



**Ashley Cedric Pardoe Pugh**

**19<sup>th</sup> May 1931  
to  
2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022**

According to an article written by Ashley himself for the 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Chester Guild, he discovered bell ringing in 1950. He was watching ringing for Mattins through the open door at Bishop's Castle, a ground floor ring at Ashley's home village. He was given some instruction by a fellow teenager and then rang call-changes for Evensong the same day. Ashley then left home to do his national service and continued to ring at the villages near the army camps. On completing his time in the army he won a county scholarship to Oxford to study chemistry, joining the Oxford University Society and rang his first peal with them at Sunningwell on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1953 and went on to ring 5 peals for the Society. After completing his studies, Ashley and his new wife H  l  ne left for America where Ashley carried out post-doctoral research at the University of Minnesota. They returned to England in 1959 where Ashley worked first at Courtaulds, living in Cookham and then the family moved up to Sandiway, when he got a job at ICI.

Ashley first appears in the Chester Guild Report in 1963. He was listed as an "unattached" member. The following year he had taken on the post of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the old Northwich Branch. He was not able to escape from this role until 1972 due to his unrivalled way with words, of which later. In the 1968 Report Ashley is now listed under Davenham along with his long-time ringing friend Stuart Bracegirdle but during this time they were very involved teaching a young new band at St Helen's Witton, (Northwich Parish Church). Their time as members of the Davenham band was fleeting as by 1969 they are now listed at Witton where the new young band has become established with Ashley as tower captain. A post he held for many years. The late 70s and early 80s were good times for the newly formed Mid-Cheshire Branch, an influx of new young ringers meant that the Branch was in a healthy state, the ringing was good and the social life was even better. Ashley's way with words resulted in doctored songs to accompany Branch coach outings, this led to the famous or rather infamous Christmas

Socials written by Ashley and Clive Simpson. They were epic performances with a large cast, full theatrical costumes, and often filled with innuendo but always clever and very funny – much like Ashley himself.

At the Mid Cheshire Branch AGM in 2005 the Branch recognised Ashley's service and dedication to ringing by electing him a Vice-President of the Branch. At this time, he had already given service to the Branch for over 40 years and as tower captain at Witton for 30 years. Ashley was also instrumental in teaching a new band at Hartford and his encouragement of new ringers was well received by all.

Ashley regularly rang Surprise methods, one of his later achievements being a quarter peal of 6 spliced Surprise Major at Grappenhall in November 2006. He was also a regular member of the Cheshire Mid-week Crisis group, meeting once a month or so to ring at a couple of towers for general ringing or a quarter. Ashley had long wanted a ten bell tower in the Mid Cheshire Branch, the only Chester Guild area without a ten or twelve. When the opportunity came to transfer the redundant eight from Bollington into the tower at Stockton Heath, Ashley offered to put up the money for two new trebles, which was gratefully accepted. The bells were cast in 2016 in memory of his wife, H  l  ne. Ashley was also keen to get involved in the Grappenhall project, and he again offered to pay for two trebles, as long as the ring was cast as a ten, and also with a proviso on when the job had to be started by. Fortunately, all his conditions were met, and the new ten for Grappenhall, with Ashley's name on the treble and second, were cast in 2019. Ashley attended the dedication service and made it up the tower and rang both of "his" bells.

Ashley continued to be a great supporter of the Branch and Witton, he always enlivened meetings and practices and was a great encouragement to many ringers throughout the Branch and Guild.

Then came COVID and a total shutdown of towers, coinciding with a deterioration in Ashley's health. He threw himself into writing letters to the Ringing World, such as 'Why Swing Bells?' which contained a number of mathematical equations to prove how vibrato and the Doppler effect combine to make the swung bell sing. The effort expended in constructing these letters passed the time. Ashley was approaching his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday (or solar orbit as he chose to call it) and wondered what could be done to celebrate this event. He was not at all sure how to proceed, but once the idea was hatched, he did all the organizing himself and the details of the menu, guest list (to become guest lists once 'Boris-ed) occupied a lot of tedious time during lock down which was tackled with military precision. Numbers were limited to 30 but not to be deprived of a "good do" Ashley eventually held three birthday parties, the last one in July 2021 being for his many ringing friends.

Sadly, Ashley's health deteriorated after this and although he managed to ring at Witton a few times, an altercation with a Manchester tram prevented any more ringing. However, the Witton band moved their post practice night pub visit to Ashley's house to cheer him up, something he very much looked forward to.

Ashley passed away on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022. His funeral was attended by family, friends and many ringers. The service was held at Birches Crematorium, near Northwich and three leads of Oxford Treble Bob Major was rung on handbells at the start of the service.

Ashley's daughters were with him at the end, they discussed funeral arrangements and his last wish for a peal of Oxford to be rung in his memory, with even the conductor specified. This was duly arranged and was successfully achieved at Grappenhall. Other ringing performances in his memory also took place.

Ashley was a one-off and we are all extremely fortunate to have known him and to have spent a considerable period of our ringing lives in his wonderful company.

**Pam Thomson**  
Mid Cheshire Branch Secretary

*Written with the assistance of Ashley's daughters and Nick Thomson from Grappenhall*