



Obituary

Sam Letters

1931 - 2017

Sam Letters was born on 17th April, 1931 and grew up in a family that revolved around church organisations. As a child, he attended the Sunday School, later becoming the Superintendent; he was Head Choir Boy; life-long Member of the CLB and for 71 years a bell ringer. He had many interests - one of which was caravanning in England of course and indulging in his passion, bellringing. He was a proud Freemason, a member of several lodges and instructed in the Masonic rites.

During the Second World War the bells of St Patrick's Church like bell towers all over the UK were silent. After the peace was declared in September 1945 ringing the bells was resumed and Sam, then a boy of 14 years, was taken up the bell tower along with his two brothers by their father, also a ringer, and taught to ring. John and Bob dropped out, but Sam was hooked.

September 2017 Sam had been a ringer for 71 years. During all that time, he had climbed the tower and called the faithful to worship every Sunday morning and evening. He had also rung for many special occasions, the first being the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and almost every other special event since. His experience and expertise were invaluable when the church's peal of eight bells was dismantled and re-cast into a new peal of twelve bells in 1987. In 1992 he was elected a member of the SRCY. It is impossible to know how many people he taught to ring over the years, but it must be well into the hundreds. Sam held many posts within campanology circles in Ireland, from the Executive Council of the Irish Association of Change Ringers to chair of the Northern District. In 1996 he was made a Life Member of the IACR in recognition of his services to bellringing. On a local level he had been the Ballymena Honorary Society of Bellringers' Tower Captain since 1997 but had also held this position on several other occasions during his 71 years. He was quiet but had a very mischievous sense of humour. On one occasion whilst being photographed for the constitution of a new Masonic Lodge he photo-bombed one of the Officers standing in front of him. On other occasions he donned his Santa hat. He gave permission for us to hold a birthday party for the Queen's 90th birthday, when the Lord High Sheriff of County Antrim, a former ringer was invited as our special guest of honour.



The last eighteen months of his life had not been very pleasant, but he soldiered on making his last ring 18th September 2016. He joined us for a dinner in January of this year along with Patricia his wife and sister Jean, who had also been ringers. Sam's two children Tracy and Sharon were former ringers and, like Sam, members of the St Patrick's Chimes handbell team.

Lorraine Watt