

Biographical Record

Rev. Canon Charles Elliot WIGG (1908 – 1976)

Represented the Oxford Society from 1935 to 1953 and attended 5 meetings

Charles Elliot Wigg was born on June 22 1908 at Ferry Hinksey, Oxford. After attending High School in Oxford, where a fellow student was his life-long friend, Fred Sharpe, he went up to Keble College. While there he learned to ring and was treasurer of the University Society from 1930-32. He rang his first peal in 1931 at St Ebbe's, Oxford. He completed his training for the Ministry at Wycliffe Hall and then took a curacy at High Wycombe from 1932 – 1936.

Elliot Wigg was elected Deputy Master of the Oxford Diocesan Guild in 1933, after the death of Rev. Cyril W O Jenkyn. Canon G F Coleridge was elected its Master but he was getting on for eighty at the time and he felt that he needed the support of a younger man. Until that time it hadn't been in the tradition of the Guild to have a Deputy Master.

He took his duties as Deputy Master very seriously and his year by year entries in the Guild Report show that he covered many hundreds of miles each year attending meetings, joining practices, helping with learners and advising on the state of the bells. His own personal ringing diary demonstrates that about one in three peals came to grief, many because of the state of the bells or gear. His diary discloses that, often the bells needed work to be done on them before a meeting. He rejoiced in teaching bands from scratch and ensuring that difficult or silent bells were restored. His first parish, Cheersley with Nether Winchendon, was one such. He records his delight, eighteen months later, when the fledgling band rang its first 120 of doubles for Evensong.

His peal ringing took a back seat as his other duties increased though he rang some significant peals, including the first peal of Grandsire Triples rung by eight priests at East Hagbourne on May 15th 1935 for the Silver Jubilee of King George V. The composition was Holt's Original and Elliot rang the 7th.

He became a representative of the Oxford Society on the Central Council in 1935 and held this post until 1953: he was a member of the, now defunct, CC Peal Boards Committee in 1938. In 1936 he became President of the Oxford University Society, a position he held until his death. He went on peal tours with the Guild of Clerical Ringers and rang in the first peal of Bob Major for this society in 1938. His total peal number was 247.

During his tours round the Oxford Diocese he would inquire where instruction was needed and then return and teach: bands were started at Dinton and Cuddington in this way. Among the peals that he rang at this time were silent Stedman Triples and Cambridge Major. On November 5th 1938 he rang Bray tenor to a peal of seven minor methods. The 26 cwt. tenor went very badly at the time: he was an excellent heavy-bell ringer.

He was a member of Walter Judge's pre-war Spliced Surprise Major peal band and, when the ban on ringing stopped peal attempts, he attended practices with the clappers tied or removed. It was at this time that he formed a handbell band at Chearsley to ring for services.

He was married to Florence Thomas on February 24th 1941 at Hayes and a handbell quarter peal was rung for the occasion: he rang his first handbell peal the following year.

The Universities Association, of which he was a Founder Member, elected him their President in January 1946 and the Oxford Guild, its Master, in the July.

In November 1948 he took the living at Wavendon, Bucks, on the edge of the diocese and for the next few years had very little opportunity for ringing. The bells here were restored in 1953 and a new band started.

On November 18th, 1961 he was installed as a minor canon of Christ Church, Oxford, which honour he accepted on behalf of the ringers of the diocese, for it showed the importance of the work they did in the service of the Church.

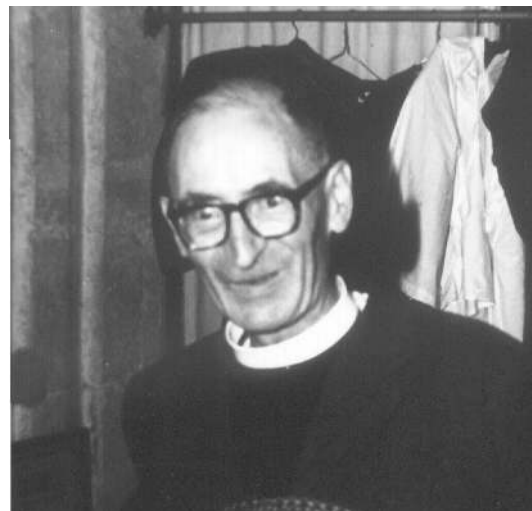
In 1965 he rang Great Tom with Fred Sharpe as the train carrying Winston Churchill's body passed through Oxford and, after the interment at Bladon, conducted a peal of Bob Minor there, which included Marie Cross, Honorary General Secretary and Fred Sharpe, Deputy Master.

In 1968 he left Wavendon for Hook Norton. Having moved back to the centre of the Guild he was now able to attend many more meetings, which gave him great pleasure. Three years later he was thrilled to baptise his first granddaughter.

In the latter part of 1972 the first signs of his illness appeared and he was forced to rest for a long period. He had partially recovered by the following May and was able to welcome the Central Council to Oxford, their first meeting here for 80 years. The following July he retired as Guild Master and handed the baton on to Fred Sharpe: he was elected a Vice President of the Guild.

He died on 8th March 1976

The Guild report, following his death, referred to his constancy and devotion to duty and others described him as a most kind and saintly man who would be much missed. Among his works were many papers of religious significance and a quantity of poetry.



Tributes to him appeared in The Ringing World in 1976 on pages 256, 337 and 436.