

Oxford University Society of Change Ringers

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2008

New Officers

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

President	John Camp
Senior Member	Dr.Stephen Cameron, Keble
General Secretary	Peter Giles
Master:	Luke Camden, Keble
Treasurer:	Bob Wallis, St Edmund Hall
Secretary:	David Giles, Corpus Christi
Librarian:	Stephen Dann, Lincoln
Steeplekeepers:	Tim Hele, Exeter, Michael O'Hagan, Merton.
Webmaster:	Claire Bell, Christ Church
Brookes rep.	(vacant - no ringers this year)
CC Rep	Mark Bell

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

Lester Yeo is the first OUS member for many years to become President of a territorial society (in this case, the Guild of Devonshire Ringers). We thank Mark Bell for going on to the CC for us, and his predecessor Peter Niblett for his 24 years' service.

Bell Restoration Fund

BRF Trustees:	Senior Member and Treasurer ex officio Andrew Stubbs Christopher Poole
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Mark Shepherd and Alex Byrne have been re-elected as Independent Examiners.

Life Members

The following have become Life Members:

Christopher Backhouse	Oriel 2004-2007
James Marchbank	Lincoln 2004-2007
Caroline Lee	Somerville 2004-2007

St Cross

Last year we announced a project to refurbish the bells of St Cross. Sadly, the church has now applied to be made redundant. At this stage we have no idea what will happen, but have registered our interest with the Archdeacon.

2008 Annual Dinner

The 2008 OUSCR Annual Dinner will take place on Saturday 2nd of February, at 7.00 for 7:30pm. Following the success of last year's dinner, it will once again be at Harris Manchester. The guest speaker will be Mark Humphreys and the OUS speaker will be Martin Cansdale. The Church Guest will be Fr John Hunwicke, the new Priest-in-Charge at St Thos, and the OS Guest will be Bernard Stone.

Tickets are now on sale for £49 to include champagne reception, wine and port. The menu is: Celeriac Soup with Parsnip Chips & Parmesan; Tournedos of Venison with Smoked Bacon & Wild Mushrooms or Wild Mushroom 'Pithivier' (vegetarian option); Apple Pie and Cream; Cheese Board; and Coffee & Mints.

As usual, there will be pre-dinner drinking on the preceding Friday evening, ringing on Saturday and coffee on Sunday morning. To book your tickets, please send a cheque payable to "OUSCR DinnerCommittee" to: Luke Camden, Keble College, Oxford OX1 3PG, enclosing a SAE, details of any dietary requirements, and seating preferences. The closing date for tickets is 20th January.

Newsletter Account

There remains enough in the funds for maybe three years' more letters. If you wish to contribute to its survival, please make your cheque payable to `Mr P Giles`.

Meeting Dates in 2008

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 14th, April 21st and Oct 13th.

AGM date - Monday, Dec 1st

Society Ties

We are down our last three. I shall hold the price to £3.00 each for the first two to go, and then hope the last one acquires rarity value. Available from the General Secretary.

The Annual Tour

The OUS Tour will be based in Sheffield in 2008. Around 35 members of the society from current residents to grizzled ‘badgers’ are expected to attend. If you have not been on the tour before, or not been for a few years, please do not feel intimidated about joining us, even if only for a couple of days. It is a very civilised occasion and the mix always benefits from a leavening of new (or not-so-new) faces.

Meeting on Easter Sunday 23 March the tour proper runs for 4 days from Monday 24 March – Thursday 27 March. Some usually stay over the Thursday night as well before travelling home on Friday. Travel will be by coach with 5 or 6 towers per day on relaxed timings with plenty of opportunity to stroll around the towns we visit or socialise according to taste.

The itinerary is not yet confirmed but provisionally I expect to spend two days in and around South Yorkshire, one day in the East Riding and one day in the Peak District. Towers will be a mix of 8s, 10s and 12s. The standard of ringing on recent tours has been high the opportunity to sample excellent bells with a capable band makes the OUS tour an event not to be missed.

Budget accommodation for the ‘children’ has been booked on a scout hall floor and is priced at £3 per night. A group booking has been made for ‘Badgers’ at the Cutlers Hotel, priced at £67 per night B&B for single rooms or £80 per night for double or twin rooms. Although costing more than the very good value deals negotiated in the past couple of years this is still more than reasonable in the context of today’s prices for a city centre location. There will also be a charge for coach hire and tower donations, and clearly the more people attend the less each of these will be per head.

There are plenty of local amenities in the form of real ale pubs and a variety of Indian and other restaurants. Excellent transport links are available from Sheffield Rail station with intercity trains from London, Transpennine from Manchester and cross country services from Birmingham, the South West and North East. The city is also served by the National Express coach network. Discounted car parking is available for hotel residents at £5.60 per 24 hours.

Full details will be available at the Dinner and will also be disseminated on the website and by email. If these media fail to reach you then you can contact me on 07738 549 471 or by post at the address below to book your place.

PETER ELLIOTT

8 Bolston Road
Worcester WR5 2JE

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

The Society's History

Congratulations to John Lonsbrough on wearing out his copy of the History and having to order a replacement. We hesitate to imagine what can do this to such a solid production, but in the circumstances we are very grateful. If you can manage to be so heavy-handed, please send your cheque for £30.00 per copy (incl. postage and package), made out to 'OUSCR History', to the general secretary.

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.

24 members are currently lost. If you can help us trace any of the following, we would be grateful:

Catherine Bannister, Robert Bruce, Rosemary Clark, Frances E Collins, Paul Crane, Lindy Ellis, Peter Gray, Andre Gren, Sally Hawksworth, Douglas Hird, Anne Lambert, Andrew J Loveland, Jeremy McCabe, James Milford, Melanie Milan, JD Mozley, David Newman, Simon Plackett, Nigel Sheppard, Richard Tapper, C Turnbull, AJ Vincent, Jonathan Wilson and Richard 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!

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. and help the Society by cutting down the number of paper newsletters.

Badger's World holds all the content of the Newsletters since 1994, 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.

Since the paper newsletter has a life expectancy of three years, please take note of this!

Residents' Review

Simon Bond, the immediate past Master, writes:

2007 has seen continued success for the OUS with a good level of attendance seen at both practices and service ringing. Practices continue to follow the normal schedule – the main practice at Mary Mag on a Tuesday usually attracts over 20 ringers and provides opportunity for all of our members to ring at their level on 6, 8 or 10. St Thos practices on alternate Mondays have seen lower attendance allowing for those wishing to advance to get plenty of rope time. St Cross practices took place in Hilary and Trinity terms to give our 6-bell ringers more chance to progress. Service ringing also follows its usual format with at quarter peal at St Thos, or St Cross open ringing, followed by Mary Mag. Alternate weeks then see either St Ebbe's in the morning or SMV and New College in the evening. A healthy number of learners have been attending practices on Wednesdays at Mary Mag and their progress has impressed those involved with teaching.

As a demonstration of the commitment shown by members, 40 tower bell quarter peals were scored during the year ranging from Plain Bob Doubles up to Spliced Surprise Royal and including many personal firsts on the way. 10 quarter peals have also been scored in hand as a result of a much increased level of interest in handbell ringing by residents.

Peal ringing has continued to be successful with 16 OUS peal being scored this year as well as 4 STS. I extend my thanks to the Badgers who have helped us score an assortment of Triples, Major, Caters and Royal methods and Mary Mag and St Thos. Particular congratulations are extended to those who scored their first peal or first as conductor this year. A resident handbell peal was also scored being the first since 2004, first in hand for two of the band and first in hand as conductor.

The termly 12 bell practices have been somewhat variable. Poor attendance at Reading in Hilary led to a productive, if somewhat deficient in number, 10 bell practice. The practice in Trinity at Amersham and Michaelmas at Reading saw far better attendance allowing Stedman Cinques and Cambridge Maximus to be rung.

Additional items in the calendar include the termly outings. The joint outing with the CUG in Hilary took us to London, the Trinity term summer outing to the area around Hook Norton, and the Michaelmas freshers' outing to towers around Witney. The tour to Exeter was attended by 13 residents reinforcing our relationship with old members. Other popular events included May Morning ringing at SMV and the SUA in Bristol where the OUS were victorious in both the 6 and 8 bell competitions.

Outside of ringing, the OUS's social side continues to thrive. Relationships with other university societies remain strong with residents attending dinners in Cambridge and London amongst others. Our own dinner was of course well attended by residents and

badgers alike. Cheese and Wine parties at the end of term continue to be well-attended and provide a well deserved chance to unwind. The pancake party on Shrove Tuesday was also enjoyed by a large group. A number of members have completed the Ringroad this year so it's probably safe to assume that the drinking reputation of the OUS is in good hands.

I would like to extend my thanks to all the residents, and particularly the members of the committee, for their help in making this year as successful as it has been. I would also like to wish Luke and his committee all the best for the continued success of the society.

Members' News

Revd G.H. Paton (Wadham, 1941) writes: for years, I haven't been able to climb the tower stairs, let alone handle a rope. If a ringer wisely decides not to try to lower the tenor, someone else has to do it, not me. I've always been a general-practice clergyman – bells rung, organs persuaded to start or stop as required, reasonable guesses at Greek and Latin, etc). I content myself with a few pertinent comments on what I hear from the tower as I walk to church on a Sunday, and with waering the OUSCR tie form time to time (e.g if I can find one in the liturgical colour of the day). As a contribution to saving costs on the newsletter, I think it's time to drop me from the list. *Eheu, fugaces, Postume, Postume, labuntur anni...*

John Lonsbrough now rings at Seaford, and goes to ten-bell practices in Brighton. For the first three or four months of the year he was out of action and very ill with blood circulation problems caused by overclotting, including complete failure of his left foot, which came close to gangrene. However, an unpleasant infusion treatment has partially restored the foot, and he can walk reasonably for short distances, although now permanently on Warfarin. He can still get away at times, and has managed a couple of dinner weekends in Oxford. He hopes to be at the College Youths dinner this year to celebrate fifty years' membership, and to manage an OS trip to Lundy in December. Most impressively, he has worn out his copy of the OUS History (' loose pages, spine coming off, covers held on with sticky tape...') so has had to order a replacement.

Shirley Rymer died on Weds Nov 28th 2007. Details to follow.

Rosemary Dew (d. 2006)

Rosemary Dew has died. (We have no record of her college or maiden name.) Her husband writes:

My wife died on August 4th 2006 after a relatively short battle with cancer. She was an enthusiastic admirer of your society and always had a critical ear at the ready for bellringing. After an early career in international affairs (United Nations, the W.E.V,

F.A.O in Rome), and in the Medical Research Council, working sometimes as an interpreter but more commonly as a precis writer of meetings, we got married in 1963 in Horsham parish church. By a twist of fate we had to abandon the church bells because of the assassination of J.F.Kennedy the evening before. However, I hope we partially rectified this when our ringers completed a quarter peal on ten bells at Rosemary's memorial service.

John Leary died on March 29th 2007.

From the Ringing World of June 22nd, 2007:

Born and bred a Yorkshireman (and proud of it), John learned to ring some time in 1965 at St Augustine's, Hedon while at school at Hymers College in Hull. John was clearly exceptionally intelligent and whilst the best students in the school studied, in addition to other subjects, Greek, John also studied Hebrew, something not offered to many. He brought the same quickness of study and intelligent understanding to bell ringing. Roddy Horton recalls arranging a peal of Plain Bob Major at Hedon in 1967 in which John was included. Roddy was going to call the peal but "struggled with the composition" so John called it - his first peal!

In October 1967, when only just 17 years of age, John went up to Oxford University to study Chemistry. He joined the OUS, but also took a keen interest in folk song and dance, becoming a member of the Cecil Sharpe Society. At this time, John was very interested in all sorts of 6-bell methods, and five of the peals which he rang in his year at Oxford were of multi-minor, including one in 37 methods. Perhaps it was his comparative youth, or perhaps because he is remembered as enjoying Oxford life to the full, but whatever the reason John did not do as well academically as might have been expected, and at the end of the first year he transferred to Reading University. He said that as a result of being at Oxford he was very good at punting, but that he felt Reading was more suited to him.

After graduation John obtained work in the pharmaceutical industry. He joined Berk Pharmaceuticals near Guildford, initially as an analyst, but over the next twenty years, and a number of changes in ownership, he worked his way up to the position of Chief Analyst with additional responsibilities for manufacturing systems. His arrival in Guildford certainly made an impact on the local ringers, many of whom remember in some detail their first meeting with him. Richard Major remembers being in the ringing room of St Nicolas church when the fledgling University of Surrey Association was holding a practice. John arrived with a smart, short haircut, neat clothes and a full length furled umbrella, looking quite out of place in a university group of the early 1970's. He announced that he had just arrived in the area and that he was called "Gnome"! When surprise was expressed at the name he took off his coat and revealed a waistcoat with a gnome embroidered on it – no further explanation of the name was forthcoming.

John joined the band at Stoke-next-Guildford, recently augmented to 6, and within a short time he established one of the best practices in the area. He also continued to support the University society. Without fuss, and sometimes without the recipients even noticing, John organised ringing to help people progress. He had a talent for managing practices which would stretch most members of the band, and although he could be a hard task master, if you were willing to take note and respond to his challenges the results were worth it. A work colleague introduced John to caving, and he developed an interest in cave photography and taking beginner parties, typically made up of bell ringers, underground. In return, John convinced a number of his caving friends to take up ringing. In addition, he found time to undertake research for his PhD under the auspices of London University.

Eventually, work forced John to move to Sussex and, with his first wife Caroline, he set up home in Polegate and joined the band at Ringmer. In 1984 John became a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths, ringing his first peal for them (4-spliced Surprise Maximus at Ipswich) in October of that year. As a practical ringer John was exceptional. He very rarely made a mistake, and was an excellent striker and conductor on all numbers of bells no matter how complex the method. He kept no peal records, so his actually total is unknown, although it was probably around 400. Even at the peak of his peal ringing career in the 1980's he rarely rang more than about 20 peals a year, and in many years he rang far fewer. Yet such was his ability and reliability that he was automatically included in bands setting out to achieve something new and complex, and no matter how long it had been since his previous peal, he rang, and often conducted, the most difficult and complex peals with confidence.

John was probably least happy during his Sussex years. Neither his home nor his work life were without difficulties, but in time his friendship with Sophie, whom he first met as one of a number of young female learners at the practice at Witley in Surrey, developed into a close relationship and eventually to marriage and a family. For some time, work kept them apart. John continued to live and work in Sussex and Sophie was working near Salisbury, but in 1993 John joined RP Scherer in Swindon and he and Sophie married in September of that year and set up home in All Cannings, Wiltshire.

Once again John chose to support his local band and was instrumental in augmenting the peal to six. Before this happened, however, John rang and conducted his first peal of Doubles (in 21 methods) and, in so doing, achieved the probably unique feat of calling the first peal he had rung on each number of bells from 5 to 12. Under John's guidance a young band was beginning to make good progress, and he would surely have been proud of how well they rang prior to his funeral.

By the exercise at large, who did not know him personally, John will probably be best remembered as a great theoretician and composer. He had a deep understanding of ringing theory and pushed back the boundaries in a number of ways. In the early days

he did a lot of excellent work on Spliced Minor and it is said that Harold Chant, a Yorkshireman of the old school, described some of John's work as "the best thing since sliced bread". John helped to produce the modern description of false course head groups and in 1993 wrote a book on composing for the Central Council, which is still in print.

Having worked his way through Norman Smith's all-the-work series, for somebody else's benefit, John decided he wanted something more challenging so he set to work and produced his own excellent, and very difficult, series of 12 to 23 methods - all methods wrong place, all works above and below different, all place bells different, and all 12 lead end groups included. The series was rung, with John conducting, in 1984/5 with a combined Guildford/Sussex band, and members of the band say it is one of the hardest things they have ever done. In fact the 23 has been rung only once since then. The Spliced Surprise Major series is probably his very best work, but he produced many compositions in all sorts of methods - all of them good and many of them very innovative. His Spliced Surprise Royal series in up to 14 methods, rung with the College Youths, has the same characteristics as the Major and was a significant step forward. In his early years John was one of those people who had little time for odd bell methods but he fairly soon grew to appreciate Stedman, particularly Stedman Caters, and he produced some superb compositions in the method and, incidentally, quickly became an expert Stedman conductor. Finally, and largely behind the scenes, John was from time to time asked to undertake challenging commissions. For example the record 15,840 30 atw Spliced Surprise Maximus which exploits cyclic part ends was one of his compositions. And he was working on a record length of Spliced Surprise Royal for the College Youths at the time of his death....

Peter Semmens

From the Daily Telegraph:

Peter Semmens, who has died aged 79, fulfilled every train-spotter's dream by becoming the pre-eminent authority on every aspect of trains and railways, from their history, design and technology to timetables and comparative performance.

He wrote 36 books, ranging from a three-volume history of the Great Western Railway to volumes about railway disasters and steam technology. For 22 years he wrote the monthly "Railway Practice and Performance" column in *Railway Magazine*, which provides detailed analysis of comparative performance, against a wide range of indicators, of different types of locomotive. He lectured and advised on television documentaries and, as the first deputy curator of the National Railway Museum at York, was responsible for supervising the building of the museum and bringing together its vast collection in preparation for its opening in 1975.

The son of a bank manager, Peter William Brett Semmens was born at Saltash, Cornwall, on September 13 1927. Educated at St Edward's School, Oxford, he studied

Chemistry at Exeter College, Oxford, where he developed an interest in bellringing, becoming master of the University Change Ringers, and learned to fly a Tiger Moth.

But railways were his real passion. An avid train-spotter as a boy, he never went anywhere without his camera, and from the 1940s he took a vast number of photographs of trains which he carefully numbered and catalogued. On his first visit to meet the parents of his wife-to-be, Barbara Knee, at their home in Barnsley, he went off to watch a steam engine hauling coal trucks at a nearby pit and returned covered from head to foot in coaldust. The relationship survived, and they married in 1950.

After graduating, Semmens joined ICI at Billingham, Yorkshire, where he worked for the next 25 years and became involved in promoting science for young people. He served on the Council of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1974 he joined the York Railways Museum as deputy curator. He also served on the Yorkshire Tourist Board.

In 1981 Semmens was invited by Railway Magazine to take over its "Practice and Performance" column - the longest-running railway column in the world. He continued to write it until 2003, having become the magazine's chief correspondent in 1990.

Following the Hatfield rail crash of 2000, for example, he noted that after the 1946 accident clearance of the wreckage started within a few hours, and all four tracks were reopened for service precisely 24 hours and 30 minutes after the train had left the rails.

By contrast, following the later accident, "in spite of all the modern technology, it will take a further two weeks to restore normal service after all the investigations have been carried out - hardly the way to attract passengers to travel by train, let alone demonstrate the efficiency of Railtrack's organisation."

Semmens's other books included a guide to the Stockton and Darlington Railway, biographies of well-known enginemen, a study of high-speed railways in Japan, a celebration of the building of the Channel Tunnel and *Railway Disasters of the World* (1994).

Peter Semmens died on March 4. He is survived by his wife and five children.

Preb. John G.M. Scott died on July 9th 2007.

From Mike Mears:

... He lived in Devon for most of his life and I had always assumed that he was a Devonian by birth, so it came as quite a surprise when he told me, not long before his death, that he was born at Blackheath. He spent part of his childhood overseas, as his father was in the Navy, before settling in South West Devon when his father became King's Harbour Master at Plymouth. John was educated at Sherborne School in Dorset, before serving in the Royal Navy and then reading history at St Edmund Hall in Oxford,

where he rowed, learnt to ring with the Oxford University Society and met Claire, whom he married in 1954.

On leaving Oxford John went to theological college at Cheshunt, and was ordained deacon in 1951. His first curacy was at Exeter St Thomas followed by Wolborough. In 1958, he moved to North-West Devon and became vicar of Clawton with Tetcott and Luffincott. I can remember him telling me stories of the cold winter of 1963, especially of driving between the parishes on the snow and ice and not using brakes.

I first met him when he became vicar of Newton St Cyres and Cowley in 1966, where he remained until the end of 1983... He soon got involved in all aspects of village life, including serving as a school governor and editing and duplicating the *Newton Wonder*, which he reminded everyone was a magazine of the full parish, not just for those who went to church. He also started the annual event of beating the bounds and led the carol singing around the village at Christmas, both activities raising money for charity. He was often seen walking around with an open-necked shirt instead of the traditional dog-collar. He kept bees – that was a first for a vicar at Newton...

He moved to become vicar of Bampton, with three other country parishes, at the beginning of 1984, the same year he was appointed a Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral. He retired to Totnes in 1991, where he continued to take services in the Totnes group. Retirement enabled him to follow and develop many interests, particularly sailing. He had always been very keen on sailing, but hadn't had the time to enjoy it as much as he would have liked. Sadly, in 1998, Claire died suddenly, but it was typical of John that he learnt to cook for himself and reminded me on more than one occasion that he hadn't needed to resort to ready meals from supermarkets.

He was a very practical man and very able wood-worker. Many a time at Newton St Cyres I found him in his well-equipped workshop, mending something or making something new, including items of furniture and detailed models (particularly ships and boats).

In his early days he developed a great love of Dartmoor and spent many hours walking all parts, including walking from South to North in a day, and became very knowledgeable on wildlife, particularly birds and butterflies.

He always had a great interest in architecture and at Newton St Cyres developed an interest in clocks, when he and one of his parishioners set about restoring the church clock, which had been silent for many years.

His ringing career makes different reading than most. He was not a prolific peal-ringer and certainly didn't keep records, but there are a few worthy of mention. His first peal was Plain Bob Minor at Oxford St Thomas, with the OUS, conducted by Rodney Meadows. He rang a few peals for the Devon Guild during the 1950s including ringing

the tenors at South Molton and Crediton to Major and strapping the tenor at Exeter Cathedral to a peal of Caters. He was very proud to have rung in the first peal of Surprise Major for the Guild by a resident band, Cambridge at Wolborough in January 1956. After moving to North Devon, he rang very few peals and his last was Plain Bob Major at Newton St Cyres in December 1983.

However, his contribution to the exercise was much more than most of us will ever equal. He was elected as Chairman of the Exeter Branch of The Guild of Devonshire Ringers in 1954 and remained an officer until his death, including over 50 years as librarian. He was Bell advisor to the Diocese for over 40 years, Central Council rep for over 30 years as well as being a Vice-President and serving a year as Guild Master.

He also did a great amount of work for the Central Council, serving as President from 1981 to 1984, being a member of the Towers and Belfry Committee for over 40 years and was a long-standing member of the Rescue Fund for Redundant bells. As mentioned above, he represented the Devon Guild on the Council for over 30 years before being elected an honorary member in 1986 and remaining in that capacity until becoming a life member in 1998.

He was the longest-serving member of The Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund and was chairman from its founding in the early 1970s until succeeded by James Clarke in 2003. He was also a member of the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths...He enjoyed call-change ringing and in his younger days took part in and judged competitions. He was a good teacher and always enjoyed helping learners...

Most of us will remember John as a bell historian and marvel at his great knowledge of not only bells but church architecture and church clocks. Over the years he had taken part in many radio and newspaper interviews and appeared on television talking about bells. He wrote a short history of the Devon Guild to coincide with its centenary in 1974 and a short booklet on the bells of Exeter Cathedral. At the end of 2006, a lifetime's work came to fruition with the publication of *The Towers and Bells of Devon*, a book in two volumes containing over 700 pages. It had involved him making many visits to get details of all the bells in all the towers in the County – this would be a big task in any county, but in Devon it must have been a huge commitment. The work on this book had been undertaken jointly with Frank Mack and latterly, James Clarke.

John was first discovered to have bowel cancer in the early autumn of 2005, but he made a very quick recovery from surgery and was able to join his family and friends to celebrate his 80th birthday in December of the same year. The cancer returned towards the end of 2006 and even though he was undergoing treatment, he still led a very active life. His final illness was very brief, less than a week before his death his son, John, had taken him ringing at South Brent.