

# ~Remembering Alan Bentley~

*As our Mentor, Friend and ART Advisor*



How the band at Lytchett Matravers in Dorset have been remembering Alan, who died on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

In July **2016** when we had a band of 5 Debbie Phipps and Annie Mitchener organised an Open Day to encourage more ringers. Along with other members of the East Dorset Branch, **Alan** came all the way from Verwood to Lytchett Matravers to help. With the enthusiasm of these helpers we found we had several people who wanted to learn to ring but Annie and Debbie were not skilled enough to teach new ringers. At this stage we could just about do Plain Hunt but had no theory to back it up.

**Alan** suggested we took the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) qualification. With **Alan** as their mentor, by November **2016** Debbie and Annie passed the Art M1 Teaching qualification and felt more comfortable teaching these new learners how to handle a bell.

In May **2017** **Alan** suggested Debbie did the ART 50 Ringing Things. As she could still only ring Plain Hunt at this stage she thought it would take forever but with his encouragement she achieved Gold Plus in October 2017 and has since encouraged some of the other ringers in the band to take the challenge.

One of our first learners to pass ART Level 1 was Cathy Neyland in January **2017** who learnt quickly and at the beginning of **2018** Cathy was also encouraged by **Alan** to take the Art M1 Teaching qualification.

**Alan** continued to support our trainers and ringers for many years – travelling all the way over from Verwood every Friday afternoon and many other days when we had special practices. One of the ART 50RT was to ring on a simulator and in May 2017 after Debbie had attended a course, **Alan** brought over some wooden bell silencers and adapted them to fit our tower, for us to use, as we had so many learners at one stage that we had to silence the bells for practice.

In **2018** we recruited Sarah Millar through the Ringing Remembers campaign. Sarah had rung before in her youth but when **Alan** heard she was wanting to take it up again and working with ART on this campaign he steered her towards our tower. We were very grateful to **Alan** for this both for Sarah and for our band.

**Alan** did a huge amount of work to help Debbie with Grant Applications for the Bell Restoration project in **2019**. Following the bell restoration the Tower were able to purchase a simulator, and Cathy

attended a course in **2019** to learn how to set this up and run sessions for our ringers. We purchased the ART Teaching with Simulators booklet and we always enjoyed trying out 'I'm sorry I haven't a clue' which was an exercise devised up by **Alan** himself. He also helped us set up the simulator for silent ringing and then supported us setting up simulator sessions for our ringers.

Not only did **Alan** write extremely complex Grant Applications he also wrote some wonderful nominations for the Guild and ART. Through these nominations Debbie won joint Adult Ringer of the year for 2017 and the ART award for Inspiring Leadership in 2023. To be honest it should have been Alan winning these awards for his amazing talent in writing these applications.

During COVID **Alan** and Debbie helped ART with the planning of the new 50 Ringing Things for Teams and though many of our band have done the individual one we now feel we would like to attempt the Teams version with some of our new ringers. Also towards the end of COVID **Alan** was able to come and do a ventilation test to allow us to start ringing again in small numbers.

**Alan** helped Cathy set up the cameras in the belfry which were linked to the monitor on the ground floor in the church and have been a huge success especially for children watching before services and weddings.

**Alan** supported our Open Days, gave handbell demonstrations and helped out when the Cubs came for a session. He rang with our ringers when we had a Bob Doubles challenge (Part of the 50 RT 'Things') and many of our ringers remember his gentle support and quiet encouragement when he would stand with a ringer to help. Some of the comments from our ringers are "*He was so encouraging and very laid back in his teaching, along with an amusing sense of humour. He'll be missed but was a real pleasure to know him.*" "*Our band couldn't have made such progress without him.*"

**Alan** encouraged us to ring Quarter Peals when we were able to and joined us in many of these. Sadly he didn't quite get the opportunity to ring a Peal on the restored bells but we thank the band who rang a Peal on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and dedicated it to **Alan**. We have a mixed ability band but with Gillian Richards (Honorary member) we did manage a Quarter Peal with 4 other Lytchett ringers and our good friend and supporter Angie Jasper to call it for us.

The rest of our band have rung a Mexican Wave in memory and thanks to Alan but when some of our past ringers heard of his sad passing they wanted to come and ring for him too. Debbie wanted to recreate a photo taken when **Alan** was with us from 2017 so on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> August we had 3 ringers who have left the band for various reasons and one who has not rung for a while. All of them have fond memories of the gentle support **Alan** gave them and the huge support he gave to our trainers and learners. Everyone got an opportunity to ring a bell in his memory.

*His name will live on  
on the plaques on our wall  
in the work we see in the tower  
but mostly with affection in all our hearts'*