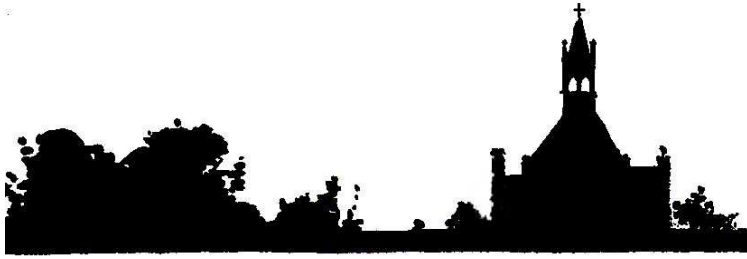


# Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



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

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Summer 2009

## Un-missable 'Cantabile' makes a welcome return!

*Cantabile* is returning to Ellerton on 12<sup>th</sup> July by popular demand! A year ago, this exciting Leeds-based chamber choir gave its triumphant first solo concert at Ellerton, despite the appalling wet weather - and was there any other kind last Summer? The audience loved both the choir and its programme of largely unaccompanied vocal works, a nice mixture of the familiar and the less well-known, which took full advantage of Ellerton Priory's wonderful, warm acoustic (see the review in newsletter No.7).

Since then, under the inspiring leadership of Jane Edwardson, *Cantabile* has given a series of well-received concerts in Leeds and York, and is bringing to Ellerton an unusual programme which balances the rich musical traditions of two great neighbours and historic rivals: England and France. The French half of this musical cross-Channel adventure includes some irresistible Gallic charm from Saint-Saëns (including a stunning evocation of stillness in music), a moving tribute to wartime friendship by Ravel, two of Duruflés serious and magnificent Motets, and some typical touches of sauciness and sensuality. On the English side there will be some seaside fun, tiny sentimental masterpieces and crowd-pleasers from Elgar and Sullivan, a group of warm and witty madrigals from the high-point of British musical craftsmanship, and a few cheeky traditional songs. Full details of this not-to-be-missed event are given in the listings (see *Events* overleaf), and *Cantabile* has already promised to pull out all the stops for a really grand musical event at Ellerton in 2010.

## Last link in an historic chain.... Remembering the Dunnington-Jeffersons of Thicket Priory

Isobel, Lady Dunnington-Jefferson, died peacefully in a convent nursing home in central London on 11<sup>th</sup> April this year. She was in her 98<sup>th</sup> year, and had been the last member of the Dunnington-Jefferson family of Thicket Priory to live in her beloved Yorkshire. Sadly, with her death the 160-year-old connection between Ellerton Priory and the Dunnington-Jeffersons has been broken.

Born Frances Isobel Cape, she was the daughter of one distinguished soldier, Colonel Herbert Anderson Cape DSO of Thorganby, and in 1938 she married another, Lt-Col John Alexander Dunnington-Jefferson DSO of Thicket Priory. He had been born in 1884, was educated at Eton and Sandhurst, and retired from the army in 1919. He became active in local politics and East Riding affairs, and in 1928 inherited the considerable family estates from an uncle. He was knighted in 1944, created a baronet in 1958, and died in 1979. Isobel, Lady Dunnington-Jefferson was an elegant, private and charmingly unassuming woman. Always very supportive of our project to restore Ellerton Priory church, she took a particular interest in the creation and installation of Helen Whittaker's Dunnington-Jefferson window in 2001. In her final years, the trustees occasionally wrote to her with news of Ellerton, and always received a kind and thoughtful reply.

One warm day in late Spring, 2001, Stephen Warburton and Phil Thomas drove her all round the Lower Derwent Valley, taking her to many once-familiar places she had not visited for many years. She sat for along time beside the river near Sutton upon Derwent, looking across at her former family home, Thicket Priory, and then reminisced entertainingly about life in the Second World War, the adventures of the local 'land girls', and the daily ritual of taking the ferry (now long-vanished) across the river to and from Thicket. She spoke of her sister who had died in a railway accident on the Derwent Valley Light Railway, and of her late husband to whose memory she was clearly devoted. Lady Dunnington-Jefferson remembered his distress when in the 1970s he learned that Ellerton Priory church was to close, and she invited us to her last Yorkshire home, Rectory Cottage at Escrick, to see his impressive portrait. Finally, she urged us to go and admire his memorial and the fine family armorial stained glass in Thorganby church, moved there from Thicket Priory, and suggested that we might make contact with her daughter Nicolette and her son Sir Mervyn, the present Baronet.

Dunningtons and Jeffersons had been significant landowners in the Valley, and elsewhere in East Yorkshire, since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, eventually accumulating well over 7000 acres. The families' surnames were combined in 1811 by John

Dunnington Jefferson, who built Thorganby Hall in 1822. In 1840 he bequeathed his lands to his nephew, the Revd Joseph Dunnington-Jefferson, vicar of Thorganby and prebend of York, who between 1844 and 1847 built himself a splendid new Jacobean-style mansion at Thicket (as well as many other buildings on the estate) to the design of the fashionable architect Edward Blore. In 1846 he commissioned the young architect John Loughborough Pearson to re-build Ellerton Priory church, paid for most of the work himself, and preached the sermon at the consecration of the new church in April, 1848.

The site of his new Thicket Priory, between Wheldrake and Thorganby, was probably chosen because of its ancient religious associations. A small Benedictine Priory for 12 nuns had been founded there in 1180, and was dissolved in 1539. Never a prosperous establishment, its remains disappeared un-remarked, although many fragments (including quantities of bones) were reportedly uncovered during the nineteenth century building operations.

Sir John and Lady Dunnington-Jefferson moved to Thorganby Hall in 1955, and returned the land at Thicket to its ancient use by selling Thicket Priory to a community of Carmelite nuns from Exmouth in Devon. They had been searching for a home in Yorkshire, which had been a Carmelite stronghold in mediaeval times. In 2009, the year of Isobel Dunnington-Jefferson's death, and after 54 years in the great house, the community of nuns moved into a new convent built for them in the former walled garden at Thicket. An historic church bell, cast in 1640 by Smith of York, has been donated by the parish of Wheldrake with the permission of the diocese of York, and now hangs above their new chapel. Daily it rings out over the Derwent ings, marking the passage of time and the steady rituals of monastic life, just as the bells of the mediaeval religious communities at Thicket and Ellerton rang over the Lower Derwent Valley for more than 450 years.

## Copies of the 'Pilgrimage of Grace' talks

We occasionally get requests for copies of the talks which Phil Thomas gave on *Aughton and the Pilgrimage of Grace* in Aughton church in 2002 and 2008. If you would like to request a copy, please send your contact details either by e-mail to: yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk or by post to: ECPT, 13 South Parade, York, YO23 1BF, and we will send them to you.

## Events at Ellerton Priory, Summer and Autumn 2009

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

### Sunday 12th July

This year's concert of English and French music by 'our' Leeds-based choir *Cantabile* will be at 3.00 pm on the afternoon of Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July. Tickets cost £4.00/£2.00 on the door, or can be reserved at yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk or on 01904 630097. Plentiful refreshments will be served, including wine, and there will be ample car parking.

### Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August

#### Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September

Working days for all enthusiastic adult volunteers, from 10.30 am and 4.30 pm. Come for a few hours and help lime-wash the newly plastered walls, and learn one of the great traditional building skills. There will also be other jobs to do. Bring overalls, stout old footwear, work-gloves and a picnic lunch.

#### Sunday 13th September

The church and churchyard will be open from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September for Heritage Open Days. Visitors this year will see the fully-restored and lime-washed interior of the church for the first time, and will be able to take part in nature exploration activities - especially involving moths and creepy-crawlies. There will be quizzes, colouring and other art activities for children and families, a raffle and tombola, our famously delicious home-made cakes and refreshments, and local plant and produce stalls. Guided tours at 11.00 am, 1.00 pm and 4.00 pm, nature walks (if possible) at 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm. Ample car parking. Why not bring a pic-nic or have lunch in the village pub? **Please Note** that on the previous day, 12<sup>th</sup> September, you can take part in a range of practical stained glass activities when the fabulous church of St Martin-cum-Gregory, Micklegate, York, is opened by The Stained Glass Trust. Our 'sister' church at Warter, near Pocklington (now the Heritage Centre for the Wolds), will also be open on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

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**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, and access is via a grass path and two small steps (ramp available). Plentiful car parking, but no dogs in the car park field, please. Nearby is *The Boot and Shoe* - an excellent, friendly traditional village pub where meals can be booked in advance (01757 288346).

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