Walkington, All Hallows

Very little has been written on the history of Walkington's parish Church as there is hardly any on which to base such a history. Why was the Church built where it was when, as far as we know, the village always lay in the valley? Why is the tower so obviously superior in design and construction to the rest of the building? Why has the South transept window such fine tracery whilst all the other windows are straight-forward Perpendicular? Why is the Jacobean pulpit the only surviving piece of ancient woodwork? Short of a lucky discovery we shall never know the answers, for the starting point for enquiry, the parish registers, were taken to London about 1780 to be used in some litigation case and were never returned. (This was reported in George Oliver's "History of Beverley". 1829).

What can be pieced together has been gleaned from “The Rectors of Walkingtn” by S.G.E. Lythe.

Nothing is known of Walkington in Saxon times other than that its name is Saxon in origin. William the Conqueror included Walkington in a gift to Bishop William of Durham in 1084, but the Domesday book records Walkington as being divided between the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Durham and a surviving Saxon thane named Gamel.

There are charters referring to the Church before 1100 but the first chronicled evidence of a Rector is in 1233 (Robert of Hem-ingbrough). Walkington has never had its village "squire" and this independence had its price. There was no Hotham or Sykes to foot the bill when money was needed for essential repairs and the Parish was thrown back on its own resources. This accounts for the hotch-potch of styles and the mixing of brickwork and stonework in a seemingly haphazard way. The Church is cruciform in design consisting of chancel, nave, transepts and a Western tower with small pinnacles.

The nearest Walkington ever got to having a "squire" was during the period 1808 to 1891 when Daniel Ferguson, and then his son, became Rectors of Walkington. The enclosure of the Parish in 1795 had led to the Rector becoming a principal landowner, owning well over 500 acres. In 1866 one of the Douglas' brothers married Annie Eliza Fawsitt, heiress to a estate of over 1400 acres. Thereafter with a Ferguson in the Rectory and a Ferguson-Fawsitt in Walkington Hall the family influence was extensive. The Fergusons were not merely landowners, they were magistrates and estate developers, their influence and their creations can still be seen in farms, plantations and boundary walls, and in the Ferguson-Fawsitt Arms. The Church was refurbished and the chancel rebuilt in 1818 and the East window was reglazed in 1870. The East window that the modern visitor sees, however, was commissioned to replace that of a hundred years before and was dedicated on 26th April 1970.

There were three bells in the church as far back as 1552, the first mention of them being in the "Inventory of Church Goods" which records;

*Item iij (bel)les in the stepill*

The Churchwardens accounts include many references to the bells and ringers from 1782 - 1863 (after this date until 1909 the records are incomplete). In 1782 there is the entry; November 5th. Three ringers at 6/- and also, in the same year, William Slater spent two days mending the bells and was paid 4/-. For the next twenty years the only time there is mention of the bells being rung is on November 5th (in those days it was a recognised Church festival) although they must have been rung quite frequent-ly as there are fairly numerous purchases of bell ropes, oil, and the odd repair.

By 1804 a William Rawson was paid 10/- per annum to ring a bell for Sunday services which he did for six years, after which his wife Elizabeth Rawson took over for a further four years. Modern ringers would approve of the payment to the ringers who rang Walkington bells for Queen Victoria's Coronation Day in 1837:-ale, oil, candles, cheese and bread.

Two of the bells were recast by Seller of York in 1725 and the third by Harrison of Barton-on-Humber in 1798, and the whole set was rehung in 1865. By the 1950's the woodwork in the belfry was giving cause for concern and, due mainly to the influence of the wife of the Rector, N.A.H. Lawrence, it was decided to augment the bells to six. A major reconstruction was undertaken in 1958 involving a new frame, the recasting of the old bells and the addition of three more, and in March 1959 the new peal rang out. Such a relatively new ring of bells could not expect to have a long list of notable ringers in its history but it would be impossible to mention Walkington without remembering Joan and Norman Castle. Joan was largely responsible for building up a band in the 1960's which won the Albert Sellars cup for the tower that had made the most progress and rang numerous quarter peals. Norman was President of the Beverley and District Ringing Society and Joan was Secretary. They produced the first B & D reports as well as editing and producing the Walkington Newsletter each month. They were sorely missed when they moved to Ripley and the B & D was saddened by the tragic death of Joan in 1981. Since the departure of the Castles to Ripley ringing at Walkington has experienced mixed fortunes and for a number of years in the 1980's the bells were not rung regularly by a local band. Since 1989, however, the tower has seen a revival with a local band able on occasions to rise to Surprise Minor for Sunday Service ringing.

Details of the bells:

Treble; Diameter 1' 11.5" Weight 3-0-14, note G.

Inscription; Let this bell ring joyfully to the Glory of God, presented by her son, Norman B. S. Birch,A.D.1958. In memory of Anna Maria Birch.

Second; Diameter 2'1" Weight 3-1-27, note F.

Inscription; To the Glory of God and in happy memory of Donald Hall. 1911-1940. Thus the gods wrought - they wove a thread of death for some that others in the years to come might have a song. Presented by his family. A.D. 1958

Third; Diameter 2'2.5" Weight 3-3-12, note E.

Inscription; Let this bell ring to the Glory of God. Given by the people of Walkington.A.D.1958. N.A.H. Lawrence. Rector.

Fourth; Diameter 2' 3.5" Weight 4-0-20, note D.

Ancient Inscription; Gloria in altissimis Deo. E. Seller, Ebor. Recast 1959 by John Taylor & Co. Loughborough.

Fifth; Diameter 2' 6.5" Weight 5-1-26, note C. (1725)

Ancient Inscription; Vox jubilate Deo. E. Seller. Ebor. Recast 1959 by John Taylor & Co. Loughborough.

Tenor; Diameter 2' 10" Weight 7-2-11, note B.

Original bell cast in 1798 by James Harrison of Barton had no inscription.

Inscription now; Let this bell ring to the Glory of God. Given by the people of Walkington. A.D. 1958. N.A.H.Lawrence. Rector. L.Binnington, N.W.Castle, Churchwardens.

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