

Biographical Record

Dennis Raymond JONES (1920 – 2010)

Represented the Lancashire Association on the Central Council
from 1974 to 1993 and attended 19 meetings

Dennis Jones was born on 21st February 1920 at Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hampshire. He spent his childhood in Chieveley, Berkshire where he learned to ring in June 1932, and attended Newbury Grammar School where he excelled at his chosen sports of cricket in the summer and cross country running in the winter.

In 1936 he joined Huntley and Palmers, the biscuit manufacturers of Reading, as an apprentice draughtsman, thus beginning a one-company career that lasted 44 years, only interrupted by World War II. Also working at Huntley and Palmers at that time was a young typist from Reading named Barbara Fisher: Dennis and Barbara were married on 24th May 1941 at St Bartholomew's, Reading.

After the outbreak of war, Dennis enlisted in to the RAF Volunteer Reserve; his engineering draughtsmanship skills were soon recognized and he spent the first year of his service life training as an aero engine fitter. He subsequently served overseas, first in India and later in Burma. His service ended in January 1946 and he returned home to his wife Barbara and the first sight of his 3-year-old son, Stephen. He then went back to his old job at Huntley and Palmers, where his engineering experience led to early relocation in the factory as a maintenance engineer.

His daughter Carole was born in 1947 and in 1948 the family bought their first house at Shinfield on the outskirts of Reading. During these years he was ringing at St Giles, Reading and from 1951 onwards he then became attached to the band at St Peter's, Caversham.

By 1959 Huntley and Palmers had built a new factory at Huyton in Liverpool and Dennis was invited to relocate to Lancashire to take up the position of Plant Maintenance Engineer at the new factory. He moved with his family to Aughton, Lancashire, where he lived for the rest of his life. He soon became a regular member of the band of ringers at Christ Church, Aughton and subsequently also joined the band at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral. He eventually became ringing master at the Cathedral in 1976, remaining in this post until 1982.

Dennis became a resident member of the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers in 1962, becoming a Vice President of the Association in 1968 and in later years an Honorary Vice President. He also served as a Central Council Representative for the Association from 1974 until 1992. In 1965 he was also elected a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths.

Although he had been a ringer for nearly 30 years when he moved to Lancashire in 1960, Dennis had not yet rung any peals up to this point, but this was soon to change and he rang his first peal, Cambridge Surprise Major, at Christ Church, Southport on

27th October 1962. For the next 22 years he rang peals regularly, with his last peal, Oxford Treble Bob Major, being rung at his home tower of Christ Church, Aughton on 15th September 1984. His final peal total was 144, with over half of these being rung in local towers in and around Southport and Aughton. Almost all these peals were rung for the Lancashire Association (138 in total), with only a handful being rung for other Guilds and Societies (2 for the College Youths, 2 for the Oxford Diocesan Guild and 1 each for the Truro Diocesan Guild and Yorkshire Association).

Dennis himself conducted 12 peals in all. Most of these were at the two Aughton towers (Christ Church and St Michael's) and were usually of Plain Bob (Minor, Triples or Major), although the last peal he conducted was Stedman Triples at Christ Church, Aughton, on 26th June 1982.

Probably the most noteworthy peal in which he took part was the very first peal to be rung on the bells at Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, Grandsire Cinques on 23rd January 1965. This was also Dennis's first peal on 12 bells and he shared the ringing of the 11th with Joseph Ridyard, who conducted the peal. Another peal worthy of note was one of Plain Bob Major, rung at Newbury on 19th July 1975 by Old Boys of Newbury Grammar School, Dennis's old school, to mark the end of the school after 509 years. This peal was conducted by Tom Lock who had also attended the school: Dennis had rung with Tom on a number of occasions in his younger days.

Dennis eventually retired from working at Huntley and Palmers in 1980, but such was his reputation in the world of biscuit-making machinery that he received and took up invitations to install and commission biscuit making plant in countries abroad such as Nigeria and Sri Lanka. As a result, Dennis and his wife developed a liking for foreign travel and became inveterate world travellers with full passport pages to prove it.

By 1997 Dennis's health had begun to deteriorate and with it his mobility. He became afflicted with an advancing degenerative disease and in December 2005 had finally to be admitted to residential nursing care in Ormskirk. He eventually died on 30th January 2010.

