

Prolific Peal Ringers

38: GEORGE WILLIAM CRITCHLEY (1924-2006)



George William Critchley was born in the West Midlands area on March 18, 1924. His first peal was on February 17, 1945, and was one of Grandsire Doubles at Keresley, Warwicks, conducted by William A Stote. It was the quickest peal on the bells!

He worked as an administrator for the railways all his life, initially for the LMS Goods Depot in the West Midlands. He later moved to the Sundries Division and then took up a post with National Carriers Ltd, working in the London area.

This meant that his early ringing in the 1940s and 1950s was in the Birmingham area with Albert Walker, George E Fearn and their contemporaries. In 1954 he married Claudia E Harding, a very experienced ringer and they first lived in Hertfordshire at Knebworth. Whilst there Bill gave considerable help and encouragement to local ringing that was responsible for much progress and enthusiasm in the area.

After a short while at Pinner they moved to High Wycombe where Claudia had a teaching post at Wycombe Abbey School. Bill became more involved in London ringing and was, in due time, appointed a Supernumerary at Westminster Abbey and, later, a Principal. Eventually he became Secretary and Conductor to the Abbey Ringers.

He was now averaging about thirty to forty peals a year, travelling all over the country ringing

more advanced methods, often for the Middlesex County Association. His 1000th peal was one of Yorkshire Surprise Major, rung on December 19, 1970 at Benington, Herts, where he had been a regular Sunday Service ringer when he lived in Hertfordshire. His thousand included 91 of Maximus and 80 of Stedman Cinques, 121 of Royal, 24 of Caters, 20 of Triples and 22 of Minor. The majority of the remainder were of Surprise Major in 278 separate methods and over 60 peals of spliced in up to 30 methods.

In March 1984 it was announced in the *Ringling World* that he was retiring from the post of conductor at Westminster Abbey and retiring with his wife Claudia to their new home in Cornwall. This was in the small village of Ruan Laniorne on the Roseland Peninsula. They became involved with the ringing at Veryan and Truro, enjoyed the countryside and Bill became a churchwarden in their village church.

In his latter years Bill did not enjoy the best of health and he died in hospital on February 23, 2006, aged 81. The local church of St Rumon was filled for the funeral on March 3, and the Rev'd Clive Budden conducted the service and spoke appreciatively of Bill's life and service.

His total number of peals, all on tower bells, was 1120 of which he conducted 300.

References

Ringling World 1945/75; 1971/54, 115; 1984/207; 2006/388