

# Biographical Record

## Edwin Hugh LEWIS MA (1881 – 1963)

Represented the Cambridge University Guild on the Central Council from 1908 to 1937, Honorary Member from 1937 to 1951, Life Member 1951 to 1963 and attended 38 Meetings

Edwin Lewis was born on 13 June 1881 at Nottingham, where his father was Vicar of St Anne's. He went to Charterhouse School and then Trinity College Cambridge as an Exhibitioner to read Mechanical Sciences.

After graduation he worked as Assistant Manager for a firm in Widnes, and in 1914 moved to the Glasgow Iron and Steel Company, of which he became General Manager in 1927, responsible for six collieries, an iron works, a cement works, an ammonia works, a limestone mine and an iron ore mine. For four years he was president of the West of Scotland Iron and Steel Institute. Then in 1929 he moved to Kent to become a director of Tunnel Portland Cement Company, from which he retired in 1956.

In 1909 he married Miss Agatha J T Richardson, the daughter of Rev. J G Richardson, and they had four sons and three daughters, five of whom served in the Royal Navy.

Edwin learnt to ring at Trowell, Nottinghamshire in 1900 while in his late teens and in 1901 he joined the Cambridge University Guild. On 16 April 1903 he rang his first peal – Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles at Great Gaddesden, Hertfordshire.

Later that year he rang in two peals that were notable firsts. Plain Bob Major on 17 June 1903 at St Andrew the Great Cambridge rung for the Cambridge University Guild, was the first tower bell peal of Major by 'either university'. Plain Bob Maximus on 10 November in Trinity College Cambridge rung jointly for the Cambridge University Guild and the Ancient Society of College Youths, was the first peal of Maximus in hand by either society. Edwin later served as Master of the College Youths in 1936–37,

By 1906 he had rung 50 peals, and in all he rang about 270, probably a third of them in hand. His last peal was Plain Bob Triples in hand in August 1960.

During his eight years in Cheshire he rang at Frodsham, where he significantly developed the band's capability and played a key role in augmenting the bells from 6 to 8 in 1911. He also taught a new band at Widnes. After he moved to Scotland his ringing was limited, but he retained a keen interest through his work on the Central Council. When he moved to Kent he rang at Brasted, where he again taught a new band, and he became an active member of the Kent County Association, serving as chairman for many years.

During his 55 years on the Central Council he served on many committees including Compositions: 1915-18, Methods: 1912-33, and Bells of Belgium: 1918-21 (as convenor). Later he served on two more: Circulation of *The Ringing World*: 1934-39, *Ringing World*: 1945-51 (as convenor), and was one of four people who helped to save *The Ringing World* after the death of its founding editor and proprietor J S Goldsmith.

The committee he served longest was Towers & Belfries: 1912–63 (as chairman 1933-54). His work included key research and experiments to expose the fallacy that elasticity in a bell frame relieves the strain on the fabric of the tower. A summary of his investigations into the forces of bell frame layout and design was included in Sir Arthur Heywood's influential 1914 book *Bell Towers and Bell Hanging, an appeal to Architects*.

For almost half his time on the Council, 27 years from 1930 to 1957, he served as President.

He composed several peals, including early compositions of spliced Minor.

His professional career was impressive not just as an engineer but because he took an active interest in the social, human side of industry. He also worked as a lay member of the church in both Scotland and England, and his contribution was recognised by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

He was also a brilliant linguist and is reputed to have translated *The Nine Tailors* into Swedish.

He was also a practical man. In Frodsham he built a house of local red sandstone on high ground among bracken and heather, and when laying out the gardens he built the dry stone walls himself. His garden also included some old wooden headstocks.

He was widely respected for high standards in ringing and as a skilful and effective chairman of meetings.

He died on 4 September 1963 and a memorial service for him was held at St Michael's Cornhill on 2 November, with the address given by Canon Gilbert Thurlow.

*His obituary and tributes appeared in The Ringing World 1963, pages: 609, 612, 646 & 746.*

