

## CHURCH OF ST. MARY, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.

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**A**LTHOUGH the original dedication of this church is obscure, it is usually referred to as St. Mary. The fabric consists of a nave with north and south aisles, a tower and spire, a large and rather plain chancel and a chantry chapel. There is also a modern south porch which probably occupies the place of an ancient one.

Of the present building, the north and south arcades of the nave are the oldest portions, and they date to the early part of the 13th century—more or less contemporary with the signing of Magna Charta. Of these arcades the southern is a little older in fashion, and the usual explanation of the slight difference in style between it and its northern neighbour is that two unknown benefactors undertook each to build one arcade and each employed his own band of masons. This may be the true explanation, but a much more likely one is to be found in the fact that from 1208 to 1213 England was under an Interdict, during which time practically all religious activities, including church building, were suspended. The difference between these two arcades may represent this pause, the south arcade being put up just before the Interdict and the north arcade just after it.

There is nothing very much to say about the piers except that the east and west responds are keeled. The capitals are plain, but one near the south porch, for no apparent reason, is elaborately carved in a rustic fashion.

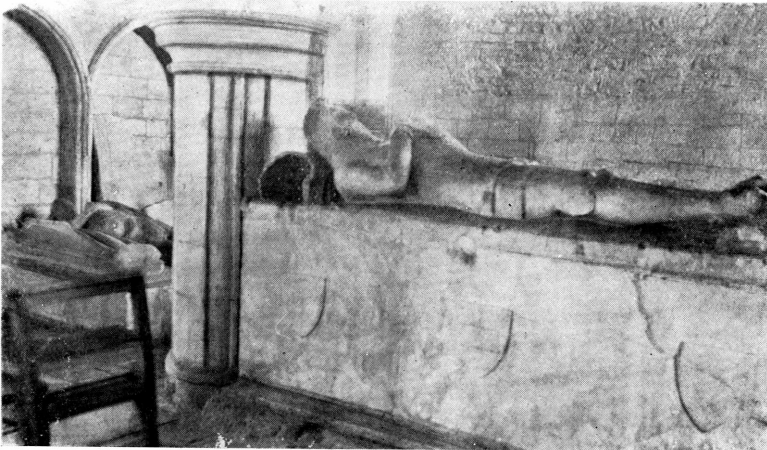
The tower with its broached spire, rather like the Northamptonshire type of spire, comes next in date and is quickly followed by the large and plain chancel, which was rebuilt upon the old foundations about thirty or forty years ago. These date from the first half of the



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Effigies of Sir Hugh Willoughby (ob. 1445) and his wife, Margaret Freville.



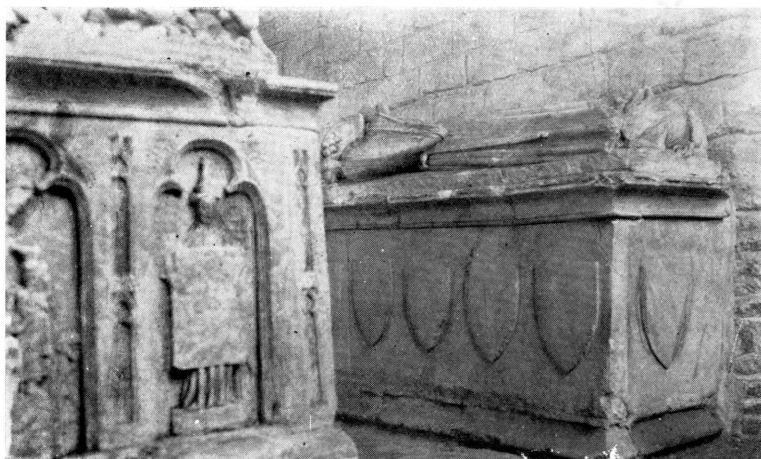
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Effigies of Sir Richard Willoughby (ob. 1325) and his wife.



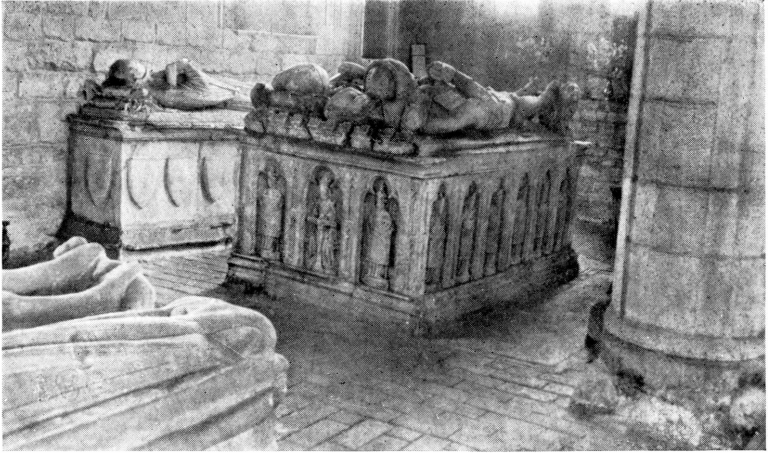
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Effigy of Sir Richard Willoughby.



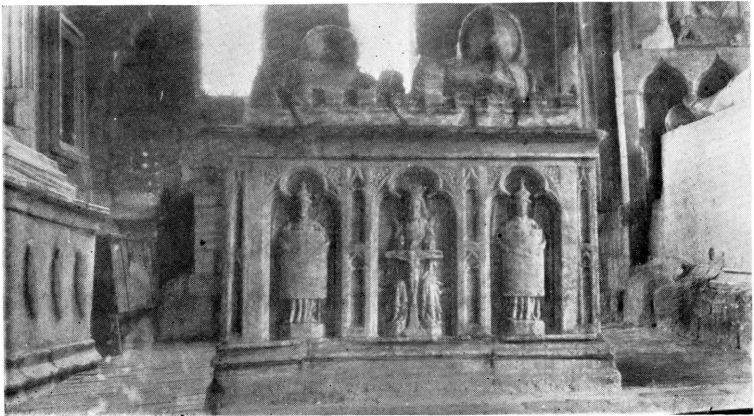
ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Detail of Madonna and Child on Sir Hugh Willoughby's Tomb.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Effigy of Sir Richard Willoughby, ob. *c.* 1370.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Interior of St. Nicholas Chapel.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS.  
Detail of Trinity on Sir Hugh Willoughby's Tomb.

14th century, about the time that Edward III arrested Roger Mortimer at Nottingham Castle. It is difficult to account for the large size of the chancel at so early a date. It is reminiscent of the earlier large chancel at Normanton-on-Soar, but at Normanton there was a cell to Durham, and a large chancel would be required for the accommodation of the monks in charge of the daughter establishment. There is no such monastic association at Willoughby. Ralph Bugge, the wealthy founder of the Willoughby family, moved from Nottingham to Willoughby just before this chancel was built, and it may be that its size represents his generosity.

In the 14th century the old aisles were replaced by the present ones which are wider than their predecessors. This additional width probably was to allow of the erection of chantry chapels or altar tombs which were coming into favour just after the Black Death, but altar tombs were never set up in these enlarged aisles, for their place was taken by the mortuary chapel of St. Nicholas.

In the 15th century the windows in the west end of the south aisle and both ends of the north aisle were inserted, and finally the clerestory and the roof of the nave with its enrichment of bosses was set up about the time of the Wars of the Roses.

A few relics of the past are preserved in the church. There is a little nail-head ornament at the east end of the south arcade, and on the south wall is a fragment of mural painting displaying the crossed oblongs in use during the Tudor period. Above the north arcade is another fragment of painting which does not appear to be in its original place. It is part of a coat-of-arms and under it is a fragmentary inscription in black letter which is undecipherable. As this painting displays the Tudor rose, we may perhaps assign it to the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

On the pier near the north door are a number of grooves like the well-known arrow sharpeners. It would be unusual to find arrow sharpeners inside a church, and

probably the fact that a school was kept in this part of the church during the 18th century may account for these markings.

The octagonal font is not of great interest, and dates from about 1350.

In the north aisle are collected a number of ancient titles whose heraldry has been worked out by Mr. Parker in the *Transactions* for 1932 (p. 99). Close by is an oval floor slab to the memory of Colonel Michael Stanhope, son of the Earl of Chesterfield, who was killed in the fight at Willoughby on July 5th, 1648. A graphic account of this encounter and the events leading up to it is to be found in *Nottinghamshire in the Civil War*, Wood, p. 125, *et seq.*

The chief interest of the church is centred around the Willoughby mortuary chapel at the north-east of the church, and its array of funerary effigies.

The dedication of the chapel is to St. Nicholas, and this patron may have been chosen by a family whose wealth was based upon the fortune made by the merchant Ralph Bugge, because St. Nicholas, amongst other things, was the patron saint of merchants and traders. The 14th-century architecture of the chapel is simple. It is a plain oblong on plan and its floor is sunk a few inches below the present floor level of the church. It is separated from the north aisle by an arcade of two arches and at its west end is another arcade consisting of three arches now blocked up. Above this western arcade is a window, also blocked up. It looks as if there had been a north porch to the church from which access to the chapel might have been obtained through this arcade, and the window was set high, either to avoid this porch or, alternatively, to provide a view from a possible watching-chamber set above it.

The tracery of the windows is only interesting because the outside is flat-faced, a rather unusual feature. The east window is curious, for the sill is cut away to allow for the insertion of an altar slab above which provision is

made for a reredos and a rere table. To the north of the altar is an aumbrey, and to the south a piscina, and west of the piscina is a stone seat which would be used as a sedilia by the cantor. The provision of this accommodation for a cantor as well as an officiating priest reflects the amplitude of the endowment of the chantry.

About 1240 a certain Ralph Bugge lived in a house at the corner of St. Mary's Gate and High Pavement, Nottingham. He was a wool merchant, and having made a fortune he purchased lands at Willoughby-on-the-Wolds and eventually was buried in St. Peter's Church, Nottingham. He had two sons, one of whom, Richard, came to live at Willoughby. Of his son, another Richard, Dr. Thoroton says "He increased his patrimony exceedingly and was a lawyer and very rich." He directed that his body should be buried in the chapel of St. Nicholas, Willoughby, and as he died in 1363 this gives us a date for the erection of this chantry.

Burial customs during the Middle Ages were somewhat different from those which obtain nowadays. One custom was the use of stone coffins which it was usual to sink a foot or two into the ground forming the floor of the church. They were closed by stone lids set flush with the floor of the church, and they were not meant for permanent occupation. Provision was made by means of which the body disappeared, leaving only the bones which were collected and deposited in an ossuary or charnel house, and the coffin left free for succeeding tenants.

After the Conquest the earliest form of a coffin lid was a flat stone a few inches narrower at the foot than at the head. If it bore any mark at all it would be a simple incised cross, often of the Calvary type—*i.e.* set upon steps. There would be no form of epitaph for the tenure of the coffin was only temporary. This plain incised marking was distasteful to the artistic sense of the 13th century and gave place to more elaborate treatment. The lids show a tendency to become coped, and the cross,



instead of being simple and incised, is carved in relief and is elaborated, particularly at the ends, which are twisted into fleurs-de-lis and other devices.

By the 14th century it was found that these coped stones were inconvenient for traffic, and so the lid becomes flat again but its shape changes to a plain oblong. From these flat stones it was no great step to the high-tomb, which was merely one of these flat stones raised a few inches from the floor. From this the table-tomb developed, a slab set upon a casket which not only held the body but afforded space for the display of heraldry and other enrichments upon the sides and the ends. The final phase came when chantries became popular and masses were said at consecrated tombs which thus became altar-tombs.

Although at first no epitaph was used—or, indeed, possible—for the tenure of the tomb was temporary, the custom of marking the sex or the profession of the deceased by some conventional device gradually came into fashion. Thus, a pair of shears might indicate a woman, a chalice a priest or a sword a soldier. From this a development was the representation of a woman, a priest or a soldier by a few incised lines. With the artistic progress of the 13th century these humble conventions were quickly turned into something more elaborate, and figures—often carved in relief but with no attempt at portraiture—came into use. As time went on, these figures in relief were cut completely free and worked on the round and laid upon the grave-slabs as separate figures.

The earliest figures thus produced were hacked out of wood or local stone, and were not usually carefully finished. They were merely cores to be covered with a coat of gesso which, while still plastic was modelled to represent a costume, vestment or armour, and the whole was elaborately coloured and gilded, producing a most decorative effect. But they were ready-made figures and made no attempt at portraiture.

During the first quarter of the 14th century, alabaster was introduced for funerary effigies. This beautiful material can be delicately carved, and its use enabled tomb-makers to dispense with the use of gesso. The delicacy of carving in alabaster attracted artists to the trade, and the beautiful art of alabaster carving reached its zenith in the early 15th century, Nottingham being one of the chief centres of the industry.

There are eight figures in the chapel at Willoughby, and of these the four lying at the west end are the oldest. They are not in their original positions and they are older than the chapel. Of the two ladies lying side by side to the north, nothing is known. They are in an attitude of devotion, and as they wear wimples they are possibly widows vowed not to marry again. The knight, whose figure is a core from which the gesso has disappeared, is identified as Sir Richard Willoughby. He was son to Richard Bugge, younger brother of Ralph Bugge and, therefore, nephew to the founder of the Willoughby family. He was commissioner of Oyer and Terminer in 1311 and 1314, and was placed on the commission of peace for the counties of Nottingham and Derby. He died in 1325.

By the north wall lies an effigy of another Sir Richard Willoughby, son to the last-named Sir Richard. He was a Justice of Common Pleas for twenty-eight years in the reign of Edward III, and acted as Chief Justice during the absence abroad of Chief Justice Scroop. He married, as his first wife, Isabella de Mortein, who brought as part of her dowry the Wollaton estates and so commenced the long connexion of the Willoughby family with Wollaton. A curious story is told of him. In 1331 a band of outlaws who called themselves "Gents Savages" infested and terrorised the country from Grantham to Buxton. Amongst other crimes they kidnapped Sir Richard, and carrying him into a wood they kept him prisoner until a ransom of ninety marks (about £60) was forthcoming. This so incensed the judge that he took

strong measures to clear the countryside of miscreants. His figure is beautifully carved, and it will be noticed that he wears his anlace or dagger on his right side where it would be of little use. It is, indeed, little more than a badge of office.

Under the eastern arch leading into the church lies Sir Richard Willoughby, son of the judge. He married a sister of Lord Grey. No effigy of her remains, but her arms—Barry of six, gold and blue—are displayed on the tomb, which confirms the identification. The knight wears the camail, and on his jupon may be seen the Willoughby arms. The three water-bougets, or skins suitable for carrying water, hanging from each side of a yoke, which are so prominent in the Willoughby arms, are evidently a pun on the family name of Bugge, which was probably pronounced "Booge."

The armour shown on this figure is of great use in identification, for there was as definite a fashion in armour as in dress or in architecture.

Norman armour consisted of a series of rings, independent of each other, sewn on to a leather jacket, and was worn during the reigns of William I, William II, Henry I, Stephen and Henry II—roughly from 1066 to 1190. It was followed by chain mail, made up of interlocked iron rings, and this form was in use during the time of Richard I, John, Henry III and Edward I—*i.e.* from *c.* 1190 to 1290. Edwardian armour, from *c.* 1290 to 1370, consisted of chain mail reinforced by plates at danger points such as the shoulders, elbows and knees. The jupon or padded cloak worn over the armour and blazoned with the arms of the wearer, came into use about the time of Edward III and remained fashionable during the times of Richard II and Henry IV : 1330-1400. Then followed plate armour, romantic and beautiful, but exceedingly difficult to keep clean, which lasted until armour was abandoned. Towards the end of the Wars of the Roses the jupon gave place to the shorter tabard—like those worn by heralds nowadays as an overgarment—and the final phase was reached during

the reign of Henry VIII when gunpowder had rendered armour nearly useless, and elaborate tilting armour with wonderful ornamentation—known as Maximilian armour—was used for tournaments and display purposes. Breastpieces and so on lingered on during the 17th century, but by the 18th century armour was found to be almost useless.

The great double tomb represents Sir Hugh Willoughby who died in 1445. His first wife was Isabella Foljambe who died in 1417 and who lies under a floor-slab to the south of her husband. His second wife, who rests by his side, was Margaret Freville. She brought the Middleton estates into the family, and when the Willoughbys were ennobled by Queen Anne in 1711, they took the title of Middleton, from the estates brought by this lady. These are the last Willoughbys to be buried at Willoughby. Thereafter, Wollaton was used as their dormitory.

The figures on the tomb wear costumes characteristic of the period, and angels, holding shields, occupy sixteen panels round the tomb. At the west end of the tomb is a Trinity of the normal medieval type, and at the east end is an unusual Madonna holding the Infant in her left arm and a posy in her right hand.

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