

John Kemp's 90th Birthday

Alastair Stracey

As many readers will know, John Kemp has been ringing at Hertford since 1948, and from the early 1960s to 2015 was Ringing Master. Although John can no longer climb the stairs, he continues to take a keen interest in all things to do with bells and the Hertford ringers determined to do something for this anniversary.

John's birthday was on 31st August and 1st September was the date selected for the celebration. The afternoon started with simultaneous quarter peals being rung at All Saints and St Andrews. Both bands were made up of ringers with associations with Hertford either as visitors or regular ringers and conducted by John's son David and by his successor as Ringing Master Alastair Stracey.



These were followed by a ringers' tea in the St Andrews Centre, with plenty of sandwiches, cake, tea and coffee which was enjoyed by over 30 people and included a celebratory cake, specially made by Celia Workman. Although ringers' teas are not as lavish as in times long gone when many ringers would travel for the tea rather than the ringing!

At the tea, John was presented with a framed address to which over 50 ringers had contributed, including ringers from as far afield as Australia, Cornwall and Birmingham. In addition, ringers had come

from Daventry, East Grinstead and Chichester to ring and to salute John.

The framed address to the "Master Emeritus" thanked John for his contribution to ringing in Hertford and for his contribution to each of our own ringing careers, a contribution which one person described as "profound". The afternoon concluded with a course of Plain Bob Major rung on handbells by Janet Penney, Pat and Graham Lay and David Kemp.



Details of the quarter peals are;

At All Saints: 1296 Plain Bob Caters, rung by John Rank, Simon Edwards, Keith Game, Clive Moore, Daniel Gregory, Graham Lay, Ashley Monck, Brian Foley, David Kemp (Junior) and Trevor Groom.

At St Andrews: 1280 Yorkshire Surprise Major, rung by David Harris, Gwynneth White (nee James), Roger Pascoe, Ann Evans, Alastair Stracey, Nigel Thomson, Jim White and Richard Sales.

Finally, these events cannot take place without a great deal of help from a number of sources. In addition to the ringers who took part, we must also thank Jo and Alan for agreeing that we could ring, to the trustees of the St Andrews Centre for letting us hold the celebration there and to David and Carol Kemp and Hilary Stracey for the catering and tea making on the day.

In John's words afterwards "it was a special day".