

Prolific Peal Ringers

31: HARRY WILLIAM BARRETT (1905-1995)



Harry William Barrett was born in Loddon, Norfolk, on November 26, 1905, one of seven children. He learned to ring at Holy Trinity, Loddon whilst it was still a six and he used to tell the story of how he and five others, each with a single handbell, used to spend evenings on the

roof of the side aisle learning new methods! Passers-by were baffled to know where the ringing was coming from and who was doing it! His first peal came on October 2, 1923 and was also at Loddon. It was one in four minor methods conducted by his tutor, Frederick A Finch. This was the first peal in the tower by an all local band.

He joined the Civil Service soon after leaving school and worked for them all his life apart from the war years. He was transferred to Surrey in 1930 and lived at Tolworth, cycling to Guildford where he regularly rang peals with Alfred Pulling and also to Burnham, Bucks for others with George Gilbert.

He married his wife Eveline, a Norwich girl, on September 11, 1935 and they set up home in Surrey. For the many years he lived here ringing was not his main hobby, although his Sunday service ringing was at Kingston on Thames where he was tower secretary. He was a keen tennis player and athletics and billiards ran this a close second and third! He was pleased to have played tennis at Wimbledon and against Fred Perry – although not in the international tournament!

During the war years he worked as a reservist on the docks in London and Eveline returned to live with her parents in Loddon with Bill driving home to see her each weekend. After the war Bill decided to return to Loddon and in 1954 he came back to Norfolk to a post with the Assistance Board. His peal ringing mushroomed and he took on peals with Nolan Golden, Leslie Bailey's band and some of the North Suffolk peal bands. When he wasn't out with these he was gardening!

He took on work with the Norwich Diocesan Association. He was Ringing Master from 1954-

6, and from 1962-78 he was a very capable General Secretary and Treasurer. He was also their representative on the Central Council from 1954-69. He taught many beginners: in one Norfolk parish he taught forty ringers!

He kept no record of his peals. In 1969 Leonard Stilwell, an old friend of his, went through the Ringing Worlds and compiled him a list. This showed that his 1000th peal had been on June 29, 1968, one of Grandsire and Bob Doubles at Forncett St Peter, Norfolk. They also showed that his first one thousand peals had consisted of 980 tower-bell peals (conducted 128) and 20 on handbells.

He was very proud of his record with the Mancroft Guild. He joined the Guild on the understanding that he could only attend ringing on Sunday mornings and this he regularly did. He also rang ninety peals at Mancroft; a good record also! His final number of peals, calculated from Pealbase after the date of his one thousandth peal, was 2013

He passed peacefully away in his home on June 24, 1995, aged 89. Many friends supported his wife, Eveline, at the funeral at Loddon church. The bells were rung open as he would have wished and five fellow ringers rang a course of Grandsire Caters during the service. He was interred in the churchyard in a grave alongside the path he had so loved to walk

A nickname occasionally used for him was based on his initials. "Hot Water Bottle" was perhaps endearingly appropriate for such a Norfolk character.

References

Ringing World 1969/499 1971/132 1985/910
1986/919 1995/895-6