

Biographical Record

Gordon Allan HALLS, MBE (1931 – 2002)

Represented the Derby Diocesan Association on the Central Council from 1960-2002, and attended 42 Council meetings.

Gordon was born at Denton, Manchester on 15th April 1931, the eldest child of Rose and Harold Halls. For a while when he was a child the family lived in Derby where Harold worked at Rolls Royce as a draughtsman. Later when Gordon was about seven years old the family moved again, this time to Newton le Willows in Lancashire. Here Gordon attended the local Grammar School.

In 1943 his father delivered an ultimatum to him: he must do something for the church at Newton le Willows; either he was to sing in the choir or he must learn to ring bells. Gordon chose the latter, saying he would give bell ringing three weeks! So began a lifelong passion for ringing. He was attached to Newton le Willows from 1943 to 1952. After 1952 he rang at Derby Cathedral for the rest of his life, also being tower captain at St. Peter's Derby from 1975 until 2000.

Gordon had an excellent record at school and after passing an impressive number of subjects in his Higher School Certificate he gained a place at UMIST to study Mechanical Engineering, travelling each day to Manchester and back from Newton. There he obtained a First Class Honours Degree and subsequently started his working life as a post-graduate apprentice at Rolls Royce in Derby, where he remained, working in various areas at different times. Gordon worked in the combustion department, the blade cooling department, the transmission department and in research and development in various other areas. For a time he was also an Industrial Fellow at Nottingham University, lecturing in thermodynamics. That association stopped after he attended a meeting about lowering the standards required for degrees. Gordon did not believe in dumbing down.

Gordon rang his first peal on 27th April 1951: Grandsire Doubles at Newton le Willows. He rang a total of 2117 peals, including 1688 for the Derby Diocesan Association and 1191 with his wife, Pat. He rang peals in 607 different towers, including 225 different 10 bell towers. Gordon conducted 781 peals and he rang the alphabet to peals of Surprise Major and Surprise Royal. He circled the following towers to peals: Derby Cathedral, St. Peter, Derby, Duffield, Ilkeston, Sawley, Loughborough Bell Foundry campanile, West Hallam, Belper, Darley Dale, Heanor, Ashbourne, Breadsall, and Ault Hucknall. He composed several peals in the days before computers made composing much simpler than it had been. He was a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths for many years, having been proposed by JAFUS (J Frank Smallwood).

Gordon was interested in all aspects of ringing. He was a dedicated Sunday service ringer and would not invite those who did not ring on Sundays into his peals, declaring they were 'freeloaders'. He served on the PCC at St. Peter's Derby for many years, including as Treasurer, and as Chairman of the Property Committee, where he oversaw the installation of new kitchen facilities.

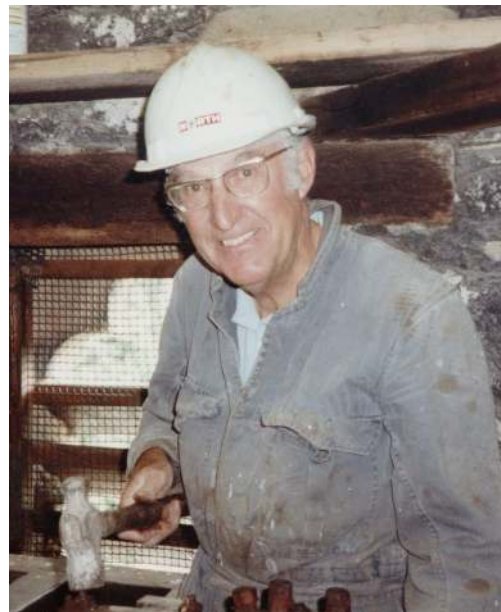
After the bells of St. Andrew's church in Derby were broken up in the tower and sold for scrap in the 1960s, Gordon was determined that such a thing would not happen again. He invited himself on to the DAC to advise on bells and held that position until his death. He was also bell consultant for the Derby Diocesan Association. In these capacities he inspected most of the rings of bells in Derbyshire, including many one bell towers. After inspecting he would write a report for the PCC concerned and go to speak to them if they requested him to. He was quite happy to lend a hand in any work required, particularly once he had retired from Rolls Royce.

He served the Derby Diocesan Association in several capacities: he was on the Derby district committee most years between 1954 and 1977, being chairman for 12 of those years. He was Bell Repair Fund Secretary from 1962-1973 and was a Vice-President from 1994 until his death.

While he was on the Central Council he served on the Bell Restoration Committee for many years and the Administrative Committee for a few years.

He married Pat Forster in 1959 and was a proud father of three children, all of whom he taught to ring.

His other interests included football – he and his son had season tickets for Derby County for many years; he enjoyed cricket, both playing and watching. He aimed to visit Mecca (Old Trafford) most years, but later had a season ticket to watch Derbyshire. He liked travelling abroad and he enjoyed learning other languages. Gordon loved his garden and spent many happy hours producing vegetables for his family. He also enjoyed tinkering with his car. He liked walking in Derbyshire and the Lake District.



In 2000 he was both surprised and delighted to be awarded an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list for services to bell ringing in Derbyshire. By then he was seriously ill with the cancer which killed him, but he thoroughly enjoyed his day going to the Palace in London.

He died on 27th April 2002, on the 51st anniversary of his first peal; his funeral was held at St Peter's Church Derby on May 8th and his ashes are interred in the Garden of Remembrance at All Saints, Mickleover.

Tributes to Gordon appeared in The Ringing World 2002 on pages: 452, 559, 564, 837, 843 & 847.