

**Peter J. W. Hardwick**  
**28<sup>th</sup> October 1944 – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2008**

As a boy Peter sang in the choir at St Matthew's Church, Oxhey, and at the age of 14 was enticed to ring the bells there, as the fee for bell ringing was 5/- per wedding instead of 2/6 as a chorister, and three weddings on a Saturday could set you up for the week. Peter also learnt to play the viola at school without telling his family. He was found out when his mother attended a concert and noticed him in the viola section. This was typical of him, quite shy and unassuming, just getting on with the job.

Peter left Oxhey to study Economics at Cardiff University followed by a post graduate course at Essex. In 1967 he moved to Somerset, joining the teaching staff at Bath University. He restarted his ringing career at St Michael's, Broad Street, Bath. Peter was a quick learner and soon advanced from Grandsire Doubles to Spliced Surprise, doing a great deal to raise the level of ringing in Bath.

Moving to Frome in 1975 he joined Frome tower where he remained a member until he was elected Tower Captain of Mells in 1993. Everyone who has rung at Mells remembers him for his ability, enthusiasm and friendliness. He improved the standard of ringing there by the support he gave in learning new methods and conducting touches. He also supported ringing in many other local churches, including Beckington, Whatley, Kilmersdon and Leigh on Mendip. When the bells at nearby Buckland Dinham were rehung and augmented, the new band was taught at Mells. Mells also took its share of responsibility in looking after some of the newly formed West Cranmore band getting ready for their bells to be rehung.

Peter was a keen supporter of the Bath and Wells Association, being Secretary then later Treasurer of the Frome branch and also Branch Representative on the Bath & Wells General Committee from 2003. He was well known for turning up to the CC Meetings in his camper van with his wife Carol who is one of the Bath & Wells Central Council Representatives.

Whenever possible, Peter rang bells four nights a week, although he still made time to sing bass in the Oakfield Choir. He was a founder member of this parent/teacher group which went from strength to strength. Their repertoire now extends from Bach to Bruckner and their twice-yearly concerts are very popular.

Peter worshipped at Mells where Carol is Church Warden and, until recently, was PCC Treasurer.

In all he rang 278 peals with 210 for the Bath & Wells and over 1000 quarters. He was a highly respected heavy bell ringer and although he did not conduct many peals he did conduct over 300 quarter peals. These are just some of the achievements of Peter Hardwick, whose untimely death has left a great gap in bellringing around Frome in Somerset.

We extend our sympathy to Carol and Peter's two sons, John and Adrian, and will all miss him greatly.

P. NEIL

**Peter J. W. Hardwick – a tribute**

It was with great sadness and shock I received a phone call on Tuesday morning to say Peter had died from a heart attack late the previous evening. We were due to ring a quarter peal that Tuesday evening which Peter would have conducted.

I had known Pete for many years – ringing our first quarter peal together in October 1969 - Surfleet at St. Mark's, Lyncombe. Peter recently rang his 1000th\* quarter and I feel privileged to have rung in over half of them. (\* He had probably rang rather more but for many years did not keep a record.) Peter was such a good friend to ringers in the area and others will I'm sure be writing about the support he gave to association activities and the many peals he rang in earlier years. I would like to mention two special characteristics Peter had that made him so popular as a ringer. Firstly he was such a good friend and would help any ringer to progress. He arranged numerous quarter peals that enabled someone to achieve a milestone - be it their first quarter of PB Minor or to complete the standard eight. The practice at Mells was run on those lines and at his last practice, the night he died, he had encouraged a young visiting ringer to ring his first course of Yorkshire. We also rang various other methods including Stedman, Single Oxford and Spliced Surprise Major with Pete turning in the tenor as he usually did. Peter also played a key role in supporting other towers. We at Beckington were always pleased when he arrived – we knew Pete could ring anything the rest of us could ring. The second point I would like to make was his ability to ring any bell and strike it accurately. I have a number of times said to ringers having a bit of difficulty with bell control - watch Peter - 'That's how to ring a bell'. When ringing more difficult methods and there was a bit of unevenness it was always a relief to dodge with Pete and get that subtle and valuable indication from him that both bells were in the right place. Pete had a good sense of humour and this invariably came out at his practices and made them so enjoyable.

For many local ringers who knew Peter the practice nights will never be quite the same. Our sympathy goes to Carol and other family members.

JOHN BALL

Beckington, Somerset