

Prolific Peal Ringers

8: JAMES GEORGE (1853-1951)



James George, affectionately known as “Jimmy” George to his wide circle of friends throughout the country, was born on November 27, 1853 at Pinner, Middlesex. His father, also James George, was in charge of the ringing at Pinner and had been there since the death of William IV and the coronation of Victoria in 1837. Jimmy and his elder brother William, both learned to ring at an early age but James did not take any interest in change ringing until he was in his mid-thirties and well established in his job as a railway official in the estate department of the London and North Western Railway Company.

He moved to Rugby with his job in 1881 and later became attached to St Andrew’s, Rugby. He rang his first peal on February 16, 1889, one of Grandsire Triples at St George, Camberwell, and others followed in all parts of the country. Being

an official on the railways was a great bonus for he was allotted free travel anywhere in the country, a privilege he kept all his life, even into his long retirement.

He wrote brief articles in *The Bell News* of the results of his holidays. In the year 1898, on Saturday August 15, he started at Bromsgrove with a peal of Grandsire Caters; moved on Monday to Solihull where he rang one of Stedman Caters; lost another of Grandsire Caters at Bromsgrove again on Tuesday and another at Chesterfield on Wednesday. Thursday he lost one of Stedman Caters at Aston; on Friday he lost Grandsire Caters at Loughborough; on Saturday the 4th rope broke in Kent Maximus at Ipswich and on Monday the 8th rope broke in Kent Royal, also at Ipswich, after 3 hours and ten minutes! Tuesday saw him at Newcastle-on-Tyne ringing a peal of Stedman Triples; Thursday at Stroud ringing Treble Bob Royal and Saturday at Brighton ringing another of Stedman Caters. Five peals rung out of eleven attempted and 2,150 miles travelled!

A new ring of eight was installed at Rugby in 1896 and he was elected Ringing Master. He later called a peal of Grandsire Triples for the local band. His 200th peal was a golden wedding compliment to his parents at Pinner on August 13, 1899. One of his first long lengths was on April 17, 1911 when he rang the tenor to the record 12,240 Kent Treble Bob Maximus at Ashton-under-Lyne in 8 hours and 39 minutes. Later that year he was elected Master of the Warwickshire Guild.

He retired in 1914 at 61 and moved to Birmingham where he rang at Bishop Ryder’s church. He was now able to devote all his time to ringing. His 600th peal was one of Stedman Caters at Wednesbury and his 700th was Stedman Cinques at Waltham Abbey. He enjoyed the challenge of ringing heavy bells and, as he grew older appeared to tackle larger and larger bells!

He was elected an honorary member of the Central Council in 1918 and served until 1931. His 1000th peal was rung at Wolverhampton on October 6, 1928 when he was nearly 75 years old: he picked a very experienced band that rang Stedman Cinques whilst James rang the tenor. It was calculated afterwards that the band had rung over six thousand peals between them and 966 of Stedman Cinques! He entertained the band and a large number of guests to a meat tea after the peal.

As an octogenarian he accomplished more than any other ringer by ringing Bow tenor to a peal. His last tower bell peal was one of Plain Bob Major at Enderby, Leics, when he was nearly 86. In the next few months he had a fall and, after complications, had to have a leg amputated. He rang five more handbell peals, the last on his 95th birthday. He rang a total of 1281 peals, conducting 19. Of these, 47 were on handbells (0).

He died in Poole Hospital, Dorset on March 10, 1951 in his 98th year whilst suffering from acute bronchitis. He had weathered earlier attacks but this one proved fatal. He was buried at Longfleet church and after the committal four ringing friends rang a course of Grandsire Triples on handbells around the open grave.

Postscript All previous articles have commented that James George was not married. Recent research has shown he married in 1880, had a son in 1881 but lived apart from them both from 1882. See RW2012/31

References

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