

## Remembering John Conduct – Louise James

*John Conduct learnt to ring at Erdington in 1943 and went on to ring 27 peals for the Guild in the 1950s and 1960s. He died in December 2019, and his obituary, below, has been written by Louise James, a ringer from Devon. John's obituary was published in the Guild of Devonshire Ringers' newsletter: 'Ringing Round Devon'. We have permission from Louise, and the GDR newsletter editor, Ian Campbell, to republish this.*

Many of you may not have heard that John died on 9<sup>th</sup> December, a few days short of his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Mention his name to anyone who knew him and the response is always 'such a kind man', 'a lovely man, modest, helpful', 'a brilliant striker'. A well-respected ringer from Cornwall once said that it was such a pity that because the striking competitions included a raise – something that John's health could not entertain – one of the best strikers in the county could not take part.



John learned to ring in 1943, on muffled bells, at Erdington. His father also rang there and they were both in the choir. He later went on to become tower captain. He regularly attended the 43ers reunions until they stopped due to dwindling numbers. When he was courting Jean he told her not to expect to see him in the week as he would be out ringing. When he and Jean married, he rang before the service, linking the two great loves of his life. Jean became a ringing widow while they lived in Birmingham, as John was off most Saturdays ringing as well as Sundays for services and a couple of practice nights in the week. His records show that he rang 91 peals (conducted one) and 259 quarter peals (44). He was happy on all numbers. He was always interested to hear where I had rung on my travels, and would quite often relate details of peals he had rung there, who was in the band and the conductor. He rang quite a bit in the early years with the Beresfords. He could not have known that he would be ringing with them and the next generations in more recent times.

The family moved to the West Country in the late 60s, ringing at Stratton with Harry Stacey, Charlie Sanguine and Henry Trewin amongst others. As well as ringing, he inscribed several peal boards for Stratton – calligraphy being one of his many talents. His daughters, Susan and Debbie, learned to ring at Stratton but gave up after a couple of years. John was thrilled that Debbie took it up again more recently at Alphington. By this time, John and Jean had moved to Oxford but they still visited Devon from time to time, and John was happy to go ringing with Debbie, but sorry that he could only sit and watch on recent trips.

John was keen to help learners progress and had a way of explaining things that everyone understood. He enjoyed conducting too and always had his little book to hand, often passing you a piece of paper with a touch that he thought we would enjoy. He particularly enjoyed calling Stedman. He was always happy to travel for some good ringing, and was a regular in the St Brannock's Society quarter peals, but he still hankered to ring one more peal while his health would tolerate it. For Jean's birthday in October 2008 he chose four-spliced at Bridgerule (where he and Jean were living). We were all relieved when it came round. After they moved to Oxford he rang for a while at Radley until the walk up the church path became too much for him.

John was a member of several ringing groups in Devon and Cornwall, so when arranging the quarter peal in his memory it seemed only right to include ringers from those groups and the towers where he had been a regular helper: Ancient Society of College Youths, Guild of Devonshire Ringers, Truro Diocesan Guild, St Brannock's Society, Taw, Torrington & Tamar Midweek Group, Marhamchurch and the northern branch of the Truro Diocesan Guild. We were delighted that Jean and Debbie were able to listen to the ringing.

In his last letter to me he said, 'Oh I do miss my ringing'. Not as much as we will miss you, dear friend.