



Obituary

Mike Pomeroy

10th January 1954 – 13th March 2023

The eulogy given by Professor Jeremy Robinson at Mike's funeral [can be found here \(page 3\)](#).

The sermon given by Very Rev. Niall Slone at Mike's funeral [can be found here \(page 6\)](#).

Put simply, Mike Pomeroy was the nicest person you could have met. A true polymath, Mike excelled in all he did, but you had to discover his achievements for yourself, such was his modesty and self-effacement. His most outstanding quality – and the one which is most painfully missed – was his sunny and positive manner. With Mike's passing Irish bellringing has lost someone who really is irreplaceable and more importantly his friends have lost a wise, funny and kind companion. Laughter – of the most gentle kind – was never far away when Mike was about.



Mike was born and grew up in Somerset and was taught to ring at Kilmersdon by his father, Gilbert. Those who are familiar with that part of the world will know how beautiful it is, and it instilled in Mike a love of the land which always remained with him. For those who knew Mike as an academic it may seem hard to visualise him driving a combine harvester along the roads between Kilmersdon and Radstock, but that is what the young Pomeroy did, and he would have been quite happy to have made his living on the land. He thought nothing of beginning the day by milking 120 cows! His mother recognised his scholarly potential, and it was she, not Mike, who completed and sent his university application form! Although Mike's pathway took him away from Somerset, he frequently returned and had great respect for his father's ringing friends such as Ted Chivers and John Fowler. Those of us who had the privilege of ringing in Somerset with Mike could easily identify why he had such a positive and gentlemanly manner in a tower, due to the ringing atmosphere in which he had been taught.

At Mike's funeral the eulogy was given by his work colleague, Professor Jeremy Robinson, and his account of Mike's stellar academic career was a revelation to many of the listeners. Mike really had hidden his light under a bushel and had never allowed himself the slightest trace of boasting about his vast achievements. He went to Wolverhampton to read for a bachelor's degree in Material and Industrial Science (along with lots of ringing), followed by his MSc at Aston and PhD at Wolverhampton. His work took him to the National Institute of Higher Education, later the University of Limerick, in 1979 and he spent the rest of his career there, rising to the position of Associate Professor. The pinnacle of his career was being made a Fellow of the European Ceramics Society. Mike was an academic giant in his field. Throughout these years he devoted his leisure time to ringing in both Limerick towers, serving many years as captain at St Mary's Cathedral. Mike played a large part in bringing the two Limerick towers closer together, encouraging combined practices and quarter peal ringing. He also led visits to Somerset and Devon and on these tours he was accompanied by many friends, including

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Limerick ringing legends Paddy Benson, Jack Sciascia, Roy McCormack and Tom Marsden. Anyone who knew these gentlemen will appreciate that (as we say in Ireland) “the craic was mighty”.

Mike’s peals ranged from doubles to septuples, with his first peal being one of seven minor methods at Kingston on Soar in 1976. He called his first peal in 1979, which was Bob Major at Tettenhall, beginning a notable pathway as a composer and conductor. Many of us will have been amused to hear Mike humming methods and calling bobs to himself. In fact, he had a unique way of shouting a bob – a loud bark that shifted pigeons from the steeple and awoke the slumbering ringer! Here in Ireland, he rang in some notable peals including the first of cinques at Ballymena, the first peal of Drumbo Delight Major and Yorkshire Surprise Royal on the fantastic bells of Mount Saint Alphonsus, the first of Surprise Royal by a resident band. Visit any tower in Ireland and you will hear stories of Mike’s encouragement to others: the ringing of rounds and Bob Doubles for the beginner; pushing others and guiding them through their first attempt of something more advanced. In Limerick he became part of the furniture, revelling in the craic with his good friends there, and helping to maintain the high standards in striking for which St Mary’s and Mount Saint Alphonsus were well-known. The IACR appreciated his wide experience, and he served as ringing master and president, and it was fitting that only last year he was honoured with life membership of the association. He was president during the Central Council meeting in Dublin 1998, which marked the IACR centenary.

In the last number of years when Mike fought his brave battle with cancer, he maintained his cheerful and positive outlook and continued to encourage others, particularly with his series of articles to aid those new to change ringing.

Mike still had so much more to share with us, and it was with bitter sorrow that we learnt of his death on 13th March.

Friends from around the British Isles, from all walks of his life, met at St Mary’s Cathedral, Limerick, on 21st March to bid farewell at a service of thanksgiving. And, of course, the bells were rung – half-muffled but at a brisk pace.

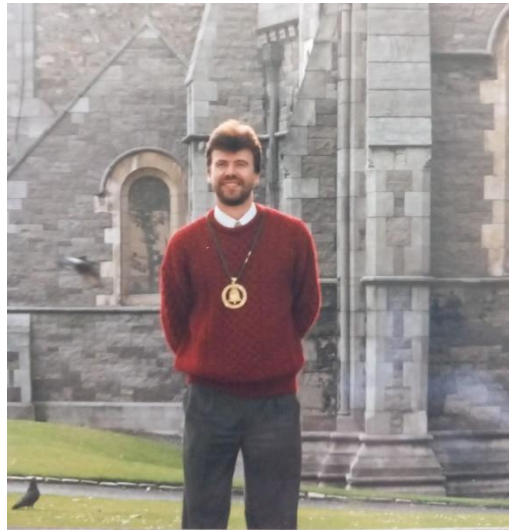
Pages upon pages could be filled with so much more about the life of Mike Pomeroy, but for now it is sufficient to say that we all still feel very raw at the passing of this genuinely lovely man.

Simon Walker, Kieron Brislane, Don McLean,
the ringers of Limerick and the whole IACR are associated with this tribute.

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Hello,

My name is Jeremy Robinson. I am Mike's University of Limerick work colleague. I admired and respected Mike, so I was very honoured when he asked me to do this. At Mike's request, I will start by highlighting some of his upbringing and education, his academic achievements and then, what he was like as a person, which will of course include references to his great interest in bellringing. We were friends and colleagues for 31 years, and for about 7 years we were office neighbours, where we laughed and joked around a lot.



Mike hailed from southwest England. Born on the 10th January 1954. Son of Ellen and Gilbert and with two sisters, Lyn and Maureen both of whom are here today, along with his brother-in-law Brian, and nieces and nephew.

He grew up in the small village of Babington in Somerset, which at that time comprised of just 8 houses and 1 farm, with the nearest familiar large city being Bath. Things were different back then, and Mike being a strapping lad soon found employment on local farms. He started working from the age of 8, and by the time he was 14, he was driving tractors on public roads, a 14ft combine harvester and was responsible for milking 120 cows. When he told me about the cows, I demonstrated my ignorance of farming and made the comment he must have had strong hands. He gave me a withering look and said they had progressed to milking machines by the 1960s. He spent a lot of his free time working in his youth, but he did not let it detract from his education.

He was also a sportsman and combined his school education and farming work with playing football, cricket, and hockey. He wasn't so enthusiastic about cross country running, and often took short cuts home. So, he could be a bit of a bold boy. One time as a child he was sent to buy cigarettes in the local pub (I told you things were very different back then). His inquiring mind led him to a secluded spot where he smoked them. He was 7.

He had a love of music and singing and played parts in many musicals including the Major General in the Pirates of Penzance. This contributed to one of his endearing idiosyncrasies in later life, which was to randomly launch into operatic lines of verse in his baritone voice. You could often hear him walking down the corridor from a significant distance.

When he was 17, his mother spotted his academic potential and filled in a university application form for him, I assume Mike being too busy earning money on the farm to do it himself. In 1972 he travelled to Wolverhampton in the West Midlands of England to study Materials and Industrial Chemistry. After graduating in 1975, he moved across the city of Birmingham to Aston university to study for a MSc. He then migrated back to Wolverhampton to conduct research leading to a PhD, examining the hot corrosion and deposition aspects associated with burning coal in fluidised beds, the work being sponsored by the UK National

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Coal Board. Mike was justly proud of his academic qualifications, and he valued education very highly.



At this early point in his academic career, Mike crossed the Irish Sea in 1979, and joined the NIHE Limerick as a research scientist in the Materials Engineering and Industrial Chemistry Dept, again working on coal combustion. Mike soon realised working in fossil fuels might not offer the research opportunities he sought, so in 1981 he expanded his research interests into the field of engineering ceramics, collaborating with the recently arrived Stuart Hampshire, who is here today. In 1985, he was recruited as a lecturer in Materials Science to support the new undergraduate program of the same name. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2000.

Mike considered himself a Materials Scientist, and over the years, he lectured in a wide variety of Materials Science related subjects, including ceramics and glass science, fracture mechanics, phase equilibria, surface engineering and physical metallurgy. He was an excellent communicator and cared about students. Mike won the UL Excellence in teaching award in 1994. Not long before he retired in 2017, he also helped to create two strategically important and successful Materials MSc programmes. He has a very long list of significant research outputs to his name, including the supervision of 15 PhD students, and over 100 peer reviewed publications. He collaborated with many international academic institutes, and these led to him being named on both European and US patents. His main collaborator at UL was Stuart, and they published over 74 journal papers together. Their last paper was published this month in the International Journal of Applied Ceramic Technology. His contribution to the science of ceramics was acknowledged in 2016 by his being appointed a Fellow of the European Ceramics Society.

Mike was highly regarded by his international collaborators, and by his colleagues at UL in several different faculties. He helped and mentored many other academics, including me navigate the slippery path of teaching, research and administration. Mike was appointed Assistant Dean of Research in the College of Engineering in 2001, and served on the Governing Authority from 2014 until his retirement.

One remarkable aspect to Mike that elevated him above the typical academic, was his significant contribution to the infrastructural growth required to promote UL as a credible place to conduct research. In the mid 1990s he secured funding to purchase our first modern X-ray diffractometer. He was also a key member of the team involved in helping to establish the Materials and Surface Science Institute in the late 1990s, which has now grown into the Bernal Institute, and, using his expertise in Scanning Electron Microscopy, helped to attract funding and support necessary to purchase an advanced Transmission Electron Microscope. UL now has world class electron microscopy and X-ray diffraction facilities. Mike contributed far more to the research growth of UL than most, and he did it without seeking acknowledgement or recognition.

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There will be many here who will have tales to tell about what Mike was like as a person. He had a large circle of friends, his closest being Aileen of course. He appreciated dining out and fine wines and he could be good fun to be around on these occasions as many here can testify.

Mike was a very competent and enthusiastic bell ringer. He started ringing from a very early age and his life has been dedicated to the activity. I also know this from being his office neighbour, and surviving his bell ringing simulation software, making what appeared to me, sequences of random noises through the office wall. He tried to convince me on many occasions that they were anything but chaotic, and that there was a very precise structure to the peals and what he was trying to do was create new ringing methods. He acted as Tower Captain, encouraged young people to ring, and supported the activity in many ways. He organised groups of ringers to travel to the North, England, Scotland and Europe ringing peals, but St Mary's and Mount St Alphonsus in Limerick held a special place for him. In recognition for all Mike has done for Bell Ringing in Ireland, he was given an Honorary Life Membership by the Irish Association of Change Ringers. I know that many of his bell ringing friends will be here today, and his guidance, skill and expertise is going to be missed.

It is for all these reasons and many others that his family, and his friends, and I am sure all of us here, will cherish our memories of Mike.

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In the name of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Words at times like this are woefully inadequate and yet we must use them to try and express the emotions and thoughts that fill this place. I am, as I am sure many of you, still in shock. Although we all knew Mike was ill, he died so suddenly in the end, that the reality of it all is still sinking in.

We come together to bid farewell to our brother Mike, to mourn his loss, to give thanks for his life, to offer our sympathy to his family, in particular to Lyn, Maureen, Brian, Aileen and Mike's extended family members and many friends; and to pray in a spirit of hopefulness to journey through the days to come.

Mike told me recently, in those beautiful Somerset tones, that he had three passions in life – farming, bells and education. To each of them he gave his all. From an early age, he loved the land. Most of his life has been involved in 3rd level education and from childhood a passion for bell ringing. Jeremy has told us much already about these interests.

In the crypt of another great Cathedral, St Paul's, London lie the remains of its architect Sir Christopher Wren. Wren was laid to rest on 5 March 1723. The plain stone plaque which mark's his resting place, includes the following inscription:

“Reader, if you seek his monument – look around you!”

As we gather today in this historic Cathedral, the same might be said of Professor Mike Pomeroy - if you seek his monument – look around you! This building as it presently looks owes a huge deal to the efforts and wisdom of Mike Pomeroy. Under the tenure and with the vision of my predecessor, Dean Maurice Sirr, Mike gave decades of service to this place during a major restoration of the building which included amongst other things its reroofing and the installation of a new heating system. Over €2.5 million was handled by the Restoration Project Committee during a period of significant financial challenge. Reader ... listener, if you seek his monument – look around you!

But there is one place that here that will forever be associated with Mike – the Tower. Much has already been said about Mike, but for me I will always associate him with the Tower and with bell ringing. If you look to the photo on the front of the service booklet, that is how I picture Mike – ‘In the zone’ – woe betide those who would speak out of turn in the tower when a ring was in progress ... Mike might banish you from the tower ... he was a consummate professional. It is a fitting tribute that the bells of this Cathedral ring out today, as indeed they have over the last few days in other towers across this island, to commemorate and give thanks for his life and to let those within earshot know, that we have a lost a dear friend today. The tolling bells are like a twofold farewell: not only our farewell to the one who is leaving us, but now as if even the bells themselves were bidding farewell to Mike, who had made them ring over many years.

When a person, like Mike, dies a light goes out. Every Christian reflects in and to the world in which they live something of the light of Christ. The light which is Christ is in turn reflected in the Church which is Christ on this earth and the individual Christian assimilates, borrows and makes their own something of that light, which is reflected in the domestic Church, their own family and in the local community. And that light which shines in the life of the Christian and

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which reveals Christ to others takes on various expressions, various tints and hues depending on the mood of the movement. There is the bright light of hope, the glowing light of love and the intense light of a moment of great joy. There are times too when that light takes on a sombre mood, begins to flicker when the going gets tough and one is buffeted by the storms and stresses of life.

But there are in our world some extraordinary men and women who somehow or other manage to keep the light aflame no matter how taxing the trial or the burden of affliction that weighs upon them. And that is how I would like to think of Mike. He was a happy man; his was the great Christian virtue of contentment and positivity.

We pray that he has gone into the possession of eternal light, into that City whose day know no dimming, and whose sun knows no setting for the glory of God is its light. Someone once wrote - 'Death is not extinguishing the light, but putting out the lamp because the dawn has come'.

Because we are but travellers, only pilgrims on our journey through life, knowing that our final destiny is with God, we keep our sight always fixed not just on the appearance of this life, but on the fact that we were created by God, that we cannot be truly happy unless we live as God wishes us to live, that our destiny is eternal life and not just death.



We are but pilgrims on the journey through life, everything in this life fades into insignificance when we look on life from this perspective, a pilgrim waiting to meet the Lord. Fellow pilgrims with Mike waiting to meet the Lord when he calls us. We pray and give thanks for Mike during this service and that he may see God in all his glory as in some small way we see Mike in the glory of this place.

Mike – a loving brother, friend and colleague - may he having departed, rest in eternal peace and rise in glory.

Amen.