



St Wilfrid Lodge NEWS

Edition No. 24A

St Wilfrid & Ripon Cathedral



There has been a stone church on the site since 672 when St Wilfrid replaced the previous timber church of the monastery at Ripon (a daughter house of Aiden's monastery at Melrose) with one in the Roman style. This is one of the earliest stone buildings erected in the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria. The crypt dates from this period.



People have been coming to worship and pray at Ripon for more than 1,350 years. The Cathedral building itself is part of this continuing act of worship, begun in the 7th century when St Wilfrid built one of England's first stone churches on this site, and still renewed every day. Within the nave and choir, you can see the evidence of 800 years in which master craftsmen have expressed their faith in wood and stone.

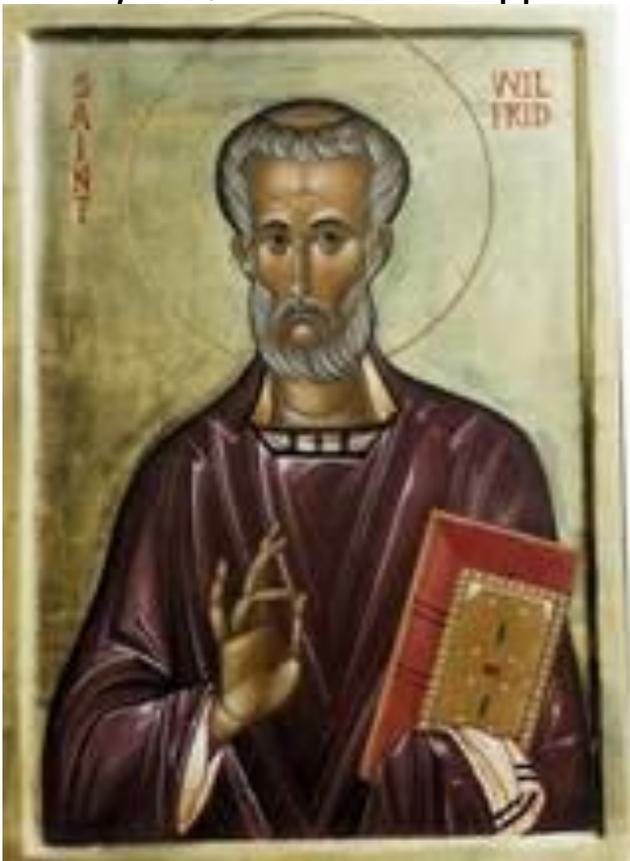
Today's church is the fourth to have stood on this site. St Wilfrid brought stonemasons, plasterers and glaziers from France and Italy to build his great basilica in 672. A contemporary account by Eddius Stephanus tells us:



"In Ripon, Saint Wilfrid built and completed from the foundations to the roof a church of dressed stone, supported by various columns and side-aisles to a great height and many windows, arched vaults and a winding cloister."



St Wilfrid was one of the most influential - and at times controversial - figures in the early English church. Born into an aristocratic Northumbrian family in 634, Wilfrid joined the monastery of Lindisfarne as a teenager, before making the first of his three trips to Rome. On his way back to England, he spent three years with the Bishop of Lyons, where he became steeped in the ways of the continental church. Upon his return to Northumbria in 658, he was given the recently founded monastery of Ripon to be its Abbot. He immediately set about building a new stone church on the site where the present Cathedral still stands. He also introduced the Benedictine Rule for his monks and promoted the most up-to-date Roman customs, including the singing of plainchant. In 664 he represented the Roman party at the Synod of Whitby. This was the council convened to decide between the Roman and the Celtic methods of calculating the date of Easter. As a result of Wilfrid's advocacy, the Roman party prevailed and in recognition of his role at the Synod, Wilfrid was appointed Bishop of York.



Wilfrid insisted on being consecrated in France, but by the time he returned to Northumbria, he found that St Chad had been installed in his place. Wilfrid withdrew to his monastery at Ripon until 669 when

Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury restored him to his bishopric. A few years later in 678, however, Theodore decided to divide the huge northern diocese into three. This was strongly resisted by Wilfrid, who left for Rome to appeal to the Pope. Although successful, further disputes with the king of Northumbria, as well as his ongoing quarrel with Archbishop Theodore, meant that Wilfrid spent much of his episcopacy in exile. During these periods he served as a bishop at Lichfield in the kingdom of Mercia, undertook missionary work in Holland and the south of England, and founded numerous churches all over the country. In 704 Wilfrid made his third and final trip to Rome in order to petition the Pope, and was once again vindicated. After his return to England it was agreed at the Synod of Nidd that he should retain the monasteries of Ripon and Hexham. A few years later in 709 or 710, Wilfrid died at Oundle. His monks immediately brought his body back to his favourite monastery of Ripon, where he was buried.



As a result, Ripon became an important shrine and pilgrimage destination during the Middle Ages. St Wilfrid was buried near the high altar. Devastated by the English King Eadred in AD 948 as a warning to the Archbishop of York, only the crypt of Wilfrid's church survived but today this tiny 7th-century chapel rests complete beneath the later grandeur of Archbishop Roger de Pont l'Evêque's 12th century minster. A second minster soon arose at Ripon, but it too perished - this time in 1069 at the hands of William the Conqueror. Thomas of Bayeux, first Norman Archbishop of York,

then instigated the construction of a third church, traces of which were incorporated into the later chapter house of Roger's minster.



The Early English west front was added in 1220, its twin towers originally crowned with wooden spires and lead. Major rebuilding had to be postponed due to the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses but resumed after the accession of Henry VII and the restoration of peace in 1485. The nave was widened and the central tower partially rebuilt. The church's thirty five misericords were carved between 1489 and 1494. The same carvers also carved the misericords at Beverley Minster and Manchester Cathedral. But in 1547, before this work was finished, Edward VI dissolved Ripon's college of canons. All revenues were appropriated by the Crown and the tower never received its last Perpendicular arches. It was not until 1604 that James I issued his Charter of Restoration.

The minster finally became a cathedral (the church where the Bishop has his cathedra or throne) in 1836, the focal point of the newly created Anglican Diocese of Ripon — the first to be established since the Reformation.



St Wilfrid has been used to name a number of Lodges in the UK and we would welcome contact with them all. Below is a list of those we have identified as being operative so far - please let us know of any others!

- St Wilfrid Lodge No. 4453 - Oundle, Northamptonshire
- St Wilfrid Chapter No. 5413 - Bognor Regis
- St Wilfrid Lodge No. 5493 - North Shields, Northumberland
- St Wilfrid Lodge No 6395 - Leeds, West Yorkshire
- St Wilfrid's Lodge No. 8350 - Market Harborough, Leicestershire



We would be delighted to make contact with the other St Wilfrid Lodges. Please email secretary@stwilfrid.co.uk

www.stwilfrid.co.uk



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