

Back Tracks

Local historian Peter Turner journeys back to our people and places of yesteryear

Bob Cumberlidge Memories

The following is a document I found in my papers that was hand written about Alan Pointon by Bob Cumberlidge and given to me many years ago. Probably as an obituary which I think I wrote up in the belfry book. It was written about Alan but is also a memorial to Bob who contributed so much to village life.

Alan made a hobby of Local History and the History of Chatterly Whitfield Colliery where he worked all his life. He was one of the authors of "The Old Road to Endon". But it was as a bellringer that I remember him.

When I started ringing in 1931, Alan was a member of the Band, having begun in about 1828. He was keen on keeping up the traditions of the belfry, ringing on Christmas mornings at 5.30 was one, and his brother Sam would knock you up if you hadn't turned up by 5.30 am

Then it was singing carolls to old Brown Edge tunes at about 7am on School Bank and outside the vicarage. Hot Cofee and mince pies used to be served in the belfry on Christmas morning and New Years Eve. Alan was also an expert with the Handbells. I have many memories of ringing on Christmas Eve around the village.

I remember well going to lichfield to ring for thre Bishop and his family (Christmas 1953) and having Tea and cakes with him. Coming Back and stopping at the Dog and Doublet Inn at Sandon for a drink, they found out who we were so we rang there as well!. Then they Feted us with Pork and turkey sandwiches. Leaving there at closing time Sam Pointon said "Lets call at Will Pickfords"

Mr and Mrs Pickford formerly farmed at Lower Stone House.and moved tp spot acre in 1942.

Mr Pickford was a bell ringer at Brown Edge in his younger days and used to send a 2 gallon bucket for the christmas morning and new years eve Coffee. We sang Carols and rang with more Cofee and sandwiches til 1 am Happy Days.

Alan was a member of the team of ringers who rang a full peal (5040 changes) on Nov 29 1947 for the wedding of our present Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

This was the first Brown Edge band to ring a full peal. In the days before the war we often went on biKes to ringing meetings. He was a ringer for about 40 years, ill health causing him to give it up.

Alans Last visit was to the belfry on the Royal Wedding day. He said he would like a short ring but illness was making him weak and pulling a rope proved to be too much for him.

I remember Allan to be a good friend with a sprig of mistletoe in his hat at Christmas trying to keep the rest of us under controll

Happy memories RHC.

Bob was a cheery soul who was very proud of Brown Edge and loved the people who lived here. He told me many stories about people and events. One was about him sitting up all night when he worked at Lower Stonehouse waiting to catch a Fox which had been stealing chickens and another about being on sentry duty at Wood Bank, Yen Ridding, during the war as a member of the home guard watching out for German Parachutists.

Of course he was a driver for us on the Buses and he usually worked garage shift which meant he drove during rush hour and cleaned the buses during the day. This gave him ample chance to wave at people and to pass a pleasantry or two with anyone walking by.



Bob with his fellow Churchwarden partner for many years Mr Bill Hollins receiving tea from Mrs Amos ,Annie Shallcross (his sister) and Mrs Hollins

He would often be heard singing hymns, psalms or the Nunc Dimittis.. *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen : thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared : before the face of all people; To be a light to lighten the Gentiles : and to be the glory of thy people Israel.* as he worked sometimes with other staff. His favourite Hymns were Belmont "There is a land of pure delight" and "The day thou gavest Lord is ended" or Vesper as he called it. He said to me several times "I want my ashes scattered over Sling Hill and for you to play Belmont on the hand-bells.

Sling Hill is the field just to the right of Judfield lane at the top lay-by.

One of the village events he told me about was a massive thunderstorm in the 1920's which washed away Judfield Lane and Tongue Lane. The two cut outs into Marshes Hill above the two roads were where the stone for repairing them came from. He also said that the stone was hammered in from hammers made from stone taken from the Grizzle Hole off

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Wood Bank as this stone was the hardest stone available and known as Bluestone hence Bluestone Cottages.

Bob of course was a stalwart for St Anne's Church being a Churchwarden for many years. He was the Peoples Warden and took the responsibility very seriously. I remember him standing up during a service and reminding the Vicar, Rev Moseley that he was "ordained for the cure of all souls" The Vicar had earlier in the service spoken about his refusal to baptise children who had non churchgoing parents. It had obviously troubled Bob causing him to speak out.

I was conducting with him one day and as somebody he had not met before got off the bus at the Sytch he asked if they were new to the village (strugs) they replied that yes they had just arrived. Bob got up out of the driver's seat, got off the bus and shook them by the hand and said "Let me be the first to welcome you to Brown Edge, I hope you have many happy years here"

I think though, the happiest time for him was at Christmas. He loved it. All the tradition, the presents and the happiness of the occasion. The real memory most people of a certain age though, is that he loved being Santa for the school, and his portly stature really fitted the part. He was a bit obvious though, one young lad saying to him loudly "you drive one of the buses". To which he quickly replied "well I have to keep myself busy during the rest of the year" which seemed to satisfy the youngster as being very logical (I hope).

Some people make a massive impact on your life and looking back I now realise that Bob did that for me. As a lad of about 12/13, I amongst others, used to see street lights as a good target practice for my set of sprags. (catapults) It never crossed our mind as to the cost of repairing them or the nuisance it caused. Bob must have suspected I was a culprit. He suggested one day that I should go along to a Parish Council Meeting as Brown Edge had now got its own council. Yes you have guessed it, all night long it seemed they were talking about street lights how much they were to replace how other areas needed lighting but that it couldn't be done because of damage etc etc etc. Harry Hammond, George Bond, Bill Basnett, Jack Rushton, Colin Symcock, and Philip Durber all powerful characters, people I respected, sitting talking about me (amongst clouds of smoke) and the effect I was having on the village! It worked. No more lights out. However there is still evidence. The light on the level at Marshes Hill still has a little hole in it. I have to say every time I walked past it I just have to look and remember a key lesson in life that was very cleverly dished out by Bob.

Thus started my long association with the Parish Council, probably as some kind of penance!

It was perhaps his achievements as a bell ringer that those who knew him will remember him most though.

Sifting through some old press cuttings I came to this article taken from the Post and Times on May 14 1981 which reminded me I needed to get a haircut!

50 years ringing the Christian Message



His half' century of ringing was marked last Thursday night by a surprise party at Endon Cricket Club at which fellow ringers past and present, gathered to wish him well and many more years ringing to come. "It's been my life, my dedication and my work and I have enjoyed every minute of it" said Bob, who took up ringing in March 1931 because he hadn't the voice to sing in the choir.

In fact Bob was the first pupil of another remarkable Brown Edge ringer, Mr. George Hall who pulled for 68 years up to his death in 1971.

Bob took over from Mr Hall as captain of the St. Anne team in 1966 and still holds the post "My aim in bell ringing has been to ring the Christian message of Jesus Christ from Brown Edge Belfry, explained Bob, whose home in Chapel Lane looks cross the vale to that stone spire.

At the party — which was as much of a surprise, he said, as when he found his wife was to have twins thirty years ago — Bob also looked back on the many happy excursions he has had to belfries all over the country. "Everywhere I go on holiday I look for a belfry to ring in", he commented, telling of the time he rang in St Mary's Cathedral on a visit to Edinburgh. Bob's dedication to ringing was underlined by fellow member of the Brown Edge team, Mr. Peter Turner, who presented him with a gift from the ringers — a specially inscribed set of china bells. Vicar of Brown Edge, Mr. Artbur Moseley added his own words of congratulations too. For Mrs Vera Cumberlidge there was a bouquet presented by Mrs. Janet Turner

What a remarkable man.

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