

Prolific Peal Ringers

10: ALFRED HENRY PULLING (1880-1859)



Alfred Henry Pulling was born at Petworth, Sussex on September 18, 1880, where his grandfather had been a ringer for 60 years. He moved to Guildford when very young and was educated at Holy Trinity School during which time he acquired two qualities which were to stay with him all his life; that of always being on time and being a firm disciplinarian. This latter was, in particular, exemplified at the Royal Grammar School, Guildford where he was caretaker for forty-one years, in the belfry at Holy Trinity and whenever he was conducting a peal.

He married "Mrs Pulling" in September 26, 1904 at Worboys, Hants and they were happily married for nearly fifty-five years. This photograph was taken in 1912.

He was taught to handle a bell at Holy Trinity in 1884 whilst it was still a call-change tower but when the bells were rehung in 1899 he took up change-ringing with the rest of the band under Charles Willshire.

After his first peal, Grandsire Triples at Hawley, Hants on October 14, 1899, his abilities as a leader and conductor began to be recognised and he was elected the Ringing Master for the Guildford district of the Winchester Diocesan Guild. In 1927, when the guild was being reorganised, he took the post of Ringing Master in the Guildford Diocesan Guild, subsequently becoming a Vice-President.

In 1912 he was elected a member of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and served them diligently from 1913 to 1959, attending 31 meetings and also serving as a member of the Standing Committee.

He was an accomplished handbell ringer and a truly brilliant conductor. His total of 1492 peals, of which he conducted 1289, were mainly in the standard methods, with over a third of them being of Stedman, his favourite method. His proclivity in this led to his being invited to call the funeral peal of the Revd F E Robinson. Amongst the long lengths of Stedman on handbells he conducted were peals of 7,028, 7,777, 14,031 changes culminating in the record length of 19,738 Stedman Caters in 9 hours and 32 minutes on August 31, 1912. Others on tower bells included 10,025 Stedman Caters at Haslemere, 10,432 Treble Bob Major at Warnham and 9,600 Double

Dublin at Guildford. His one thousandth peal was one of Stedman Triples at Holy Trinity, Guildford on August 26, 1931. Another peal he treasured was the first peal to be rung by a band all of whom had rung over one thousand peals - one of Cambridge Surprise Major - at St Olave, Hart Street on February 15, 1936.

He had three breaks from ringing. The first was four years during World War I; the second was a serious motor accident in 1927, which kept him from ringing for a year and a further year out of peal ringing and then the Second World War, which stopped tower-bell ringing for nearly three years. His last peal was at Holy Trinity on November 22, 1954 and he died on July 6, 1959, aged 78.

To conclude, here are two anecdotes to illustrate his wish to be in full control of the ringing. When the ringing was spoiled by a trip he would show his disapproval by stamping on the floor with one foot and shouting: "Bust it!" The other concerns a peal of Stedman Caters I rang with him at Wisbech, Cambs on April 14, 1951. I didn't go wrong but EVERY time I had to make a bob he would call: "Bob. YOU make it, boy!"

References

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