

# *Oxford University Society of Change Ringers*

## **ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2007**

### **New Officers**

This is a complete list of the Officers elected at the AGM:

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| President          | John Camp   |
| Senior Member      | Stephen Cameron                                   |
| General Secretary  | Peter Giles                                       |
| Master             | Simon Bond (Keble)                                |
| Resident Secretary | Sian Haseldine (Oriel)                            |
| Librarian          | Michael O'Hagan (Merton)                          |
| Treasurer          | Luke Camden (Keble)                               |
| Webmaster          | Claire Thomson (Christ Church)                    |
| Steeplekeepers     | Adam Ellis (Corpus)<br>Hugh Wilkinson (St John's) |
| Brookes rep.       | Mike Lowe   |
| CC Rep             | Peter Niblett                                     |

The surviving Vice Presidents were again re-elected en bloc: Quentin Armitage, Doug Beaumont, David Brown, Ian W Davies, Stephen Ivin, Paul Mounsey, Donald Niblett, Dermot Roaf, Betty Robbins, and Andrew Stubbs. Peter Giles was also elected.

### **Bell Restoration Fund**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| BRF Trustees: | Senior Member and Treasurer ex officio<br>Andrew Stubbs<br>Christopher Poole |
|---------------|--|

Mark Shepherd and Alex Byrne have been re-elected as Independent Examiners.

### **Life Members**

The following have become Life Members:

|                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Nick Balderson | Magdalen 2003-06     |
| Alex Dicks     | Christchurch 2003-06 |
| Chris Griggs   | Lincoln 2006         |

## **St Cross**

As of Nov 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006 the appeal has raised approximately £1130, including a donation of £250 from the Oxford Society.

If you would like to donate, please make cheques payable to "OUSCR BRF". A Gift Aid declaration is available from the General Secretary. If you pay income tax, please print this out and fill it in.

Please send your cheque and Gift Aid declaration to Simon Bond, Keble College, Oxford OX1 3PG.

## **Senior Member**

At the TGM in Hilary 2006, Dr. Stephen Cameron was elected Senior Member. Stephen is Reader in Computing Science and a Fellow of Keble College He lives in Charlton-on-Otmoor, where he is making progress with Grandsire Doubles. He is the tutor of the current Master, Simon Bond.

An unexpected link exists, in that Stephen was an undergraduate at Exeter College, where his tutor was Dermot Roaf. You can find out more about Stephen from his website, <http://web.comlab.ox.ac.uk/oucl/work/stephen.cameron/>

## **2007 Annual Dinner**

This year's Dinner will again be at Harris Manchester College, on Saturday 3rd February at 7.00 for 7.30 p.m. The principal guest will be the Dean of Christ Church.

The menu will be: Broccoli & Stilton Soup, Breast of Duck with an Aromatic Sherry & Ginger Sauce, Apple & Blackberry Crumble with Custard, Cheese Board and Coffee and Mints.

The vegetarian option is Gateaux of Roast Mediterranean Vegetables with Olive & Herb Dressing.

Friday night's pub remains to be announced, and Sunday coffee is yet to be decided, but is likely to be Christ Church again.

Tickets are £48.00, available from Simon Bond, Keble College, Oxford OX1 3PG. The closing date is January is Jan 20<sup>th</sup>. Please send an SAE and a cheque payable to 'OUSCR Dinner Committee', and state any seating plan preferences and dietary requirements.

## **Newsletter Account**

There remains enough in the funds for four or five years' more letters. If you wish to contribute to its survival, please make your cheque payable to `Mr P Giles`. I thank Joan Gray, Ruth How and Stella Strawbridge for their donations this year.

## **Meeting Dates in 2007**

The Society's business meetings are held on Mondays, and customarily take place in Exeter College Please confirm the venue in advance.

TGM dates - the first Monday in term. Jan 15th, April 23rd and Oct 8<sup>th</sup>.

AGM date - Monday, Nov 26th.

## **Society Ties**

We still have six left. Assiduous readers will calculate this year's sales as zero. They are still a mere £3.00 each, available from the General Secretary.

## **The Society's History**

Every year now I say we still need to sell about 30 more to break even. After 2006's business, I should amend that to 'about 29'. Please send your cheque for £30.00 per copy (incl. postage and package), made out to 'OUSCR History', to the general secretary.

## **The Annual Tour**

The 2007 tour will be based somewhere in South Devon, organised by Lester Yeo, who is now looking for a base which meets all the requirements. We plan to visit some of the recently augmented towers in the county (eg the new twelves at Crediton and Withycombe Raleigh, the new tens at St Mark's, Exeter and Axminster, possibly; Sidmouth and Thorverton have also become tens since the last tour in South Devon); in general we will avoid towers without a nearby pub, although Mary Mack's small bells may be available as an additional amusement or challenge. We will publish further details on the OUS list, but Lester may be contacted at the dinner, by email at [lester.yeo@btinternet.com](mailto:lester.yeo@btinternet.com), at home at Chapel House, Sandford, Crediton EX17 4LZ or by phone on 01363 755989.

Updated details of towers etc will be posted to the main website and the bulletin list.

## **Address List**

The General Secretary maintains the Society's address list, of nearly 330 members. Over half are now on email. If you would like a copy of the list, either electronically or on paper, please ask.

Email addresses are held on the website and by the secretary, but the master list is maintained by John Camp for use on the bulletin board.

26 members are currently lost. Margaret Malpas has kindly circulated the colleges and persuaded most of them to forward letters or emails. This has helped us find several lost members, but if you can help us trace any of the following, we would be grateful:

Catherine Bannister, Robert Bruce, Mike Capocci, Rosemary Clark, Frances E Collins, Paul Crane, Peter Gray, Andre Gren, Judith Harvey, Sally Hawksworth, Anne Lambert, Andrew J Loveland, Jeremy McCabe, James Milford, Melanie Milan, JD Mozley, David Newman, Simon Plackett, Richard Wilson, Nigel Sheppard, Richard Tapper, Steve Thompson, Sonia Tucker, C Turnbull, AJ Vincent and Jonathan Wilson.

We now face the annoying position of members going onto email then changing their email addresses without telling us. Please don't be one of them!

## **OUS Peals**

Fifteen peals have been rung this year: 2 of London (no 3) S Royal, Bristol and 8-spliced S Major, and one each of Bristol, Cambridge and Yorkshire Royal, Superlative and Pudsey Major, and Stedman Triples, 7 Minor and Double Norwich CBM in hand. It was especially good to see an undergraduate-only peal of Bob Major on Dinner Day.

Congratulations to Lester Yeo and Ruth Blackwell on ringing their 1000<sup>th</sup> peals this year.

## **The OUS Online**

The OUS now has not only a website <http://www.users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr> but an online peals database <http://www.ouscr.org.uk/peals/>, a badgers' area <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/ousgensec/> and a bulletin board. Please join this by contacting [ouscr-admin@bellringers.net](mailto:ouscr-admin@bellringers.net). and help the Society by cutting down the number of paper newsletters.

Badger's World holds all the content of the Newsletters for the last twelve years, and lists of Masters, dinners, tours etc. If you have anything you would like to be added, or ideas for extra sections, please let me know.

### **Residents' Review**

*James Marchbank, the immediate past Master, writes:*

2006 has been another good year for the OUS. Attendance has generally been good, despite the usual problems caused by exams in Trinity Term, and thanks to a large intake of keen freshers, we have had over 20 people at every Tuesday practice during Michaelmas term! Sunday service ringing has also been well attended, with enough people to ring on ten almost every Sunday throughout the year, the good practice attendance enabling us to focus on ten bell ringing more, and to increase our surprise royal repertoire to include London and Bristol Royal on some occasions.

Quarter peals have been attempted every Tuesday and on alternate Mondays, before the Mary Mag and St Thos Practices respectively Sunday ringing has carried on as usual, a Quarter Peal attempt at St Thos, followed by ringing at Mary Mag in the morning each week, with St Ebbe's morning ringing alternating each week with SMV and New College evensong ringing. We also ring for the service at St Cross on the first Sunday of the month, and have been practicing there on a Wednesday.

We scored 47 Quarters during the year, including 14 ten bell Quarters (which includes six different surprise royal methods), three handbell quarters, and a whole range of firsts. Those of particular note include a quarter of London at SMV, and a quarter of Grandsire Caters at New College, which was rung half-muffled in memory of John Spice.

Regular peal attempts have continued during term time, with attempts at St Thos on alternate Mondays, and at least one attempt a term at Mary Mag. This year, there have been 15 OUS peals and 5 STS peals rung, the OUS peals including a peal of Plain Bob Major by an OUS undergraduate band, a peal of Cambridge Royal rung in memory of John Spice (both at Mary Mag), and a peal at Charlton-on-Otmoor to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first peal on the bells. Many thanks to the badgers, without whom these peal attempts would not have been possible.

Our termly twelve bell practices have all been at Reading this year, and with a bit of help from the OS and non-resident OUS, we have been able to ring everything from call changes on twelve to surprise maximus at every practice.

Although there wasn't much handbell ringing at the start of the year, interest has picked up during the year, and a few quarter peals had been rung in hand by the end of the year, including Simon's first in hand.

This year's calendar has been fairly full as usual, in particular with the annual dinner in February, the joint outing with the CUG, which took us to Bedford this year, the annual tour, this year around Cheshire, May Day morning ringing at SMV, the summer outing to the Milton Keynes area, the Freshers' Outing to the Abingdon area, including ringing on the brand new ring of ten, and the SUA, which was held in Cambridge this year, where we won the 8 bell competition.

Relations with the other university societies have remained good, with a number of the OUS attending the SUA (even enough to enter a legitimate 8 bell band this year!), and a contingent present at the CUG and UL dinners. The social side of the OUS has continued to thrive, with a high ratio of post practice pub attendance to practice attendance, with the now traditional cheese and wine parties at the end of each term, and with the pancake party after the practice on Shrove Tuesday continuing to be a popular change to a night in the pub.

I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work over the last year, and the residents for their continued support and enthusiasm for OUS ringing. I wish Simon and his committee all the best for the coming year, and I hope the OUS continues to improve in the coming year.

## **Members' News**

**Margaret Moote** (nee Tutt, LMH 1942) died on March 25th 2005 in Connecticut.

**Maureen Persson** (nee Astbury, Somerville 1942) died on Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 2006 at Sundsvall in Sweden.

**John Lonsbrough** has move toSussex, and is settling in well and busy ringing.

**Stella Strawbridge** writes: John Spice taught the three of us (including Margaret Tutt and Maureen Astbury) first year chemistry undergraduates to handle a bell in New College tower, with the clappers lashed while the wartime ban remained, and introduced us to handbells. Margaret learned fast, quickly acquiring ropesight, and was soon ringing peals. Maureen and I persevered with more modest progress, enjoyed practices in remote Oxford towers and rang for services fairly regularly at St Ebbe's. There was a memorable Yorkshire tour based at Leeds, where Maureen lived, where we were able to ring at York Minster. The three of us appear together in the OUS photograph of TT 45 on page 104 of the History, and kept in touch over the years. Now, aged 82, I miss these friends, and the ringing. My husband David and I were regular ringers at nearby Symondsburry village for the last fifteen years, but old age and declining health has dwindled the numbers from six to only four, and this winter we decided that we too should stop, before we became unreliable!

## **Ewart H Edge**

Ewart Edge died on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2006. He was at Teddy Hall in 1944, and 1948-51, and married to Julia, nee Preston, also of the OUS.

*Michael Orme writes:*

Ewart was good company after a practice night with a wealth of information on many varied subjects, he was a keen tower grabber and an extremely gifted water colour artist. Ewart will be remembered especially at Christmas time by members of the local band who were fortunate enough to receive hand painted local scene individual christmas cards; during his retirement years he held a number of exhibitions and gave classes locally on the subject.

*From JG Burton's notice in the RW issue 4965:*

Ewart was born on Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 1926 and grew up in Wolstanton, North Staffordshire, where his father was the headmaster of a local church school. He attended Wolstanton Grammar before leaving for Oxford University, though after a year he joined the RAF, completing his basic flying training just as the war ended. In 1948 he returned to Teddy Hall to complete his degree: his attendance at universities in Cologne and Poitiers fostered his love of Northern European culture, particularly German, but it was at Oxford that Ewart learned to ring, probably at St Thomas's.

Ewart met Julia, a fellow linguist who was to become his wife, on an OUS tour of Suffolk. They married in 1957 and soon moved from Wolstanton to Scholar Green, Cheshire, though he continued to ring at St Mary's Wolstanton until approximately 1989. Thereafter he rang at Astbury for a short while until joining the Congleton band, whose companionship he continued to enjoy in the pub after practice long after arthritis in his hands obliged him to stop ringing regularly.

Ewart contributed much to the North Staffs Association: he was secretary between 1953 and 1959 and CC rep from 1960 to 1965, and wrote a history of the Association for its centenary in 1982. He rang 52 peals in a wide range of methods for them, but also for the Chesire Guild and the Universities Association, of which he was a member for many years, holding several offices and organising many of the summer ringing weeks.

Ewart and Julia's great love, however, was for tower grabbing, and in the early years he was not beyond turning his collar round, pretending to be a man of the cloth and knocking on the vicarage door to ask if we could have a ring! He loved to tell the story of one tour when a stranger who wanted to look at the ringing was welcomed into the belfry – the gentleman turned out to be John Betjeman. He rang in about 4800 towers, and the total would have been higher but for his intense dislike of ladders.

Ewart was a man of the old school: good manners mattered to him both in the belfry and elsewhere. His food also mattered to him, and his tours were noted for their appropriately lengthy lunch breaks. His interests were eclectic, and in particular he was an accomplished artist and an expert on local and medieval history, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and ceramics. He played bridge, collected stamps and at the time of his death was teaching art, calligraphy and German.

He spent his working life in the pottery industry, and latterly was export sales manager for Wedgwoods. Whilst in his forties he had a serious heart attack, and subsequent health problems led people to believe he would die before Julia. It was therefore a great shock when three years ago his beloved Julia became ill and after a protracted illness during which he nursed her devotedly died, leaving him bereft. However, he picked himself up and with great courage and determination began to enjoy life again.

'Five minute visits' always lasted much longer. He would invariably be found surrounded by books, half-finished watercolours or his pen and ink drawings, some of his hundreds of photographic slides and copious pages of notes for his next project.

He was a modest and unassuming gentleman of deep faith and integrity. May he rest in peace.

### **Jean Littler.**

*Judith Pelham writes:*

The older generation may remember Jean Littler (nee Herbert) who died suddenly on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.

She rang with her husband John during their fourth year at Oxford (1957-8). They rang at the university towers and at Wolvercote and knew Dermot Roaf. Unfortunately when they got to Bristol their local church had no bells, which together with a young family severely restricted their ringing. They did introduce their five children to the art and encouraged them to ring. Jean put most of her considerable energy into the Guide Association and the Mothers Union.

A quarter peal was rung at Wimbledon, London SW19, where her daughter Judith is Tower Captain. 12 Nov 06, 1273 Grandsire Triples (Half-muffled).

### **Catherine Gallop**

Died on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2006. We have no further details.

## **Roderick Alan Fitzjohn Macmillan (d. 2006)**

*From the RW October 20<sup>th</sup> 2006, and Robert Perry:*

A Wykehamist, John was educated at New College, where he read Law after doing his National Service. After Oxford he followed family tradition by taking up the mantle of a Lloyds underwriter in the City of London. His outstanding ability as an oarsman with Thames Rowing Club led for selection in the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, where in spite of Herculean efforts his team just missed the Bronze Medal in the coxless fours, and settled for fourth place. He was also a member of the famous Leander Club. Later, in the 1954 Commonwealth Games he gained both silver and bronze. After retiring from competitive rowing he maintained links in the sport with friends all over this country and abroad.

His modest, unassuming manner hid a wealth of interests: in golf (past captain of Launceston Golf Club), the British Legion, investment clubs, fine wines, bridge, British and European history, and the church, where in addition to looking after the bells he was sidesman and churchwarden. In 1952 he married Brenda Snook at St Gennys, north Cornwall, and later when living in Rickmansworth came under the gentle encouragement of tower captain Fred Elliott.

John carried all his many responsibilities uncomplainingly and efficiently. A man of quiet charm and unfailing courtesy, thoughtful and considerate, a devoted family man who immediately became attentive and supportive to Brenda when her health began to fail. His passing has left a big void in the lives of Brenda, their children, grandchildren and a considerable number of family and friends.

He kept the bells going at Werrington more or less single handed and although no method ringer himself he was always pleased to welcome visiting peal and quarter peal ringers. He will be much missed, not least because the tower will probably become silent now he's no longer there to keep an eye on things.

## **Wilfrid Moreton**

Wilfrid F Moreton of Wakefield died on Monday morning (13th November), after a long illness bravely borne. Wilf had been General Secretary and Vice President of the OUS. Before his disability overtook him, he was regarded as one of the finest ringers of his generation. He was involved with the Central Council for much of his life.

*A few thoughts about Wilfrid Moreton's time with the OUS - by Betty Robbins*

Wilf went up to Oxford in Michaelmas term 1942, knowing that he might only have a year there before being called up. He was already a member of the Senior Training Corps. To the delight of my brother, John Spice, the Master of the OUS, Wilf

was already a tower bell ringer. He had already rung several peals and even conducted one, before the wartime ban on ringing had come into effect, and he immediately threw himself wholeheartedly into learning to ring handbells. By October 31<sup>st</sup> he rang his first handbell peal, 7-8 to Bob Major, at the first attempt. John's own records say he was on the slow side at the beginning, but rapidly improved until almost perfect at the end. Two more peals followed for him before the end of term, and at the end of the second, Bob Royal, John's remarks were:- 'Wilf rang very well. This rounded off a pretty good term's work, especially for Wilf, who is now a very useful handbell ringer and quick to learn. He is keen and ready to put off anything but STC (which he can't) for ringing.' Obviously a kindred spirit to John! Unfortunately his call-up came earlier than expected, at the end of the Hilary term, but by that time he had rung 11 handbell peals, including Double Bob and Kent TB.

Throughout this time he had shown great ability in teaching beginners, both to handle the silent tower bells of New College and in hand, and he was delighted to send back news from Ahmednagar, Bombay Province, where he'd been sent for the rest of the war, of a peal of Bob Minor, which he had conducted, with two fellow officers (from Balliol and New College). He had taught them from in India!

He was very quickly in his element when he returned to Oxford in Michaelmas 1946, and the then OUS benefited greatly from his abilities, and although he wasn't technically the Master (because I was!) he did in fact take on much of that role, especially in conducting. He was occasionally a little too stern with beginners, often then older men returning from active service, and in fact Rodney Meadows himself needed calming down after one somewhat bruising encounter! When he was formally elected in 1947, it was most unfortunate that his tenure was prematurely terminated in the following September. When he came up originally it was to read Modern Languages, but after the War he switched to Theology. However, after a term and a half he gave this up, and was allowed to change to Maths. This turned out to be extremely ill advised, his previous knowledge being at O levels, so much work was needed to be able to pass the preliminary exams needed before starting an honours course. This he failed to do, so life at Oxford came to a sudden end. He continued his studies at Lampeter, and then became a schoolmaster, where one can be sure his excellent teaching abilities would have been well used.

Wilf was certainly one of those fanatically keen bellringers who give their utmost to the art – and sometimes more than ordinary folk can manage! The writer (who rang 85 peals with him, between 1944 & 1951) has always remembered the words quoted to Wilf by his Mother from Phillipians 4 v5 'Let your moderation be known unto all men'. I'm sure he was a most obedient son in all respects except in that for bellringing! – and it was very sad that MS prematurely prevented his physical participation in the Art, of which he was such an outstanding practitioner.

## **John E Spice**

John Spice died on Saturday Aug 26<sup>th</sup> 2006. He was Master of the OUS from 1940 to 1945 and was largely responsible for keeping the society alive during the war. He had been a Vice-President for many years. He was, of course, also the author of the OUS History, published in 1997, and retained a great interest in the society.

*Betty Robbins writes:*

John Edgar Spice was born into a bellringing family, on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1922. His paternal grandfather was William Spice, whose own peal total was 345 from 1897 onwards, of which he conducted 38. This was a magnificent effort on the part of a simple gardener whose only means of travel were his bicycle and the branch railway lines of rural Kent and Sussex. William's four sons all became proficient bellringers; Percy J. and Edward H. were really keen and rang many peals each, whereas William E. and George H. rang in peals when required but were basically service ringers at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Tunstall, Kent, where the belfry and choir were dominated for many years by the Spice family (with Mrs 'George' presiding at the organ.) There was always the hope that grandsons would learn to ring so that Grandfather's heart's desire to ring a Spice peal could be achieved. In the tower this never happened, despite several attempts in the 1930's with the wives of George and Edward who'd been taught by their husbands, and William E's eldest son, but later several Spice handbell peals were rung with William, his first at the age of 80!

So pressure came on John at the age of 9 or 10 to learn to ring – a cause of great unhappiness on walks home from Church, since he was an obstinate boy, objecting to being taught against his will to handle a bell, and who wouldn't try to ring rounds properly - much to the annoyance of his father George, who eventually acknowledged defeat. However, affection for his grandfather, whose much loved son Edward had just died, caused John, at the age of 15, to decide for himself to take up the 'art', and from then on there was no looking back! His first peal was at Borden, near Sittingbourne, on Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1937, when he rang the 2 to Grandsire Triples. Between then and 1939 when he went up to Oxford having won an Open Scholarship to New College and been awarded a State Scholarship all at the age of 17, he managed to ring 13 peals, including Kent TB Royal and Double Norwich. He had also been working on his family with handbell ringing – Bob Minor and Major and Grandsire Triples. If anyone demurred from spending their free time in this way, they were being selfish! In fact the immediate family rang the first peal ever by father, mother, son and daughter. This was Grandsire Triples in hand, in 1942, at 35, Woodstock Road, Sittingbourne, during the ban and while an actual air raid was taking place outside!

When he arrived in Oxford, the Oxford University Society was at a very low ebb, with a handful of resident ringers hardly able to manage Bob Minor. John began (and always continued) to ring with Walter Judge and his good band of ringers at

Christchurch and All Saints. Almost immediately the war-time ban on all Church bellringing came into effect (bells would only be used to give warning of an invasion), and it was this that turned his attention to handbell ringing in a big way. He and William Leese, one of the keenest of the then OUS, honed their skills by contact and peal ringing with noted handbell ringers in London, Birmingham and Leicester, scoring with them peals in the standard methods, Stedman and even Surprise Major. This was mainly done in vacations.

In Oxford the recruiting and teaching of complete beginners was the great work. Only three actual ringers came up during the six years with John as Master - Wilf Moreton briefly till he was called up, returning post-John in 1946, Derek Jones, and me, John's sister. With great foresight all the beginners (generally about 70+ at the beginning of each year, reducing to more like 20 at the end) were taught to handle a bell and to ring rounds on the silent bells of New College, after the clappers had been removed. There were many hairy scenes while so many learners were taught, with the help of some of the City ringers, but the method paid dividends when the ban was lifted, first for the victory at El Alamein and then finally in the summer of 1943. Rapid progress was then made with method ringing in the tower. Meanwhile handbells were assiduously practised and great progress made. John evolved his own teaching methods, first getting beginners used to the plain hunting positions on six bells, Bob Minor and then Major, and then different methods basically using place notations following the course of the treble. This led to the ringing of many peals of Plain Bob from Minor to Maximus, Kent and Oxford TB to Maximus, Double Norwich, and various other plain major methods, many for the first time in a peal. But managing to ring Stedman Caters (rung by sixes), Stedman Triples and Cambridge were never achieved by the OUS at this time, despite many attempts. Trying to ring Surprise by the place method in the case of all the ringers meant that a slip at the speed at which the band customarily rang caused too much chaos even for John to sort out! He was undoubtedly an outstanding teacher, but a hard task master! He expected a devotion to bell ringing equal to his own, and his forceful way of correcting mistakes or bad striking was not always happily received. The writer remembers many occasions when we were told to 'CONCENTRATE' when we were trying very hard to do just that. But he was a great conductor with high standards for good striking, who knew the coursing order of the bells throughout the calling, and could correct mistakes as they occurred – if others cooperated! The history of this time is well recorded in his epic volume, *The Oxford University Society of Change Ringers 1872-1997*.

An extra achievement while at Oxford was to collaborate with Kenneth S.B. Croft, a ringer from Lincoln who was up at Cambridge at that time, to inaugurate the Universities Association. This was with the approval and backing of such ringers as Marie Cross and her brother, the Revs. Malcolm Melville and Gilbert Thurlow, E.H.Lewis and many others. The first event was a highly enjoyable tour centred on Worcester in the summer of 1944, followed by a Dinner and peal attempts over the New Year in London, and this pattern has largely continued (at least with an annual tour).

The aim was to encourage the formation of ringing societies in other universities, few of which had them at that time.

Although so much of his six years at Oxford was devoted to ringing, he sang in the Oxford Harmonic society, played the violin in an orchestra, read widely in theology as a practising Christian –and got a First in Chemistry in 1943, enabling him to work for a D.Phil. for the next two years. On leaving Oxford, where he had been reserved from National Service because he was a chemist, he became a Lecturer at Liverpool University. He continued to ring handbell and tower bell peals as often as he could, and was a regular member of the band at the Parish Church of Our Lady and St. Nicholas. However, marriage in 1947 to a non-ringer, the subsequent production of four children and a responsible job all slowed his ringing down a lot. While his peal total in the middle of 1947 was 313, it only grew by 53 in the next thirty-seven years. In 1959 he left Liverpool to become Senior Chemistry Master at Winchester College. Here he rang at the Cathedral and also taught ringing to some of the students on the six bells of the College, scoring the first handbell peal (Bob Minor) for the Winchester College Society in 1962. Leaving the College in 1973 he became Senior Science Inspector for the Inner London Education Authority, and it was during this time that he had a great hand in organising Nuffield Chemistry, a modern approach to the teaching of the subject, and also himself devised a new subject, Physical Science, at A Level.

In retirement, at 1984, he began to ring again in earnest, and he rang over 100 peals in hand and tower, mainly for the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild. In 1997 he had a serious abdominal operation, but recovered enough to ring what actually turned out to be his last tower bell peal, of Cambridge Major at his old home tower of Tunstall, in Kent, in 1999. In 2001 he had a benign brain tumour removed. He made a good recovery but aged considerably, and the death of his wife in 2004 also set him back. He rang three more handbell peals of Minor conducted by Andrew Craddock in 2005 and 2006, and in fact another attempt, for Double Norwich this time, had been planned for two days after his sudden and unexpected death from a heart attack on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

His actual peal total – not great in these days of several thousands – was 479, of which 250 were in hand; he conducted 228, of which 139 were in hand. His peals included all the standard methods up to twelve bells, Spliced Surprise Major in four methods and Surprise Minor in eleven in hand, and Spliced Surprise Major in thirteen methods in the tower. He rang four peals of Glasgow, having arranged and conducted the first in that method at Frindsbury, near Rochester, in 1946. Another notable first was a peal in 21 plain major methods; this was a handbell peal for the OUS rung on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1946 – before breakfast! – and there were many other ‘firsts’.

The funeral in Chantry at Winchester College on September 6<sup>th</sup> was a Requiem conducted by his brother-in-law, the Rev. Peter Robbins (with whom he had rung six

peals). It was attended by his four children and their spouses, and six grandchildren – of whom none so far are ringers – and about fifty friends.

*Peter Robbins adds:*

(commenting on an OUS belief that John Spice taught in Manchester, and had John Nelson as a pupil): Robert Nelson was Rector of Liverpool Parish Church (at the time the bells were replaced after WW2). He became Bishop of Middleton in the diocese of Manchester when I was Vicar of St Hilda, Prestwich, about 1956 or 7, and the family attached themselves to our church, John & Michael becoming servers. The Bishop died tragically very soon, and Mrs Nelson and the family continued to live near Manchester (Whitefield I think). So there were Manchester connections, but Liverpool was where John Spice would have met John Nelson. I can't recall whether or not the two boys were ringers when I first knew them, but although I kept my hand in at that time, I was Vicar of a church with no bells, and I didn't have much time for ringing. Betty didn't either and we had two babies born to us during the 4 years at Prestwich.

*Wilf Moreton writes:*

The Revd Geoffrey Benson told me that although the OUS was founded before his CUG, it was generally dormant.

When I went up to Oxford in October 1942 it was more than two years after the Government had placed a ban on ringing, and I had forgotten about ringing. Fortunately the OUS had put a notice in the porter's lodge which gave details of ringing in New College on the first Wednesday of Full Term. There were thirty or forty people in the ringing chamber, most of them being taught or waiting to be taught to ring a bell. The clappers were tied or had been taken out. I found out that John Spice was the Master of the OUS and Bill Leese was Secretary. I asked John if we could ring some handbells and we went into the Library to ring Bob Minor. The silent sessions continued at New College every Wednesday, with the number of learners dropping to about a dozen.

The ban on ringing was lifted in May 1943, so the Society could practise at several churches with the bells open. There was ringing on Sundays and at churches on Saturday afternoons. John told me that his way to teach Bob Minor was to teach the three positions/patterns: 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6, and then put them together. His system has been used on ringing courses every year since 1961. John called my first peal of Bob Major. He had his own private peal book in which he made comments on a ringer. I expect his comment on me was 'too slow at the parted leads' A number of handbell peals followed that year and the next, mostly called by John. John asked me to teach Bob Minor to two young ladies who had just come up. I used John's system, and after regular practice we were able to ring a 720. Teaching is the best way to learn, as I learnt – and as John knew when he asked me to teach them.

When the Government asked for bells to be rung at some time between 9 am. and midday on Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 to celebrate victory at El Alamein, John went to see Walter Judge to suggest that all the ringers in Oxford should meet at Christchurch by 9 a.m, to ring there for an hour and then in groups to ring at the other seven churches, four colleges and Carfax. His suggestion was carried out, and several members of the OUS had their first taste of ringing tower bells and hearing them.

As a result of a notice in the Ringing World, ringers from several universities met in New College in February 1943 to found the Universities Association. This was at the instigation of Ken Croft and John Spice, respectively Masters of the CUG and OUS. One of its aims was to encourage other universities to start their own societies. John arranged three UA ringing weeks: Worcester 1944, Norwich 1945 when a peal of Grandsire Cinques was rung to celebrate VJ Day, and Kent 1946. He arranged two OUS weekends: Kent in July 1945, when four peals were rung, three of them in his and Betty's parents' house, and Cambridge in August that year when three peals were rung, including Stedman Caters at Great St Mary's.

John moved to Liverpool in autumn 1945 to lecture at the University. He joined the congregation of Our Lady and St Nicholas (Pierhead). The church's twelve bells were taken to Taylor's at the beginning of the war for safety. In 1951 the PCC decided they should be returned, and John, the only ringer on the committee, urged that they be recast with a heavier tenor of 42cwt and heavier trebles than usual for Taylor's. His words were heeded, and the recast bells were opened by several visiting bands in autumn 1952. John's History of the OUSCR was published in 1997. When he lived in Liverpool he used to go to The College of the Resurrection, Mirfield for retreats and his wife went to St Peter's Convent, Horbury in the same diocese. When John went up to Oxford he had little interest in the OUS, but elected as Master he began to pull it to a worthy standard.

After a few years it began to thrive, and over the decades it has thrived and thrived and continues to thrive. John's legacy. 'Generally Dormant'?

*John Lonsbrough writes:*

I think that his D Phil was war-orientated under the wing of the Ministry of Supply and rather secret, but I expect that he did other 'war work' in vacations, as we all did. From the back of my mind comes the thought that he taught agricultural tractor driving to a Berkhamsted School boy who later was a prominent member of the OUSCR (John Dickinson?).

As a schoolboy, my holidays (and some term-time) were filled up with farm work, including driving, and as John Spice came from a non-academic country background I would expect him to have been similarly involved. Later he taught at

Winchester College, which we thought unusual as he had not been a public schoolboy, though there may have been a Berkhamsted connection and he was no doubt highly thought of academically by New College which was closely connected with Winchester.

He was an inspiring teacher of ringing and his energy and determination were immense. Anything he did had to be pushed to a successful conclusion and we sometimes found his strong personality to be a little too much for those of us who could not match his level of concentration, but we loved and respected him.

*Andrew Craddock writes:*

Handbell peal attempts in John's home in Winchester were a regular occurrence. We always rang in the same room which had a bay window overlooking his garden and Cheriton Road. I was facing the window in one attempt for Superlative when I was astonished to see a police car pull up, two constables get out and then climb over the hedge into John's garden. I mentioned this to the other three and although John wasn't conducting he told me to "Shut up and keep ringing". A few seconds later, John's normally well behaved dog started barking furiously. Clearly something was up. John put his handbells down, went to the front door and we overheard him angrily tell the policemen "Do you know what you've done? You've made us lose our peal!". It turned out that a neighbour saw some suspicious looking men enter John's house. When the neighbour got no response from ringing John's front door bell he called the police. Obviously the sound of the handbells drowned out the neighbours ringing of the door bell. And the suspicious men? Messers John Collis, Andrew Craddock and Roy LeMarechal ... three quarters of the handbell band.

In the last lead of a handbell peal of Kent Royal, I missed a dodge. John yelled "Dodge!" at me so loudly that his wife, Betty, later complained to him about the loudness of his shout despite the fact that she was in a different room on the other side of a fairly large house.

In another peal attempt, the clapper in one of John's handbells began to slowly unscrew itself. Not to be beaten, John desperately tried to tighten it up whilst ringing both bells. It was doomed to failure but I found the sight of an elderly gentleman, John must have been about 70 at the time, trying to screw a clapper back in whilst ringing both bells, hysterically funny.

John got back into regular handbell attempts this year following a break because of his wife's prolonged illness. Andrew Craddock, Tom Hinks and Kelly Salter attempted and lost a peal of Double Norwich with John on the Monday before his death but did ring a quarter of it and were reasonably hopeful that they would score the following week. Sadly this was not to be. Instead, Andrew, Tom and Kelly rang a peal of Minor in memory of and to celebrate the life of John E Spice.