

## Anne Stenning 16.3.1920 - 18.7.2011



On a sunny August day, we said our goodbyes to Anne. The Beautiful little church of All Saints', Chipstable, was full to capacity – a fitting tribute to this inspirational lady.

Anne had spent the Second World War, serving in the Land Army, in Sussex. Whilst there, she met her husband 'Alf' and they set up their first home in Rusper. Anne was taught to ring in 1945 and she and Alf became members of the local band.

The family moved to Somerset in 1970 and the couple were welcomed by the Wellington ringers. They bought a small general shop and with their two young sons, enjoyed their busy lives. Anne was elected a member of the Bath and Wells DACR in 1971.

About this time Anne started to have problems with her eyesight and was diagnosed with an inoperable condition. She was gradually to lose most of her sight and was left with only a residual pin point of vision.

Anne was determined that this handicap should not stand in her way and set out to live as independent a life as possible.

With a move to Wiveliscombe, she and Alf became members of the St Andrew's band and with the enthusiastic support of the local ringers Anne was able to progress with her ringing.

Sadly Alf was to contract Motor Neurone Disease and Anne and her sons nursed him at home until his death in 1983.

Anne was to form a lasting friendship with John Levin (the then captain of Chipstable Church) and with John's help, she was able to further develop her ringing capabilities. Ringing was to take her far beyond Somerset and she was able to organise a number of excellent holiday tours.

At about this time Anne took over the role of Secretary/Treasurer of the Dunster Branch and was to continue in this capacity for the next fifteen years – quite a remarkable achievement for somebody with such limited sight! Anne was an excellent secretary and we marvelled at the way she coped

with all the paper-work – to see her don her low vision aid ‘specs’ and with the minute book held an inch away from her face, we knew the branch business was in safe hands! Anne masterminded the Annual Branch outings (and there was always that little addition to the day – such as a boat trip, a steam train ride or a canal boat lunch, to make the day that little bit special). Then there were the popular Branch Dinners and at least two Association AGMs. With John Levin’s help she organised two ‘Open Tower’ days and helped to raise large amounts of money for the Association Bell Fund. Her breadth of Association knowledge was to prove invaluable to successive Dunster Branch officers.

In recognition of her service to the Association she was made an Honorary Life Member of the Bath and Wells DACR in 1996. And in 2008, she was further honoured, and pleased to accept the position of Deputy Master of the Association for that year.

Anne was to become a prolific quarter peal ringer and, with the assistance of John and other friends, she was able to be out ringing on most days of the week. For a number of years – Anne was to appear towards the top of *The Ringing World’s* list of Leading Quarter Peal Ringers. She enjoyed six bell ringing and became a competent conductor – calling many of her quarter peals in a variety of methods.

Anne could enjoy ringing on eight bells but larger peals and those rings with plain coloured sallies were a challenge. However Anne certainly enjoyed a challenge – long or short draughts – no problem! I recall on one ringing holiday, when we visited Pershore to ring at the centre, on hearing the bells start up in the Abbey, that she was the first person up the tower to tackle ringing in the infamous cage!

Anne had an ambition to ring Surprise Major and with the encouragement of Chris Marshall and a supportive band at St Andrew’s, Wiveliscombe, she was able to ring quarter peals in six of the standard eight methods. – the tower record book even records that for some of these quarter peals, it meant first blows in the method for Anne.

Even though age and arthritis were to add to her difficulties, Anne was still to enjoy her ringing days. She might not be able to climb many of the towers but she could still make the arrangements for the towers and the all important lunch-time venues for her Thursday Group. Being included in these ringing days was so special to her.

Anne remained interested in Branch activities and enjoyed being taken to meet old ringing friends. The last occasion was to be at Hawkridge, near Dulverton, in June this year when, after a splendid ringers’ tea, Anne was presented with a certificate marking her 40 years membership of the Association.

Her last few years were not easy ones for her. There was a move to a granny flat in Taunton and then a subsequent very sad time following her son’s untimely death. Then, eventually, a happier move back to Wiveliscombe, for the last year of her life. Throughout this time Anne was supported by her very good ringing friends Winnie, Audrey and Liz; their regular visits and personal help allowed her to remain independent to the end.

Chipstable was her tower – she had helped raise the money to re-hang the bells and to put in the gallery. She had taken over the captaincy when John Levin retired to Taunton and with her diligence, insured that the bells were rung for services, whenever possible. And it was at Chipstable church, she had requested, that her funeral should take place.

In his inimitable uplifting style, Preb. Christopher Marshall, officiated at Anne’s funeral. We all sang lustily (as only ringers can). The bells rang out – the ropes changed hands many times to accommodate all those who had come to ring and pay their respects. Following cremation Anne’s ashes were to join those of her husband and her son Richard in the churchyard in Rusper – back to Sussex where her interest in ringing began!

You certainly were an inspirational person Anne and we shall miss you. May you ‘Rest in Peace’.

Joan Hopwood