

Prolific Peal Ringers

15 CHARLES THOMAS COLES (1882-1946)



Charles Thomas Coles was born at Islington on June 5, 1882. He learned to ring at St George's-in-the-East around 1903 and, a couple of years later, on March 10, 1905, rang his first peal, one of Stedman Triples, conducted by George Sharman. A few years after this he moved to North London and became a regular Sunday service ringer at St Mary's, Walthamstow.

He joined the Middlesex County Association when he started ringing and very soon became quite involved in its work. When Arthur T King had founded the Middlesex County Association he had set out to establish it on the lines of a modern territorial association. This had run into opposition from some of the old and powerful existing societies whose views were not quite the same as some of the newcomers. On Arthur T King's retirement in 1910, Tom Coles inherited the post of General Secretary and steered the association through the troubled and turbulent times ahead.

He made an ideal secretary. His clear thinking and concise style of writing made his reports of events a pleasure to read. They were well arranged, full of things that mattered with no unnecessary words or affectation of style. His letters followed the same pattern. John Goldsmith used to say that Tom Coles' reports required less sub-editing than those of anyone else!

He was elected a representative member of the Central Council for the Middlesex County Association in 1921 and took a great interest in this work. He soon became one of its influential members and was a member of the Standing Committee and the special committee that carried out a revision of the rules.



One of the schemes dreamt up by Arthur King, to build up the prestige of the Middlesex County Association, was to develop a first-class peal band and, in the course of time, this is what transpired. The Pye brothers gathered a group of excellent ringers around them, one of whom was Tom Coles.

As a peal ringer he rated as one of the best of his time. This was partly due to his close association with William Pye but mainly through his organising ability, undoubted skill as a ringer, and the friendly relationships he forged with ringers over all parts of the country.

His first peal was Stedman Triples in 1905 (as mentioned above) and his one hundredth was another in July 1910. He accumulated a total of 1014 peals (conducted 278) of which 12 were on handbells. He rang his one thousandth peal on July 24, 1943 as a memorial to his son, killed in action at Tunis. He and George Pye became the first ringers to ring peals in fifty different 12-bell towers. His most popular method was Stedman, of which he rang 346 peals (Triples to Cinques), of which he conducted 158; whilst on even numbers Cambridge (Major to Maximus) he rang 213 (30).

Ringling was not his only relaxation. He was a chess player of some ability and at one time played a part in local politics. He worked for the Railway Clearing House all his life and took part in some of the work of the organisations connected with his fellow workers.

He passed away suddenly on February 2, 1946 in his 64th year and was buried in the family grave at Chingford, Essex in the presence of his widow, two sons and two daughters. When the ring at St Mary, Finchley was augmented subsequently, one of the two new bells was inscribed in his memory.

References

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