

Beryl rings for Victory 70 years on

When the young Beryl Dew did a crash course in bell ringing to mark VE day in 1945 she little thought that seventy years later she would be leading the band of ringers at St Martin's Church, Ruislip, to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the end of World War Two in Europe.

Beryl was still at college in spring 1945 when a call went out to get people trained as bell ringers in anticipation that the war would soon be over. Most ringers before the war were men and, as many of them had been called up, there were few people left who knew how to handle a bell. Church bells had hung silent throughout the war but with the end in sight there was a scramble to find people to ring for Victory as soon the war in Europe was over.

Beryl put herself forward and found herself spending her evenings in a bell tower in Bexhill-on-Sea with four other teenage girls and a younger boy, learning

how to handle a bell. "We were taught by the curate," recalls Beryl. "He was very fierce so we were all on our best behaviour, trying hard to learn quickly."

After six weeks, Beryl and her friends were competent ringers and ready to ring out a victory peal - just in time, as it turned out. "We didn't know how long we'd have to learn in", Beryl explained, "we only knew when we started that the war was expected to be over soon."

Those six weeks hard training inspired in Beryl a lifelong love of bell ringing. As a young woman she went to practice nights in churches across London, eventually meeting a fellow bell ringer, Trevor, who became her husband. Hailing from Westbury, in Wiltshire, Trevor, like Beryl, had also learned to ring in his parish church in readiness for VE Day. Later, he joined the police and came to London and by the early 1950s was stationed at Harrow Road Police Station. By then, Beryl was



Beryl Dew (front) with St Martin's ringers

also living in London, and working as a hairdresser. The pair met one evening in 1952 at a practice night in St Augustine's Church, Kilburn. Beryl says that to begin with, she was more interested in the bells than in the young man ringing alongside her, but Trevor was evidently persistent!

Beryl is a bell ringer to this day and can be found most Sunday mornings in the bell tower ringing the Treble before the 9.15 service. She also often rings for weddings and other special services,

at St Martin's and at other churches in the area. Her good humour and her wealth of bell ringing experience are a constant encouragement to the rest of the band, most of whom can count their years of experience on the fingers of one hand. And if you want living proof that bell ringing is an activity that can keep you in good shape physically and mentally in later life – look no further than Beryl!

Karin Farnworth