

# 1000 Years of Ellastone

## 11<sup>th</sup> Century

Ellastone was mostly wasteland like much of Staffordshire, but with some farming. It was divided into two manors Edelachestone and Elachestone, both named after an Anglo-Saxon called Ethelac. The Normans came and took all the land.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Century

The Norman Barons who now owned the land and ruled here were Nicholas and Margaret de Longford from nearby in Derbyshire. They built the Priory at Calwich and its Church at Ellastone. They gave both to the Priory of Kenilworth in Warwickshire where Margaret's guardian had his castle. He was Geoffrey de Clinton, Lord Chamberlain to King Henry I, son of William the Conqueror. Priory and Church would remain part of Kenilworth for two centuries.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Century

A triangle of Norman Buildings was made when some of the de Longfords built a fortified property surrounded by a moat. They were knights who supported the barons in the feudal system and kept the peasants in line, working for their masters. The property was between Bentley Fold and Mill Street. The name Bentley came from Longford where it is still in use today. The moat did not finally disappear until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. You can see where it was on an old map in the Parish Hall.

## 14<sup>th</sup> Century

The plague known as the Black Death came in 1349 killing more than a third of the country's population. The number of deaths in Ellastone is unknown but probably high as it killed two successive vicars.

## 15<sup>th</sup> Century

A time of struggle - after the Black Death there were fewer to work the land but fewer mouths to feed. The Priory at Calwich was struggling to survive. As well as running the Church and a huge estate of land, the Canons of Calwich Priory had supported the poor and aged in the community, but they themselves were now poor and aged (and few). The Longfords left their fortified building.

## 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Calwich Priory closed in 1531 and the new owner of the Calwich Estate (John Fleetwood) built the present Church Tower and Chancel in the 1580s. Both survived the great storm of 21 March 1593 which destroyed many houses in Ellastone, which were made of wood or wattle and daub. The Church records in Ellastone Parish began in 1538\*.

## 17<sup>th</sup> Century

Civil War. The battle at Wootton Lodge saw parliamentary forces take it from the royalists. Fatalities are recorded in the Church Records. The parliamentary forces damaged the church, which was Catholic at the time – damage can still be seen to the Fleetwoods' tomb in the church.

This century saw the start of a long history of metal-working in Ellastone when copper smelting began near Dove Bridge. The copper was brought from Ecton in Derbyshire on packhorse trains for Sir Richard Fleetwood to his estate at Calwich.

#### 18<sup>th</sup> Century

The new owner of Calwich, Bernard Granville, built a magnificent new house and many famous visitors came including Handel and Rousseau.

Two new Turnpike Roads passed through Ellastone; the “Spath to Hanging Bridge” and the “Darly Moor and Ellaston”. The Turnpike Trusts built new bridges at the edge of the village (which are still in use) and improved communications greatly.

#### 19<sup>th</sup> Century

A time of growth, when the village was at its peak. It was well-populated and a National School Room opened in 1812 to take 200 children. ( Education for 5-10 year olds wasn't made law till 1870.)

The Uttoxeter Canal was close by in the early part of the century with a large wharf at Rocester to serve Ashbourne (and also Ellastone) with bulky materials; there was also a coal wharf at Quixhill. This was replaced mid-century by the Railway, with a station and goods yard at Norbury and even better communications, including a telegraph office.

Ellastone had the biggest building business in the Ashbourne area, that of the Evans family of which the writer George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) was a part. She visited and the village found fame as Hayslope in “Adam Bede”.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The Parish Hall was built, but then came World War 1 and Ellastone declined. The important estates of Wootton Hall and Calwich Abbey, which had provided employment and leadership to the community through the Bromley-Davenports and the Duncombes were sold off and split up and the great houses demolished. (Most of Ellastone had been part of the Wootton Hall Estate until the 1920s.)

The Railway closed and, in 1983 the village school closed, changing the character of the village irreversibly. Some determined people began to develop new facilities including a bowling green and tennis court.

#### 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The last shop/post office closed but there has been progress and modernisation. Improvements made to the leisure facilities:- Parish Hall; Bowling Club pavilion; new children's play equipment; a modernised church; also a re-opened pub/restaurant ( part of the new Wootton Hall Estate); modern communications with broadband and a village web-site.