

## Richard Frederick Bowditch

10th October 1947 – 31st March 2014



Richard was born in Fallingbostal, Germany. His father was in the army and the family moved around for some years but eventually settled in North Wootton.

Richard was 14 when he was part of a group of youngsters from North Wootton who were rounded up by the Revd Simon Riddley to learn to ring. He continued ringing until the age of 18 and also regularly pumped the organ during services at North Wootton church.

He finished school in December 1962 and went to work in the foundry at Sheldons of Wells where he was to serve an apprenticeship. He was pleased to be starting work but had to check in the dictionary to discover what a foundry was. He completed his apprenticeship at the age of 21 having passed his advanced City and Guilds in foundry practice.

At this age Richard took up tug of war. Over the next 24 years he competed in Switzerland, Southern Ireland, Holland and Jersey and his teams won many trophies before Richard felt it was time to retire.

He also competed at power lifting and his strength was remarked on by his peers; especially as he didn't eat meat.

At the age of 30 Richard started working for himself full time at his foundry at Dulcote where he continued for 35 years until he was forced to retire through ill health. He was very proud to complete 50 working years and stated that he had no regrets about retiring any earlier as he loved his work so much.

Over the years Richard made many incredible things including brass ornaments, ornate handles for windows, a brass cannon that he actually fired, parts for a reproduction vintage car, a commemorative plaque for former manager Bill Shankley on the gates at Liverpool football ground, parts for steam engines and six very large plaques that are now hung on the entrance walls to Wimbledon Tennis club. He also made a Pindaric plaque which was placed in the Olympic stadium for the 2012 Games as commissioned by Boris Johnson, a coat of arms for Prince Charles' estate and between 1989 and 2013 he cast over 462 bells. The largest bell that he cast was about 2.5cwt and the smallest around 6oz. He cast several mini rings in addition to those he installed in his own garage.

Richard returned to bell ringing when Jackie's daughter, Lisa, asked him to join the band at Shapwick Church. He never looked back and ringing became a great passion which played a major part in the rest of his life.

In 2002 Richard and Jackie moved into their new home, Great Orchard. Richard was very particular about his requirements for this house, the garage of which had to be at least 20 by 30 feet. He discussed reducing the size of the house as he considered it was too big but quickly changed his mind when the architect indicated that the garage would also need to be made smaller if this was done.

He put his own mark on the house with things he made himself including a large clock and a weather vane. He also cast his own ring of eight bells which were hung in the 'huge' garage. These bells have been enjoyed by many ringers as has the hospitality provided by Jackie, including countless cups of tea and slices of cake.

Richard was tower captain at Pilton for many years and enjoyed teaching new ringers. He acted as my Assistant Ringing Master from 2005 until his death. He loved ringing at Wells Cathedral – I remember his joy at successfully completing quarter peals of the Standard Eight Surprise Major

methods, and eight-spliced, ringing the 56cwt tenor. I also remember my own panic trying to conduct Superlative whilst being acutely aware that it was only a few weeks before that his appendix had burst!

Richard established a regular quarter peal band from members of the Glaston Branch. When he became too ill to comfortably ring for any length of time on tower bells we were pleased to attempt quarter peals on his very own bells. Our last success was 1250 Yorkshire Surprise Major on 12th February. Richard rang the treble as he felt he would be unable to concentrate on the method.

In February 2013 Richard started suffering shortness of breath and was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation and fluid around the heart. There were further complications and it wasn't until August that he was finally diagnosed with lung cancer and given six to nine months. Devastating, especially as he had always been so fit and healthy.

Richard accepted his fate without complaint and stated that he had no regrets in his life. His only fear was that he would be leaving Jackie and he dreaded the day when he wouldn't be able to ring any more.

There has been much ringing in Richard's memory, including the following quarters rung in Glaston Branch towers by his friends.

Jackie has asked me to pass on her thanks to everyone who has rung for Richard, sent messages of condolence and/or came to the service of thanksgiving for his life.

BEVERLEY PERRY

Glaston Branch Ringing Master

*The above is based on memories of Richard as delivered by Jake Cowling at the service of thanksgiving.*

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