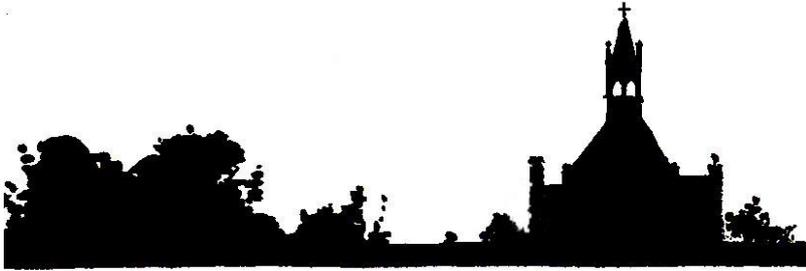


# Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



*Awarded the CPRE Mark for 2005*

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

*Newsletter number 13*

*Spring 2014*

## *Of peacocks and tortoises...*

Sometime in early March I became aware of a Peacock butterfly fluttering around in my workshop. Because it was battering itself against the windows, I caught it in my hands and carried it outside. I let it go near the potting bench where it took shelter among the stacks of pots on the lower shelf. Presumably, it had overwintered in the workshop, maybe in the roof space, and had been woken by the unseasonably warm weather. I was strongly reminded of the last time I had been at Ellerton Priory church, in mid-September last year.

On that occasion, helping to tidy the church after our Open Day and stowing various bits and pieces in the vestry, I became aware of an odd, low, slow rhythmic sound coming from overhead. Shining a torch up into the rafters, I discovered a Peacock butterfly clinging to the timbers, slowly and deliberately flapping its wings.

Moving the torch-light further around the underside of the roof revealed many more butterflies; small triangular shards of darkness clinging to the timbers of the cool dim space. The Peacock was the only one apparently disturbed by the activity below, and after a few moments it settled back into its torpor. I think I counted above two dozen insects, mostly Small Tortoiseshell and a couple more Peacock butterflies.

People using the church in springtime have always been aware of the Small Tortoiseshells' presence. They flutter against the windows as we try to clean them in

preparation for the new season's activities, and the floor is liberally scattered with the remnants of their wings at this time of year, the insects having (presumably) fallen prey to the attentions of our very healthy spider population. The butterflies also fail to survive the winter if they have not built up enough food reserves during the late summer and early autumn.

So ubiquitous are the wing scraps that our craftsman plasterer, Peter Baker, embedded a couple of them in tiny patches of almost transparent marble plaster; one on the north wall of the nave and one in the sanctuary.

I think I had always known that Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells overwintered in the UK as adults, but hadn't realised that they started to hibernate so early – apparently it is quite common. A few other varieties of butterfly can also survive our winters as adults, depending on the severity of the season, while many others pass the cold period as eggs, caterpillars or pupae (chrysalises). All other summer butterflies arrive as migrants from warmer countries and generally do not survive our winters.

Species which do overwinter as adults require cool, dry spaces with reasonable ventilation and access to the outside when they wake up. If they are too damp they will succumb to fungal infections. Sheds, garages and similar outbuildings are ideal, if they are not subject to intermittent periods of heating-up which fool the insects into breaking their dormancy at a time of year when they cannot survive.

Butterflies may also hibernate in spare rooms in houses, and be awoken when the rooms come into use for guests over the Christmas period and the heating comes on. In such cases they should be carefully caught and released into a more suitable indoor location where they can return to their dormant state until the weather improves.

Of course it is no good carefully nurturing butterflies throughout the winter if they cannot find a suitable environment in which to survive and reproduce the following year. Nectar-rich flowers are a vital food source for adult butterflies, and planting them in a sunny position encourages the flowers to open wide and helps to spread the scent. Shelter from strong winds also helps the insects to feed effectively, and flowering ivy is



*Small Tortoiseshell butterfly*

## The Autumn Open Day, 2013

particularly important in the autumn for hibernating butterflies. There are several helpful websites, of which [www.butterflyconservation.org](http://www.butterflyconservation.org) gives lists of the most useful plants, although not season by season. However, this information is given on [www.butterflyfarm.co.uk](http://www.butterflyfarm.co.uk).

Of equal importance are plants and habitats for the larvae of the butterfly – the dreaded caterpillar! It seems an obvious point to make, but native insects have evolved alongside native plants, and it is usually these which are of most benefit to them, including butterflies and their larvae. Many seem to thrive on nettles and thistles, so a truly wild-life friendly garden needs to have a corner where these plants can be left to grow undisturbed throughout the season. If you can incorporate a good range of old cottage garden plants – that is, old-fashioned countryside plants which haven't been messed about with by the plant breeders – so much the better.



*The Peacock butterfly*

[www.munchingcaterpillars.org](http://www.munchingcaterpillars.org) is a very useful website giving concise information about a number of butterfly varieties, their caterpillars and their food plants. It is also important to avoid the use of pesticides, because that which kills the aphids and the thrips will also kill the butterflies, the ladybirds and the bees.

At Ellerton Priory the churchyard is managed for the benefit of wildlife; encouraging a wide range of native species, using no chemicals and trying to control the more vigorous and unwanted vegetation by traditional methods. Yellow Rattle has been used in an attempt to weaken the grass, and let other species of plants gain a foothold.

Weather permitting, the churchyard is cut in mid-summer to let the flowering plants seed naturally, and then re-generate enough to allow sheep to graze in the autumn – another form of natural control. From time to time a species count is carried out, and so far the results have been encouraging.

Already this year I have seen more butterflies in my garden than in the whole of some recent years, and hopefully this will continue throughout the summer. Not only are they beautiful, they are a good and very visible indicator of conditions in general, showing that we are on the right track in terms of our management of our local ecology.



*The church looking its best, ready for visitors*

Getting Ellerton Priory ready for our Open Days and concerts requires a lot of hard work from by a small, dedicated group of trustees and supporters. This is especially true after messy working weekends involving scaffolding, lime-wash and muddy boots, or when the building has to be woken from its winter hibernation.

The church looked particularly lovely last year, with every part of the interior finally lime-washed, and our most effective and admired exhibition to date. Entitled *The Flood*, it could hardly have been more prescient.

And it is always encouraging to get a pat on the back, so the trustees were greatly heartened to receive these lovely comments in a letter from one of our 2013 visitors; *'I was so impressed with the work done at Ellerton Priory as seen yesterday at the National Heritage open day. I loved the tour and appreciated the evidence of high quality craftsmanship – all set in one of my favourite landscapes.'*



*Two views of our much-praised 2013 exhibition*

## *Another taste of Ellerton; ...even more of Michael's delicious Continental cakes*

Three more wonderful cake recipes from our resident expert baker-cum-pastry-cook. All have been tasted and relished by visitors to recent September Open Days.

### *Strawberry yogurt cream cake*

#### **For the cake mixture**

150 grams soft butter  
100 grams sugar  
1 tablespoon vanilla sugar  
1 pinch salt  
3 eggs  
150 grams self-raising flour  
50 g cornflour

#### **For the filling**

500 g strawberries  
200 grams whipping cream  
500 grams strawberry yogurt  
6 leaves gelatine

Pre-heat the oven to 175°C

#### **Method**

Beat the butter, sugar, vanilla sugar and salt into a creamy paste. Add one egg and beat it into the paste, then do the same with the next egg and then the third. Gradually fold in the flour and cornflour until completely mixed in. Butter and line with baking paper a 26 cm (11 inch) spring-form baking tin, spread the mixture in it and bake in a pre-heated oven for 30 minutes. Remove from the tin onto a cooling rack, and cut the cake horizontally into two layers.

Clean and hull the strawberries. Put one of the sponges on a plate, cut each strawberry in half and place the halves in a layer on the sponge cake, then put the ring of the baking tin back around the strawberry-covered sponge. Whip the cream until firm, and mix in the strawberry yogurt. Soak and melt the gelatine in water as per the instructions, and stir it well into the cream/yogurt mixture. Pour the mixture over the bottom cake and strawberries and put the other sponge on top. Leave it in the fridge overnight, and before serving remove the baking tin and decorate the top in any way you like.

### *Rich chocolate slab tart*

500 grams dark chocolate  
500 grams double cream  
250 grams digestive biscuits  
30 grams butter  
1 tablespoon cocoa powder

Break the chocolate into small pieces and put them in a bowl. Boil the cream and it pour over the chocolate, stirring until all the chocolate has melted. Line a 25 cm x 35 cm (10 x 12 inch) baking tray with baking paper. Crush the biscuits into fine crumbs, mix with the butter and press into the tray in a layer. Pour the still warm chocolate mixture over the biscuit layer then leave in the fridge overnight. Before serving, dust with cocoa powder and cut into small rectangles about 3cm x 4cm.

### *Buttermilk and raspberry roulade*

#### **For the cake mixture**

3 eggs, separated into whites and yolks  
1 pinch salt  
220 grams sugar  
120 grams flour  
30 grams cornflour  
1 teaspoon baking powder

#### **For the filling**

200 ml whipping cream  
250 ml buttermilk  
Zest of one lemon  
1 sachet instant gelatine  
250 g raspberries  
3 tablespoons icing sugar

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C

#### **Method**

Whip the egg whites, salt and 3 tablespoons of cold water with an electric mixer until firm. Add the sugar and continue whipping for 3 more minutes. Then add the egg yolks and whip them in too. Sieve the flour, cornflour and baking powder, and fold them into the mixture by hand. Spread the mixture on a 30 cm x 40 cm baking tray, buttered and lined with baking paper, and bake in the pre-heated oven for 8 to 10 minutes. Turn the cake on to a tea-towel which you have sprinkled with caster sugar. Remove the baking paper, roll the cake in the tea-towel and leave it to cool.

Whip the cream until firm with the electric mixer, then beat in the buttermilk, lemon zest and instant gelatin by hand. Keep stirring until the mixture begins to thicken. Carefully unroll the cake, spread it with the cream mixture and dot it with the raspberries, then roll it all up again. Dust the roulade with icing sugar.



*A corner of the café stall in September 2012*

## Events at Ellerton Priory in spring and summer 2014

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

### Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July

#### Practical maintenance days

Come and join us at any time between 11.00 am and 5.00 pm on our working days at the Priory church. There are lots of jobs to do, some involving a bit of skill, but many only needing enthusiasm and elbow-grease. They include re-grading the ground in areas of the churchyard to improve access, excavating a French drain, hanging chandeliers inside the church, a spot of lime-washing, some re-pointing on the churchyard wall, cleaning out gullies and gutters, polishing woodwork, and a really thorough annual clean-up in advance of our National Heritage Open Day in September. Equipment, materials, drinks and biscuits will be provided, but bring lunch and wear sensible clothing and stout footwear.

### Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July

#### Summer afternoon concert: *Love in the North*

Ellerton's Priory's popular 'resident' choir *Cantabile* returns in July with a rich programme of music celebrating love in its many forms; especially love in northern lands or as expressed by northern musicians. *Love in the North* explores the passion, romance, heartache and pain of falling in (and out of) love across five centuries and in different ways and places. *Cantabile's* programme includes works sacred and profane, and ranges from Purcell to Cole Porter, from joy and comedy to calm serenity, from tender affection to vivid bursts of jealousy and disdain. Let the singers of *Cantabile* guide you on a summer roller-coaster journey through the ecstasies and agonies of Love. Tickets are £7.00 each (£3.50 for children and the disabled), available on the door or reserved in advance at [yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk) or on 01904 630097. Generous refreshments are included in the ticket price, including crisp summer afternoon wine, soft drinks, and tea and coffee.

### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September

#### Heritage Open Day

In 2014 the Priory church and churchyard will be open for *National Heritage Open Days* from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September. As always, refreshments will be available with real coffee and generous portions of Michael's near-legendary cakes and savouries. There will be activities for children, stalls selling local produce and plants, guidebooks and gift-cards, second hand books, and a tombola. 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. We hope that sheep will once again be grazing the churchyard, so why not join them, and bring a pic-nic to share with friends, or order lunch in Ellerton's splendid village pub, *The Boot and Shoe*?

## Keeping in touch with the Trust

If you are willing to receive these newsletters by e-mail, please let us know - the saving to the trust is very significant!

*Ellerton Church Preservation Trust* is a Registered Charity, with the number 1052689. The address for correspondence is 13 South Parade York, North Yorkshire YO23 1BF. Our website is [www.ellertonpriory.co.uk](http://www.ellertonpriory.co.uk) and if you wish to contact the trustees for any reason, or wish to offer help or support, please feel free to 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, David Hargreaves, Michael Roesen, 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 via a fairly level grass path and two small steps (help available). We have plentiful car parking, but no dogs allowed in the car park field, please. Nearby is *The Boot and Shoe* - a friendly traditional village pub, where hearty meals can be booked in advance (01757 288346).

---