North Cave, All Saints

For centuries, a traveller approaching North Cave from the east along the old Turnpike that ran from Beverley to Howden, would first see the tower of North Cave Church as he descended Castle Hill

Today, a visitor to the village will still get the same view by looking to the left after passing Castle Farm on the 81230 road. The tower is a little easier to spot when the trees are not in full leaf, and at night when the single powerful floodlight mounted on the tower's east wall, above the pitch of the nave roof, allows it to be seen from much greater distances.

The route the coach road took used to run to the north of the church, but this was changed in the 1880's when the lake was built. Now a series of sharp bends bring visitors past the door of the Church. However, one thing that has remained basically unaltered since the fourteenth century, except by wind and rain, is its fabric.

The Church of All Saints', North Cave, is a delightful building, its Norman design with later additions, is the epitome. of a foreigners idea of what an English country Church should look like. Surrounded on three sides by mature trees and on the fourth by a recently planted arboretum, the gurgling of the nearby trout stream can be heard from the graveyard. A walk between the ancient headstones, along grassy paths is a treat enjoyed by many who enter one of the three gates into the Churchyard.

The tower hides six bells that are in the key of G. The first record of bells being hung is when 5 bells were cast in 1772 by Doulton and Sons of York, although it is possible that there was a single tolling bell before then. Many rural Churches signalled services and sometimes time, with a single bell being tolled in the morning and evening.

These five bells were re-cast in 1919, by John Taylor of Loughborough. At the same time, the sixth bell, a tenor was added, the whole as a thanksgiving for victory in the Great War. The Vicar and Church Wardens of the time are named on number five, and the names of benefactors who provided the tenor, weighing 11.2.16, are similarly remembered on their bell.

The 1772 set swung in brass shell bearings, mounted on a wooden frame in the top of the tower, the marks of the timbers still being visible. The re-cast set of six were hung lower down, in a steel frame fastened to a more solid section of masonry and in moving ball race bearings.

There is an Ellacombe chime in the ringing chamber, but the playing of it is a little difficult and hence it is not liked.

The ringing chamber is in the former vestry, now separated from the main body of the Church by a finely carved oak screen commemorating the 1911 Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary.

The Company of Ringers

The record of ringers is of recent origin, having been begun by the present Captain, Geoff Hardwick. Like many rural Churches, the North Cave congregation has diminished over the last half century and with it has gone the Choir. Before the War, it was accepted that many village boys would join the Choir, remaining until their voices broke and then some would become members of the company of ringers. It was through this route that Geoff began his ringing career in 1944, becoming Captain in 1956.

The choir ceased about 20 years ago, since which time a number of local people have learned the rudiments of ringing, to keep the tradition of the bells alive.

The current team ring for the Sunday morning service, with occasional afternoon and evening services as well. They are available for special occasions, most frequently weddings. Presently they practice limited change ringing - rounds with a hunting course as a call change.

Up to November 1984, the bells were rung twice on Sundays, for morning and evening worship, then services were reduced to one. Tuesday evening is the occasional practice evening.

There are one or interesting reminders of some past North Cave ringers. A paper cutting exists, from the late nineteenth cen-tury, recording the death of George Allott of Park Street, Nordham who died aged 91. He had resided in North Cave for all his life and had been a ringer for 50 years. Strange to think that he probably knew some of the first team of ringers from 1772!

There is a small portrait hanging in the ringing chamber, of Mr Newmarch, painted about 100 years ago. It shows the ringing chamber before the organ which was above it, was moved to Cliffe Church, when the current one was presented to North Cave. A very solid screen separates vestry and nave and the altar can be seen through a very small doorway.

Until the mid 1950's it was a practice to ring a death bell or nine tellers. The tenor was rung as early as possible on the day of death and always before sunset. The bell was rung in a group, nine times for a man, six times for a woman and three times for a child, then the age of the person followed.

The present company of ringers is a bit of a family affair with local farmer Dennis Underwood (5), and his two daughters Alison (2) and Rachel (3) being joined by Jason Bradley (tenor) and Norman Woollons (4) with the Captain ringing treble.

Few ladies of the Parish have been involved in ringing, but one notable occasion took place on February 28, 1982, when for the first (and only) time an all female team of local ringers rang for the 11am service.

The first lady ringer was Susan Wood, a local teacher who joined the team in 1971. She also rang in the team at her own wedding in 1978.

Throughout each year, the Church welcomes a number of visiting teams from the Beverley and District Society and from further afield, each of whose skills are appreciated by local residents. Because the Church is almost the most easterly building in the village, for best enjoyment the wind should also be in the east. However, it is a truism that the wind will always be easterly when the present company have one of their off days!

Norman Woollons