

# SHEPHERDS LAW HERMITAGE



# The Vision for the Future

## The story so far

Shepherds Law is a hermitage dedicated to St Mary and St Cuthbert, set on a hilltop between the villages of Powburn and Eglingham with magnificent views of the Cheviot Hills. It looks out towards the stunning Beamish valley stretching away towards the Tweed and the Scottish border.

The establishment of a Hermitage was the vision of Brother Harold, a Franciscan Friar who, back in the 1960s felt a call to a contemplative way of life; a life centred on prayer and solitude. Brother Harold writes of that call:

*There remains clear in my mind the occasion when, as a young man, I first visited Glasshampton in Worcestershire. Passing through the monastery, fashioned by Father William from the stables of a country house, I caught his vision of the restoration of monastic life to the Church of England.*

It wasn't until 1970 though that he first came across Shepherd's Law as he was being driven through the Northumbrian countryside by a local curate.

At that time, it was just a set of ruins, but having gained the permission of the Franciscan community to live apart from them, and also been given the blessing of the owner of the site, he moved to Shepherd's Law on Good Friday 1971, living in an old loaned caravan. There were no facilities to begin with and so water had to be collected from the bottom of the hill and he had to rely on the hospitality of the local parish priest to have a bath!



*Start of the building*

Over the next few years, through his own hard work and with the help of friends and supporters, the hermitage was built and a cloister and four cells were added and dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1989.



Later a beautiful chapel was built by local craftsmen: it took seven years to complete and was dedicated by the

Archbishop of York in 2004. He was accompanied by the Anglican Bishops of Newcastle and Wakefield, the Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and representatives from the Orthodox and Reformed churches; reflecting the ecumenical vision of Brother Harold for the Hermitage.

For over fifty years Brother Harold lived a life of prayer and poverty at Shepherds Law, where he had to endure many hardships through tough winters and with very basic facilities. His holiness though drew many people to come to him for spiritual guidance and to enjoy the silence, the beauty and solitude which Shepherds Law offers. He died peacefully on St Francis' day, 4th October 2024.

Others who have been inspired by his life and vision want to continue his work and share this wonderful place and what it has to offer, with the people of Northumberland and beyond. One past visitor wrote: “*Shepherds Law,*



*soaked in the prayers of Brother Harold and pilgrims who have ventured here gives the Church an especially ‘thin place’. Here, vocations including my own have been nurtured and better understood. It is a gift to all who come upon it”.*

A new Ecumenical Board of Trustees

has been established and registered with the Charity Commission and over two years the buildings have been refurbished. A beautiful second side of the cloister was completed in 2025, providing an indoor connection between the accommodation and the church, wide enough as well to be a space for events and gatherings.



*New Cloister  
(on the right)*

The accommodation now complies with current health and safety regulations. The four main cells are self-contained, with a kitchenette equipped for preparing simple meals and living-space downstairs, and a bedroom, study area and en-suite bathroom upstairs, with one of the cells equipped, if needed, to house a married couple. In addition, there are two small, simple guestrooms in the Parlour building; this houses the main public space, with eating and full cooking facilities. There is also an interesting and well-stocked library and the buildings are centrally heated throughout.



*New Cloister Interior*



*Bedroom in a  
Cell*

**Our programme currently includes:**

- An ecumenical evening service on the second Sunday of the month at 3pm (2pm from November to March).
- An annual Open Day held in the summer
- Regular monastic weeks, when a small group from a religious community live the monastic life at Shepherds Law and receive guests and visitors, including from parishes and schools.
- Provision for individual guests to stay.
- On certain Sundays of the year, the Orthodox Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Berwick Orthodox congregation

## Our Vision

**It is the vision of the trustees to continue the tradition of hospitality that Brother Harold practised, and this can take various possible forms.**

We wish to nurture the monastic way of life with its daily round of worship, work, prayer and contemplation and this will continue to be the beating heart at Shepherd's Law. This will be a place which inspires people from a wide variety of religious traditions to pray together, celebrating diversity and working for peace and reconciliation in our divided world.

We hope that people wishing to have an individual retreat, or taking a sabbatical, or embarking on a pilgrim walk, or needing time for refreshment or recuperation, will find Shepherd's Law an ideal place to stay.

We also hope on occasions to be able to offer the facilities at Shepherds Law to Christian families in need of a break.



*Part of the Library*

Alongside this it is our hope that local groups and individuals will come to Shepherd's Law to enjoy its atmosphere and beauty, and to participate in a range of creative activities, guided by a desire that they will gain a taste of what monastic life has to give to people.

Plans for other future activities include:

- Organised stays, where a priest or member of a religious community will be available to ensure the monastic round of services and provide any accompaniment that might be needed.
- Guided walks from Shepherd's Law into the surrounding countryside
- Study days for clergy and lay people
- Art/Crafts/Painting/Poetry/ Creative Writing days
- Family Activity Days
- Activity Days for Teenagers
- Deanery Quiet Days
- Contemplating the sky at night
- Well-being Groups
- Vocation Exploration Days
- Bread Church
- Seasonal Celebrations



*Ecumenical Advent Service 2025*

### **Practicalities for your stay**

We do not charge for people to stay, but we estimate it will cost a minimum of £25 – £35 per person per day to run the hermitage. Income is very limited, and so we rely on donations to remain viable. These donations can be gift aided.

Household linen – Residential guests are encouraged to bring their own bed linen and towels. Duvets and pillows will be provided and bedlinen etc can be provided for longer term guests and for resident religious.

Provisions – Basic cleaning supplies will be made available for residents and guests e.g. washing up liquid, cloths, toilet rolls and cleaner. Basic dry provisions will also be available e.g. tea, coffee, biscuits.

Residential guests will be expected to bring their own food supplies unless they make other arrangements with the housekeeper.

To **book to stay** at Shepherds Law or to arrange a special activity please contact the manager, The Revd Tracey Malthouse, by email: [shepherdslaw@hotmail.com](mailto:shepherdslaw@hotmail.com), or through the website: <https://shepherdslawhermitage.org/>  
Address: 6 New Cottages, Ilderton, NE66 4YD. Mobile: 07376 914757

If you would like to receive our occasional **newsletters**, please send an email with your name, address and email to [shepherdslaw@hotmail.com](mailto:shepherdslaw@hotmail.com).

**Maintenance and running are a challenge for the new Trust.**  
**If you would like to make a donation:**

Our **bank account** details are: The Shepherds Law Trust  
sort code 30-99-50 account number 51411163

A **cheque**, payable to Shepherds Law Trust, may be sent to  
The Treasurer at The Hermitage, Eglingham, Alnwick NE66 2DZ

**Online** donations may be made on our website

It is, of course, an extra benefit if you can **Gift-Aid** your donation.