

Alexander Strachan (Tim) Watt

1927 - 2010



Tim Watt at the 2009 ASCY dinner in animated conversation with Rupert Littlewood a fellow Old Wykehamist (Photo by Robert Lewis)

The recent death of Tim Watt has been a great loss, not only to the local ringing community here in Somerset, but to the other guilds of which he was a member.

Tim's personality owed a great deal to his Scottish descent, being a man of principle and humanity, of great and practical kindness and full of boundless enthusiasm; always ready to help a younger ringer attempting to learn a difficult method.

Tim was a pupil at Winchester during the War, where he learnt his love of music, the church, of architecture and, of course, bells and bell ringing (although his introduction to bell-ringing was a direct consequence of allegedly being caught smoking on the roof of Winchester Cathedral!). National Service followed in the navy with minesweeping in the North Sea, then to read History with Geography at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he joined the CU Guild in 1948, was elected Secretary in 1949, then Master in 1950-51. Tim rang 44 peals for the Guild, and remained actively involved throughout his life, being a most valued member. Till not long before his death he regularly attended the Guild annual Ringing Week in August, and organised the 1999 week in North Devon, with a day on Lundy Island. Tim was also elected to the College Youths in 1949, and in 2009 celebrated 60 years as a member.

After Cambridge Tim rejoined the Royal Navy, becoming an instructor in meteorology and oceanography. Tim was based at Dartmouth from 1962, which led to his interest in Devonshire towers and call change ringing, although interrupted by a short spell with NATO in Naples with his young family, which kindled his love of all things Italian.

Tim was the driving force in 1978 behind the formation of the now-thriving Royal Naval Guild. As well as holding regular meetings, quarter peals are rung to celebrate the Queen's birthday, and a weekend of ringing is organised around Trafalgar Day in October. Naval Guild members dedicated quarter peals rung at their April meeting in memory of Tim.

Through all his travels Tim accumulated an encyclopaedic knowledge of towers, bells and bell founders, as well as all the many ringers he came to know. A visit to a tower in Australia or New Zealand would prompt the question from one of the ringers "Hello, Tim! What are you doing here?"

Retiring to Somerset with Rosemary in 1977 Tim became very active in local ringing, and encouraged the care of local towers and bells. None more so than at St Bartholomew's, Yeovilton, now the Fleet Air Arm Chapel, where in 1993 the bells were rehung and augmented to make the now lovely ring of six.

Though not a prolific peal ringer Tim rang in 90 peals in his lifetime, the most recent being in a peal of Yorkshire for the Cambridge University Guild in 2006.

Tim will be remembered with affection by his many friends in the Exercise. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held at North Cadbury on 6th April. The church was packed with his many friends and family, with the bells that he cared for ringing out before and after the service.

May he Rest in Peace.

A.B.S.