

# St Albans District Newsletter

Volume 23 Issue 2 – September 2018

## Champions!

**Location:** Sawbridgeworth (8 bells, 24 cwt). **Date:** 16 June 2018. Time: 10.00 am. **Method :** Grandsire Triples. **Reason:** The County 8-bell competition (**The Coburn Trophy**). Seven teams entered and St Albans District were declared winners by Judges Brian Meads and John Taylor.



**St Albans District Team: From L (treble) to R (tenor):**  
**Charles Pocock (Harpenden),**  
**Christine Carter (St Peter's), Ann**  
**Evans (St Peter's), Rosemary**  
**Sales (St Peter's), Vivian Nutton**  
**(Sandridge), Andy Reeve**  
**(unattached), Richard Sales -**  
**conductor (St Peter's), Rob Goss**  
**(Hatfield).**

The Coburn  
Trophy



Drawn	District / Band	Method	Judges' Comments	Faults	Placed
1	St Albans	Triples	Very nice ringing, confident and steady. Peal speed 3.20	41	1
7	Northern Otters	Plain Bob Major	Wondered if anyone would attempt major. Quite nice rhythm. Tenor rang well, but had some hesitations. Peal speed 3.26	47	2
2	Bishops Stortford 1	Triples	They had a shaky start, the basic rhythm was reasonable. Peal speed 3.22	62	3
6	Western	Triples	Set off confidently, but started tripping over and had quite a few clashes. Peal speed 3.15	71	4
3	Eastern Promise	Grandsire Triples	Shaky in practice, speed was variable, quite a few faults for hesitations. This was the slowest band. Peal speed 3.33	97	5
5	Northern Beavers	Grandsire Triples	This band had trouble with the bells, irregular rhythm, tenor was having problems. Peal speed 3.24	168	6
4	Bishops Stortford 2	Triples	This band had trouble controlling the bells, going into the test piece they had great difficulties but managed to reach the end. Peal speed 3.31	297	7

## Celebrations at Wheathampstead

A home band (including regular ringers) rang on all eight bells in St Helen's Wheathampstead both before and after the service on Saturday 28 July when Hugh and Susan L'Estrange renewed their wedding vows to celebrate their 10 year anniversary. As is traditional at weddings in the church, where bells are rung from the floor in the crossing, the couple walked through an arch formed by the bell ropes.

Both Hugh and Susan are themselves ringers at St Helen's. Hugh has had some serious health issues – including being paralysed from the chest down in 2014 – so the service was also one of thanksgiving for the fact that he is now walking, and he should be ringing again on Sundays shortly. He's certainly intending to join the band on their tour of churches in Ireland (Dublin to Cork) this September.

Susan said, "I've always felt privileged to ring for other couples at their weddings, but it was very special to be the ones walking under the ropes, especially when all the ringers are friends."



Ringers from left to right: William Tudway, Anne Howie, Roger Gedy, Carol Tizard, Ben Quinn, Dianne Crowder, Dan Gregory, Chris Male

## District Meetings

In July, seven of us met at Kimpton but we were able to ring a variety of methods for those present. But what a change at North Mymms....! 22 ringers turned up making it one of the best attended meetings for the year. With everything from Rounds and Call Changes to Surprise Major and excellent tea/coffee and biscuits at half-time resulted in a very good morning.

On 15 September, the meeting will be held at The Abbey– the Mayor and County President will be there – all welcome.

## MFP (My First Peal)

By Christine Nutton

I learnt to ring (or at least to do both strokes unsupervised) on the heavy six at Chesterton on the outskirts of Cambridge in the early 1970s. I never really managed the transition to upstairs rings and lighter bells, and soon the arrival of a daughter and the move to St Albans meant I dropped out completely. Subsequently I developed serious spinal problems which precluded virtually all physical activity for about 15 years. A pioneering operation eventually laid the foundations for a return to near normal health, but I never thought of trying to ring again until 2015. Vivian, now tower captain at Sandridge, found the Sunday Service band, much depleted by moves away for retirement or university, was often unable to ring all 6 bells, while I had stepped down as churchwarden and was no longer needed downstairs before the service. He persuaded me to have another go, starting with the fourth – not too light!

Strangely I have absolutely no memory of the learning process at Chesterton, but whoever taught me did a good job, and the basic technique returned quite quickly. I soon discovered the pleasures and challenges of ringing at other towers at practices and District meetings, including Western District teas! For the first time I progressed to plain hunting and then to doing it while others did something else, meanwhile enjoying the sound of bells and feeling really useful on Sundays and at weddings. I rang my first quarter in December 2016, then three more, and as our forty-fifth wedding anniversary approached this year I daringly began to hatch a plan to ring at least one peal in my life.

For the first attempt on July 7<sup>th</sup> we struggled to find a band as illness, holidays, family engagements and the RWNYC prevented three potential conductors and numerous ringers from accepting. The attempt failed after half an hour, to be replaced by a quarter, but was useful practice and the support of those who rang was much appreciated. The next attempt was scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> August, two days before my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, and to everyone's relief Bob Crocker was available to conduct.



I was determined to succeed this time and spent the previous week in serious preparation both mental (plenty of sleep) and physical, as my main fear was distraction by pain in my right leg, which sometimes gives trouble. I'd also been perfecting the art of ringing with economy of effort, and thankfully the weather was by now much cooler. This all seemed to pay off, and the further we progressed, the easier it was to ignore any twinges. I failed to catch the call as the method changed on one occasion but managed to "keep calm and carry on hunting".

**Peal Band:** Left to Right Ron Titmus, Brian Watson, Vivian Nutton, Christine Nutton, Bob Crocker, Judith Titmus

The sense of achievement as Bob called "That's all" is still buoying me up over a week later, and I want to express heartfelt thanks not only to the other members of the band, but to all the many

Sandridge, Hertfordshire

St Leonard

Saturday, 7 July 2018 in 40m (6–0–18 in B b )

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Christine Nutton
2. Judith Titmus
3. Nicky J Smith
4. Brian C Watson
5. Vivian Nutton (C)
6. Ron Titmus

Rung on the 45th wedding anniversary of  
Christine and Vivian Nutton



Hertfordshire ringers who have patiently and encouragingly helped me reach this milestone – but I don't intend to stop here, and look forward to further progress.

### **Sandridge, St Leonard**

Saturday 11 August 2018 in 2h 34 (6 cwt)

5040 Doubles

240 Grandsire and 960 each of St Simon's, St Martin's, St Osmund, Eynesbury and Plain Bob

1. **Christine Nutton**
2. **Vivian Nutton**
3. **Judith Titmus**
4. **Brian C Watson**
5. **Robert J Crocker (Cond)**
6. **Ron Titmus**

### **First Peal (1) and Birthday Compliment to Christine Nutton (born 13.08.1948)**

## **Obituary: John Nicholson**

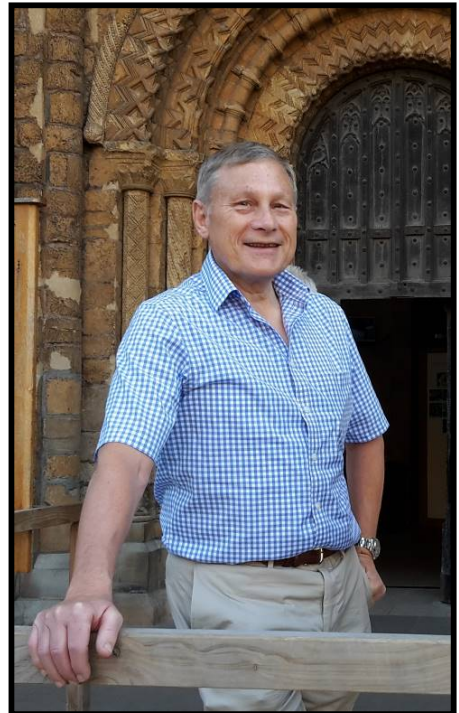
By Claire Nicholson

John Nicholson was born 19th February 1947 and grew up in Peckham Rye in South London. John started his career as an apprentice electrical engineer at the London Electricity Board where he met Barbara and they married in 1972.

He worked hard to progress his career and spent over 20 years as a telecommunications engineer with the Eastern Electricity Board. John took voluntary redundancy at the age of 50 and became a consultant working on network infrastructure projects across mainland Europe. After a while, he grew weary of the constant travelling and he set up his own company as an IT consultant; which he continued to do until he retired.

John always kept himself occupied. Alongside his work and his hobbies, he embarked on a Bachelor of Science degree followed by a Master of Business Administration degree, both with the Open University. He was also was an accomplished DIYer which came in handy whenever he moved to a new house or Barbara wanted to redecorate the kitchen. John would often come back from his day job and work into the early hours of the morning painting, decorating, and fixing. His DIY skills were not just limited to his own houses, he liked to help family, and for several years carried out odd jobs in ringing chambers and churches as well.

John learnt to ring at Tring in 1986. Soon after, the bells at Tring were removed for rehanging. This gave John a chance to use his excellent practical skills by being an enthusiastic member of the working party providing the labour for the rehang. In the middle of the Tring rehang, we moved to Hatfield where the bells were a little trickier to handle, but the band was



just as welcoming. John fitted in and as well as supporting practice nights at Hatfield he was also heading back to Tring on regular basis to help finish off the work there until the bells were back in. This was the template for John's involvement with ringing. He was someone with wider skills who was always willing to help where he could and could be relied on for the tough or dirty jobs. We need someone to paint the top half of a 30' ringing chamber – John did that. We need someone to drive a dozen rowdy bell ringers around in minibus all day – John did that. We need someone turn up early to help teach the learners or clean the tower – John did that.

John became a stalwart of the Hatfield band and was steeple keeper and then tower captain there for many years. He was also a supporter of the Hertford County Association and was St Albans District Secretary for a decade. Just another thankless task that he did quietly, diligently and above all effectively. He was happy to support other towers in need notably Wheathampstead. When the band there was being rebuilt John was a frequent visitor to help develop the band and bring the tower back into the District after a twenty-year absence.

John never kept any records of his own ringing achievements or of the towers he visited. Some Bellboard and Pealbase searches reveal that John rang 10 peals and over 400 quarter peals in his thirty-odd years of ringing. He seemed happier to be in the background and play a supporting role in other areas.

In 2008, John and Barbara moved to Lincolnshire to embrace their retirement from working life, but this did not slow John down. He loved the open space and the ability to plant fruits and vegetables, and to mow the lawn on his red ride-on lawn mower. In the mornings he would jump on his bicycle to collect the newspaper. He joined the university of the third age and was often at the theatre. He even took up ballroom dancing.

John became chair of governors at Potterhanworth School. Being a governor brought a lot of enjoyment to John. He saw the position as an honour and a privilege. Each week John would attend the school's Monday morning church services. And being a governor also meant that he could join the children for Christmas lunch and dress up as Father Christmas.



John also became involved with the Lincoln Guild of Change Ringers, helping out with tower maintenance, holding a number of positions including being Guild Report Secretary and President of the Central Branch. He was very lucky to move to an area that is a ringing hotspot and find a welcoming and enthusiastic band of ringers. John was now ringing with friends who encouraged him and pushed him further than before and with them he rang quarters of spliced surprise major and surprise royal.

John was a strong and a determined person. He kept his life full and gave to his family and the community. John was sometimes reserved in his emotions, but he was proud of his family. He was husband to Barbara for 46 years and father to Claire and Dawn. He took a real pleasure in his roles as husband, father, grandfather, son, uncle, brother and godfather. He was also a friend to many others.

When John was diagnosed with cancer in early 2015 he

took it in his stride and was determined to beat it. He quietly got on with the treatments and never complained. He kept pushing himself and carried on going. Like one of John's favourite actors, John Wayne, John lived his life and fought his cancer with "courage, strength and (true) grit".

John sadly passed away before he got old and is missed by wife Barbara, daughters Dawn and Claire and his many friends.

Five quarter peals were rung in John's memory – two of them are printed here

Lincoln Diocesan Guild

**Washingborough**, Lincolnshire St John

Thursday 14 June 2018 in 44m (12 cwt)

**1260 Grandsire Triples**

1. Gemma Evans
2. Helen Brotherton
3. Sylvia M Taylor
4. Betty F Stracey
5. Bill Brotherton
6. Alan DH Bird
7. Michael E Stracey (C)
8. Philip H Dawson

**Rung following the funeral of fellow ringer John Nicholson**

**Aspenden, Hertfordshire**

**Wednesday, 13 June 2018 in 44m (9 cwt)**

1376 Lincoln Surprise Major

**Composed by Paul J Flavell**

1. John S Rank
2. Mary Bone
3. Ann Evans
4. Vicky LeFèvre
5. Penny Browne
6. Graham Lay
7. Claire C Nicholson (C)
8. Fred Bone

**Remembering John Nicholson, formerly a ringer at Hatfield, Herts and secretary of the St. Albans District of the Hertford County Association. More recently he was a valued member of the Lincoln Cathedral company.**

Editor Rob Goss  
*e-mail [mary.rob.goss@gmail.com](mailto:mary.rob.goss@gmail.com)*