

Biographical Record

Ruth Margaret FOREMAN (1931 – 2017)

Represented the Middlesex County Association & London Diocesan Guild on the Central Council from 1966 to 1969 and attended 2 meetings

Ruth Foreman was the youngest of three sisters, born on 24 January 1931, in Reigate, Surrey. She was evacuated to Wales in 1944 in wartime. It was here that she first learnt to ring at Llangynwyd, Glamorgan where there was an active local band, as there was little else to do – and no hockey, which was her other interest. The local ringing master wrote to the Reigate tower captain when she returned home in late 1944, saying that Ruth could ring, and asking them to take her on. Reigate was a 10-bell tower with a good band, and the ringing master there sorted out her rather poor style of handling at that time.

A few years later, at the end of 1951, she moved to North London where she was to live for much of her life, and soon joined the band at St Mary's Hendon. Harry Arnold, the tower captain and tenor ringer there, taught people to handle a bell very well but he could not conduct methods. So Harry continued to teach the handling while Ruth ran the practice and called the methods. She was elected ringing master in 1953, a post she was to hold for most of the next 48 years, finally standing down in 2000. There were only two occasions on which she was not re-elected at the Ringers AGM, once in the 1970s and once in the 1980s, when she pushed her view of what the band should be doing a little too far. However, she was welcomed back unanimously within a short time.

Ruth initiated the idea to augment Hendon's ring of six bells to eight in 1957, to mark the church's Millennium celebrations. The PCC gave approval, but the ringers had to raise the cash. Ruth galvanized the band to raise the money by touring the local pubs at Christmas, playing carols on hand-bells. She also arranged Tower open days with the Church, and drew posters and colourful displays of ringing activity to inform and educate people about ringing. The two trebles were eventually cast in 1959 to complete the ring of eight.

During her years as ringing master of Hendon Ruth learned many of her ringing skills. When in later years she was asked the question "How did you become such a good ringer, conductor, teacher, etc?", her answer was simply "I had to do it as there was no one else".

Ruth was a member of the Middlesex County Association & London Diocesan Guild for many years, during which she held the posts of Master of two of the Districts, Association Secretary and in later years Master and then President of the Association. She subsequently became an Honorary Vice-President and Life Member. She also represented the Association on the Central Council from 1966 to 1969.

As Ruth became an established ringer, she was much sought after by other ringers and societies. She rang 360 peals in all (359 peals on tower bells from Minor to Maximus and 1 peal on handbells). About half were rung for the Middlesex County Association. She also rang peals for the Hertford County Association, the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths and the Ladies' Guild. Her first peal was at Batley, Yorkshire, on 31st August 1959 where she

rang the treble to Superlative Surprise Major. In the same week in Yorkshire she then rang inside to 3 further peals of Surprise Major (Cambridge, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire).

In fact, she went on to ring over 200 peals of Surprise Major, including peals of methods starting with all letters of the alphabet. Other personal goals which she managed to achieve included ringing a peal in all four corners of Britain, and circling her home tower of Hendon to peals – the first person to do so. She conducted a total of 5 peals, all within the space of 2 years (1972-1973), the first being the only peal she rang for the Ladies' Guild, Plain Bob Major at Hayes on 15th April 1972.

Ruth increased her circle of ringing acquaintances on overseas tours to Australia in 1988 and Canada in 1993. On the Australian tour she rang in the first peal of Surprise Maximus to be rung outside the British Isles, Yorkshire Surprise Maximus at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne on 24th July 1988. The friends Ruth met in Australia reciprocated the tour with one to England, with Ruth driving them around the towers of Middlesex in a minibus.

Another notable peal on 30th May 1992 was one specially arranged to enable Ruth to ring a peal at Llangynwyd, where she had learnt to ring. This was a peal of Minor in 7 methods. Sadly, this also proved to be Tom Lock's last peal as he died a few days later.

As well as her personal goals and achievements, Ruth's strength was helping ordinary ringers to develop their skills. She had not become a good ringer by being part of elite bands and societies, but by hard work and determination, and was therefore a great inspiration to others. During her years in the Middlesex Association she taught many to ring and others to progress their ringing. She could be strict at times, but also very kind, helping out at practices (especially at Finchley and Willesden), taking part in quarter peals, and judging striking competitions. However, the church and band at Hendon always came first. Ruth would never accept invitations to ring elsewhere if they clashed with Sunday service or practice night ringing. She was very proud of the achievements of the band and individual members.

Ruth had a successful career in banking with Lloyds Bank and became one of the earliest women bank managers in Britain. Outside of work she enjoyed driving, and was proud of having been taught to drive by an instructor at Hendon Police College. She could at times be very competitive and enjoyed playing games such as Scrabble and Canasta. At home she was fond of her garden and cats.

Ruth spent her last few years in a care home at Crowborough in East Sussex and eventually died on 19 February 2017.

