

George W Massey. 31st August 1922 – 14th February 2010

With the passing of George Massey the Bath and Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers has lost a distinguished elder statesman - the Annual General Meeting will never be the same again! However there was life before the Bath and Wells. George learnt to ring in Surrey, his parents having been ringers. Who actually taught George to handle a bell I have been unable to discover, but whoever it was did an excellent job, producing as steady and as neat a ringer as you will ever find.

George's first peal was at Beddington, Surrey, on 6th April 1940 - Cambridge Surprise Royal, conducted by the late Charles Kippin. A career of 30 years in the RAF sometimes limited peal opportunities, although a posting to RAF stations in Lincolnshire produced a very productive period. His final peal was rung at Pig-le-Tower, Marston Bigot on 22nd November 2009 bringing his grand total to 1538. Throughout his peal ringing career George, along with his son David, saw many ringers through their first peal.

But, of course, there was much more to George than peal ringing. On retirement from the RAF he worked for the Inland Revenue but at the very heart of his life was his family and his wide-ranging service to the Church. His family life was not without its sadness, notably the death of his daughter, Frances, herself an able ringer, and in recent years his devoted care of his wife, Hilda. The Church and ringing will miss him on many fronts. St John's, Frome lay at the heart of this, serving as Tower captain, not to speak of Synods and Diocesan Committees, notably the DAC as Clocks and Bells Adviser. His record in the Bath and Wells speaks for itself – Peal Secretary 1964-1972, General Secretary 1972-1984; Central Council Representative 1972-2004. During his time on the Central Council George served on the Towers and Belfries Committee from 1973-1990 and on the Committee for Redundant Bells from 1973 – 2004 serving as Chairman from 1993-1999.

As if all this was not enough, his “spare” time was spent researching “Church Bells of Somerset”, the manuscript of which is now in the hands of the Bath and Wells librarian. Its publication would be a fitting memorial to George.

The Service of Thanksgiving for George's life was held in St John's, Frome, on 26th February, conducted by the Vicar, the Revd. Colin Alsbury, the lessons being read by the Rural Dean and the Diocesan Secretary, Nick Dennison. The large congregation, as one would expect, included ringers from far and wide.

May George rest in peace and rise in glory.

C J B M