

Biographical Record

Arthur CRAVEN (1869 – 1930)

Represented the Lincoln Diocesan Guild on the Central Council
from 1897 to 1900 and attended 2 meetings

Arthur Craven was born in Burley, Leeds, Yorkshire in 1869. He learned to ring in 1885 at Burley. Other towers to which he was later attached were Armley (Leeds), St. Peter at Arches, Lincoln from 1897, St. Mary and All Saints, Chesterfield from 1919-1921 and Sheffield.

At the 1899 meeting of the Central Council a committee was formed to determine what constitutes a method; this was the fore-runner Methods Committee. Arthur was a member of this select group, though only for one year.

He rang his first peal, Grandsire Triples, at Armley on May 17th 1890. His 100th peal was in 1904 and he had conducted 36 of his peals. His final peal total was 155. However it is not as a peal ringer that he is remembered, but for his composing and conducting skills.

Arthur composed many peals for the standard methods, Double Norwich Court Bob Major and Treble Bob being the favourites. He particularly endeavoured to include as many of the combinations of 4, 5 and 6 in 6ths place as he could to improve the music. Many of his compositions are very rarely rung these days, but he should be remembered as a prolific composer at a time when all peals had to be proved with paper and pencil – a very time consuming job.

He devised methods as well as composing peals of them. It is to him that we owe the still popular Yorkshire Surprise Major; the figures he came up with originally in about 1898 were what is now called Belgrave Surprise Major, but E. Bankes James suggested to him that the method would be much improved if 7ths place was made when the treble was in 8ths. Arthur agreed to this, so Yorkshire Surprise Major was born.

He published the figures for Yorkshire Surprise Royal, which was first rung to a peal at Chesterfield on January 29th 1921. Arthur Craven rang in this peal. Later he produced Yorkshire Surprise Maximus, which was first rung at Ipswich in 1929.

In 1923 he published his reasoned arguments for extending Bristol Surprise Major to Royal and Maximus and it is his versions of the methods that are rung today. Rutland Surprise Major was published in 1923 and the first peal of it was rung at Bolsover on 13th October 1923. Other methods for which Arthur was responsible are Ealing Surprise Major and Uxbridge Surprise Major. He, Frederick Dexter and John Carter all claimed to have invented Pudsey Surprise Major.

In 1902 Arthur Craven married Mary Lydia Aked at St. Mary & All Saints church, Chesterfield. The couple had one daughter, Dorothy Mary, early in 1911. In the 1911 census, Arthur's occupation is given as 'Foreman mechanics'.

Arthur Craven died on 20th August 1930 after having been in poor health for four years. He was buried on Saturday August 23rd at Abbey Road Cemetery Sheffield.

An obituary for him appeared in The Ringing World on September 5th 1930, and an article about him by Paul Flavell, in The Ringing World in December 20th/27th 2013.

