



## Obituary

# Lesley Taylor

In the early morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> October (2015), Leslie Robert Taylor, for a long time Ringing Master at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, passed away peacefully at his home in the presence of his loving family from Motor Neuron Disease (MND). MND that was first diagnosed in December 2012 just three short years ago. However, it is a disease by which Leslie refused to be defined. Being very private regarding his own health, for many months only his family were aware of the diagnosis and even when it became more widely known, he did not wish to have it discussed. He preferred instead to direct his focus towards his family and bell ringing at Christ Church.

But MND is nothing if not relentless and over the intervening period Leslie's condition worsened. We Christ Church ringers, privileged to have rung with him were witnesses to his bravery in confronting his inexorable decline. His dogged determination to climb the tower stairs to ring (as well as conduct tours of the belfry!) for as long as possible before ill-health prevented it, reflects his great strength of character and is surely an example of an indomitable human spirit.



Leslie came to the Cathedral as a choirboy in Christ Church Cathedral Grammar School in the early 1960s and from an early age sang for Sunday services morning and afternoon. When his voice changed, but with the routine of going to the Cathedral established, it was easy to follow in his elder brother David's footsteps and become a bell ringer. In those days on Sundays the two brothers would often ring in St Patrick's then dash up to Christ Church to ring and in the days long before ecumenism became a popular concept would ring at Johns Lane for 12.30 Mass too.

In the early 70s David who had been Ringing Master handed over the baton to Leslie which he was to retain until 1983 when he took a three-year break from ringing. It was not until the early 90s that he came to be Ringing Master again. From then on in his stewardship of the role Leslie was unstinting in his devotion to ringing bells at Christ Church. During the late John Patterson's period as dean, he was involved in augmenting the bells from ten to the current ring of sixteen (1998). It was a massive undertaking and in recognition of Leslie's contribution to the project one of the additional bells is named after him. Many of the current ringers are here because of his recruitment drive and tireless tutoring at that time.

Since then, there has been a steady flow of pupils. While always focused on the task of passing on his skills to others, he did so with a deep understanding and passion of the historical context of bell ringing generally, but with particular regard to Christ Church.

Going back over forty years both he and his wife Ann have been pivotal in encouraging the social aspect of ringing in Dublin and many ringers far and wide have been the beneficiaries of their hospitality. Interested in the culinary arts Leslie, in concert with Ann, would often try out new recipes on willing guinea pigs and many pleasant meals were had in Taylor's by many ringers and friends.

Throughout his journalistic career culminating as Features Editor in The Evening Herald he was well placed to publicise bell ringing at Christ Church over the years. He took and often created opportunities to promote the art of ringing to a wider public with interesting articles on bell ringing in the paper.

Leslie was last in the Cathedral tower on the afternoon of 10th August 2014, after which we had a ringing competition in Christ Church, Taney. The emphasis that afternoon was on fun - it was an occasion enjoyed by all, including Leslie.

I know that his commitment to ringing was not just from a deep sense of duty and tradition but primarily and quite simply because he enjoyed ringing so much. And the comradeship he shared with many ringers over many decades meant a great deal to him. For Leslie 'fun' epitomised what ringing was about. His dry and often wicked sense of humour and puns were so typical of him.

His funeral service in the Cathedral, which was packed, was by all accounts quite remarkable and the choir were superb. At Leslie's express request no change ringing was permitted but his passing was marked by ringing the bell named after him.

To his wife Ann, their children Edwin and Lisa as well as their families, his siblings Denise, David and Jill we extend our deepest sympathy.



*Leslie (right) at work in the tower at Christ Church.*

Nigel Pelow