

REG COCKLE 1917 - 2007

Reginald Edgar Victor Cockle was an integral part of Bishops Waltham, having lived all his life in the house in which he was born on 10 January 1917, except for wartime service. His interest in the Church and the community together with his photographs and an amazing memory for names, faces, places and events made him a walking history book and a great asset to organisations such as the town Museum.

Reg's links with St Peter's Church started at a very early age when he attended Sunday school and also went with his grandfather to stoke the coke fired furnace which heated the church. He started to learn to ring on 9 June 1933 at the age of 16. In those days the then six bells were rung for Sunday service by the same six ringers and Reg was allowed to ring the 5 minute bell. Until eventually, one Sunday the Tower Secretary arrived 5 minutes late, fined himself sixpence and went home, leaving Reg to take his place for Plain Bob Minor.

Before starting full time work as an apprentice electrician with the West Hampshire Electricity Co. on 4 Dec 1933, Reg worked weekends for WH Smith at Botley station, which he reached via the Bishops Waltham branch line. In fact he was on the last scheduled passenger train on that line on the last day of 1932 and it was a lasting regret of his that he was unable to retain the ticket which had been specially purchased as he already had a pass for going to work.



Reg saw the augmentation of St Peter's to eight bells in 1937, but just a few years later the bells were silenced for the Second World War and Reg was called up on 4 April 1940 to the Royal Engineers. He went to Scotland for training, Sussex to mine beaches and blow up piers, to North Africa and the battle of Tobruk, and then to Greece in April 1941 where he endured daily air attacks and was captured to spend the next 4 years as a Prisoner of War, mainly in Austria. War service left Reg with mixed memories, respect for New Zealand soldiers and Austrian farmers, a liking for Schnapps and gifts from the Red Cross of "The Art and Science of Bell Ringing" by Ernest Moris and a Jew's harp. The Jew's harp, as it was described during the war for obvious reasons, was still being played by Reg many years later during special gatherings of ringers, usually in the Bunch of Grapes.

After the war Reg returned to Bishops Waltham to resume bell ringing and working in the Electricity supply industry. He helped teach ringers in several local bands and enjoyed mixed fortunes with the numbers of ringers at St Peter's until in 1969 he was elected Tower Captain of an enthusiastic band while the bells were being rehung. Reg was not a peal ringer but enjoyed well struck quarter peals. He particularly enjoyed the annual Ringers coach outings, during most of which he recorded one touch from each Church visited. As time passed by he gradually relinquished various of his tasks, such as winding the ancient Church clock which he looked after for some 30 years and the routine maintenance of his beloved bells.

Reg's long service to St Peters and the community as a whole did not pass unnoticed.. He was proud to receive Maundy Money from Her Majesty The Queen at Portsmouth Cathedral in 1998. An invitation to attend the Portsmouth Diocese 75th anniversary celebrations in 2002 was accepted gleefully as the only person present to have also attended the celebrations of the founding of the Diocese in 1927. Then on Whit Sunday 2003 when Reg was still ringing short touches, his 70 years of ringing at St Peters was marked by the presentation of letters of congratulation from all levels of the Church of England including the Archbishop of Canterbury and Buckingham Palace. Reg was rightly proud of these tributes, as he was of the Greek Medal which was finally awarded in 2000 for his service in the 1940-41 Greek Campaign battles.

St PETER BISHOPS WALTHAM

11 Feb 2007

1260 Plain Bob Triples

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Fiona Goss | 5. Paul Littlefair |
| 2. Janet Chatfield | 6. Francis Mitchell |
| 3. Carolyn Wright | 7. David Goss (C) |
| 4. Michael Goss | 8. Norman Chatfield |

**Dedicated to the memory of Reg Cockle, ringer
at this Church for over 70 years.**

Toward the end of 2003 Reg started showing his age and several spells in Hospital with heart related illnesses led to him entering a Residential Home in October 2006 where he passed away peacefully in his sleep on 28 Jan 2007 aged 90, still St Peter's Honorary Bell Captain. He was buried in the churchyard within sound of the bells on 9 February. The bells were rung half muffled before and after the well attended funeral service with the tenor tolled as his coffin was carried from the Church and lowered to rest.

In his life Reg kept alive names, happenings and traditions from many years ago. Now he will live on in the many cherished memories he has given to those who knew him. May he Rest in Peace.

F.W.M