

**THE PARISH OF BELTINGHAM
WITH HENSHAW
Parish Newsletter July 2020**



Notes on St Cuthbert's Church, Beltingham

One of the things we have been missing during lockdown has been the normal routine of weekly services in our parish churches. During a usual summer, so many people call in at St Cuthbert's Church in Beltingham, sometimes to see the ancient yew at the back of the church, but often because they were married in the church, or baptised there, or have a relative buried in the cemetery. However, whilst recognising that the church is clearly very old, many may know little of its history and associations. It is named for St Cuthbert, as his body rested here during the journey by the monks from Lindisfarne escaping from the Viking invaders. His body eventually reached Durham Cathedral.

There is some evidence that there has been a church on this site in Beltingham since Saxon times, supported by the fact that there is the shaft of a Saxon cross outside at the east end of the church. The presence of ancient yews also points to a church from earliest times – indeed the yew at the back of the church could be 2000 years old.

The present church building dates from about 1500. By 1650 it was a near ruin but was restored by Major John Ridley of Hardriding. Originally there would be no pews in the church – hence the expression “the weakest to the wall”, but these were added later, probably when sermons became longer! Further work took place in the 19th C, after which the building would look much as it does today. It is Grade 1 listed.

The church is approached through a lychgate, donated by the Hon Frances Bowes Lyon, whose family retain a private burial ground within the church grounds. The church is surrounded by ancient tombstones, the oldest readable one dating back to 1781. The Northumbrian author, Nancy Ridley, is buried within the cemetery. In the grounds is a tree planted by the late Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of her visit in 1989, when she was

staying with her cousin at Beltingham House, next door to the church. At the corner of the church, near the Saxon cross, you can see marks in the wall from where arrows were sharpened in earlier times.

Once inside the church, you will see there are some very fine stain glass windows. The big east window, shown in the photograph, is by Kempe. There is also a much more modern window, in memory of Douglas Smith OBE, by the artist Leonard Evetts. The south windows are memorials to commemorate the survival of relatives of the Bowes Lyons in an early motor car accident in 1904.

The font at the door of the church is possibly medieval, and it is thought that this is where the martyr, Bishop Ridley, was baptised. He was burnt at the stake in Oxford, for refusing to renounce his protestant faith when Queen Mary restored Catholicism

Although those walking through Beltingham may be struck by its calm and peaceful atmosphere, this was not always the case. One unfortunate vicar here was captured by the Scots, and his parishioners refused to pay the ransom for his release. However, the church has been fortunate in that four local families have come to its rescue when work was needed, the Riddleys, the Blacketts, the Lowes and the Bowes Lyons.

Once church services are able to resume, check on the website, www.parishesbythewall.org.uk to see when these will be in St Cuthbert's and do come and join us in this holy and peaceful place. You will be very welcome.

Favourite Hymns

The words of "**Amazing Grace**", a hymn which has been sung and recorded thousands of times, were written in 1772 by the English poet and Anglican clergyman John Newton (1725–1807). His father went to sea, and his mother died when he was only 7. By the age of 11, he had

joined his father at sea. At some point, he became involved in the slave trade. During his time at sea, he had an appalling reputation for his debauchery and profanity.

In 1748, a violent storm battered his vessel off the coast of Ireland, so severely that he called out to God for mercy. This moment marked his spiritual conversion, and he began his study of Christian theology. Ordained in 1764, Newton became the curate of Olney in Buckinghamshire, where he began to write hymns with poet William Cowper. "Amazing Grace" was actually written to illustrate a sermon on New Year's Day of 1773. At that time, there may not have been any music accompanying the verses; it may have been chanted by the congregation. The words were printed in 1779 in Newton and Cowper's *Olney Hymns*. "Amazing Grace" became a popular song in the USA, used by Baptist and Methodist preachers as part of their evangelizing. The tune we know today was composed by an American, William Walker. "Amazing Grace" is one of the most recognisable songs in the English-speaking world.

After his death, a simple tablet to his memory was placed on a wall behind the pulpit of his church, bearing the following inscription, written by Newton himself:

JOHN NEWTON, CLERK, ONCE AN INFIDEL AND LIBERTINE, A
SERVANT OF SLAVES IN AFRICA; WAS BY THE RICH MERCY
OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, PRESERVED,
RESTORED, PARDONED, AND APPOINTED TO PREACH THE
FAITH HE HAD LONG LABOURED TO DESTROY. NEAR SIXTEEN
YEARS AT OLNEY
IN BUCKS, AND TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS IN THIS CHURCH.

Some lockdown fun: Answers next month

The answer to these clues is the name of a garden or wild flower or plant.

Industrious queen

These would keep Basil's paws warm

Caused by cold in the belfry

Romantic encounter in the fog

A small garden flower, I presume

She's close to her pupil

The new one sweeps clean

Rather prudish when she got up

Males on bikes

Pussy likes polos

Lass of the vale

Stitch with help from "Chubb"

Way up for a biblical character

A virtue

Well fed fowl

Facial hair on octogenarian

Bovine takes a tumble.