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. The tower is a little easier to spot when the trees are not in full leaf, and at night when the floodlights allow 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, which is on the right after passing Castle Farm on the B1230 road. 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, with its Norman design with later additions. 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 has six bells 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.

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.

The ringing chamber retains a working Ellacombe chime, but the playing of it is a little difficult.

Until 2004 the ringing chamber was in the former vestry, which is 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. Following a very generous bequest from Hannah Hotchin the present first-floor ringing chamber overlooking the nave was installed. This permitted the room below to be used separately while also making the ringing more public.

In 2013 the East Riding Ringing Centre was formed. This comprises a simulator to sound the bells when they have been silenced by clapper-locks as well as use of the downstairs room for theoretical introduction to and investigation of the course being studied. Subjects have included Plain Bob Doubles & Minor and Grandsire Doubles as well as the launch meeting of The Hull Handbells Project which made the Ringing World in November 2016.

The Company of Ringers

The tower has a list of service ringers dating back to 2000, having been begun by the previous Captain, Geoff Hardwick, who started it to record those who rang-in the new Millennium. Like many rural Churches, the North Cave congregation diminished over the last half century and with it went 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. In 2011, having completed 55 years as Captain, Geoff stood down and is now the tower’s Honorary Life President. The choir ceased about 40 years ago, since which time a number of local people have learned the art of ringing, to keep the tradition of the bells alive.

Up to November 1984, the bells were rung twice on Sundays, for morning and evening worship, then services were reduced to the morning. The band rings for the service, with occasional afternoon and evening services as well. They mark special occasions, most frequently weddings, but also such national events as the Olympic Games and royal weddings. Tuesday evening is the practice evening.

The village of North Cave lost 19 men in the Great War. The ringers have marked the 100th anniversary of each death to the day with a Quarter Peal in the soldier’s memory. The only exception is Private John Curtis whose date is not known. We therefore rang his Quarter on the morning of November 11th, prior to a full Peal in the afternoon performed by a largely Service band.

There are one or interesting reminders of some past North Cave ringers. A paper cutting exists, from the late nineteenth century, 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 120 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. In the portrait a very solid screen separates vestry and nave and the altar can be seen through a very small doorway.

The ringing chamber has three lead plaques, presumably created upon the replacement of these sheets. They date back to 1796. The roof which was releaded in 2016 had an inscription of the initials of the churchwardens in office at the time of the previous re-roofing in 1756. This has been retained by the church. The current churchwardens are similarly recorded in the new lead.

Until the mid 1950's it was a practice to ring a death bell or nine Taylors. 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.

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 Ringing 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.

Since 2013 the tower has entered the Beverley & District’s annual striking competition, hosting it in 2015 and winning it at Middleton in 2018. In 2017 we hosted the Yorkshire Association’s 6-bell competition.

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Website: [www.eastridingringingcentre.co.uk](http://www.eastridingringingcentre.co.uk)

Facebook: the East Riding Ringing Centre