

# Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



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## Shakespeare in a country churchyard

This summer we are trying something completely new at Ellerton Priory. On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July, at 7.30 in the evening, we shall be presenting a programme of *Scenes from Shakespeare*; four scenes from separate plays, performed in promenade at different locations around the churchyard. A cast of experienced amateur actors will be directed by Tim Holman, ably assisted by stage manager Jill Maris - both trustees of Ellerton Church Preservation Trust. Scenery and props will be minimal; instead they will rely on the unique atmosphere of an English country churchyard on a long summer evening.

Each scene will present a different theme; 'political-comical-philosophical-tragical' as Hamlet's Polonius might have put it. The total performance will last just over an hour, with the audience moving from location to location between scenes. We will *not* be providing any seating, so if you need to sit please bring your own seat and be prepared to carry it about. Some parking will be available in Abbey Garth, the field beside the churchyard, but we would prefer people to come on foot if possible. Remember, there are no 'facilities' at the church, so we will make arrangements either with the village hall or with the excellent local *Boot and Shoe Inn* - but make sure that you go before you come!

There will be no charge for admission and no tickets - we would prefer to think of this event as a small reward for those who have helped and supported us so wonderfully over the years - but to give us some idea of likely numbers, please let us know if you intend to be there by sending an e-mail to [york@enterprise.net](mailto:york@enterprise.net) or by ringing Tim on 01904 639248 (leave a message on the answering machine, if necessary).

This *Scenes from Shakespeare* project is an experiment. If it is successful we hope it might lead to bigger things in future, so pray for fair weather and a fine Ellerton evening. Please come along - we are really looking forward to seeing you!

## Ellerton's extraordinary lichens

In last year's newsletter we noted that on the church, churchyard walls and gravestones, forty-four species of lichens had been found. This is far more than the next largest species group, plants, which number thirty-four so far in our on-going attempt to list Ellerton's wildlife. Lichens are a remarkable partnership between a fungus and a plant (alga). In return for the protection given by the fungus, the algae provide it with the energy they capture from the sun's rays. However, sometimes the algae can live on their own and the lichenologist, D.H. Smith on his second visit to Ellerton in 2001, had to look at the pink powdering on the north-east buttress with 400 times magnification to find the fungal capsules.

Growing very slowly, sometimes only half a millimetre a year, they can often be almost as old as the gravestones on which they live, and can colonise almost every stone or brick surface in unpolluted churches and churchyards. Each species has its own very particular requirements for light, moisture and the chemicals in the materials they are attached to. The variety of stone and brick and the differences in its exposure to the elements accounts for the great diversity of lichens at Ellerton.

Remarkably, one species normally found only on tree trunks is very unusually present on a headstone in the churchyard. Apart from obscuring the lettering, lichens do very little damage and may even protect the stone surface from weathering. If an inscription is becoming obscured, a soft brush and plain water is sufficient. Particularly in lowland England, our 20,000 churchyards provide the most important sites for lichens in the landscape and are very worthy of care and attention to make sure they are not damaged through the unnecessary use of chemicals. Although very few lichens have English names, there is an excellent field key to common churchyard lichens and many can be identified with a hand lens. Anyone wanting more information on lichens should explore the excellent British Lichen Society website: [www.thbls.org.uk](http://www.thbls.org.uk).

## Some events at Ellerton Priory, 2007

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

**Sunday 27th May.**

Church and churchyard will be open from 11.00 pm to 5.00 pm in conjunction with Ellerton Open Gardens. We hope to offer some Childrens' events in the churchyard, a moth trap, an orchid walk and refreshments. Guided tours of the church and its setting on request. Why not bring a pic-nic to eat if the weather is fine?

**Sunday 10th June.**

Church and churchyard will be open from 11.00 am to 5.00 pm in conjunction with Ellerton Open Gardens for a quiet day and an opportunity to come and look at works in progress. People will be on-hand to answer questions about the church, the stained glass, the landscape and wildlife. Refreshments available, and tours on request.

**Saturday 14th July.**

A summer evening of *Scenes from Shakespeare* in the churchyard, starting at 7.30 pm. Numbers will have to be limited, so please e-mail [york@enterprise.net](mailto:york@enterprise.net) or ring Tim on 01904 639248 in advance to confirm.

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August**

Working weekend for enthusiastic volunteers, including lime-washing inside the church and pointing and building work in the churchyard, 10.30am - 4.30pm both days. Bring overalls, stout old footwear, work-gloves and lunch. Goggles and masks would be useful for lime-washing, other equipment is provided.

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

Church and churchyard will be open from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm for National Heritage Open Days. This year there will be: special nature activities for children; a quiz-sheet about the church itself; a new exhibition; our ever-popular stalls; plants for sale; excellent refreshments; a new stained glass window celebrating the life of Snowden Sights (see below). Fascinating guided tours of the whole site at 11.00 am, 1.00 pm and 4.00 pm, with special nature walks of the ings and the hugely important surrounding landscape at 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm. Bring a picnic to share in the churchyard while you watch the delightful Hebridean sheep grazing. Car parking will be plentiful. The picturesque *Boot and Shoe Inn*, nearby, is strongly recommended to all lovers of the traditional country pub.

Please note that our glorious 'sister' church of St James, Warter - now magnificently restored as a *Heritage Centre for the Wolds* - will be open from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September. Splendid stained glass, important sculpture and atmospheric churchyard. Refreshments available on both days.

## A sparkling tribute to a local hero

Ellerton Priory church already contains a notable collection of fine stained glass, and three more windows have been commissioned or are being made as you read this newsletter. This summer, a beautiful new window will be installed as a small memorial and tribute to one of the great characters of the Lower Derwent Valley, Snowden Sights of East Cottingwith (1830-1913); sportsman, wildfowler and basket-maker, with a matchless knowledge of the local landscape.

Designed by Andrew Anderson, and made by Barley Studios, who also made our superb east window in 2003, it shows Snowden in his jacket and muffler and St. Francis of Assisi in his monk's habit, both charming the birds from the air above Ellerton ings. Punt, paddles and punt-gun are arranged in the ancient symbolic shape of a *vesica* or *mandorla* (almond) with the Priory church in the background. Bubbles stream from beneath the punt, and the skies are filled with wheeling birds and distant angels; heavenly messengers swooping between the stars, the planets and the crescent moon.

Andrew's witty and unusual design is made from lovely 'flashed' glasses - white glasses covered with a thin layer of blue, green or brown glass, which is selectively etched away and then subtly painted. The window will become a permanent sign of the unbreakable link between man and the land, and evidence that the creative and spiritual life of Ellerton remains strong, more than 800 years after the Gilbertine canons first built their home here as a place of charity and beauty.

**Directions:** **Ellerton** is 14 miles south-east of York, just off the B1228 York-Howden road. The church is the last building at the far end of the village. Access is via a grass path and two steps, with two more steps inside. There is a traditional village pub nearby. **Warter** is on the B1246, 4 miles east of Pocklington. Park in the ample village car park next to the School. Once up the gently sloping path, the building is fully accessible.