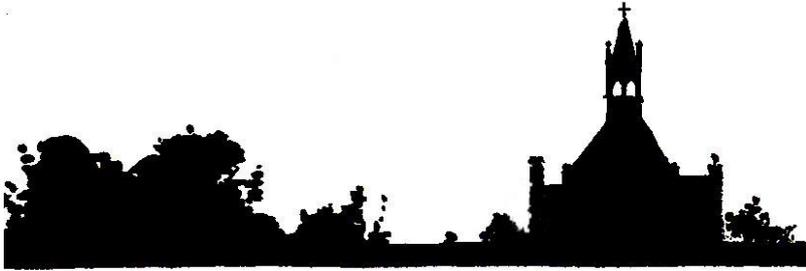


Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



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

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Spring 2017

Ring out the old, ring in the new...

Until about twenty years ago, a small early-C19 watercolour of the surviving mediaeval church at Ellerton hung in Aughton church. It showed a low building with a pyramid-roofed timber bell-cote riding the ridge of the nave roof, close to the west end. That bell-cote contained at least one bell, un-dated, but cast by a member of the Seller family of York sometime between 1662 and 1763.

When Ellerton Priory church was rebuilt in the 1840s it was given a handsome western bell-cote for two bells. The larger (tenor) bell was the Seller bell from the previous church, the smaller (treble) bell was specially cast for Ellerton by Mears of Whitechapel in 1849. Ellerton church was closed in 1979, and in the 1980s the bells were removed and offered to another church in the diocese. Apparently they were not used, and seem to have changed hands several times thereafter. Eventually they disappeared, probably to be melted down and re-cast, and after 450 years of bell-founding, the Whitechapel bell-foundry itself closed in 2017.



*Tresillian, Cornwall
- three chiming bells in a bell-cote*

In the cultures of these islands, bells have always been associated with churches. In the past they announced the

times of daily prayer, and still they call worshippers to services. They mark significant celebrations like weddings and jubilees, and have long been a part of the public ritual surrounding death. The 'passing bell' was rung to warn of a death, the 'death knell' announced a death (usually with different patterns of strokes for a man, woman or child, followed by chimes to indicate the age of the deceased), and the 'lych bell' or 'corpse bell' accompanied the funeral procession.



*Horspath, Oxfordshire
- a peal of six bells for 'full circle' ringing*

Bells are usually mounted high in a tower or bell-cote so they can be heard by the surrounding community. Each bell is attached to a beam (the headstock) which pivots to and fro on bearings. A rope is tied to a wheel or lever on the headstock, and hangs down to the ringer. Such bells can be 'hung dead' (in a fixed position) or swung on their headstocks. In English-speaking countries the tradition of 'change ringing' has developed in which bells tuned to a common scale are swung 'full circle', enabling the ringers to produce elaborate, shifting patterns of notes called 'changes'.

But what has this to do with Ellerton Priory, a former church which now has no bells? Well it seems very likely that Ellerton church will have bells once again before the year is out – bells similar to those it lost in the 1980s, but brought here by a very roundabout route!

In 1866 a new church was built at Foxholes, north of Driffield, by the York architect George Fowler Jones,

near to the site of an ancient predecessor of which nothing remains. Saint Mary Foxholes has three bells – a treble cast by Edward I Seller in 1710 (listed as 'worthy of preservation' by the Church Buildings Council) and a second and tenor both cast by John Taylor & Co in 1866. However, the church has now also been closed, and its bells are to be disposed of.

Advised by the Diocesan Bells Advisor, the Archbishop of York has directed that the two smaller bells, the treble and second, should come to Ellerton Priory. Once again, Ellerton will be home to a bell cast in the mid-C19 and a bell cast by a member of the Seller family.

Bell-founding was revived in York in the early-C17, but the first member of this particular bell-making dynasty was William Seller, who had a foundry in Jubbergate from 1662, mainly providing bells for Lincolnshire churches. He was succeeded by his son Edward I, who died a wealthy man in 1724. This Edward left the bell foundry to his sons, Richard and Edward II, who sold the last remnants of the business in 1763, a year before his death. The tradition of casting bells in York was kept alive by two generations of the Dalton family until it finally ended early in the C19.

It is usual for founder's marks and inscriptions to be cast into English bells. Both Edward I Seller and his son Edward II used the mark *E Seller/Ebor* and favourite inscriptions included *Gloria in altissimis Deo* and *Venite exultemus Domino*. It is not yet known whether Ellerton's 'new' old treble bell is inscribed.

Ellerton's other 'new' bell was cast in 1866 by John Taylor & Co, successors to an ancient tradition of bell-founding in the East Midlands. They have been based in Loughborough since 1784, where they are still proudly casting bells in the largest bell-foundry in the world.

Now that we are to have bells again, we must start raising funds to commission suitable new bell-fittings and to raise the bells into the Ellerton bell-cote. Perhaps one day we might, as Lord Tennyson describes it, *'Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells'* across the ings of the Lower Derwent Valley, as must have happened so often over the last eight centuries.

Flying love-knots and daggers

Each year, the evening before our Heritage Open Day, our trustee Richard Baker, who is part of the churchyard management team, sets up a moth trap in Ellerton. He opens the trap during the day's activities so that visitors can see the catch being recorded before being released.

Most people are aware of moths but either pay them little regard or consider them to be a nuisance. Moths get into the house at night in the summer and batter ceaselessly around our light bulbs. We should consider ourselves lucky that we live in the age of electricity. When we used candles and oil lamps to light our houses the smell of singed moth was a normal part of the household scent-scape.



Common clothes moth

Moths get into our wardrobes and clothes drawers and we come across holes or worm tracks across the fabric of our most expensive and cherished garments. (This damage may actually have been caused by the carpet beetle larvae which have evolved to live on feathers, fur, hair and wool, although the adults feed on pollen and nectar). Having similarly evolved in bird or animal nests, the caterpillars of the two common clothes moths are particularly attracted to dirty natural fabrics; the residue of human sweat etc. provides the nutrients and traces of moisture essential for their development. In fact the adults do not feed at all, it is only the grubs which do the damage.

If the maggot in your apple has legs it is the caterpillar of the Codling moth - not actually a maggot, which is the larva of a beetle or fly and which has no legs – but this is no comfort if you have just bitten into one. What is worse than finding a maggot in your apple? Finding half a maggot! Codling moths can be a serious pest in fruit orchards. However, there are nearly 200,000 species of moths in the world, found all over the globe, and they are as diverse as any other group of creatures.



Buff tip moth (feeds on trees such as cherries, commonly planted in Ellerton)

Moths belong to the same family as butterflies and share many of their characteristics. There are fewer than 70 butterflies in the UK but more than 2,500 moths. They have the same basic biology and the same life-cycle of eggs, larvae (caterpillars) pupae (cocoons) and adults. The caterpillars of each species have a preferred range of food plants, chewing variously through the leaves and other parts of wild plants, weeds or carefully nurtured vegetables and ornamental garden plants. The large, bright yellow and black caterpillars of the Mullein moth can strip a six foot verbascum of all its leaves virtually overnight. Some moth caterpillars can be serious agricultural pests too, but the adults feed on

nectar, and in doing so are essential to pollination of the plants in just the same way as bees and butterflies.

Given the large numbers of species which are in our environment it may seem astonishing that we generally know so little about moths. If we think more carefully however it is perhaps not so surprising. For one thing they usually, but not exclusively, fly at night when we are naturally much less aware of what is going on around us. The other reason is that so many of them are masters of camouflage.



Red underwing moth (seen at Ellerton church)

Flying by night, they rest by day and need to blend into their backgrounds so as not to be picked off by any passing birds. At rest many of them look like dead leaves, tree bark, stone (with or without lichen and moss), their postures, subtle colouring and intricately marked wings all adding to the disguise. When they fly or if they are disturbed it can be seen that quite often the underwings are brightly coloured. If threatened by a predator the moth will suddenly spread its wings and the startling flash of colour may save it from being eaten.

The colouring of some moths is anything but subtle. In many cases this is because the insects are poisonous or bitter-tasting, due to the food plants they favour, and birds learn to avoid them. Sometimes it is just in imitation of other moths which are unpleasant to eat. In some cases however, what we perceive to be highly coloured and beautiful moths do actually still blend perfectly into their backgrounds. The Elephant hawk moth is a case in point. Looking as if clad in olive green and magenta suede fabric it merges superbly well into its preferred nectar plants of honeysuckle or rosebay willow-herb, which is a food plant for its caterpillar.



Elephant hawk moth

Talking about the Elephant hawk moth brings us onto the subject of moth naming. Many moths are named for tiny distinguishing features which set them apart from others, virtually identical in colouring, or for almost invisible or fanciful markings which seem to resemble other objects: darts, arches, love-knots, coronets amongst many others. Some are obviously named for their main food plant, such as the Convolvulus and Spurge hawk moths, or for their way of flying, like the Humming-bird hawk moth, or their resemblance to other insects, such as the Hornet moth.

A number of moths are named after the characteristics of their caterpillars. The Elephant hawk moth has a caterpillar which grows to about 3" or 8cm and which starts off green, moults to brown, and has a habit of pulling its head back into its body if frightened. It is said to resemble an elephant's head in this position. This posture also causes prominent 'eye' spots to appear which help to deter predators.

The Lobster moth is so named because of its bizarrely shaped pink caterpillar. Looper moths have long thin caterpillars which move along twigs in a looping motion, stretching out their front feet to grip the stem and then bringing their rear end up to meet them. Leaf mining moths have caterpillars which live inside leaves and tunnel through between the upper and lower surfaces, leaving distinctive tracks as they go.



Vapourer moth caterpillar

Although most caterpillars are relatively hard to spot, some moths have caterpillars which are far more eye-catching than they are. A case in point is the Vapourer moth. The male is smallish with chestnut coloured wings, the female has a bug shaped furry white body and has no wings, but the caterpillar defies description!

Many caterpillars have tufts of fine hairs which put off birds from eating them.

Moths and caterpillars form an important part of the food chain. Both adult moths and their caterpillars are food for a wide variety of wildlife, including other insects, spiders, frogs, toads, lizards, shrews, hedgehogs, bats and birds. Night-flying adult moths form a major part of the diet of bats. Many birds eat both adult moths and their caterpillars, but the caterpillars are especially important for feeding the young. Some of Britain's favourite garden birds rely on caterpillars to rear their chicks – it is estimated that Blue tits consume about 35 billion a year!

Since they are so widespread, are found in so many different habitats, and are so sensitive to changes, moths are particularly useful as indicator species. Monitoring their numbers and ranges can give us vital clues to changes in our environment, such as the effects of new farming practices, pesticides, pollution or climate change.

In July 2016 the moth trap set in an Ellerton garden caught sixty-four different species of moths. We can take heart from this and feel that our little corner of the valley is in a healthy state!



Angle shades moth (regularly seen at Ellerton)

Events at Ellerton Priory, Summer 2017

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

Sunday 23rd July

Cantabile celebrates 'this Shining Night'...

The wonderful summer concerts given by the Leeds-based chamber choir **Cantabile** (www.cantabile-choir-leeds.org.uk) have become a firm and popular fixture in the Ellerton Priory calendar. This year they will be singing at Ellerton on Sunday 23rd July at 3.00 pm, bringing an atmospheric programme of nocturnal music evoking the magic, mystery and breath-taking majesty of the night.

The concert includes a wonderful musical portrait of the intense and shining stillness of the star-filled heavens, accompanied by the shimmering sound of tuned wine-glasses. There will be glorious pieces by Edvard Grieg, Hubert Parry and Benjamin Britten, and one of the most haunting moments from Sergei Rachmaninov's famous *All Night Vigil*. Perhaps less surprisingly, among the velvet skies, the owls and the evening primroses, **Cantabile** will be paying a romantic visit to Berkeley Square to hear a nightingale sing.

Tickets for this event have been held at £8.00 each (£4.00 for children and the disabled) and can be purchased on the door or reserved in advance by leaving a message with yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk or on 01430 431951. **Refreshments are included** in the ticket price, including perfect Summer-afternoon wine and soft drinks. As always there will be ample car parking, but come early to be sure of a good seat.

Sunday 10th September

Heritage Open Day

This year the church and churchyard will once again be open for **National Heritage Open Days** from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm on Sunday 10th September. Richard will be on hand to tell you all about churchyard creepy-crawlies and moths (some of which will have been caught in Ellerton the evening before in his moth-trap) and of course there will be generous portions of Michael's famously delicious home-made cakes and savouries, local produce, a tombola, second-hand books, a plant sale and gift cards. Phil's entertaining tours of the whole site will be at 11.00 am, 1.00 pm and 3.30pm, and he will be here to answer questions all day. Why not join us and bring a pic-nic to share with friends, or have lunch in Ellerton's great village pub?

Directions to Ellerton Priory

Ellerton is 14 miles south-east of York, just off the B1228 York-Howden road, which 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 (ramp and help available). We have plentiful car parking, but no dogs are allowed in the car park field, please. Nearby is **The Boot and Shoe** - a friendly, traditional village pub with great ales, where very hearty meals can be booked in advance (01757 288346).
