

1 August 2025



PRESS RELEASE

VISIT ALL SAINTS, EGGESFORD: ONE OF DEVON'S FIFTY BEST CHURCHES

**Enjoy a cream tea while discovering more about Mid and North Devon's
heritage in a specially curated local history exhibition**

www.heritageopendays.org.uk

14th September 2025

- On Sunday 14 September 2025, the Friends of Eggesford All Saints Trust (FEAST) are presenting a local history exhibition about the church and the vast aristocratic estate (at its peak over 16,000 acres, with many farms and villages) held by families of regional and national importance, such as the de Reigneys, Chichesters and Fellowes, and later the Earls of Portsmouth. Discover the connections to Julian Fellowes and his acclaimed TV and film series 'Downton Abbey'. Cream teas and refreshments will be served in the beautifully positioned churchyard from 11 am – 5 pm. Access to the church and exhibition is free.
- FEAST rescued All Saints Church, Eggesford, Devon from closure by the Church of England in the 1990s. A Grade II* listed church with rectors from the C13, it has a C14/C15 tower and impressive C17 Chichester monuments, along with later estate owner William Fellowes' C18 monument. The 1867 restoration by the 5th Earl of Portsmouth installed an unusually large family pew, and moved the remarkable Earl of Donegall monument to opposite today's entrance in the nave, fronted by rare Georgian box pews.
- The church was included by historian Dr Todd Gray in his 'Devon's Fifty Best Churches': 'This is a building dominated by a need to be remembered and to do so ostentatiously... The monuments dominate the church and are, according to Miss Cresswell a century ago, more suited to a cathedral than to a small village church... the first great monument... is the only one of its kind in Devon... in the east end of the chapel is a third monument which catches the eye. This massive collection of marble dates from the early eighteenth century and demonstrates the change in taste to classical imagery... Notice also the Tortoise Stove with the motto slow but sure combustion.'
- The Chichesters' earlier Eggesford House was adjacent, before being rebuilt in the early C19 as today's grand Grade II building higher up the valley, still visible from the church. The original walled garden nearby is now in private hands. The secluded churchyard, with views over earlier parkland and the Taw valley, has Fellowes and Churchill chest tombs and access to the Portsmouth vault, resting place for the 4th and 5th Earls (closed for this event).
- Pre-booking not required. Parking is available by the church (EX18 7QU) or access via the Tarka Line (Eggesford Station, some ten minutes' walk) and the Tarka Trail. The recently published history of Eggesford and the estate – 'The Portsmouth Connection' – will be on sale, along with a variety of second-hand books. Visitors can chat to local historian and author Jonathan Crofts for more information.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

For media enquiries and images contact:

Jonathan Crofts feasteggesford@gmail.com +44 (0) 7798 681 707

About Heritage Open Days

- Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. Running for ten days every September, the festival offers free access to heritage events and activities across England.
- Heritage Open Days is brought to you by the National Trust with support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, and delivered locally by a large range of organisations (including civic societies, heritage organisations and local councils, community champions and thousands of enthusiastic volunteers)
- Heritage Open Days is England's contribution to European Heritage Days, taking place across 50 countries. Other events in the UK are Doors Open Days in Scotland (www.doorsopendays.org.uk); Open Doors Days in Wales (<https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/whats-on/open-doors>); and European Heritage Open Days in Northern Ireland (www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/european-heritage-open-days).
- For further details about the festival, visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk, follow on Instagram [@HeritageOpenDays](https://www.instagram.com/HeritageOpenDays), or subscribe to the [newsletter](#).