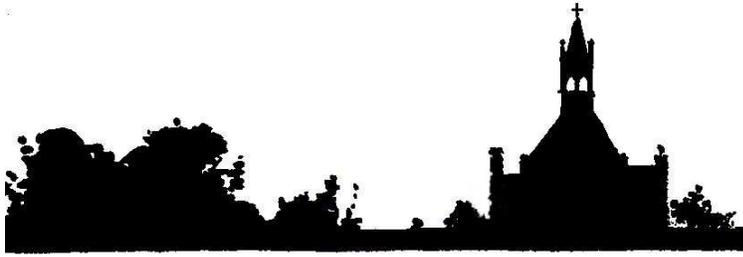


Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



Awarded the CPRE Mark for 2005
For excellence, value and long-term benefit in rural conservation

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Remembering a real Yorkshire gentleman

When Len Charlesworth died in York on 13th January, after a short illness, the people of Ellerton lost an irreplaceable neighbour and friend, the Priory church lost its most loyal supporter and trustee, and Yorkshire lost a great and honourable gentleman. At his crowded funeral in Bubwith church, Phil Thomas included the following recollections in his address.

Known to almost everyone simply as 'Len', Willis Leonard Charlesworth was born near Pontefract in 1931. Len was the best kind of countryman; in love with the land and its seasons, kind, wise, dignified, full of good sense. I knew him for fifteen years, and my late partner for fifteen before that, and neither of us ever saw him do a mean or petty thing, or heard him speak ill of another. He judged no-one, always accepted people for what they were, and had absolute respect for any generous or un-selfish act. I suspect that his greatest joy was his relationship with his adored wife Jean, who died almost exactly a year before him. Together they founded their lives on the most loving aspects of their shared Christian faith, and since her death he has looked steadily forward to the time when he knew they would be re-united.

Like any good farmer, he understood the importance of having deep roots, and of never taking anything for granted. 'I've lived in Ellerton now for well over thirty years,' he once remarked to me, adding dryly, 'and sometimes I think they've just about accepted me. Sometimes.'

Together, Len and Jean were deeply involved in the rescue and repair of Ellerton Priory church, and both were keen to see the contributions of all village people valued and remembered. The trustees of the Priory Church have already decided to commission a permanent memorial to them, and they will be remembered at the forthcoming Summer concert

Jill Maris, formerly a trustee of the ECPT, has also offered this reminiscence. *I first met Len when my husband asked him if he could use a barn as a workshop. Peter is a stone carver, and had been asked by Stephen Warburton to make a 'dolestone', or field marker, to be placed in Len's meadow beside the Derwent. Len was pleased to offer the space, and helped Pete to feel at home and welcome in every way he could. Hot, steaming mugs of coffee and tea would be offered to ward off the bitter East Riding cold, and Len's lovely wife Jean plied him with their favourite biscuits and cakes. When Pete returned from many hours working the stones, and I asked how he had fared that day, the reply usually began, 'Well, I didn't do as much as I planned because I was talking to Len...'. He would then recount the latest funny anecdotes, thoughtful opinions or wry observations shared during a prolonged tea-break. Later, Len and Jean agreed that Pete could use the barn as a workshop for other carvings. It was duly made more weather-proof, and constant free advice was given offering unique (probably illegal) farmers' solutions to mending tools, rigging-up lights, moving heavy stones and any other problems that occurred.*

I knew Len and Jean for about twelve years. I remember laughing, always staying with them longer than planned, intelligent and considered debate, and warmth, love and fondness. They will be missed by very many.

'Hen-penny' sorts out the churchyard!

At Ellerton, as in churchyards across the country, we are providing a safe haven for many of the plants and animals that are disappearing rapidly from the wider environment. The most effective way of increasing the attractiveness of our churchyard to these species is to try to turn the area between the gravestones into a traditional hay meadow. This wonderful habitat, rich in flowering plants, butterflies and other animals, has decreased dramatically everywhere. However, recreating hay meadows is not a simple task. It is particularly difficult at Ellerton because, like the church building, the churchyard was left in disuse, encouraging the unchecked growth of tall grasses, nettles and cow parsley. Our annual hay cut (this year will be our twelfth) and Autumn grazing by sheep are already reducing the amount of rank vegetation, but we are keen to speed-up the process. We have therefore introduced yellow rattle, a native plant which parasitises the roots of grasses, in the hope that this will leave bare soil for other plants to colonise. Already a surprising

diversity of plants is apparent. Butterflies, like the ringlet, are now breeding, and a survey in 2001 found forty-four lichens, including several rarities.

Yellow rattle (Yorkshire name hen-penny), is so called because of its attractive yellow flowers and the rattling of ripe seeds. The seeds were sown last autumn and we will be monitoring the churchyard closely to see how well it takes. We hope to carry out a second sowing later this year.

‘Music Divine’ - yes, our first ever Summer Concert!

Sunday 6th July promises to be an important day for the Trust, because at three o'clock that afternoon we will be fulfilling a long-cherished ambition by holding our first real concert in Ellerton church. *Cantabile* is a new and exciting Leeds-based choir, founded in September 2007 and dedicated both to having fun and making a beautiful sound. Under the inspiring leadership of Jane Edwardson – an internationally-experienced choral director who has won awards from *Sing for Pleasure* – this enthusiastic group of experienced singers will give their first ‘solo’ full-length concert in the magical setting (and excellent acoustic) of Ellerton Priory church on a Sunday afternoon in high Summer.

In a programme of works spanning three hundred years, *Cantabile* will explore some of the ways composers have celebrated the pleasures of music and dance, in styles ranging from Elizabethan madrigals to swing. Joyful traditional songs like *Mairi's wedding* and *Dance for your daddy* will be heard alongside magnificent English masterpieces like Gibbons' haunting *The Silver Swan* and Tomkins' *Music Divine*. More recent works, including Michael Hurd's heart-warming *Music's Praise*, Alan Woods' *Ode on St Cecilia's day* and even a tiny offering by Phil Thomas, will be contrasted with witty and joyful choral arrangements of well-known dance-numbers by Cole Porter (*Begin the Beguine*) and George Gershwin (*I got rhythm*). And what could be more appropriate than songs celebrating birdsong in the curlew-haunted Derwent valley? We can confidently promise that some nightingales, blackbirds, thrushes, several larks and even a few cuckoos will be putting in an appearance! Oh, and if that's not temptation enough, after the concert we will be serving wine, tea, coffee and home-made biscuits too!

Some events at Ellerton Priory, 2008

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

* **Saturday 31st and Sunday 1st June**

A hard-working weekend for all enthusiastic volunteers, including lime-washing inside the church and works in the churchyard. Bring overalls, work-gloves, stout footwear – and lunch. 10.30 am to 4.30 pm both days.

* **Sunday 6th July at 3.00 pm**

Music Divine, a thrilling Summer afternoon concert by the Leeds-based chamber choir *Cantabile*. The music starts at 3.00 pm, but arrive early to be sure of a seat, or bring along a stool and a cushion. After the concert wine, tea, coffee and home-made biscuits will be available.

Adults £3.00, children and concessions £1.50

* **Sunday 14th September**

Church and churchyard open from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm for National Heritage Open Days. Featuring special nature activities for children and families, quiz-sheets, stalls including plants and local produce, tombola and raffle, delicious home-made cakes and biscuits and (we hope) live music. Guided tours at 11.00 am, 1.00 pm and 4.00 pm. Derwent Valley nature walks at 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm. Why not bring a pic-nic?

Please note that our ‘sister’ church at **Warter** will also be open this year on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th September.

* **Please note our new e-mail address**

For further information or general enquiries please contact yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk or **01904 630097**.

Directions: Ellerton is 14 miles south-east of York, just off the B1228 York-Howden road. The Priory Church is the last building at the far end of the village. Access is via a mown grass path and two shallow steps, and there is a lovely traditional pub in the village, *The Boot and Shoe*. **Warter** is on the B1246, 4 miles east of Pocklington. There is an ample village car park nearby and there are toilet facilities at the church. Access is excellent.



**A sandstone beast on the
bell-cote at Ellerton Priory**