after 1901 was 'modern rubbish!'



He began his bell ringing career in 1966 under Tower Captain Albert Steer. Throughout his life as a member of St Mary's band, at one time or another Les took on most of the jobs in the tower, including the roles of Tower Captain, clock winder, flag raiser and putting the muffles on the bells for remembrance. Les was enthusiastic in everything he took part in. Of course he also rang for services and for special services when booked, for weddings and occasionally funerals. Indeed, anytime the Church wanted the bells to be rung, Les was always willing to help. Les rang many quarter peals and full peals, particularly in his earlier years. On occasion he also rang at most of the other local Churches with bells and was always keen to ring at neighbouring Codicote.

For a number of years Les also chimed the bells at Ayot St Peter's Church for services. The beautiful 'Arts and Crafts' style Victorian church of Ayot St Peter's has a peal of six bells in the tower made by John Warner and Sons of London. These were donated by Dr Henry Jephson of Leamington Spa in memory of his wife Ann who had died in 1874. The bells are 'Ellacombe Chimes' – an arrangement where the bells are hung in place and are struck with hammers controlled by ropes. These ropes descend into a wooden frame in a lower room in the tower. The whole set of bells can be rung by just one person.



Ayot St Peter Church

Les' favourite ring was to ring in the New Year at midnight on New Year's Eve. He said it signified a new start and was a symbol of hope.

Les was an extremely shy and gentle man and many misinterpreted this for aloofness. He often had a habit of talking too quickly which meant that unless you knew him well you did not always know what he was trying to say. Nevertheless Les was a very kind man, always happy to help friends and neighbours in any way he could. He will be missed by his family, friends, the Welwyn St Mary's band of ringers - and those who hear the Church Bells at St Mary's and beyond.

I am indebted to Les' younger sister, Mrs Jackie Hall for many of the details in this article, particularly those relating to Les' earlier years.

John Williams

Editor Rob Goss