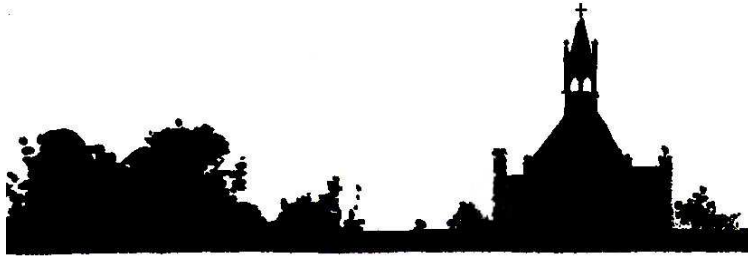


Ellerton Church Preservation Trust



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

Newsletter number 7
Summer 2008

Music Divine? It certainly was!

.... even if the weather was definitely more autumnal than summery, writes Ann Sotheran, trustee and stained glass artist.

Despite the drifting squally showers throughout the day, and quite long journeys for most of the singers (the choir *Cantabile* is based in Leeds), the musicians arrived at the church in a good humour for our first ever Summer concert on the afternoon of the 6th July. They didn't seem to mind at all the wet trek backwards and forwards to the village hall to get changed into their concert clothes, or the soggy walk to the *Boot and Shoe* where friends and relatives were enjoying Sunday lunch. Those of us who were helping to set up the church were privileged to hear the brief rehearsal beforehand and get a foretaste of the treat in store. Friends and supporters of Ellerton church turned up trumps, and by three o'clock there were upwards of eighty people sitting in the newly lime-washed nave for the opening notes of an hour-long performance – although one wonders if we gained a little from Sutton upon Derwent's sadly rained-off *Open Gardens!*

The programme of largely unaccompanied music ranged from arrangements of well-known and well-loved folk songs to more intricate and complex works by Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Tomkins, an impressive recent work by Michael Hurd, and even a delightful short piece written by Phil Thomas, chair of the Church Trust. The acoustics of Ellerton Priory ensured that the glorious harmonies of the madrigals resonated to the point where they made one's blood fizz, and every word of the three solo performances was clear and distinct, so the witty lyric of the Alto's Lament, for instance, was completely audible. The choir obviously relished the warm, lively sound and gave its all under the inspiring leadership of Jane Edwardson. And after the music there was food, drink and even a welcome gleam of late-afternoon sunshine.

I can hardly think of a more enjoyable way of spending a summer afternoon, wet or dry, than sitting with friends in a beautiful English country church, listening to extraordinarily talented and enthusiastic singers performing such wonderful music. I hope that we might repeat the experience next year – if the choir members enjoyed it as much as they seemed to, and would be willing to come to our little corner of paradise again.

Since the concert we have received lots of favourable comments, including the following selection: '*...thank you for the superb concert yesterday at Ellerton Priory. We thoroughly enjoyed it and hope that a Cantabile concert will become at least an annual event.*' '*I loved it on Sunday afternoon.*' '*It was a great experience yesterday - I really enjoyed singing on such a wonderful, historic occasion. My parents thoroughly enjoyed themselves.*' '*We really enjoyed the music and the atmosphere.*' '*I would love to go back and sing there again.*' As always, we owe a debt of gratitude to our tireless helpers, without whose efforts and expertise none of the events at the church would be possible. Thank you all very much!

For more information about *Cantabile* please look at www.cantabile-leeds.co.uk

Future newsletters and our contact details

We would love this little newsletter to be as informative and interesting as possible. If you have an appropriate idea for an article you would like to read, or would be prepared to consider submitting an item yourself, why not contact the editor care of: Ellerton Church Preservation Trust, 13 South Parade, York YO23 1BF. If you prefer to send an e-mail or leave a telephone message, or just want to make a general enquiry about anything concerning the church, the contact details are: yorkbear@hotmail.co.uk or 01904 630097. Future editions are likely to include articles on: Traditional Farming practices in the Lower Derwent Valley; 'Our' architect J.L. Pearson, and his work in Yorkshire; The Gilbertine monks of Ellerton; England's rural churchyards – neglected resources in the landscape?

Ellerton Priory: 'a box full of jewels'...

When the Trust took over Ellerton Priory church in the mid 1990s, it was intended simply to restore the exterior of the building as an historic feature in a precious landscape, and to disregard the damaged and stripped interior altogether. However, once the roofs and stonework and gutters had been repaired and the church was watertight, the trustees had to decide what to do with the windows, and when they decided to restore the 1840s leaded glazing as far as possible, and then to commission new stained glass to replace the ancient glass moved to Selby Abbey in 1984, the whole project began to blossom into something more ambitious and more interesting. After all, what was the point of lovely glass no-one would be able to see? And what was the use of a handsome light-filled interior, with a fine roof and glorious acoustics, if no-one came inside to enjoy it? Gradually, a plan evolved. We would repair and conserve the inside of the church for occasional events (too many might threaten the tranquillity that is such a special part of Ellerton's atmosphere), and furnish it with beautiful objects in search of a new home. 'When visitors walk through the door,' said Stephen Warburton, first Secretary to the Trust, 'they should feel that they've come into a box full of jewels; a lovely space filled with bright things.'

In 2002, we started with the font, font cover and new stone floors. The east window followed in 2003, with other exciting new glass over the next four years. Then the plaster in the chancel and on the east wall of the nave was repaired, and in 2008 Peter Baker completely re-plastered the north wall of the nave and a gang of volunteers applied four coats of traditional lime-wash. Soon we will have a painted Royal Arms of 1802 and some spectacular choir stalls and book-boards of 1848 from Hull Holy Trinity, and we have been offered a pulpit of 1911 designed by the great architect Temple Moore.

...and a constant labour of love

Of course, maintaining Ellerton Priory needs a steady flow of funds, craftsmanship, vigilance and labour. For example, we need urgently to replace the sandstone seats in the porch which have finally given up the ghost after 160 years of wind erosion. They could cost up to £1,000 and another £500 is required to re-new the elaborately moulded stone sill of one of the west windows, which has eroded back behind the line of the glazing and is now perished inside and out. The entire stonework of the vestry window must be replaced, so that we can re-glaze the openings to give us some natural light and help keep out the jackdaws! The south door of the chancel must be carefully repaired and fitted with a new oak sub-frame to make the chancel properly weatherproof, we would really love to have a decent well-designed handrail to ease access at the porch steps, and our newly-acquired Royal Arms desperately needs professional conservation and cleaning – and so the list goes on, many of the items costing £500 or more. Excitingly, we have at last found an expert keen to put the harmonium (more properly an 'American organ') back into perfect playing condition. It provided Ellerton church with music for more than 100 years, and will do again as soon as we can raise the necessary £500.

Heritage Open days, 2009

* Sunday 14th September

The church and churchyard at Ellerton will be open from 10.30 am to 5.30 pm as part of National Heritage Open Days. There will be nature exploration, quiz sheets, colouring and other activities for children and families, stalls including plants and local produce, a raffle, delicious home-made cakes and biscuits, and music recorded in the church at the concert in July. Guided tours at 11.00 am, 1.00 pm and 4.00 pm, and (if possible) nature walks at 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm. Why not bring a pic-nic?

This year, as a special attraction, we will have a handsome and thought-provoking new exhibition on display, exploring the role played by East Yorkshire families during the Slave trade and its abolition. And please remember, our beautiful Ellerton Priory Christmas cards and gift cards will also be available – a great opportunity to buy early for Christmas. Also our 'sister' church at **Warter** will be open this year the day before Ellerton on:

* Saturday 13th September

St James' Warter, now the Heritage Centre for the Yorkshire Wolds, will be open on for teas, coffees, home made cakes, a children's quiz and colourful lectures on the history of the wonderful church and the village given by Phil Thomas at 11.00 am and 2.30 pm. This will also be the opening day of an exhibition on local Village History, with pictures, stories and memories to browse through at leisure. Follow our mown paths around the churchyard and maybe find an ancestor amongst the gravestones. Take one of our new leaflets about country walks around Warter, or one of our local history leaflets, and give yourself another reason to return to this lovely place.

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.
