Hessle, All Saints

The township of Hessle dates from Anglo-Saxon times, as does its Parish Church, mentioned in the Domesday book, 1086. The Saxon Church of which nothing remains beyond the mention in Domesday was replaced between 1100 and 1150 by one built in the Norman style, and this probably had a small western tower. With the exception of a few stones, the Norman Church has also disappeared and this was replaced in the early part of the 13th century by a much larger construction which forms the basic structure of the present Church.

There is an interesting old legend about the Parish Clerks field, which dates back to this time and makes the first reference to a bell. The legend says that this field was left to the Parish Clerk, out of gratitude, by a man who, on his way from Hull one dark and misty evening, lost his way in the wild, unenclosed swampy land by the Humber bank, but who, on hearing the Church bell ringing was, by its welcome sound, enabled to grope his way safely to his village home in Hessle. The legend further says that he directed the Parish Clerk, in return for the gift of the land, to forever ring the Church bell at seven-o'clock in the evening, to commemorate his miraculous escape, and as a reassuring sound from the Church tower 'to other wanderers in a similar plight, who might welcome the sound of the Church bell to guide them home safely.

At the beginning of the 15th century the small 12th century Norman tower was replaced by the present tower, with the graceful octagonal spire rising to 170 feet. An ancient request recorded at this time that a bell was tolled each evening at seven-o'clock, after which the day of the month was tolled on another bell.

It was shortly after the turn of the 17th century that a peal of four bells was installed in the tower - no doubt the gift of the Parishioners. Inscriptions on two of the bells were *Jesu be our speed, 1611 and All men what heare my mournfull sounde repent before you ly in grounde, 1645*

The present peal of six bells was recast in 1892 from the 17th century peal of four bells, by John -Taylor and Company, Loughborough: Tenor bell 14-0-7 in F#. The six bells are situated in a large frame made of oak and cast iron, and are rung, at present, from the ground floor, some 65 feet below. It is hoped that in the not too distant future a ringers gallery will be installed at Hessle, and there are also plans for augmentation.

Hessle has had a very dedicated band of ringers for many years now. In the years following the end of the Second World War such names as Dale, Hobson, Rodmell and Speck are seen in the ringing records. A former Curate in Hessle, the Revd. Fred Ross, did much to help and improve the ringing team during the 1960's by teaching many local youngsters the art of bellringing. The last twenty years have been years of fluctuating growth - but the 1990's have seen the establishment of a very stable band with ten adults forming the nucleus of the team. Practice night is busy, with a full range, from call changes to spliced surprise minor, being rung. The band ring many quarter peals during the year and at least one peal per year is attempted. This together with numerous weddings and service ringing twice every Sunday means that the bells in Hessle are rung on every possible occasion.

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