

## Prolific Peel Ringers

### 4: ERNEST PYE (1876-1915)



Ernest Pye was born at Chadwell Heath, Essex, on September 20, 1876, the fifth of six brothers, all of who were ringers. He learned to handle a bell when 12 at Little Heath, Essex (Great Ilford) a light ring of five. He was about fifteen when he started change ringing, his first touch of Grandsire Triples being at Romford. His first peal was also Grandsire Triples, rung at Barking on February 27, 1892.

When he started work as a member of the Permanent Way staff of the G E C he found his job prevented much peal ringing and it wasn't until after 1898 that he was able to make more time available. He joined the local band at Romford, which was, at that time, in a very elementary state but with his help and commitment it prospered until the entire band had rung peals in the four standard surprise methods.

As a heavy bell ringer he had few equals. Of more than average height and physical strength, he had a perfect style in handling a bell-rope and his skill and judgement carried him through many a difficult task. An unassuming man, he had a cheery optimistic nature and ever-ready help and encouragement that made him popular with all with whom he came in contact.

His peal ringing made him known far and wide throughout England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales and he rang peals in 46 counties. Of his 1007 peals, one hundred and fifty-five were on handbells. It is said that he was a genius as a conductor, knowing where everyone was throughout the peal, but preferring to leave the conducting to others. His records show he conducted 15 tower bell peals and 7 on handbells.

He was the second person to achieve 100 twelve bell peals, ringing a total of 108. Of his handbell peals, one hundred and fourteen of them were of Stedman. Amongst others, his long-lengths include 11,111 Stedman Cinques, 15,264 Bristol Surprise Major, 14,112 London Surprise Major, 15,072 Double Norwich Court Bob Major

and 10,464 Kent Treble Bob Major. He took part in the only Surprise peal rung by four brothers and he also rang four Surprise peals in one day.

The Middlesex County Association was established on Whit-Sunday, 1897, and Ernest was a member almost from its inception. He was well known to the members and his obituary made a point of his sterling service. He rang over half his peals for the Guild.

He died on Wednesday, December 8, 1915. He had been unwell for three weeks, unable to work and suffering from insomnia. This brought on a mental breakdown and, getting up early in the morning he went straight to the railway line about a mile away and was killed by the 5 a.m. express from Liverpool Street to Colchester.

His obituary concluded with the words: "The death of Ernest Pye removed one of the finest ringers who ever pulled a rope. He was marvellously gifted in the practical side of ringing and few could pretend to his ability, whether in the actual handling of a bell or in the finer art of conducting."

#### References

*Bell News* 8/239, 01/72, 02/245, 03/411, 06/315, 11/450, 12/89, 13/7,104  
*Ringing World* 11/619, 13/311, 15/171,280,293