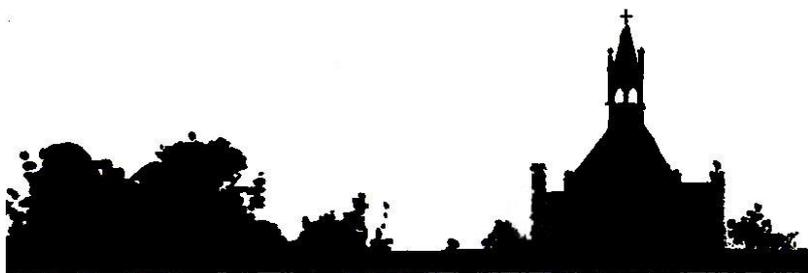


# Ellerton Church Preservation Trust: 21<sup>st</sup> birthday year



*Awarded the CPRE Mark for 2005*

*For excellence, value and long-term benefit in rural conservation*

*Newsletter number 15*

*Spring 2016*

## *Highlights from our history*

*....some personal reminiscences of the last 21 years*

Stephen Warburton was a remarkable man, remembered with deep respect by many in the Derwent Valley and in the wider world of conservation. A month after first meeting him in November 1991, he brought me to Ellerton's derelict church on a biting cold afternoon, hoping that my enthusiasm, and my passion for 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture, would help to fuel a plan for its rescue. He explained his belief that the church was the essential focus of an important cultural landscape, and even made a stirrup of his hands so that I could reach up to glimpse the inside of the abandoned wreck. My job was to begin making a case for the architecture.

With the help of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Carstairs Countryside Trust, of which Stephen was a trustee, had rescued the meadows around the church earlier in 1991. The following year a beautiful picture of Ellerton Priory church seen across the huge expanse of the Ings and Abbey Garth appeared on the front cover of the NHMF annual report. 'We must do something,' he said, and this felt like the moment.



*Stephen Warburton (1950-2004) in 1992*

After a struggle to get the diocese to part with the church before it was beyond help, Stephen persuaded Rosalie Habgood, wife of the Archbishop, to promote our cause. The log-jam began to clear, and we founded the Ellerton Church Preservation Trust in 1995, initially to rescue and restore the church as 'a monument in the landscape' and later we hoped to make it available for local activities. Even before the Trust had been formally established, an application for funding was submitted to the HLF in February that year. Soon afterwards, the proposed trustees saw the inside of the church for the first time. It was not at first an encouraging experience.

It took four people to push open the door against resisting heaps of guano and rubble – just enough to squeeze into a damp, stinking chaos of rot, dead birds, young trees, fallen plaster and a tangle of broken leaded glazing. We explored in the semi-darkness, walking gingerly over the deep springy mounds, shocked and disheartened by the wreckage. Suddenly, a pale shape skimmed silently above our heads from east end to west. A pause, and then it passed again, four or five times. It was a barn owl; a magical, other-worldly messenger, and surely a sign. We crept out and closed the door, enthralled, and newly determined to save the place.

There had been a church on this site in Ellerton since about 1203, but just 130 years after the present building was consecrated, it was closed for worship despite local opposition. In 1984 the contents and bells were removed and dispersed, and the important mediaeval stained glass eventually went to Selby Abbey, where it fills the *Ellerton Window* in the north aisle. Water poured through the roofs and the building was soon vandalised into dereliction. The churchyard became a jungle.

External repairs began in 1997 and were to last several years. Once accessible from high-level scaffolding, it became apparent that the entire spire was weakened by terrible internal wind-erosion invisible from the ground and was being lifted and split apart by rusting iron embedded in the stonework; ironically, ironwork intended to bind it together and give it strength. The morning after the spire had been completely dismantled, a bewildered resident of Thorganby came running up the churchyard path, half-shaved and shouting, 'you have stolen my view!' After an urgent burst of extra fundraising, the spire was carefully re-built.



*The 1911 pulpit arrives in 2010  
(with canine assistance from Flynn)*

On a warm, bright day in April 1998 we celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the re-built church by holding our first public Open Day. At the end of my talk in the churchyard, an elderly man stepped from the crowd with a cardboard box and held it out with the words, 'I was the last churchwarden here. When they closed the church, I couldn't bear to see these leave the village, so I kept them. Now it's time you had them back.' Inside the box were the cross, candle-sticks and missal-stand from the altar and the collection plate inscribed 'Ellerton Priory'. Since then, the original altar rails, bier and lectern, a glorious 17<sup>th</sup> century font cover, wonderfully comfortable pews (Stephen's gift) and a lovely pulpit have arrived and seem perfectly at home.

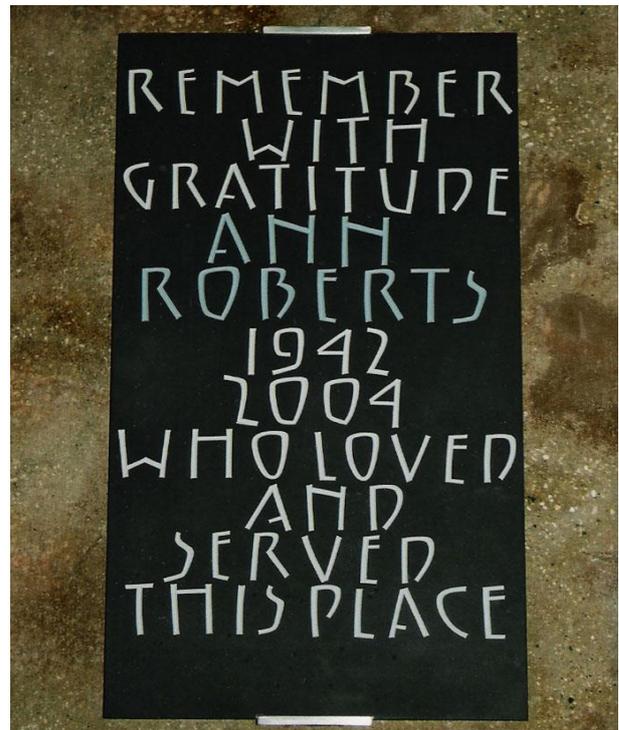
Stephen's vision for the church was always of a calm lime-washed interior; a 'jewel box' containing bright, beautiful things. It was his idea that we re-create the lost scheme of heraldic glazing in the nave windows, and fill the rest with an adventurous programme of fine old and contemporary glass. In 2000 the first new glazing was installed; a panel by Ann Sotheran showing the arms of Peter Pace, architect for the restoration of the building,



*Peter Baker preparing lime plaster in 2008*

soon joined by the arms of the Dunnington- Jefferson family and of the mediaeval Gilbertine canons. In 2003 the Trust marked the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Priory, and expressed its gratitude to the local villagers, by installing Helen Whittaker's east window. The final glazing is due to be completed later this year.

We began to repair the interior by replacing rotten wooden floors with new stone ones, and hammering 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete render from the walls. In 2006, craftsman-plasterer Peter Baker began a four-year programme to lime plaster the whole interior as it had originally been, followed by gangs of volunteers who gave it at least three coats of lime-wash. Thanks to him and many other excellent people working in the traditional building crafts, Ellerton Priory church is once again a 'breathable' historic building in good heart.



*The 2005 memorial plaque by Charles Gurrey*

When Stephen was gravely ill, only weeks before his death in January 2004, he asked whether he might be allowed a small memorial at Ellerton. In May 2006, a handsome monument was installed on the north wall of the nave, with lettering by Peter Coates, sculpture by Harold Gosney, masonry by Peter Maris and with the kind of epitaph which would have delighted him. A few months later it was joined by a Welsh slate plaque to Ann Roberts by Charles Gurrey. The trustees also have plans for a memorial to Len and Jean Charlesworth, among the earliest and most passionate supporters of the Trust. It is intended that all will be examples of the best contemporary design, letter-cutting and craftsmanship.

This year we celebrate our anniversary by holding our 8<sup>th</sup> annual concert and participating in Heritage Open Days for the 18<sup>th</sup> successive year. And we have hosted two wedding receptions, two baptisms and numerous other events. Surely twenty-one years well spent! [PT]

## Growing a better future

Our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday year would seem to be an excellent time to take stock of what has been happening in the churchyard. When the Trust took over the Priory church in the mid-1990s, except for the paths and few areas close to the south-west corner of the church itself, now regularly mown by a kind and careful volunteer, the churchyard was full of rank vegetation. The surrounding wall was being pushed apart and slowly demolished by ivy, which was also smothering the chancel, and nettles, hogweed, brambles and elders had colonised large areas of the churchyard. On the north side, the elders were as tall as the church itself, and were only removed with the heroic effort of a team of local helpers.

Left to its own devices, this vegetation would eventually have turned into a small wood. To stop it, we have been taking a hay-cut in July-August every year with the help of a local farmer (see *To mow or not to mow?* in Newsletter 11) in order to turn the churchyard into a hay meadow, and thus provide a haven for the many plants and animals that have been greatly reduced in numbers due to the dramatic nationwide loss of this habitat.

The nettles have now almost gone, the hogweed has diminished and the only woody plants are the planted replacement oak trees and the remarkable and vigorous *Rosa mulliganii* in the north-west corner. Several plants that were once common in the old hay meadows have returned. As an example, there is now a large and spreading patch of cowslips in the area outside the porch and at the west end.



*Cowslips at Ellerton*

(Richard Baker)

However, the churchyard is still dominated by vigorous grasses. We have seven species; cocksfoot, false oat-grass, meadow barley, perennial rye grass, rough meadow grass, yellow oat grass and Yorkshire fog. They are so strongly competitive that it is difficult for the seeds of new plant species to colonise. While some may arrive naturally, it is a considerable challenge for other species to travel to the churchyard by themselves.

Understanding our difficulty, the Carstairs Countryside Trust (CCT), a conservation charity that has been a significant benefactor to the church Trust throughout the last twenty-one years, and has permitted car parking on

its surrounding land, has donated plants of several species that grow locally in the few remaining hay meadows of the Derwent Valley. Earlier this year we were able to plant meadowsweet, greater burnet, meadow vetchling, tufted vetch, cuckoo flower, cowslip, meadow foxtail, oxeye daisy, lesser knapweed, yellow rattle, red clover, southern marsh orchid, pepper saxifrage, red campion, birdsfoot trefoil and tansy.



*Southern marsh orchid*

(Richard Baker)

Despite our efforts and the generosity of the CCT and other donors, we expect that several of these plants will still struggle because the grasses grow so vigorously. In an attempt to combat this, we hope that the yellow rattle will take hold. This plant – also called *rattlebaskets*, *pots and pans*, *cockscomb* and *hay rattle*, *shackle bags* and *tiddibottles* – is so named because the seeds rattle in the inflated brown calyces when ripe.

Yellow rattle provides two benefits; not only does it have beautiful yellow flowers and rattling seeds, but it also parasitizes grasses. Once the grasses are weakened, other species will thrive. We very much want the yellow rattle to flourish so that Ellerton's churchyard will gradually become a haven for more and more species, and so that future generations can enjoy a sense of the glorious herb-rich meadows which were once so abundant in England, and which still have a toe-hold in the lower Derwent Valley. [RB]



*Yellow rattle*

(David Nicholls)

## Another taste of Ellerton

.... more of Michael's continental cakes

Two more of the delicious cakes tasted and relished by visitors to our September Open Days.

### Frankfurter Kranz ...a royal recipe of 1735



#### For the cake mixture

100 grams soft butter or margarine  
150 grams sugar  
2 teaspoon vanilla sugar  
Zest of 1 lemon  
3 eggs  
150 grams self-raising flour  
50 grams cornflour

#### For the buttercream filling

250 grams softened butter  
600 grams icing sugar  
1 teaspoon real vanilla essence  
4 or 5 tablespoons redcurrant jelly

#### For decoration

1 dessertspoon butter  
100 grams sugar  
200 grams chopped nuts or almonds  
Glacé cherries

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C

#### Method

Place the butter/margarine in a bowl. Slowly whisk-in the sugar, vanilla sugar and lemon zest with an electric mixer until light and creamy. Mix in the eggs one at a time, then fold in the flour and cornflour. Pour the mixture into a buttered 24cm (11 inch) ring-mould cake tin. Bake for 40 minutes, allow to cool for 10 minutes, then turn onto a cooling rack.

Whisk the softened butter until light and fluffy. Slowly mix in the icing sugar and vanilla essence until thick and creamy. Set this buttercream one side, and make the nut brittle decoration by placing the butter, sugar and

chopped nuts in a saucepan and heating them, stirring constantly, until the mixture turns golden brown. Spread thinly on a sheet of baking paper. Once thoroughly cool break into small pieces – like large crumbs.

Cut the cooled cake into three horizontal layers. Place the bottom one on a large plate or cake-stand. Spread redcurrant jelly on top, and then about one-fifth of the buttercream on the jelly. Place the middle layer on top, cover it with another fifth of the buttercream. Place the final layer on top and spread two-thirds of the remaining buttercream over the top and sides of the whole cake to make a white-covered ring or crown.

Cover all over with crushed nut brittle, and pipe the remaining cream in a circle of dots on top. Place half a cherry on each dot. Store the finished cake in the fridge.

### Kilimanjaro cake



#### For the cake mixture

150 grams self-raising flour  
1 tablespoon cocoa powder  
150 grams sugar  
150 grams soft butter or margarine  
3 eggs

#### For the filling

350 grams of tinned mandarin oranges, drained  
100 ml mandarin orange juice  
7 sheets of white gelatine  
600 grams cold whipping cream  
2 heaped tablespoons of sugar  
Zest of one 1 orange

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C

#### Method

Mix the flour and cocoa powder in a bowl and add the other cake ingredients. Blend together with an electric mixer, initially at low speed but gradually faster until you have a smooth mixture. Butter a 26 cm (11 inch) spring-form baking tin, line with baking paper, and pour in the mixture. Bake for about 30 minutes, allow to cool for 10 minutes, then turn onto a cooling rack.

Reserve 10-12 mandarin segments for decoration. Put the gelatine in a bowl with the orange juice to soften. Meanwhile, whip the cream, gradually adding the sugar, until firm. Warm the juice and gelatine in a saucepan, stirring continually, until the gelatine has dissolved completely. Allow to cool a little then very gradually fold the gelatine into the cream with a balloon whisk, followed by the orange zest. With a rubber spatula, gently mix in the orange segments. Line a shallow 24cm diameter bowl with cling-film, pour in the orange mixture and allow to set in the fridge for several hours. It is important that the bowl is about 2 cm smaller than the original cake tin.

Cut the sponge cake horizontally, the top layer being no thicker than 1cm. Set this layer aside. Invert the firm orange cream mixture onto the thick cake base then remove the bowl and the cling-film. Cut the thin layer of cake into 16 equal segments. Arrange them around the dome of orange cream, their shortest sides standing on the bottom layer of cake. Heap the reserved orange segments on top. Decorate the fruit and top of the cake with a light dusting of icing sugar – like snow on Mount Kilimanjaro. [MT]

## Our churchyard choristers

....discovering the world of the elusive grasshopper

There are few things more evocative of a hot summer day in the countryside than the sound of grasshoppers chirping in our meadows, grasslands and churchyards. Usually camouflaged in patterns of green and brown, these little creatures are remarkably difficult to see, and once they sense that something close at hand is taking an interest in them, they wisely fall silent until the danger has passed. However, if you stay still long enough they will start chirping again and you may be able to spot them.



Common green grasshopper (Richard Baker)  
*Omocestus viridulus*

It is the adult male who makes the noise, firstly to attract a female and then to persuade her to mate. He isn't actually singing, he is rubbing his hind legs against the edges of his front wing cases, and grasshoppers cannot actually hear a melody. Each species has its own

characteristic rhythm to ensure that the right pairs find each-other. People familiar with the calls can tell which species they are listening to without seeing the insect itself, in much the way that birdwatchers recognize the calls of individual species of bird.

Grasshoppers lay their eggs in pods in the ground and the young hatch out in the spring. They look similar to the adults, but will moult six times over the next few weeks until they reach their final size of about 2 cm (¾") long and are ready to breed. They live for about five months, from May to October, dying off when the colder weather arrives. Grasshoppers are highly evolved to fit their habitat and have hardly changed since the age of the dinosaurs, as fossil records show.

There are eleven species of grasshopper in Britain, the three most numerous being the *common green grasshopper*, the *field grasshopper* and our only flightless one, the *meadow grasshopper*. There are also several crickets native to Britain which closely resemble grasshoppers. The most obvious difference is that crickets have very long antennae, compared to the grasshoppers' stubby ones, and crickets are more often heard in the evening, producing their song by rubbing one wing over the other. Most grasshoppers feed on grasses and related plants like cereal crops, usually consuming about half their bodyweight each day. Crickets will also eat soft-bodied insects.

Grasshoppers provide food for birds and small mammals as well as for various parasites, fungi and some other insects, and the distribution of grasshoppers and allied insects may be a useful clue to the pattern of climate change. Because they rely on the sun's warmth to get going in a morning, alterations in their range over the last few years are likely to be a good indicator of general atmospheric warming, when studied alongside other records.

Generally cylindrical in body-shape, grasshoppers and crickets have a curiously machine-like appearance, with an armoured external casing and distinctively angled long, back legs used for leaping from place to place when a swift escape is necessary. A large grasshopper can leap about twenty times its own body length. They are perfectly capable of flying as well, the wings being hidden under leathery cases and used mainly for short flights. Of course, the exception to this is the locust.

The Greek word *locusta* was applied to any bug with a thick, shell-like skin, and was used to describe crabs, lobsters and cicadas as well as locusts and grasshoppers. Lobster and locust are actually variants of the same word, as is langoustine, which means *little sea locust*. Locusts and grasshoppers are actually the same thing, and there are several thousand known species across the world, but the name locust is usually given only to those species which swarm under certain conditions.

It has been shown that swarming behaviour is often a response to overcrowding; too many and too frequent contacts between individual insects leads to hormone

shifts which cause the grasshoppers to change colour, feed more and breed faster. Under suitable conditions – drought followed by abundant new vegetation, for example – dense nomadic groups of juveniles can occur, producing pheromones which in turn attract more. With several generations in a year, the locust populations rapidly increase from localised groups into vast accumulations of flying insects known as plagues. A swarm might contain 250 million grasshoppers per square kilometre, and a big swarm may cover an area half as large as an English county.



*Common field grasshopper*  
*Chorthippus brunneus*

An adult desert locust can eat about two grams of vegetation a day, so the billions of insects in a large swarm can be very destructive, stripping not only the foliage from plants in the affected area, but also the flowers, fruits, seeds, stems and bark. Locust plagues have had a devastating effect on human populations, causing famine and mass-migration. The largest recorded swarm was of the now-extinct Rocky Mountain locust in 1875; an almost unbelievable 1,800 miles (2,900 km) long and 110 miles (180 km) wide.

It comes as no surprise that folklore attitudes to grasshoppers vary widely from country to country. In the Mediterranean region and the Middle East they are hated and feared because of their association with swarming and all-devouring destruction. There are frequent references to them in both the Qur'an and the Bible, where they are one of the plagues of Egypt, and are called true demons from Hell, laying waste to the un-Godly. On the other hand Leviticus gives the Hebrews permission to eat them, and John the Baptist survived in the desert on a diet of locusts and honey – and this definitely means the insects, not the locust bean. Today grasshoppers and locusts are eaten in parts of Africa, Asia and the Americas as highly-prized delicious and nutritious foods.

By contrast, in northern Europe grasshoppers have often been associated with a carefree or careless approach to life. A grasshopper mind jumps thoughtlessly about, and a grasshopper personality takes pleasure from idling away time in song and sunshine rather than making provision for the future, unlike more industrious ants and bees. Interestingly, a grasshopper is Cockney rhyming slang for a copper or policeman, so could this be the origin of the term to 'grass someone up'?

Because grasshoppers are perceived as chirpy and light-hearted, they often appear in stories for children. Their ability to move deftly through and over grass has meant that their name is frequently associated with sports clubs and teams, and with brands of sports equipment. In the Far East crickets are prized for their songs and are treated almost as domestic pets, much as caged birds once were in England. An entire sub-culture has developed around the breeding, feeding and caging of these creatures, which feature in the arts and poetry, especially in Japan where they symbolise good luck.

As well as a symbol of joy, the grasshopper has become an unlikely badge of wealth and commerce. Its image is found on banks in the City of London, and a particularly splendid golden one crowns the tower of London's Royal Exchange. It originated on the arms of the Gresham family of Norfolk and hence is known as the Gresham grasshopper. The story goes that an ancestor of the Greshams was abandoned in a field as a baby, to be rescued in the nick of time when an old lady, drawn by the loud chirping of a nearby grasshopper, spotted the infant. More likely, the Gresham grasshopper is a pun on the family name; the Old English form of grass being *gres*, hence Gresham and *gresh-hopper*.

The richest of the Greshams was Sir Thomas, who in the 16<sup>th</sup> century founded what is now the Royal Exchange. The original Exchange, opened in 1571, seems to have had grasshoppers carved everywhere, and a huge gilded one on a tall column, to signify Sir Thomas's vast fortune. There were also grasshoppers on its successor, built in 1669, and the present Royal Exchange, opened in 1845, has a large grasshopper seemingly skewered on the gilded weathervane like a specimen in a museum.

If you want to catch one to examine it more closely, you could do worse than buy a butterfly net. Sweep it gently over the grass where you think the grasshopper is lurking and it will probably jump into the net. Or just listen carefully until you sense its location and then quietly move forward on your stomach, just as our trustee Richard Baker did last year to take these wonderful photographs in Ellerton churchyard. [AS]



*Lesser marsh grasshopper* (Richard Baker)  
*Chorthippus albomarginatus*

## Events at Ellerton Priory in spring and summer 2016

*Please make a note of these in your diary, and share them with your friends*

### Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 3.00 pm

*Summer music inspired by poetry (and free wine) to mark Shakespeare 400!*

Please join us at Ellerton Priory this July for a celebration of the long and continuing love affair between poetry and music to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the death of William Shakespeare – the greatest of all British literary and theatrical figures. Much-loved Leeds-based chamber choir *Cantabile* has been delighting audiences at Ellerton every year since 2008, and this year returns with some instrumentalist friends to perform an entertaining and varied programme of short musical classics.

Naturally, we will hear Shakespeare's own words in several bold, witty musical versions – both from his time and ours – in company with haunting and lyrical settings of poetry by Tennyson, Longfellow, Robert Bridges and many others by England's greatest composers like Elgar, Parry, Holst and Vaughan Williams. All will be seasoned with moving folk-song arrangements, cheeky catches, glees and rounds. Oh, and there could well be a few swinging surprises!

The concert is at 3.00 pm, but it would be wise to arrive a little earlier to secure a seat. Tickets are £8 (£4.00 children and disabled) and include **free** wine and refreshments. They are available on the door or in advance on 01904 630097.

### Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September, 10.30 am – 5.30 pm

*Heritage Open Day*

In 2016 the Priory church and churchyard will be open for *National Heritage Open Days* from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September. As always, refreshments will be available with real coffee and generous portions of Michael's near-legendary cakes and savouries. This year there will be activities for children, stalls selling local produce and plants, guidebooks and gift-cards, second hand books, a tombola and a new exhibition. Richard and David, our in-house wildlife experts, will be on hand, and Phil's celebrated tours of the whole site will begin at 11.00am, 1.00pm and 3.30pm. All will be happy to answer questions throughout the day. Why not bring a picnic to share with friends in the churchyard, or order lunch in Ellerton's splendid village pub, *The Boot and Shoe*?

---

## Helping and keeping in touch with the Trust

Please let us know if you are willing to receive these newsletters by e-mail, it makes life much easier and the financial saving to the Trust is very significant! To let us know, either send an e-mail to [yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk) or leave your e-mail address with one of the trustees either at the concert or at the Open Day. Please consider signing a Gift-Aid form, which enables us to reclaim tax on any donations you might make to the Trust.

*Ellerton Church Preservation Trust* is Registered Charity number 1052689. The correspondence address is 13 South Parade, York, YO23 1BF. The website is [www.ellertonpriory.co.uk](http://www.ellertonpriory.co.uk) and if you wish to contact the trustees, or to offer help or support, please e-mail [yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk) or [ann@annsotheran.co.uk](mailto:ann@annsotheran.co.uk) or leave a telephone message on **01904 630097**. The trustees are Richard Baker, Michael Thomas, Ann Sotheran (treasurer) and Philip Thomas (chair).

---

## Directions to Ellerton Priory

Ellerton is 14 miles south-east of York, just off the B1228 York-Howden road, and is accessible from the north via the A64/A1079 or from the south via the A163 at Bubwith. The Priory church is the last building at the far end of the village, and access is by way of a fairly level grass path and two small steps (help is available). We have plentiful car parking, but no dogs allowed in the car park field, please. Nearby is *The Boot and Shoe* – Ellerton's friendly traditional village pub, where hearty meals can be booked in advance (01757 288346). For on-line travel information, go to [www.google.co.uk/maps](http://www.google.co.uk/maps) or [www.bing.com/mapspreview](http://www.bing.com/mapspreview) and seek directions to YO42 4PD.

---

**Ellerton Church Preservation Trust : 21<sup>st</sup> birthday year : 2016**

---

*Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July  
3.00 pm at Ellerton church*

*Summer music inspired by poetry to mark  
Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
and our own 21<sup>st</sup> birthday*

# **Cantabile** and friends

*free wine and refreshments, ample parking  
why not bring a pic-nic?  
tickets £8.00 (£4.00 children and disabled)*

---

*Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September at Ellerton church*

# **Heritage Open Day**

*open 10.30 am to 5.30 pm - admission and tours free  
tours 11.00 am, 1.00 pm and 3.30 pm  
lavish refreshments, stalls, tombola, exhibition  
activities for children, ample parking*

---

**The Priory Church : Ellerton : East Riding of Yorkshire : YO42 4PD**