

Prolific Peal Ringers

3: ISAAC GEORGE SHADE (1851-1926)



Isaac George Shade was born on April 27, 1851 at Greenwich, the son of William George Shade. Isaac, like his father, attended the church and rang at the “stony” tower of St Alfege but after learning to handle a bell in the early 1870s, wanted to start method ringing. The rest of the band did not want to change, so he and his father sought method ringing further afield although they maintained their Sunday service ringing, achieving a total of nearly one hundred years between them. Isaac rang his first peal, one of Grandsire Triples at St Alfege on April 30, 1875

but, in general, his progress was very slow.

However, to say he became an enthusiast for ringing is to put it mildly: throughout his long working life which began as a gas-fitter at the Phoenix Gas Company and afterwards as a gas inspector, he spent most of his spare time in the pursuit of his pastime. When he retired at seventy he was pensioned off by the company and had the leisure to pursue his hobby even more intensively and was ready to go anywhere at any time. He would willingly travel a hundred miles for a peal of Grandsire Triples as well as for one of London Surprise Major or Stedman Cinques.

He never married: one of his sisters kept house for him. He was described as being sparely built with a frame of whipcord and able to stand the most strenuous tests of endurance, although this photograph of 1912 seems to give him a fuller figure!

When he first started to ring Surprise methods he found he could get little help near home and, to practise even the simpler methods, had to travel to Crawley or Brighton, many miles from Greenwich. However, he found the newly formed Middlesex County Association helped with ringing on the higher numbers. When William Pye started drawing a band around him and achieving some of his remarkable successes, Isaac was one of his first converts and they rang 875 peals together, more than any other two ringers at that time except for the brothers, William and Ernest Pye. (890)

During the fifty years he amassed his total of 1450 peals he must have travelled many thousands of miles. He rang peals in nearly every English county as well as Scotland, Ireland and

Wales, and on all number of bells. In his early days he conducted 54 peals – starting with Holt’s Original – but left it to others after 1897. His first 100 peals took him more than twenty years to score but the second 100 took but four years and was achieved in the year 1900.

Weekend excursions to more distant places enabled him to be in the first peals of Surprise in Ireland and Wales and the long list of associations of which he was a member shows the extent of his travelling for peals. He took part in nearly all William Pye’s tours, including the famous one to Exeter Cathedral where Pye rang the 72cwt tenor single-handed. His long list of record peals included also the 18,027 Stedman Caters at Loughborough parish church in 12 hours and 18 minutes in 1909. Other long lengths included 15,264 Bristol Surprise Major at Hornchurch, Essex in 1912 and 15,072 Double Norwich Court Bob Major at Erith in 1899.

Like others prolific peal ringers of this period, the majority of his peals were of Stedman – a total of 517 – but, unusually, over 400 were of London or Superlative Surprise Major. He rang two peals in a day on 78 occasions, three in a day three times and four in a day once.

He died on July 19, 1926, aged 75. It was a dark, wet night and he had been to a practice at St Botolph, Bishopsgate and was walking home. Whilst crossing the road not far from his home at 72 Blissett Street he was struck by a car and knocked over. He was taken to the hospital but pronounced dead on arrival.

References

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