

Clifford H. F. Kortright 1917-2008

1st February 1917 - 23rd September 2008

It was fitting that Clifford's funeral service at Wraxall, Somerset, took place on a cloudless autumn day at Harvest time, when, as the Rector reminded us, the best of our produce is on show. Clifford was a countryman of the old school to his fingertips, placid and unhurried, and he had prepared the service some time before, based on the Book of Common Prayer – how we were reminded of the richness of the text from the King James Bible, and other excerpts from the older liturgy.

Although he had a classical education, Clifford chose farming as a livelihood, spending many years on a farm at Brockley, whilst living with his mother at Four Gables, also a farmhouse on the outskirts of Nailsea, where his cider press was put to good use for his and local farmers' needs. Always of an enquiring mind, Clifford was introduced to Nailsea's six bell tower in 1937 under their then tower captain, Ted Baker. He joined the Bath and Wells Association in 1938, and was to complete 70 years service, 43 of them at Nailsea, and following two years ringing at Wraxall, a further 25 years at nearby Tickenham, where he became tower captain.

It was Clifford and the late Len Derrick who taught Michael Horseman to ring at Nailsea in 1948, and as Michael says, he owed much to their infectious enthusiasm, his introduction to tower grabbing, and Clifford's zest for promoting obscure double methods, plus his favourite Grandsire Minor! The band was strong, enthusiastic (and fun!) when the writer in turn, was introduced to the tower by Michael in 1955, and it was Clifford who called his first quarter peal at Nailsea in April 1956. Peals rarely appealed to him ("quarter peals are quite long enough" he would say firmly), but Michael recalls him standing in his own first as conductor at Uphill in 1956.

Visiting ringers at Nailsea were always welcome, and the late Rodney Meadows, who rang at Westminster Abbey, who was on a railway management training course locally was amongst them, following the practice by a visit to Four Gables to sample Clifford's home made cider before an unsteady cycle ride home (along the railway line!) to his digs at Yatton. Clifford took a keen interest in the rules and regulations relating to signalling on the GWR and he and Rodney (the professional and the amateur!) would test one another on the various rules applicable when theoretical railway emergencies took place. How ironic that when his farming career ended, Clifford to his delight was accepted by British Rail to be trained as a signaller, and served at several local signal boxes to the end of his working life.

Although content in his village circle he had a sharp and enquiring mind, and his cultured voice was often heard contributing to morning phone-ins on Radio Bristol. He was also very musical, playing the organ at nearby Brockley and Chelvey for many years, and helping out at Chew Branch services if the need arose.

Clifford's happy married life to Monica was marred sadly by the accidental death of his son at an early age, but their twin daughter rings at Winscombe, and following the funeral joined us in the belfry at Wraxall with her young son who has just started to ring, and who was able to ring a few rounds, under supervision, as a special tribute to his late grandfather.

So we remember a good life, 91 years of it, and years of quiet but loyal service to the Exercise by a man of gentle disposition. He was laid to rest as friends and colleagues rang a half muffled quarter peal of Grandsire Triples to his memory – may he rest in peace.

JOHN BRAIN and MICHAEL HORSEMAN