

Biographical Record

Elizabeth (Betty) ROBBINS, nee SPICE (1925 – 2013)

Represented the the Oxford University Society from 1948 to 1950
and attended 1 meeting

Betty Spice was born at Tunstall in Kent in 1925. She came from a family of ringers: her paternal grandfather was a ringer and he had several ringing sons. Her elder brother, John, was also a renowned ringer. Her first peal was Grandsire Triples in hand in 1941, when the ban on tower bell ringing meant that peals could only be rung in hand. On one occasion Betty rang a handbell peal with her mother, father and brother John. Her first tower bell peal was Plain Bob Major at Tunstall on 18th September 1943. In total she rang 329 peals, of which she conducted 49. She took part in the first ever peal of Glasgow Surprise Major and she also rang Spliced Surprise Major up to 13 methods. She rang peals of Stedman Cinqes in hand. She was a very capable all round ringer.

Betty was educated at Somerville College, Oxford, where she read chemistry. She followed her brother, John, as the Master of the Oxford University Society. While she was up at Oxford she met her future husband, Peter Robbins, who was taught to handle a bell by Betty's father, George. Peter and Betty became engaged in 1949 and were married in 1951 after Peter was ordained. After Betty went down from Oxford she taught chemistry at Bedford.

Betty and Peter had four children: Andrew was born in 1952, Catherine in 1954. Richard followed in 1957 and the youngest child was Margaret who arrived in 1959. Bringing up four children as well as working hard as a vicar's wife meant there was little time for ringing during that period. Also not many of their parishes had bells so opportunities to ring were very limited.

After Peter retired they moved to Staffordshire and rang for a while at Tamworth. A further move took them to Lichfield. The steps to the ringing chambers at these two towers proved too much for Betty who suffered from arthritis and she had to give up ringing.

She developed leukaemia in 2012 and died on 14th March 2013. Her funeral took place at St. John's Hospital Chapel Lichfield on March 22nd.

An obituary for her, written by Peter, appeared in 'The Ringing World' on April 26th 2013.

