

## **Christmas morning at Carlisle Cathedral, 2016**

Christmas morning was wild and windy and it was a relief to step through the door into the peace and serenity of the cathedral building. It was warm and welcoming and there was our cheerful band of bell ringers gathering to go up into the tower to ring the bells for one of the most important services in the year. One, two, three, four ..... great, we would be able to ring ten bells this morning even though several of our band were away.

The greatest pleasure, though, was to be joined by Canon Warden Jan Kearton who first thanked us for ringing for the carol service on Christmas Eve. The Cathedral had been filled for the service and much interest had been shown in the live video of ringers and ringing that is beamed down from cameras in the ringing room and belfry to a monitor in the crossing. Canon Jan had taken time, even on such a busy morning, to talk with us and lead us in a prayer before we began the climb of 117 steps to the ringing room.

The bells were already raised after last night's ringing. We rang to the strength of the band - long lengths of rounds and call changes, the first of some 25 minutes, non-stop. It was one of those mornings when everyone rang to their best ability and the striking was very good indeed. It can raise the hairs on the back of your neck when the bells handle as though ringing on their own and are singing in harmony with one another.

We lowered the bells before the service, thankfully with the same good striking as before, first the front six bells and then the back four bells. These four bells weigh a total of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  tons and have a majesty of their own. We lowered the bells with great care because they are the only sound that can be heard in the few moments of silence before the service begins.

Best wishes, hugs and handshakes were given all around before we left, some to their church services and others to their Christmas turkeys. It is a great privilege and pleasure to ring at the cathedral and to be valued as volunteers - such a contrast to the sad experience of some bell ringers at this time.