

Prolific Peal Ringers

30: THOMAS JOSEPH LOCK (1909-1992)



Tom Lock was born at Woolton Hill, Hants., on June 23, 1909, grew up in the village with his brother Jim and was educated at the ancient grammar school of St Bartholomew, Newbury. The two boys were both taught to ring by Harry Balaam on the light six at St Thomas' in November, 1924 and, despite Harry having lost an arm in WW1, he soon had them ringing London Surprise Minor. Tom moved to London in 1927 where he was articled to a quantity surveyor. When qualified he worked for the London County Council as a quantity surveyor and local government officer, working at County Hall for the rest of his life.

He joined the Willesden band where he rang his first peal on December 20, 1927. This was a peal of Bob Major, composed and conducted by J Armiger Trollope. Two other ringers taking part in this peal who later achieved prominence were Ernest C S Turner, ringing his first tower-bell peal, and Wilfred S Wilson his first tower-bell peal of Major.

On April 23, 1938, Tom married Kathleen M Bradford at Twickenham. Kathleen was a very skilful peal ringer and musician, who would later become President of the Ladies Guild. Just before the war they moved to North Mymms where they had a house built and set up home and had a family of two boys, Graham and Martin. Tom and Kathleen joined the local band, establishing roots that lasted the rest of their lives. Tom later became tower captain, a position he was to hold for nearly half a century.

In the next twenty years he became very well known throughout the Exercise not only for being Secretary of one of the larger associations but also for the many successful ringing tours he organised in the years following 1951. His attention to detail and insistence on good striking encouraged many younger members to tackle new methods and improve their standard of ringing.

He was a staunch supporter of the Middlesex County Association and this led to him being elected one of the District Ringing Masters from

1936-39 and a District Secretary from 1939-47. He moved on to be General Secretary from 1957 to 1968 and Guild Master from 1969 to 1978. He was their representative on the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers from 1946-48 and 1951-92, attending 45 meetings. He served on the Administrative Committee for many years and the Biographies Committee from 1963 to 1992, being convener for all but the first year.

In 1960 Jafus made him the subject of the twenty-fifth article on Servants of the Exercise. He pointed out many of the facts detailed above and emphasised how well Tom had succeeded in stepping into the shoes of Ernest Turner as General Secretary of the Middlesex Association.

His 500th peal was at Harrow Weald, Middlesex on February 20, 1958 and his 600th was in March 1960. These included over 100 different Surprise Major methods, all rung for the first time! In 1965 he organised Great Adventure II to Australia, where he conducted the first peal of Maximus to be rung outside the British Isles. Three years later on June 20, 1968 he became the thirtieth ringer to achieve 1000 peals by conducting one of London Surprise Major at Willesden where he had rung his first peal. He rang this after 1,587 attempts!

Increasing age didn't slow Tom down and his peal total continued to accumulate steadily. On Wilfred Williams' Grand North American trip in June 1973 he rang at Calgary in the first peal of Surprise Major in North America and the first of Spliced Surprise Major outside Britain at Vancouver. His wife Kath accompanied him on many of these tours ringing peals although later in life other church activities such as being organist and choir mistress took precedence over ringing. They led a very happy life together until March 29, 1978 when she died in hospital after a stroke, aged only 66.

After Tom retired from full-time work he kept in touch with the many ringing friends he had made overseas, and he continued to visit most of them on a very regular basis. He became a wonderful ambassador in the International sphere, visiting all the centres of ringing most years. He was always made most welcome and he was held in very high esteem wherever he went. His ringing knowledge and expertise were always available and he was respected for the unassuming manner in which he passed it on. He regarded it as a great honour when he was asked by the Zimbabwe Guild to propose their affiliation to the Central Council, particularly as his proposal was so well accepted.

Tom's 2000th peal (conducted 129) was on September 19, 1989 at North Mymms and, at his request, they rang Hampshire Surprise Major. Twelve ringers had reached this total of two thousand peals but Tom, at just over eighty, was the oldest ringer to reach it. It was in this year that he also achieved – for the first and only time in his ringing life – ringing one hundred peals in a calendar year!

He was one of the band who rang the first peal of "Four Spliced Surprise Major - all the work" in April, 1947 and amongst his eighty or so handbell peals was a series of Spliced Surprise Major in up to twenty methods. He also rang in a "Thomas" peal on December 15, 1934; a "Father and Sons" peal of Surprise Maximus at Evesham in 1966; peals on all 366 days of the year and peals in more

than 600 different Surprise Major methods. His last, and 2223rd peal, was in May 1992.

He met his end rather suddenly. On the evening of June 2nd 1992 he rang a quarter peal of Stedman Triples at Bushey, Herts with some friends from Sydney, NSW, and died whilst driving home, aged 82. A great many tributes were paid at his funeral and published in the *Ringling World*. A short extract from an appreciation published by a great friend who rang more peals with him than anyone else might sum up what has been said earlier:

"Tom was a very fine ringer with superb concentration and accuracy. His whole life was systematic and ordered to a degree and was guided by strong and definite principles. One of these was reliability: he never let anyone down. And a second one was that he would not worry about anything – at least he said he didn't. He observed that it achieved nothing so he avoided it! Would we could all do the same!

This mental and physical self-discipline which informed all his activities was the principle reason that he could sustain his remarkable peal-ringing activity into his 80s. It enabled him to travel halfway around the world and arrive as "fresh as a daisy", and through thorough preparation to produce consistently high levels of performance in all his ringing. When I think of Tom I often think of the parable of the talents. If ever there were an example of someone who absolutely maximised his ability as a ringer, it was he."

It wasn't generally known that Tom was a keen cricketer. One brief anecdote about this is set on August Bank Holiday in 1931 when he was playing an all-day match at the village Mereworth in Kent together with a fellow ringer, Ernest Kilby, with whom he had rung his first peal. During a lull in the play they heard the umpire mention "Bob Minor" to another colleague and, within a few minutes, they had mustered four other ringers and were able to ring a touch of Bob Minor in the lunch interval! They reckoned it was the only time Bob Minor has been rung by a band all in spiked boots and flannels!



References

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