

Biographical Record

Roderick Wilgress PIPE (Rod) (1940 - 2011)

Represented the St. Martin's Guild for the Diocese of Birmingham on the Central Council from 1970 - 1987 and attended 17 meetings.

Roderick Wilgress Pipe was born at Ipswich on 17th April 1940, the second son of ringers Cecil and Sylvia Pipe and the younger brother of George.

Rod learned to ring in 1949 at Grundisburgh, where he rang his first peal, Kent Treble Bob Major, on May 26th 1951, when he was only just 11 years old. On November 3rd 1951, still aged 11 years, he conducted his second peal, Kent TB Royal, which he had also composed. His first peal of Bristol as conductor was on 11th April 1953, a few days prior to his 13th birthday. On 31st December 1958 he called Holts Original peal of Grandsire Triples. He rang 101 peals during 1963. On 3rd April 1965 he took part in a silent and non-conducted peal of Holts Original. On 25th November 1967 he conducted a record peal of 11,872 Glasgow Surprise Major at Edgbaston.

He took part in a fathers and sons peal of Surprise Maximus at Evesham on 17th September 1966. His 1000th peal and 300th of Surprise Maximus was at Birmingham Cathedral on 7th November 1974. On October 16th 1976 he rang three peals of Maximus in a day at Solihull, Birmingham Cathedral and Aston. He rang in a record peal of 20 methods Spliced Surprise Maximus, all the work, at All Saints Worcester on 21st February 1981. He rang his 50th peal on 16 bells on 26th April 2005 at St. Martin's, Birmingham.

Other towers to which Rod was attached are King's Norton, St. Philip's, Birmingham and St. Martin's Birmingham. He was conductor at the latter from 2004-2007.

Rod was an extremely talented composer and conductor as well as being an excellent ringer. He rang his 2000th peal on May 11th 2008 at St. Martin's Birmingham. The peal was 5009 Spliced Stedman 15 and Surprise 16, which he composed as well as conducted. At the time he rang that peal, he had rung more peals on 16 bells than anyone else. He conducted over half of his peals, which were all on tower bells. An article about his 2000th peal appeared in The Ringing World on page 772 in 2008. He rang a total of 2033 peals, all on tower bells.

He was renowned for being a good striker and he had been a member of the winning team in 16 of the National 12 Bell Contests.

Rod produced and rang many new methods, chiefly on 12 bells. He was equally inventive with new compositions on all numbers of bells, both odd and even.

He was a member of the Central Council Peal Compositions Committee from 1978-1987, being chairman from 1979-1986. He was a member of the Standing Committee from 1979-1986.

He produced, in collaboration with David Hull, a book on compositions for 10 and 12+ bells for the Central Council.

Rod was also active in bell restoration, being the chief fund raiser for the 16 bells at St. Martin's in the Bull Ring, Birmingham, where £200,000 had to be found and also for the ten bells at St. Paul's in the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham, for which £100,000 had to be raised.

Rod worked as a statistician, but in spite of that, did not keep many personal records of his ringing. He was Master of Birmingham University Society from 1959-1961 and from 1962-1963. He served as a Vice-President of St. Martin's Guild.

In addition to ringing, Rod enjoyed hill walking, photography and gardening.

Rod died on April 1st 2011 and his funeral was held at St. Martin's Birmingham on Monday April 11th. A memorial weekend was held in Birmingham in October 2013 to celebrate Rod and his many achievements.

His obituary appeared in The Ringing World 2011, pages 621-624 with other tributes on pages 650, 674-676, 1303.

