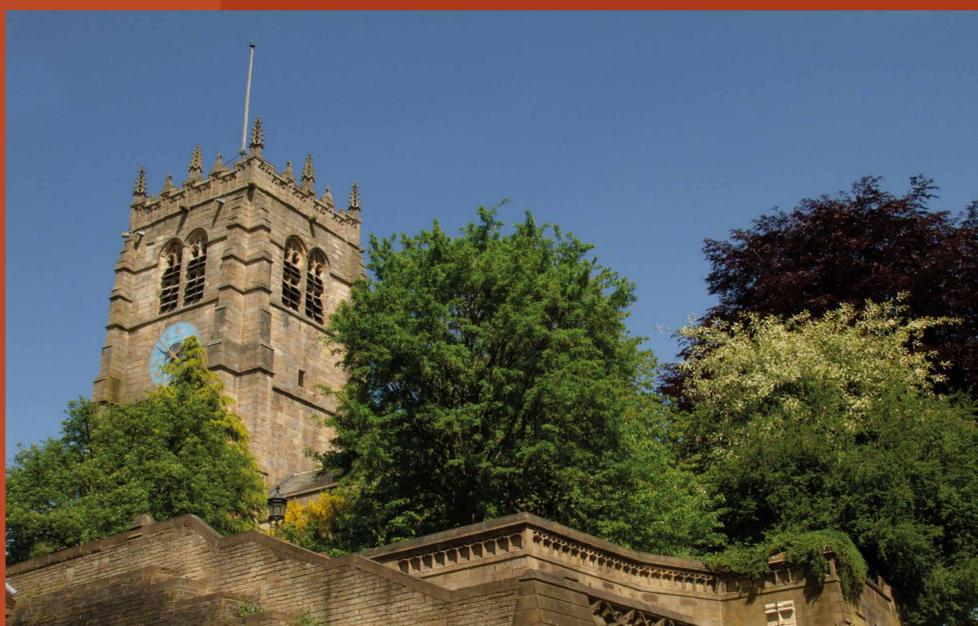




The Cathedral: Sights and Sounds



A Place Where People Meet

Bradford has always been a place where diverse people have come together to live, work and worship.

Christian Sights

The Cathedral is the oldest building in Bradford. It stands at the heart of the City and is a place for people of all faiths and none. The Cathedral is the seat of the Bishop of Bradford and its history and heritage are at the centre of the City's story.

The Cathedral is located on a hill that was once covered in trees overlooking a ford over the Beck, a river that now runs beneath the City streets. People first came to this broad ford to cross the river. It became a popular meeting place, goods were traded here and even in pre-Christian Britain people may have come here to worship as wooded areas were often regarded as sacred. People started to live near the broad ford and from the earliest times they came here from faraway places. It was the broad ford that gave the area the name by which it is known today: Bradford, a name first mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086.



A fragment of a Saxon cross is built into the wall on the North Ambulatory. It was discovered in the rubble of the South Nave wall during rebuilding work in the nineteenth century.

Today if you look closely in the Cathedral near the old spiral staircase, opposite the pulpit, you will see fragments of a Saxon preaching cross, evidence that people came to the broad ford to listen to priests telling stories from the Gospels as early as the 7th century. The first church was probably built out of wood for the Norman Lord of the Manor of Bradford, Ilbert De Lacy, in the 11th century. This was later replaced by a stone church which was destroyed by fire, probably by Scottish raiders in 1327. The church was rebuilt and completed in 1458. A stone tower was added and finished in 1508. The church and tower became a visual symbol of the presence of Christians in Bradford and provided a home for the church bells that called out across the valley.

The Bradford Parish Church of St Peter finally became a Cathedral in 1919 and ten new World War I Memorial Bells were dedicated and hung in the tower in 1921. Further extensions and alterations to the building were made in the 1950s. The Cathedral celebrates its centenary in 2019.

Christian Sounds

Bells are the sound of the Cathedral in the community. They have rung out across Bradford for centuries, calling people to prayer, heralding special occasions in the City's story and marking national events. The first Christian priests used hand bells to call people to worship. By the 8th century a single Sanctus bell would have called to the faithful, marking key points in the church's day and calendar. A peal (group) of four bells was installed in the Cathedral's tower in 1666. As Bradford grew over the years so did the number of bells and by 1735 there were eight. These were recast and made into ten bells in 1846.

By 1919 the Cathedral's tower and bells were in a poor condition and eventually, as a result of the efforts of an exceptional man, a bell ringer called Mr Joe Hardcastle, it was decided by the Cathedral Memorial Committee to raise funds for ten new bells. These were to be cast in memory of those who fought and died in the First World War and to give thanks for victory, freedom and peace. First dedicated in 1921, they were refurbished and re-dedicated in 2018 so that they may continue to ring out:

"...over the valley, to those at football matches, at work, at their business, in mills and at home."

Quote from the Yorkshire Observer Newspaper, 3 October 1921



Today the peal of twelve bells includes ten World War I Memorial Bells and two others, donated to the Cathedral from the Parish Church of St John, Little Horton in 1975. These bells are installed in the bell tower of the Cathedral.