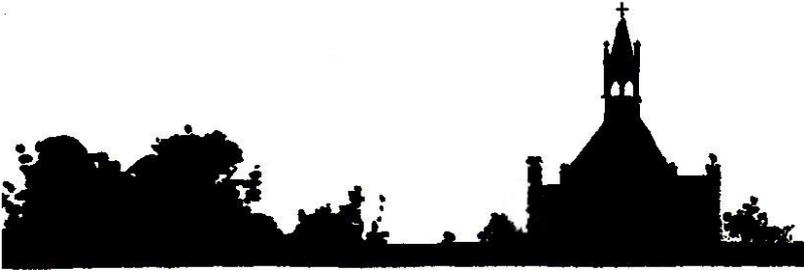


# Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



*Awarded the CPRE Mark for 2005*

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

*Newsletter number 14*

*Spring 2015*

*Get ready to celebrate...*

*...countdown to 21 years of the Preservation Trust*

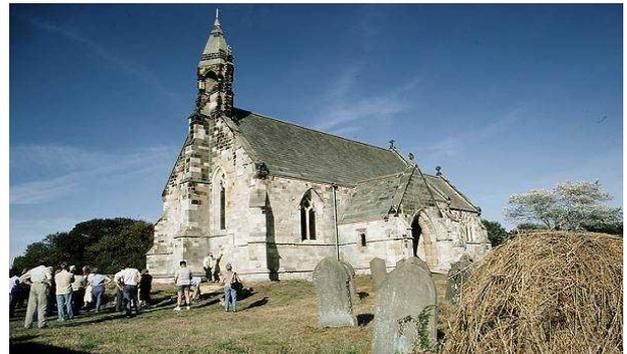
In 2016 the Ellerton Church Preservation Trust will be twenty-one years old. Twenty-first anniversaries are usually fairly significant, and the trustees intend to mark this one with a celebratory issue of the newsletter next year and various activities in and around the Priory church and churchyard.

Much of that newsletter will be devoted to telling the story of this remarkable site, of how incredibly close Ellerton came to losing its church completely. The complete demolition of any ancient country church and the loss of its associations would be cause enough for regret, but in this case it would also have obliterated the visible evidence of more than 800 years of human communal and spiritual life, and the focus of a vital 'cultural landscape' in the Lower Derwent Valley.

One person has by far the greatest claim to be the inspiration behind the work of the Trust, and the salvation of the church and its churchyard; the late Stephen Warburton. He was a remarkable figure in the worlds of conservation and natural history, remembered with affection and respect by many people in the Valley, but because he worked quietly and without fuss, published little, and refused all personal honours or acknowledgment, the real scale of his achievement is known only to a few colleagues and close friends.



*Stephen Warburton (1950-2004)*



*September 1998, with haycocks in the churchyard*

Between 1984 and 1993 he was a central figure in a major court battle to defend the river Derwent (one of the finest British examples of a classic river system with its wildlife intact) from navigation and development. The case was finally settled by a House of Lords action which protected the Derwent and some 400 other rivers. One of the unexpected consequences was the creation of the Carstairs Countryside Trust, of which Stephen was a trustee. The CCT was encouraged by English Nature to acquire critical conservation land at Ellerton, and very swiftly the trustees realised the enormous importance of the relationship between the river, its ecology, the survival of a rare land- and water-management system, and the pattern of settlement represented by the village, medieval priory site and the then derelict and abandoned church; an unusually intact 'cultural landscape'.

Stephen's commitment was crucial to the establishment of the Ellerton Church Preservation Trust in 1995, and he was its first Secretary. Although its initial aim was simply to rescue and restore the church as 'a monument in the landscape' warm local support has enabled it to achieve far more than that in its first twenty-one years.

Confident that there is plenty to celebrate, next year we will be inviting our 'resident' choir *Cantabile* to produce a really special concert with invited guests, the final, long-awaited stained glass window will be installed in the church, new editions of our Guidebooks will be produced, the website will be transformed, and we are already thinking about activities elsewhere in the Derwent Valley. Please watch this space, and prepare to help us mark a significant birthday!

## *Another taste of Ellerton; ... two more of Michael's legendary Continental cakes*

Two more delicious recipes for you to try from Michael Thomas, Ellerton Priory's resident baker-cum-pastry-cook and now a trustee of the ECPT. All have been tasted and relished by visitors to our Open Days.

### *Traditional Swiss cheesecake*

#### **For the pastry**

300 grams plain flour  
150 grams cold butter, chopped into pieces  
80 grams sugar  
1 pinch salt  
1 egg

#### **For the cheesecake mixture**

250 grams caster sugar  
6 eggs, separated into yolks and whites  
750 grams Quark (available at some supermarkets)  
150 grams soured cream  
1 pinch salt  
100 grams molten butter  
Zest and juice of 1 lemon  
50 grams cornflour

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C

#### **Method**

Sift the flour into a bowl and add the other pastry ingredients. Mix them together with your fingers into a smooth lump of pastry. Butter a 26 cm (11 inch) spring-form baking tin. Using your fingers, evenly line the base and sides of the tin with the pastry.

Whisk the sugar and egg yolks with an electric mixer until pale and creamy. Add the Quark, soured cream and salt and continue mixing, then add the cooled butter, lemon zest and juice, and cornflour and mix until all the ingredients are well integrated. In another bowl, whip the egg whites with an electric mixer until very firm, then gradually fold them by hand into the cheesecake mixture using a balloon whisk.

Pour the mixture into the pastry-lined tin and bake for about 40 minutes. Without taking the cake from the oven, quickly cover the top with aluminium foil to prevent it going too brown, and bake for a further 20 minutes.

Turn the oven off, open the door a little, and leave the cheesecake to cool inside the oven. When the cake has cooled completely, carefully open and remove the ring from the tin, leaving the cake on the base of the tin for serving. Dust with icing sugar if desired.

### *Apricot & almond meringue cake*

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

150 grams self-raising flour  
100 grams butter, chopped into pieces  
50 grams sugar  
1 egg white (retain the yolk for the topping)  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

#### **For the baked topping**

2 tablespoons of fine, dry breadcrumbs  
1 tin of apricots in juice, drained  
2 egg yolks  
1 egg white  
75 grams caster sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
3 tablespoons double cream  
15 grams cornflour  
100 grams flaked almonds

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C

#### **Method**

Sift the flour into a bowl and add the other cake mixture ingredients. Mix them together with your hands into a lump of pastry or dough. Butter a 26 cm (11 inch) spring-form baking tin, and using your fingers line it with the dough mixture: two thirds to cover the base, and the remaining third to cover the sides to half the height of the tin.

Spread the breadcrumbs over the pastry base, cut the apricots into halves and arrange them in a layer over the breadcrumbs. Whip the egg white with an electric mixer until very firm. In another bowl beat the sugar, vanilla extract, cream and cornflour until the consistency is smooth and creamy. Very carefully fold in the whipped egg white by hand, and then fold in the flaked almonds. Pour the mixture over the apricots.

Bake in the pre-heated oven for 45 minutes. Leave to cool, then carefully open and lift the ring from the cake tin, leaving your apricot and almond cake on the base for serving.



*A corner of Michael's cake stall in 2013  
The apricot and almond meringue cake is top left*

## The secret life of woodlice...

...billy button, chisel-pig, chooky, chuggy-pig  
crilly-green, crockie, cruller, cudworm...

It's a curious fact that whenever we limewash the inside of Ellerton Priory church, as soon as our backs are turned woodlice appear on the newly immaculate walls. This started us wondering about the many small, barely noticed creatures which inhabit the building and how they go about their lives. Hence this article, the first of an occasional series about the permanent inhabitants of the church and churchyard.

Woodlice are related to crabs, lobsters, shrimp and 67,000 other species of crustaceans, most of which live in the sea, but woodlice have long-since adapted to living on land. Little changed since the Carboniferous era (about 358 million years ago), similar bugs can be found petrified inside lumps of coal. About 40 native species live outdoors in Britain and another 12 inhabit heated greenhouses. Only nine are common, and five – known as 'the famous five' – are very common and live in our gardens (and churches). A habitat that includes 'all 5 plus another one' is likely to be fairly rich in invertebrates; animals without a backbone.

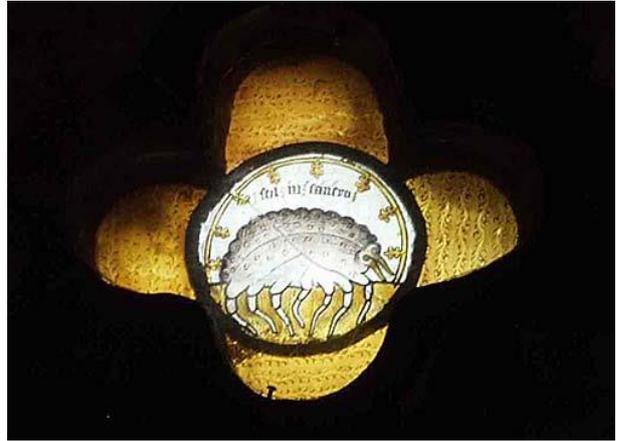
The commonest woodlice are grey, but others can be surprisingly colourful; mottled browns, yellows, purples and whites. Perhaps the prettiest is the Rosy woodlouse, with a pair of bright yellow stripes on its back.

...grammar-zow, granny picker, hobby horse, Horace,  
Jacobite, journey-pig, millacreen, mankie-pea...

In the past it was believed that woodlice needed only 'warm moisture' or dew to survive. In fact they have to eat 5-10% of their body weight every day. Fortunately they are not fussy eaters, munching through masses of rotten wood and detritus, including their own droppings. Such thrifty habits make them useful decomposers and recyclers. Woodlice can be a nuisance in glasshouses, where they nibble seedlings, and suggested ways of getting rid of them included spectacular examples of overkill. Between the 1930s and late-1970s, gardeners were advised to sprinkle huge concentrations of poisons or to drench affected greenhouse soil in DDT, a powerful and now banned insecticide which killed every soil-borne creature it came into contact with. A kinder, much safer solution is to keep a tidy greenhouse and so remove potential refuges.

Woodlice are the sort of animals that seem to acquire nicknames; more than 80 have been found in Britain, 34 of them gathered in the 1960s in Devon alone. Familiar and yet odd, with their armoured bodies, rows of spiky legs and a pair of 'feelers' upfront, woodlice have great character and do little harm. Hence most of their nicknames are friendly, picturing them as small domestic objects like buttons, pills or peas, or as unrelated insects like lice, bugs and worms.

The Anglo-Saxons had a name for them – *eselchans*, meaning ass-coloured. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century they were called *chestlockes* or *lockdors*, *chisleps* or *monk's peas*, which by the 17<sup>th</sup> century had become *monkey-peas*. The shape of rolled-up woodlice also provided the cue for many *-button* and *-cob* names, while round cheeses probably suggested *cheese-bob* or *chizzle-bob*. *Chisleps* seems to come from an Old English word for a natural agent that helped to turn sour milk into cheese. Were woodlice also once used for that purpose?



A woodlouse in medieval stained glass

Today many names are purely local, and confined to particular parts of the country. Real experts could tell roughly where they were by the name the locals give to woodlice. In the north, they are *coffin-cutters* (a sinister association with damp, rotten wood), *crawly-pigs*, *pissibeds* and *slaters* (because the back of the common grey woodlouse looks like a slated roof, and they are often found hiding under roof slates), in the Midlands *chucky-pigs*, *bibble bugs*, *fairy pigs* and *carpenter's fleas* (again associated with the wood on which they feed), in the south *gramfer grigs*, *woozy pugs* and *monkeypede*. In eastern counties they are *snots*, *tiddy-hogs* and *grumpy gravies*. Indeed, woodlouse itself seems to be a nickname that stuck. Though un-related to lice, they look a little like a once-familiar large pig louse – a mistake that lies behind the commonest woodlouse's scientific name *porcellio* (little pig).

...penny mouse, pig's button, piggy-wiggy,  
rollin-ball, slater, sheel-back, shoemaker...

But why did they attract so much linguistic invention? Perhaps because they were so familiar, but also because they were regarded as useful. When curled up, woodlice looked like apothecary's pills which may have suggested to people more trusting of heaven-sent signs and associations that they had medicinal properties. They seem to have been widely used in traditional medicine, either dried and ground to powder or simply swallowed whole – a cure for stomach ache which survived into modern times. Their faint smell of urine (hence their Dutch name *pissebed*) lead them to be valued as a treatment for bladder or urinary tract ailments, and few apothecaries would have been without a jar of dried woodlice, supplied by a long-obsolete chisleps gatherer.

...slatree, slaterworm, Susie-pig, tank,  
thrush louse, tiggy-hog, zowey pig...

By all accounts they taste horribly bitter. Young birds and even spiders (with one specialised exception) spit them out, so physicians tried to disguise the bitterness with wine or (more curiously) with mouse or pigeon droppings, or hung them about the patient's neck in a bag – thirteen often being regarded as the ideal number. In fact, woodlice do contain compounds which make them useful in some treatments, and their external skeletons, like those of all crustaceans, are mainly composed of calcium carbonate – still an ingredient in many indigestion, heartburn and ulcer remedies.

Only rarely has the woodlouse been elevated in a work of art, but in the south porch of the church of Saint Mary in Shrewsbury, a church famous for its beautiful stained glass, is a charming image in ancient glass of what is unmistakably a common woodlouse (porcellio scaber) with seven legs along the visible side, two bulging eyes and a pair of short antennae. The inscription 'Sol in cancro' suggests that it is being used as a homely stand-in for the crab of the zodiac.

And why do they seem to love limewash? Perhaps it's to do with calcium, but your guess is as good as ours!

[*Bugs Britannica* by Peter Marren and Richard Mabey is a great source of further information.]

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## Events at Ellerton Priory in Summer and Autumn 2015

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

### Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July

#### Summer afternoon concert – *Cantabile in Arcadia*

Ellerton Priory's popular 'resident' chamber choir, *Cantabile*, returns this year with a rich programme of music appropriately inspired by nature and the rural idyll. *Arcadia* represents life and love experienced in unspoiled harmony with nature; a poetic Eden or paradise. Through the glorious music of Vaughan Williams, Holst, John Tavener (famous for his contribution to the funeral of Diana, princess of Wales), Stanford and others, *Cantabile* offers portraits of the lamb, tiger and bluebird in their element, and performs choruses from Purcell's deeply moving opera *Dido and Aeneas*. The concert starts at 3.00 pm (come early to be sure of a good seat) and there will be ample car parking. Tickets are £8.00 each (£4.00 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, tea, coffee and nibbles.

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

#### Heritage Open Day

In 2015 the Priory church and churchyard will be open for *National Heritage Open Days* from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm on Sunday 13<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, should 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 keen to answer your questions and hear your thoughts. Why not make a day of it by bringing a picnic to share with friends, or order an excellent lunch in Ellerton's splendid village pub, *The Boot and Shoe* (01757 288346). Ample car parking will be available close to the church.

In 2015 Ellerton Priory will also be hosting several private visits by Local History and Adult Education groups. If you belong to an organisation which would enjoy a private tour with refreshments, or would like to use the church as a venue for an activity or occasion, you are encouraged to get in touch with the Trust (see details below).

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## Keeping in touch with the Trust

**If you are happy to receive our newsletters by e-mail, please let us know. The saving to the trust is 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 current trustees are Richard Baker, Ann Sotheran (treasurer), Michael Thomas and Phil Thomas (chair).