Obituary

Ronald (Ronnie) King

3rd June 1932 – 14th October 2025

Ronnie was born in the Bloomfield area of East Belfast on 3rd June 1932. He had one brother (Frank) and two sisters. He began his school days at Elmgrove Primary School on Beersbridge Road, and later served on their Board of Governors, becoming the Vice Chair of the Board.

He went to Belfast Royal Academy and began his working life with a large engineering company that made equipment for drying tea.

In 1973, he joined the staff of Northern Ireland Electricity Service and was later appointed Contracts Officer for capital projects, which included Kilroot Power Station.

St. Donard's, Parish Church, Bloomfield was an important part of Ronnie's life. He was baptised here as an infant, was confirmed here, was a member of many organisations, including being captain of the tennis and the table tennis clubs, and he served as Rector's Church Warden from 1977 to 1978.

Ronnie married Betty at St Donard's in 1962. Their daughter, Janice, later married Nicholas, and Ronnie and Betty were blessed with two grandchildren, Edward and Donnie. His family was always at the heart of his life; he loved them dearly and always put them first.

Ronnie was also a bell ringer, and he was one of the original bell ringers at St. Donard's.

The six bells were installed in 1949, and the service of dedication was held on 26th November that year.

A 17-year-old Ronnie joined the newly forming band of ringers and was taught to ring. He quickly became a very competent and accomplished ringer. According to our tower records he rang his first ever full peal just over a year later, at St Donard's, on Saturday 31 st March 1951. A peal of 5040 Grandsire Doubles in 2 hours and 53 minutes. Ronnie was ringing bell number two.

He rang another peal on 1 st June 1951 and on Monday 11 February 1952 he was a member of a band who rang a peal of 5040 Grandsire Doubles in 2 hours 47 minutes. This peal was significant as being the first peal to be rung by a team composed solely of St. Donard's ringers and was the youngest team yet to ring a peal in Ireland, the average age being just 18 years. Ronnie was ringing bell 4, my Mum (Jean Stewart) was on the treble, and Ronnie's brother Frank rang the 5 and conducted it. This young team went from strength to strength and in their first ever competition, on the bells of St. Patrick's Coleraine, on Easter Monday 1951, they came home not only as winners of the Cunningham Cup, but also as winners of the Attendance Shield for having the best attendance at Sunday Service ringing.

Ronnie was also a member of the St. Donard's teams which won the Cunningham Cup in 1953, 1959, 1964, 1975 and 1981 and the Murphy Cup in 1959 and 1975.

Many more quarter peals, peals and other significant rings were to follow throughout his long service as a bellringer, and he also served in various Association positions within the Irish Association of Change Ringers, from Northern District Chairperson, Vice President and Northern District Representative.

He remained a dedicated and faithful ringer here at St. Donard's right up until health problems prevented him from ringing. Even in those last few years when he was unable to get up into the tower, he remained very interested in the bells and in the ringers.

We were especially delighted at our 75th Anniversary Service, on Sunday 24thNovember 2024, when he made it up into the tower before the service. Two days later, on Tuesday 26th, we rang a quarter peal in the tower for our 75th and Ronnie and Betty joined other parishioners in the Parish Centre to listen to it. I am told he kept stepping outside to hear better and then would go back in and tell those who were there what was happening, and what would be happening next.

We were all devastated to get the news that Ronnie had passed away on 14th October 2025. A service of Thanksgiving was held in St. Donard's on Wednesday, 22nd October 2025 and was followed by a private burial in Dundonald Cemetery.

On Sunday, 14th December 2025 a Quarter Peal of 1260 Doubles – Stedman, Grandsire and Plain Bob in 43 minutes was rung at St. Donard's in his memory and, on Monday 12th October 2026, a Memorial Bench was dedicated in his memory as St. Donard's. It is placed close to the door of the bell tower.

He was such a lovely man in every way and will always be missed here at St. Donard's both as a ringer and as a friend.

Colin Jeffery
St. Donard's, Bloomfield, Belfast