



Middlesex Bell News



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Meet our Patron

*Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London,
kindly agreed to a Zoom interview with Bell News:*



The Patron of our Guild, Bishop Sarah, has followed a rather unusual course to her appointment in March 2018 to be Bishop of London, ranking only behind the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Having qualified as a

nurse in 1984, she sought to apply her interest in a holistic approach to patient care both on the ward with specialist training at the Royal Marsden and with further academic qualifications. In 1999 at the age of 37 she was appointed Chief Nursing Officer at the Department of Health, the youngest person ever so appointed, and remained in post until 2004.

In 1998, however, Bishop Sarah had started theological training for the priesthood, and from 2001 until 2004 served as an unpaid curate in Battersea. She commented that as Chief Nursing Officer, travelling first class in trains and often with a driver when going by car, it would have been easy to become somewhat removed from the immediacy of dealing with patients suffering pain or facing death. She found that working as a curate in her parish in Battersea provided some balance, and her theological and academic studies provided a theoretical structure for the challenges that arose. Her aim is always to be a “reflective practitioner”.

How did she manage her husband, children, all her academic work, and two jobs, all at the same time? “You must be very efficient,” Bell News commented nervously. Without claiming to be efficient, Bishop Sarah did acknowledge that an academic assignment might have been completed on a bench in Rugby station while waiting for a train. We get the picture.

The three churches in her Battersea patch had no bells, and it was not until, after ordination, she moved to Sutton that she encountered handbells and for the first time saw what change ringers were doing, though she didn't take up the Exercise herself. She gained an MA at Heythrop instead.

Bishop Sarah was appointed a Canon of Salisbury Cathedral in 2012, but, as a cruel fate would have it, Salisbury is one of only three English Cathedrals which has

no peal of bells, making do with the oldest clock (1386) in England instead.

However, the city has other towers with peals of bells, and Bishop Sarah says that their children grew up surrounded by bells, not least the Cathedral clock which chimes every 15 minutes, day and night. She and their children have always been conscious of bells around their various homes, and her family miss them when they fall silent, as they have done during lockdown.

In 2015 Bishop Sarah was consecrated Bishop and became Suffragan Bishop of Crediton. Holy Cross church in Crediton has a ring of 12 Whitechapel bells, cast in 2004 and 2006, so in Crediton and in many other churches in her area she was very accustomed to the sound of bells. She remembers blessing the bells of St Mary, Hemyock, where No. 5 has the enigmatic motto “True Hearts and Sound Bottoms”, and of course met many ringers who were members of their church or church workers.

When visiting churches Bishop Sarah has always tried to meet the ringers because of their role in making the church and its services known in the neighbourhood. Churches have a central role in the community, for worship and members of the church, but also for those of other faiths or none. Her view is that all are welcome to ring – “It's a joy that those who are not members of the church come to ring”.

She is aware, of course, that ringers often leave the church after ringing, unseen by the incumbent or members of the church. She would encourage ringers always to build relationships, perhaps best done around activities other than ringing, so that each church's ringers are known and recognised as part of the wider community centred around the church. Ringers are always welcome to attend services, but could perhaps take part in any of the many outreach activities that most parishes run.

And how does Bishop Sarah take time out? Her daughter learnt pottery in her teens, and Bishop Sarah took it up too in order to have time with her. She finds it a completely absorbing activity, and has been able to give it more time during the Covid-19 lockdown when some of her normal duties have been curtailed. However she would not make great claims for her skill, and says that her level is “Making large pots”.

Bishop Sarah spoke warmly about the sound of bells, and seemed delighted to have the bells of St Paul's as her very own. She discreetly indicated that she was doing what she could to persuade the government to make a return to normal ringing possible, and all members of the Guild will be grateful to our Patron for her efforts in that direction.

Bishop Sarah concluded the interview by expressing her thanks to ringers for the time they committed. It was clear that she views ringing as an integral and valued part of the church's position in the community, and welcomes all ringers to take part.

Ringling for the Grenfell dead

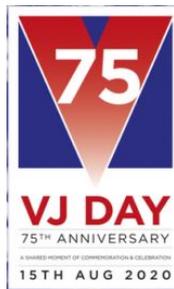


At the request of Rt. Rvd. Dr. Graham Tomlin, Bishop of Kensington, on 14th June towers across the Association commemorated those who died and those who suffered in the Grenfell Tower fire three years ago. Across the country at least 166 towers tolled 72 times for the dead and then 3 times more, one for each year since the disaster. In our Association 9 towers recorded tolling for Grenfell, and many others did so without recording the event.

VJ Day and 'Crying out for peace'

Bruno Peek, Pageantmaster, tells Bell News:

Plans for a worldwide commemoration of VE Day, May 8th, were disrupted by the Covid lockdown, but attention was then focused on the 75th anniversary of VJ day, August 15th. Across the world more than 100 pipers played "Battle's Over", while a similar number of town criers worldwide called out the 'Cry for Peace'. Although the CCCBR did not endorse the appeal for towers in the UK to toll 75 times at 11:10, more than 10 towers in our Association arranged to do so in compliance with the health precautions in force.



Annual General Meeting

Lucy Chandhial writes::

It is our intention to hold the Annual General Meeting for the Association on Saturday 10th October in a virtual format. We expect to make it possible for all members to join via phone or via computer / smart phone. Please keep this date in your diary (unlike so many other planned ringing events this year) and more information will be provided by email nearer the time.

Annual Report of the Association

All tower contacts, and anyone who requested one, should now have received a paper copy of the 2019-20 Annual Report by post – or have received an email from me asking for confirmation of the contact details held. Anyone who has not received their copy should please contact me – preferably by email at jill.wigney@googlemail.com - and I will send one out. *Jill Wigney, Membership Secretary*

Whitechapel bell foundry

Bell News architecture correspondent writes:



The Whitechapel foundry, having been on the present site since 1570, closed in 2017 and the site was sold for £7.8 million.

The developer proposes to build a hotel, café, and "small production facility" on the site, complete with a gesture to its history on the roof.



Artist's impression

In January 2020 the Secretary of State called in the proposal for a public enquiry, originally set for May, but then postponed to October 6th. Whether and how this enquiry will take place is not clear. Updates may be found at <https://spitalfieldslife.com> as more information becomes available, or check <https://hackney.gov.uk/planning-applications> .

Bell Restoration report

Steve Jakeman, Bell Restoration Officer, reports:

St John at Hackney needed more than just dusting off the bells, tightening a few nuts and putting the ropes back - far from it! They were last rung in November 2018. The church has had a £5m+ restoration project, with sundry delays plus 8 weeks more with lock down.

Services restart on September 13th. By then we should have replaced the mesh on the louvres, upgraded the sound control system, redecorated the ringing room, put back all the peal boards and installed the simulator. We now have a dedicated kitchen area with a sink and running water in one of the alcoves and additional storage space.

Virtual Bells – Ropesight Restored

Angela Slocumbe offers a guide:

With towers silent, what can newbies getting to grips with call changes, plain hunt and method ringing do to practise ?

My memory's not what it was when I first learnt the basics and enjoyed ringing back in the seventies. Whilst one can't replicate the supportive ensemble of a tower practice session, Steve Scanlon's **Change Ringing Toolkit** is an amazing resource that can help those like myself trying to retain, learn or improve their skills during this unprecedented time.

I relied on the **Ropesight Tutor** when I returned to bell ringing. It is a simple effective tool. Fantastic for visual learners trying to memorise new methods or positions. The bell ringing community is modest, kind and supportive, so when I could not find 'Ropesight Tutor' on the updated toolkit, Steve Scanlon responded to my email and resolved the issue immediately.

Designed and developed by Steve the change ringing software is a free resource provided to help new and experienced campanologists. It can be located at:

<http://www.ringbell.co.uk/software/>

Those wanting to ensure progress made is not lost can use the Ropesight Tutor to help simulate the actions required for towers with up to eight bells. With rounds, call changes and plain hunts to practise you can select a bell and the configuration of your home tower.

Whilst we cannot be sure when the nation's bells will be back in action. I would like to thank all those like Steve Scanlon doing their best to ensure some virtual practice is available.

eKenton ?

Sonia Field explains:

An accidental consequence of Lockdown is the emergence of eKenton (*RinginRoom*). Previously we had established a 'hub' in the north of the S&W District offering a regular programme of training and practice based on ART's Learning the Ropes scheme. Primarily for local ringers, but also open to those from further afield, events were proving increasingly popular, so we decided to continue our learning virtually using Zoom and RinginRoom.

With the support of Dave Bassford, our Master, and other helpers we have held a series of successful theory and practical sessions covering Call Changes, Plain Hunt, Plain Bob, simple method structure and place bells. eKenton has enabled early-stage ringers to continue progressing, and helps to maintain involvement and motivation.

eKenton - Questions to ponder

Rachel Seghers writes:

Led by Sonia Field and David Smith, as a follow-on from the two sessions 'What is a Change?' and 'Plain Bob to Place Bells', there were 10 keen students in the e-Kenton RingingRoom at 11am that morning. Although we are all missing the physical act of ringing, for learners like me - with a couple of years or less under their belts - exploring the theory without managing the bell itself can be rather liberating. It offers a great opportunity to meet other ringers through the powers of technology and extend our theoretical knowledge so that we are 'ready to go' when we get back to normal.

The session consisted of 21 questions. We worked through these in smaller discussion groups using Zoom breakout rooms to explore theory, vocabulary and blue line diagrams. Regrouping we shared answers, asked more questions and received additional morsels of knowledge that we had no way of knowing that we needed - but discovered we did!

Thanks to the experienced ringers that so willingly dedicate their time to give guidance and advice.

eKenton – a real ramble

Marilyn Langridge reports:

Seven ringers met for "a three mile round trip" along the Ebury Way from Watford - Rickmansworth. Some of us had previously met only online in

RinginRoom and had to introduce ourselves in real life. After a socially-distanced distribution of ART certificates we set out.

Our walk began through the delightful Oxhey Park, on to and along the Grand Union canal where our accompanying dogs enthusiastically swam in the black mud. All three returned to their owners happy and delighted, legs and tummies

covered in black silt.

Lunch outside The Café @ lock 81, Rickmansworth to eat our snacks, and then we did Plain Hunt Minor moves in dance form in order to teach Becca what it's all about.

We must have covered some nine, *nine*, miles...not quite what we thought we had signed up to! However good friendships were made and a fine time had by all, not least the dogs. Thanks for organizing this ramble and we look forward to the next occasion.



Debbie Malin

A tribute from Janet Drake:

Debbie was remembered with great affection and appreciation during June's virtual zoom N&E District Meeting. There were 9 participants including two from S&W District. Shared memories included her calm, quiet, unassuming manner whilst ringing, particularly when helping learners, 'standing behind' and enabling equal participation for the more hesitant ringer without treading on toes. Her presence at practices was always reassuring and supportive to those running the practice as well as the participants. Her nod and reassuring look as one dodged with her confirming one was in the right place has helped so many of us.

We have vivid memories of her being laden with tea making equipment, quietly doing what was needed, preparation, washing up and providing those mouth-watering flap-jacks and cakes. Perhaps less well known to all, but important to many, was her involvement in the handbell ringing particularly at Christmas time and the visits to Care Homes in Muswell Hill and elsewhere.

Her skills, personality, quiet sense of humour and smile will be very much missed by all, and, of course, by her family and the Hackney ringers. Her absence when we do eventually return to ringing will be very apparent and particularly hard-hitting for the Hackney band. A number of us will be wanting to ring in her memory both tower quarters and tune-handbells as soon as we are able. She was unstinting in the help she gave to our ringing community.

Peal appeal

Mike Wigney writes:

During lockdown there have been no District-wide activities. Some towers have been meeting via RingingRoom, and some have been ringing on Sundays with reduced bands, or on handbells.

Jill and I have entered all Middlesex peals into Bellboard back to the beginning of 1984. I have also been entering peals from the early years, with the peals rung by the MCA's predecessors: West Middlesex Association (1882-5), the South and West Middlesex Association (1885-1897), and the Middlesex Association (1889-97). By the time Bell News is published I expect to be up to the end of 1909 for the Middlesex County Association (the London Diocesan Guild was added to the title in 1903).

Lots of peals of Grandsire, Stedman and Superlative, with Bill Pye beginning to push the boundaries on both tower and handbells. The first peals, one in tower the other in hand, rung by a woman for the Middlesex Association, were by Miss Margaret Nichols, an American from Boston in 1902.

We mean to work through the MCA reports and close the 75 year gap from both ends. Would anyone like to help out with a few years? There are about 80 peals in an average year, and it takes about 5 hours per year.

N&E: A hectic social life

Lucy Chandhial reports:

No District ringing has been possible during lockdown. However in May Helen Porter, Lucy Chandhial and Janet Drake met (virtually) to consider how to replace the monthly Saturday District events in the programme agreed in January. Their efforts have resulted in a virtual tea-party in June, bingo in July, and a socially-distanced picnic in Trent Park with handbells in August (report below).

The third Wednesday District practice run by Adrian Sweeting has been maintained via RingingRoom and Zoom, focusing on Bob Minor and Little Bob Minor, and the Training Officers have continued with training offers. Tom Hinks (Lewisham District) has attracted a number of District ringers with his training sessions. These are available online at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuwovfc8KHEE EgsMTfLrIjA> and are well worth a look.

On Saturday October 3rd it is hoped to organise Janets' Jaunt with a picnic and handbells rather than tower ringing and a pub lunch. Details will follow and all are welcome.

N&E: Third Saturday picnic

Celia Workman reports:

A small group from North and East District met on 22nd August for a socially distanced Saturday afternoon picnic in Trent Park, which is on the northern edge of the District at the end of the Piccadilly line. We arrived by car, bicycle and scooter!

Janet Drake brought handbells. With one bell each we rang rounds, Plain Hunt, and peaked with an attempt on Bob Minor.

As we left we had to shelter under a sweet chestnut tree from a heavy shower but we were rewarded with a wonderful rainbow. No pot of gold, but two lucky numbers were drawn for the 200 Club draw. In time-honoured fashion some retired to the pub and the rest of us went home.

Dennis Brock



Ringers in the Association have already been informed of the death of Dennis Brock. His funeral took place on Tuesday 25th August and some of his many friends watched the service remotely at his parish church of St Mary, Sunbury.

A full obituary of Dennis has appeared in Ringing World and by permission is reproduced at the end of this issue of Bell News.

Dennis on his 100th birthday, having just rung a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples at St Mary's.

The Central Council – What’s it for ?

Simon Linford, President, Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, brings us up to date:



There certainly was a time when if there was an item in a ringing newsletter titled “Central Council Report” you would be flicking on and trying to do the crossword. But try my blogs (<https://ccabr.org.uk/> and see President’s blog). My challenge is to get you to read all of them !

For most ringers the sort of ringing I do, 12-bell competitions, calling spliced peals, and so on is not real life. So it’s the other end of the scale that’s important for most. Before lockdown put everything on hold, every Saturday morning after parkrun I would expect to be at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing teaching ringing. Every Thursday evening I was at Moseley teaching kids. I did ten years of being Master of the St Martin’s Guild, based in Birmingham, and we made great leaps in inclusivity of all levels of ringing. There is nothing better than the look on someone’s face when they do something they didn’t think they could do, whether it is a quarter of Bob Doubles or a peal of Orion.

Kicking the Central Council has long been a bit of a sport. Many ringers see it as irrelevant or ineffective.



So in 2017 it embarked on a ‘strategic review’ and came up with a reforming agenda that the rank and file did not believe would get voted through. The so-called ‘CRAG review’ proposed widespread change, which was then implemented.

I came in on the back of that, with a new structure and a sense of mission, but maybe not a complete sense of what was possible. After 100 days of watching and listening I wrote the ‘Strategic Priorities 2020 and Beyond’ paper, and now we are implementing the ideas within it.

I have an enthusiasm for getting things moving (Simon runs CZero, a sustainable construction company. Ed.) and believe that if I can engage the enthusiasm of others we can achieve a lot. The Council is not sitting in some ivory tower. We are just ringers like anyone else who are trying to do things for the good of ringing that cannot be done as effectively at

the local level. I think I am gradually winning people over. There are fewer critics, and more helpers.

When I learned to ring I was very lucky as I never hit a barrier to my own progress. It upsets me that some people do not fulfil their potential because the opportunities are not presented to them. These are things the Strategic Priorities are hoping to do something about. For instance we have committed to organising two new **residential courses** starting next year to build on the success of courses run in Hereford and Bradfield.

I am also hoping to recruit the ‘**Cast of 1000**’ – experienced ringers prepared to turn out and help at focused practices aimed at helping people to achieve things that cannot be done with local resources.

I have got two new Workgroups established which are looking at how we get ringing into **schools and in youth organisations**, and how we stop young ringers giving up when they go to university.

And the latest initiative is looking at how we remove **gender imbalance** in ringing that prevents women ringers from getting the same opportunities as men.

We won’t have our ringing restricted forever, although I fear it will be longer than we ever expected. There will be much rebuilding to be done when we get going again. A year with no teaching, ringers who just give up, bands which lose critical mass – this is a perfect storm. Maybe though it gives us the opportunity to take a step back and do some of those things which we always knew we needed to do to secure ringing’s future.

Please give the Central Council a chance to prove its value. If nothing else, read my blogs and see what we are doing.

And finally...

All Association members appreciate the work done by Dave Bassford, our Master, to support ringers at every stage. During lockdown he has supported virtual ringing for beginners and developers via Ringing-Room.

But does this photo suggest that his devoted service, might, at times, go above and beyond ?



(A source close to the Master assures Bell News that the car was parked in a lay-by at the time. Ed.)

DENNIS BROCK, BEM, OSM

23.11.1918 – 24.7.2020

This obituary first appeared in Ringing World and is published by permission. Pictures have been added.

Dennis Brock, who has died at the great age of 101, achieved a degree of fame in his last years as ‘the world’s oldest active bell ringer’ and for his lifetime service to St Mary’s Church, Sunbury-on-Thames. He was a ringer for 89 years and tower captain for 82 years (interrupted by war service).



In 2016 he received from the Bishop of London a special award of the Order of the St Mellitus for his long service to St Mary’s; prior to his 100th birthday he received the good wishes of the Prime Minister (the Rt Hon. Theresa May) at Prime Minister’s Questions in reply to one from his local MP; in the 2019 Queen’s Birthday Honours he was awarded the British Empire Medal for his services to bell ringing; and on 9th April 2020 he was a recipient of Maundy Money from Her Majesty the Queen (although not in person because of lockdown).

Perhaps his crowning achievement was to ring a quarter peal on his 100th birthday – the treble to Grandsire Triples at Sunbury – believed to be the oldest person ever

to ring a quarter peal. Even that was not his last as he took part in another quarter a few months later.

Apart from his war service and the last few months, Dennis lived his whole life in Sunbury. He was brought up within sight of the tower and the sound of the bells. A regular church attender from an early age, he joined the choir and from the age of 9 would often assist his neighbour, the tower captain, to oil the bells and adjust the ropes. He started ringing in 1931 at the age of 12, progressed quickly and rang his first peal on 6th May 1935 – Grandsire and Plain Bob Doubles with an all-local band, as recorded on a peal board in the tower. In 1938 he was asked to take over as tower captain and remained in that role until his death.

A bright pupil at primary school, he gained a place at Hampton Grammar School, but his grandparents, with whom he was living since his mother’s early death and his father’s remarriage, could not afford the expense which that would entail. He therefore attended a new local secondary school, where he excelled in most subjects, winning various prizes and certificates, and was appointed head boy before leaving at the age of 15. While there he took a commercial course, qualifying in book-keeping and shorthand at speeds of over 120 words a minute. Amazingly, at the age of 100 he could still read and write Pitman’s shorthand. After school he had office jobs in a local industry and with an undertaker while studying at night school for qualifications which would permit him to join the Civil Service, where he remained for the rest of his working life.

A keen cyclist, Dennis soon developed an interest in ringing at other towers, at first in his local area and then further afield. In the mid-1930s he linked up with a group to visit churches in London on Sunday afternoons where there was little other ringing and he also took the opportunity of the 1935 Jubilee and the 1936 Central Council meeting to ring at many other London towers.

In 2009 Alan Regin and I spent a fascinating four hours listening to his amazingly sharp memories of ringing before the war, which Alan recorded. Dennis rang at most of the central London towers whose bells were destroyed or removed in WW2. These included St Bride’s, Fleet Street (a good Rudhall 12, but hard work), St Stephen’s, Coleman Street (a nice 15 cwt 8 but filthy stairs and ringing room), St Giles, Cripplegate, All Hallows, Lombard Street, the grand Gillett 12 at St Mary-le-Bow, the 30 cwt eights at St Lawrence Jewry and St George-in-the East, St Mary Matfelon, Whitechapel (wobbly tower) and St Magnus the Martyr. Prior to his death Dennis was almost certainly the last person alive to have rung on these bells.

Dennis has always appreciated good quality bells and good ringing, and he was fortunate indeed to have a really good Taylor eight on his doorstep in Sunbury. One day in 1938 he and a friend cycled to a meeting at Walthamstow but left early because they had heard that there was to be a peal at St Paul’s Cathedral starting at 5 pm. They arrived in time for the start, chained up their bikes and listened to the ringing – Stedman Cinques half-muffled in memory of William Cockerill, a former Cathedral ringer. So taken were they by the excellent ringing on those grand bells that they stayed for the full 4 hours and 10 minutes until it came round.

In 1936 Dennis and his good friend Reg Darvill (then at Hillingdon, but later at St Albans) decided to take a week’s holiday cycling to Shropshire and North Wales, staying at youth hostels and seeing how many towers they could ring at. They only managed five towers, but the following year they got a few more ringers together and had a more organised tour in Somerset. Further tours followed in 1938 and 1939 and the group became known as the NUTS – the National Union of Tower Snatchers!

In 1938 Reg Darvill moved to Southend for work and lodged with Frank Lufkin, who will be remembered by many. Before long Frank was inviting Dennis down for Saturday peals at Prittlewell and elsewhere in Essex. He would cycle

there, going right through the centre of London, ring the peal, have something to eat and cycle back – 60 miles each way and all in one day so that he could be back for ringing at Sunbury on Sunday morning.

All that came to an end when he was called up for military service in September 1939. Initially sent to Belgium with the Royal Artillery, he was seriously injured at Dunkirk before getting back to England. After recovery he went to Egypt, Cyprus and Iraq and then in 1942 into the North African desert, where he received wounds in his hands and knee, was captured by the Germans, handed over to the Italians, placed in a compound at Benghazi – no shelter and very meagre rations – and transferred to Italy. Here he began to lose the use of his legs and was told that he might never walk again. However, due to a brilliant young Italian doctor's willingness to experiment with a new procedure, he gradually regained use of his legs, although he continued to suffer from lack of feeling in his feet for the rest of his life.

As Italy surrendered, he was taken by the Germans to a prisoner-of-war camp near Dresden and forced to do manual labour in brickfields, again on meagre rations. In the messages he was allowed to send home he used the phrase 'Keep the old bells a-ringing' to assure family and friends that it really was him. One evening to amuse himself he wrote out the figures for Parker's 12-part peal of Grandsire Triples from memory and left it in his coat pocket. His captors found it and assumed it was a secret code. When asked to explain it he said it was bell music – Die Glocken. 'You will hear more about this', he was told, but he didn't, as a few days later Dresden was bombed, he escaped and after various escapades made his way back to England and Sunbury.

Dennis reckoned that it was only his fitness from cycling that kept him going through those terrible times, but by then the injuries and malnutrition had taken their toll and it was several years before he regained full health. In 1946 he married his childhood sweetheart, Joyce, and in 1951 their daughter Lorna was born. Soon after their marriage Dennis's doctor told Joyce that he 'would never make old bones'. 'Leave that to me', she replied, and over 70 years later he was still going strong.

With the help of others he managed to keep the ringing going at Sunbury while he recovered but there was little travelling to other towers. By 1950 he was able to resume the tower captaincy in full. Since then he has taught a great many new ringers and has maintained a Sunday service band throughout. He was also the steeplekeeper: until the bells were rehung in 1999, every other week he was up among them to oil the bearings – no easy job with an H-frame and restricted space.

In the 50s and 60s the local band included several talented young ringers, all taught by Dennis, who went on to make their mark elsewhere – David Struckett, Doug Boniface, Tony and Mike Tyers and Paul Brand among them. Practice nights were lively and often attracted youngsters from Heston, Isleworth and elsewhere. A peal of Cambridge Major in 1966 with Dennis, five of his pupils, my sister Trish and myself is particularly memorable. Several of those young ringers have been delighted to return to Sunbury in more recent years to ring peals and quarters in celebration of Dennis's birthdays and ringing anniversaries.



Having become quite keen on peal ringing before the war, with 11 peals in that period, it was not until 1962 that he felt ready to ring a peal again – Plain Bob Major at St Catherine's, Feltham. From then until 1987 he rang 25 peals, mainly on the treble but including some of Stedman Triples and Caters, giving a total of 36. He also took part in a great many quarter peals, including 12 since the age of 98, but he never quite regained his early enthusiasm for ringing at new towers. He was however always ready to help out at nearby towers and even in his 101st year he was regularly attending practices at Walton-on-Thames, Weybridge, Hershaw, Twickenham and Isleworth, where his presence was always warmly welcomed.

Dennis was above all a family man, devoted to Joyce, Lorna and his two granddaughters, nursing Joyce through her final illness, and over many years visiting and helping out aged aunts and uncles. After that came his devotion to the Christian faith, Sunbury church and its bells. David Struckett recalls conversations in the tower during weddings when Dennis would relate stories of his youth. A particular memory is that he never had a cross word to say about anyone. If conversation turned to a 'problem' personality, he was the first to express themes such as a difficult childhood, a lost partner or financial disaster as the cause of their erroneous ways. He was also very trusting of his young ringers, lending them his precious handbells when they went camping and whenever else they wanted them.

In his later years Dennis gave many talks to schools and local groups on his time as a prisoner of war during WW2, sometimes bringing artefacts to show them. He also made recordings for Military History Tours television of some of his wartime experiences. Asked how someone who had been through such hardship, seen so much horror and encountered the worst type of human being could remain so positive, he replied "After my time as a PoW I vowed that nothing was going to get me down".

At the age of 100 he was still living on his own, preparing his own meals, doing his shopping and driving his car. However, early this year his health began to deteriorate and he went to live with Lorna and her family, where he passed away on 24th July.

On the day of his death, the Revd Andrew Downes, Vicar of Sunbury, circulated the following message: "It is with sadness that I have to share the news that our very own and much-loved Dennis Brock died peacefully at home this lunchtime. He was 101. As we mourn his passing we give thanks to God for his long life, his immense contribution to the world of bell-ringing and to our common life here at St Mary's. I had the privilege of being able to spend a little time with him during his final days and he was able to receive communion and he died fortified by the rites of the church. A Sunbury-on-Thames man through and through with a deep and committed faith he has blessed our Parish in countless ways. St Peter is waiting for him in the great ringing chamber in the sky and will already be whispering into his ear "Well done thou good and faithful servant". Our church flag will be flying at half-mast as a mark of respect and affection. May he Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory."

That day Father Andrew rang the half-muffled tenor 101 times and the next day Mike Fuller did the same in the presence of Dennis's family, Sunbury ringers, neighbours and friends. Under present restrictions Dennis's funeral on 25th August was attended only by family members, but it is hoped that there will be a celebration of his life at a later date when we can again assemble in larger numbers.

CHRIS ROGERS, with assistance from Lorna Doyle, David Struckett, Doug Boniface, Mike Wigney and Trish Hitchins.