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# Archaeology & Built Heritage

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Archaeological Recording of the  
Roof over the Willoughby Chapel  
at the Church of St Mary & All Saints  
Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Nottinghamshire

National Grid Reference: SK 6338 2541

Undertaken on behalf of  
Willoughby-on-the-Wolds  
Parochial Church Council

By

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## Summary

*Archaeology & Built Heritage conducted a programme of archaeological recording in the autumn of 2021, prior to and during re-roofing of the Willoughby Chapel at the Church of St Mary & All Saints, Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Nottinghamshire.*

*The archaeological investigation, commissioned by Willoughby-on-the-Wolds Parochial Church Council, was required in respect of a Faculty granted in the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham for the re-roofing of the Willoughby Chapel and associated repairs.*

*Jamie Mayers of Peter Rogan & Associates Ltd was the architect for the re-roofing programme and JTC Roofing Contractors Ltd carried out the work.*

*The archaeological recording programme involved the preparation of a photographic record of plumbers' marks on the lead roof covering, prior to its removal and replacement with terne coated stainless steel.*

*Provision was also made for the recording of any pre-19<sup>th</sup> century roof timbers replaced or repaired in the course of the re-roofing works, though no early timbers were affected. The only timbers replaced were modern (probably 20<sup>th</sup> century) boards forming the valley gutter between the Willoughby Chapel and the north aisle of the church.*

*A total of 65 plumbers' marks were recorded on the lead roof of the Willoughby Chapel, of which 51 were the traced outlines of footwear (either boots or shoes), 8 were outlines of hands and the remaining 6 were miscellaneous inscriptions and drawings. Some of the marks were very faint and it seems likely that there were originally more, with an unknown number having been lost to weathering of the lead over time.*

*Many of the marks were accompanied by initials and legible dates were recorded in 23 examples. With the exception of two marks made in 1985, all of the dated examples fell within the period 1783 to 1878.*

*The tradition of tracing round footwear certainly dates back to the medieval period and dated examples on the lead roofs of churches and other buildings have been recorded from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.*

*It is likely that some of the marks on the roof of the Willoughby Chapel were made by plumbers engaged in roof repairs at various times, however, it is possible that some were made by other members of the community.*

*The motivations behind the creation of such marks are not fully understood. At a basic level, they serve to record the presence of an individual in a particular place at a particular time. However, the reasons are probably more complex and need to be considered in the context of other traditions and superstitions associated with footwear.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document presents the results of a programme of archaeological recording undertaken prior to and during re-roofing of the Willoughby Chapel on the north side of the Church of St Mary & All Saints, Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Nottinghamshire.
- 1.2 The archaeological investigation was commissioned by Willoughby-on-the-Wolds Parochial Church Council (PCC) and undertaken by Neil Finn of Archaeology & Built Heritage (A&BH) in the autumn of 2021.
- 1.3 The archaeological investigation was required in respect of conditions on a Faculty granted in the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham for the re-roofing of the Willoughby Chapel and associated repairs (ref: 2020-051769).
- 1.4 Jamie Mayers of Peter Rogan & Associates Ltd was the architect for the re-roofing programme and JTC Roofing Contractors Ltd carried out the work.
- 1.5 The archaeological recording programme involved the preparation of a photographic record of plumbers' marks on the lead roof covering, prior to its removal and replacement with terne coated stainless steel. Provision was also made for the recording of any pre-19<sup>th</sup> century roof timbers replaced or repaired in the course of the re-roofing works, though no early timbers were affected.
- 1.6 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by A&BH for the approval of the Diocesan Advisor Committee's (DAC) archaeological advisor (Finn 2021).
- 1.7 The archaeological investigation was conducted in accordance with the provisions of the approved WSI and in compliance with the Historic England guidelines for a Level 2 record as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (Lane 2016, 26).
- 1.8 Fieldwork was undertaken over the course of two visits: on 27.10.2021 when the plumbers' marks were recorded; and on 04.11.2021 following removal of the lead roofing sheets and during repairs to the valley gutter between the Willoughby Chapel and the north aisle.

## **2.0 Location**

- 2.1 The village of Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, in the Rushcliffe District of Nottinghamshire, is located in the south of the county close to the Leicestershire border (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The Parish Church of St Mary & All Saints is situated on the west side of Church Lane, north of Main Street, at National Grid Reference: SK 6338 2541 (Figure 2; Photo 1). The postal address is Church Lane, Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, Loughborough, LE12 6SS.

- 2.3 The Willoughby Chapel, also referred to as the north chantry chapel, is located against the north side of the north aisle (Figures 3-4; Photos 2-3).

### 3.0 Statutory Designation

- 3.1 The Church of St Mary & All Saints is included on the statutory national list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. It was listed at grade I on 13.10.1966 with the following description:

Parish church. C13, C14, C15, chapel repaired 1781, repaired and enlarged 1829, chancel rebuilt 1891, restored and porch built 1908, chapel restored 1984. Dressed coursed rubble, some ashlar. Lead roofs with coped gables, parapets to nave and chancel. Single ridge crosses to east chancel and porch, single stack to west end of north aisle. Buttressed. Tower with spire, nave, aisles, north chantry chapel, south porch and chancel. C13 tower of dressed coursed rubble with ashlar quoins and of 2 stages. The early C14 broach spire with 2 tiers of 4 lucarnes. Set on a low chamfered plinth. The west side has a single arched window and the south side a single rectangular light with single clock face over. The 4 arched bell chamber openings each have 2 pointed arched lights. The west wall of the north aisle has a single arched restored C14 window with cusped tracery and hood mould. In the north wall is a single arched 2 light early C14 window with Y tracery, to the left is a chamfered arched doorway. Further left is the C13 angle buttressed chapel set on a plinth. In the west wall is a single blind quatrefoil. There is a band which continues to form a sill band on the north side where there are 2 restored C14 windows each with 2 arched and cusped lights under a flat arch. The east wall has a single restored C14 window with 3 cinquefoil arched lights under a flat arch, the central light has a single transom with single blind trefoil arch under. To the left is the east wall of the aisle which is on a shallow plinth and has a single C15 arched 3 light window with cusped panel tracery and hood mould. The C15 clerestorey has 4 arched C15 windows each with 3 cinquefoil arched lights, hood mould and label stops. The north wall of the chancel is set on a shallow plinth in parts and has a single early C14 arched 2 light window with Y tracery and remains of a continuous sill band. The east end has a single C19 arched 5 light window with cusped tracery, hood mould and label stops. The south chancel with band extending over the narrow plinth has 2 C19 arched 3 light windows with cusped panel tracery, hood mould and label stops. The south aisle is set on a plinth and has in the east wall a single arched 3 light early C14 window with intersecting tracery. The south wall has 2 arched 2 light early C14 windows with Y tracery. To the left is the gabled 1908 porch set on a plinth. Double chamfered arched entrance, the inner chamfer supported on C19 octagonal responds, with hood

mould and label stops, over is a single trefoil arched niche. Each side wall has a single trefoil arched light. Inner double chamfered arched doorway with hood mould and remains of label stops. To the left is a single similar 2 light window. In the west wall is a single arched 3 light C15 window with cusped panel tracery, hood mould and human head label stops. The clerestory corresponds to the north. Interior. 4 bay early C13 nave arcades with circular columns, keeled responds, octagonal moulded capitals to all but the 2 east columns of the south arcade, which are circular. The capital of the single central pier on the south side is decorated with crude foliate and the capital of the east respond of this side has some C19 nailhead and remains of crude foliate carving. Double chamfered arches, hood moulds to nave sides with remains of 2 label stops. Double chamfered tower arch, the inner chamfer supported on keeled responds with moulded capitals. C19 double chamfered chancel arch, the inner chamfer supported on octagonal responds. C19 rood screen. 2 bay north aisle/chapel arcade with moulded arches and single central circular moulded column. The east most bays partly occupied by panel with 2 blind trefoil arches. The west wall of the chapel decorated with 3 bay C13 blind arcading with moulded arches and jambs, no capitals. Over is a single rectangular recess. The north wall has an aumbry and single moulded rectangular niche, with further small recess. The south wall with ogee arched piscina. Flanking the jambs of the east window here is some decorative moulding. Nave with evidence of former roof on west wall. Nave roof C15 with moulded and carved beams and decorative bosses. North aisle with single rectangular niche under the east window. Remains of wall painting to south aisle, south wall, and to the north and east walls of the nave. There is a C16 oak chest with iron hinges and 2 chairs with C16 carving. Octagonal ashlar C14 font with blind trefoil arched panels decorating the bowl. Remaining furniture C19. Single William IV hatchment. In the tower are 2 boards with biblical texts and a single board detailing bequests. Between north aisle and north chapel are a few medieval tiles. In the floor of the north aisle is a small oval brass to Colonel Michael Stanhope, 1648, this decorated with a skull and crossbone and hour glass and angel's wings. There is a further floor slab decorated with an incised cross. The north chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas contains several good monuments. There are 2 c.1300 effigies of ladies in wimples, one with head on a pillow, the other with head supported by angels. The effigy of Sir Richard de Willoughby, 1325, of a recumbent cross legged knight with his wife next, both with feet on lions and heads on pillows. That to Sir Richard de Willoughby Judge, 1362, is of a recumbent figure in pleated dress. The sides of the alabaster tomb being decorated with blind shields. The alabaster tomb of his son Sir Richard de Willoughby, 1369, is of a recumbent knight with head resting on a visor and feet on a dog. The front of the tomb is decorated with raised decorated shields. The alabaster tomb of Sir

Hugh de Willoughby and his second wife Margaret Freville, 1448, depicts 2 recumbent figures in prayer, he a knight with feet resting on a lion and head on a visor. She with feet resting on a dog and head on a pillow supported by angels. The tomb decorated at the head end with a representation of the Holy Trinity and at the feet end with the Virgin and Child. The sides are decorated with figures of angels holding shields, set into trefoil arched panels with decorative carved spandrels. His sword, now fragmented, is displayed in a case attached to the north wall. There is an incised floor slab to Isabel Foljmabe, 1417, first wife of Sir Hugh and a much restored-floor slab of a priest, probably Hugh Willoughby, Rector of Willoughby 1320-29.

#### 4.0 Historical Background

- 4.1 A detailed history of St Mary & All Saints Church is presented on the website of the Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project, accessible via this link: <https://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/willoughby-on-the-wolds-/history.php>.
- 4.2 The following brief summary is abstracted mainly from this source.
- 4.3 There was a settlement at Willoughby-on-the-Wolds before the Norman Conquest, named as *Wilgebi* in the *Domesday Book* of 1086; no reference is made to a church or priest at that date.
- 4.4 The earliest reference to a church at *Willgebi* is in a document of c. 1120 that confirms an earlier grant of 1103, of monies and land to found the great Priory of Worksop.
- 4.5 The earliest elements of the present building are 13<sup>th</sup> century in date, suggesting that the original Norman church was replaced at that time.
- 4.6 Surviving 13<sup>th</sup> century elements include the north and south arcades of the nave and the west tower. The chancel dates from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The aisles were rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the north chapel was added, as a chantry chapel for the Willoughby family, dedicated to St Nicholas. Various windows and the font are also 14<sup>th</sup> century in date. The clerestory and nave roof date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The chantry chapel and Willoughby effigies were repaired in 1781. Restoration work was undertaken in 1829 and in 1891 when the chancel was rebuilt. The church was restored in 1908-9, and the south porch was rebuilt at that time. Repairs were made to the roof, tower and spire in the 1950s-60s. Restoration work to the tombs was carried out in 1984. The tower and spire were restored in 2005-6.

## 5.0 Research Aims and Objectives

5.1 Regional research aims are defined in *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands* (Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012), which builds on an earlier resource assessment and research agenda: *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Assessment and Research Agenda* (Cooper 2006).

5.2 The archaeological recording programme was identified as having the potential to contribute towards themes defined in Section 6.7 of *East Midlands Heritage: An Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands*, which provides a research agenda for the High Medieval period (1066-1485), specifically aspects covered in paragraph 7.5: *Religion*; and also Section 6.8 which provides a research agenda for the post-medieval period (1485-1750), specifically paragraph 8.6: *Ecclesiastical structures, estates and burials* (Knight, Vyner and Allen 2012, 94, 108).

5.3 The specific objectives of the archaeological recording programme, as set out in the approved WSI, were:

- To record any plumbers' marks on the lead roof of the Willoughby Chapel before this is removed;
- To record any roof timbers affected by the re-roofing of the Willoughby Chapel, particularly any pre-19<sup>th</sup> century timbers;
- To interpret the recorded evidence within the context of the known history of the Church;
- To produce a report and archive of the results of the investigation.

## 6.0 Methodology

6.1 The archaeological recording was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in section 7 of the approved WSI.

6.2 On each slope of the low-pitched roof of the Willoughby Chapel, the lead covering was divided into a series of 8 'panels' by upstanding seams (Photos 4-5). These 'panels' were allocated nominal letter codes (**A-P**) as an aid to locating the plumbers' marks. The individual plumbers' marks were numbered in consecutive sequence from **[01]** to **[65]**.

6.3 Following removal of the lead covering the roof boards were found to be in reasonably sound condition; these were left *in situ* and overlain with new diagonal boarding to which the new roof covering was fixed (Photos 6-7).



6.4 The only timbers that were replaced were modern softwood boards forming the valley gutter between the Willoughby Chapel and the north aisle (Photos 8-9). The base board of the valley gutter was seated on concrete and evidently formed part of a 20<sup>th</sup> century repair. No earlier roof timbers were affected.

## 7.0 Results

7.1 65 plumbers' marks were recorded on the upper surface of the lead roof covering of the Willoughby Chapel (Figure 5). 51 of the marks (78.5%) were the traced outlines of footwear (either boots or shoes). Eight of the marks (12.3%) were tracings of hands (6 complete and 2 incomplete examples). The remaining 6 marks were miscellaneous inscriptions and drawings.

7.2 Some of the marks were vary faint and it seems likely that there were originally more, with an unknown number having been lost to weathering of the lead over time.

7.3 A majority of the marks (37 examples) were made using a tool (or tools) that left a distinctive narrow, rouletted impression in the lead (Photos 10-11). A smaller number (14 examples) were scratched or scribed into the lead using a knife blade or other sharp implement (Photos 12-13). A single example was made by repeatedly pricking the surface of the lead with a nail, punch or other pointed implement (Photo 14). These different methods are described hereafter as tooled, scribed and pricked. In 12 examples, a combination of these methods was used, typically involving an initial scribed mark that was then traced over with a tool that left a rouletted impression (Photo 15).

7.4 A fourth method, limited to a single example, involved lead-welding a series of names and the date 1985 onto an applied lead patch (Photo 16).

7.5 Many of the marks included initials and some were also dated. Legible dates were recorded in 23 examples (35%). With the exception of two marks dated 1985, all of the dated examples fell within the period 1783 to 1878 (Photos 17-18).

7.6 In a single instance a full name was included along with a date: *Thos. Borrington 1829* (Photo 19).

7.7 The footwear outlines have been classified in the catalogue based on the shape of the toe as either pointed, rounded point, rounded, or square. In some examples only the outline of the boot or shoe was shown, whilst in others the heel was also marked; in a few cases additional details such as hobnails were also shown.

7.8 The marks are catalogued below. Names, dates and initials are italicised. Maximum length and width of footwear marks are recorded in mm.

## PANEL A

[01]. Diamond-shaped applied lead panel, 250mm square, with lead-welded inscription: *S. Jose. D. Hopkins. R. Unwin. 1985.*

[02]. Footwear outline, mainly tooled but partly scribed. Pointed toe. Very small, 130 x 45mm. Apparently a tracing of a child's shoe.

[03]. Scribed name and date: *R. Unwin 1985.* 50mm wide x 20mm high.

## PANEL B

Blank

## PANEL C

[04]. Faint tooled footwear outline, only heel clearly visible, with rounded toe and date/initials: *1867 GG.* 250mm long.

[05]. Footwear outline, partly scribed and partly tooled. Rounded point toe. No initials/date. 260 x 90mm.

[06]. Footwear outline, partly scribed and partly tooled. Rounded toe. Crude heel. Faint scribed initials, possibly *WS.* 235 x 80mm. Appears to be associated with [07].

[07]. Scribed footwear outline. Rounded toe. No initials/date. 231 x 81mm. Appears to be associated with [06].

[08]. Incomplete scribed outline of hand. Index finger and part of palm of left hand.

[09]. Scribed footwear outline. Rounded toe. Faint. No initials/date. 300 x 102mm.

[10]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. 265 x 97mm. Faint, no initials/date visible.

[11]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Letter *J* towards toe plus other illegible inscription within panel below. 270 x 94mm.

## PANEL D

Blank

## PANEL E

[12]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Partly obscured by later repair. Initials and date: *I x H 178?* (poss. 3). 275+ x 91mm. Appears to be associated with [13] & [14].

[13]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Initials and date: *I x H 1783.* 280 x 91mm. Appears to be associated with [12] & [14].

[14]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Lower part obscured by later repair. Initials: *I x H*, arranged in similar manner to [13]. Undated. ? x 91mm. Appears to be associated with [12] & [13].

[15]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. No initials/date. 270 x 98mm.

[16]. Tooled footwear outline. Very faint. Size and details unclear.

[17]. Partly scribed and partly tooled footwear outline. Very faint. Size and details unclear.

[18]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded toe. Heel. Faint initials, possibly: *I.B.* with the rest illegible. 262 x 90mm.

[19]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded toe. Heel. No initials/date. 270 x 91mm.

[20]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. Initials: *JB* and other illegible lettering. Date in heel: *1828*.

[21]. Pricked footwear outline over scribed lines. Square toe. Heel and heel detail. Illegible pricked ?initials. 262 x 92mm.

#### PANEL F

[22]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel and heel detail. Name and date: *Thos. Borrington 1829*.

[23]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. Star in circle detail to heel. Initials and date: *J.B. 1827*. 227 x 80mm. Appears to be associated with [24].

[24]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. Star in circle detail to heel. Initials and date: *E.J. 1827*. 230 x 78mm. Appears to be associated with [23].

#### PANEL G

[25]. Scribed footwear outline; short section tooled. Pointed toe. No initials/date. 250 x 86mm.

[26]. Tooled footwear outline over scribed line. Rounded point toe. Heel. No initials/date. 230 x 84mm.

[27]. Tooled footwear outline over scribed line. Pointed toe. Initials and date: *I.G. 1789*. 235 x 86mm. cf. [29].

[28]. Scribed letter: *W* followed by number *9* or possibly inverted *G*. 100mm high.

[29]. Tooled footwear outline over scribed line. Pointed toe. Heel. Initials and date: *I.G. 1790*. 242 x 80mm. cf. [27].

[30]. Tooled footwear outline. Faint. Pointed toe. Heel. Initials and date: *I.D. 1796*.

[31]. Scribed and partly tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Scribed mark inside toe, possibly an *I*. 264 x 90mm.

[32]. Tooled footwear outline. Square toe. Heel. No initials/date. 260 x 94mm.

#### PANEL H

[33]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. Initials and date: *I.H. 1811*. 277 x 105mm.

#### PANEL I

[34]. Incomplete scribed footwear outline (heel not shown). Pointed toe. No initials/date. ? x 95mm.

[35]. Faint scribed footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. Very faint lettering: *P. S.* 275 x 95mm.

[36]. Very faint outline of left hand. Part scribed and part tooled. No initials/date.

[37]. A series of 5 scribed concentric circles, the largest 320mm in diameter and the smallest 43mm in diameter. Evidently made with a pair of compasses. Outermost circle very faint.

[38]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. No initials/date. 250 x 90mm.

[39]. Tooled outline of left hand. No initials/date. Partially overlaps [40].

[40]. Tooled outline of left hand, No initials/date. Partially overlaps [39].

[41]. Tooled footwear outline. Square toe. Heel. Initial *W* visible, other initials and possible date not legible. 240 x 80mm.

[42]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Marks possibly intended to depict hobnails? No initials/date. 275 x 90mm.

[43]. Faint partly scribed and partly tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. No initials/date. 257 x 86mm.

[44]. Tooled outline of left hand. Initials and date: *E.T. 1818*.

[45]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Illegible initials. Date in heel: *1811*. 280 x 102mm.

[46]. Tooled outline of left hand. Initials and date: *GC 1818*.

## PANEL J

[47]. Incomplete scribed footwear outline. Pointed toe. No initials/date. No complete dimensions.

[48]. Partly scribed and partly tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Quite irregular in form. Tooled mark along centreline of shoe. Tooling pattern is slightly different to most other examples. No initials/date. 234 x 80mm.

[49]. Scribed then tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Initials: *I* above *J.C* and below this date: *1803*. Below date a small hexafoil made with a pair of compasses. In heel a cross within a circle and another illegible mark. 278 x 92mm.

## PANEL K

[50]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded toe. Heel. No initials/date. 245 x 88mm. Multiple linear scribed marks cut across it.

[51]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Initials and date: *JG 1811*. 275 x 95mm.

[52]. Tooled footwear outline. Square toe. Heel. Additional detail to toe and heel. Initials and date: *J.S.* above *W* below which is date *1878*. Multiple linear scribed marks cut across it.

[53]. Tooled footwear outline. Square toe. Heel. Additional detail to toe and heel. Initials and date not legible. 220 x 70mm.

[54]. Faint tooled footwear outline. Rounded point toe. Heel. Illegible. 256 x 86mm.

## PANEL L

[55]. Incomplete tooled footwear outline - heel only. No initials/date. No complete dimensions.

## PANEL M

[56]. Incomplete scribed outline of left hand. Thumb and part of index finger only. No initials/date.

[57]. Tooled initials and date: *T.G. 1783*. Characters are 50mm high. Possibly associated with [58].

[58]. Faint tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. 250 x 88mm. Possibly associated with [57].

[59]. Incomplete scribed footwear outline. No initials/date. No complete dimensions.

[60]. Scribed footwear outline. Square toe. Heel. Additional detail to toe. Initials and date: *C.S. 1875*. 266 x 80mm.

[61]. Scribed letters: *WI* and *W*.

[62]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Letter *H* formed on heel line. No other initials/date. 233 x 91mm.

[63]. Tooled footwear outline. Pointed toe. Heel. Initials and date: *J.S. 1878* set above triangle. 250 x 81mm.

[64]. Tooled footwear outline. Rounded toe. Heel. Initials: *TA* above grid type pattern. In heel the date: *1875* above ?decoration. 210 x 71mm.

[65]. Tooled outline of ?left hand. Partially obscured by later patched repair. Circular motif to palm, like spoked wheel or petals within roundel (not compass drawn).

## PANELS N, O and P

Blank

## 8.0 Discussion

### *Distribution of the marks*

8.1 A majority of the plumbers' marks were on the southern slope of the Willoughby Chapel roof (57 examples = 87.7%), which adjoins the roof of the north aisle (Figure 5). Just 8 marks were recorded on the northern slope of the chapel roof and with a single exception these were located close to the ridge line. Number [22] (Panel F) is notable for its proximity to the northern edge of the roof as well as for its careful execution and inclusion of a full name rather than just initials. Thomas Borrington evidently wished to stand out (literally) from the crowd (Photo 19). Few marks were located close to the ends of the chapel roof, with panels B, D, N, O and P being blank, and panel A having just 3 marks.

8.2 The marks were concentrated in the southern central part of the chapel roof, away from the edges where there was a greater risk of falling from the roof.

### *Chronology*

8.3 With the exception of two marks on Panel A, both dating from 1985, all of the dated marks fall within a 95-year period, between 1783 and 1878. The practice of making such 'informal' marks had evidently ceased before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it is interesting to note the complete absence of similar marks on the lead roof of the north aisle, which was replaced in 1908. A 'formal' inscription on the roof of the north aisle

names the vicar, churchwardens, architect and building contractor involved in the 1908 renovation work (Photo 20).

- 8.4 The tradition of tracing footwear outlines apparently dates back to the medieval period. Examples of graffiti showing medieval style footwear are known from a number of churches and cathedrals (Champion 2015, 50, 171, 185, 233).
- 8.5 The practice of tracing footwear outlines on lead roofs is documented from at least the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1606, Christian IV (1577-1668) King of Denmark, visiting his sister Anne in London (the wife of King James I), after surveying the city, 'hee held his foote still whilst Edward Soper keeper of the Steeple, with his knife cutte the length and breadth thereof in the lead' (Rye 1865, cited in Hoggard 2021).

### *Significance*

- 8.6 Tracing round a shoe or hand left a personal mark that, at a basic level, served to document the presence of an individual in a particular place at a particular time. The motivation behind the creation of such marks may be more complex, however, and Hoggard has suggested that the act was a form of sympathetic magic. Leaving a unique mark on a building that was the 'house of God' and therefore a source of supernatural power was considered to have the effect of sympathetically transmitting the positive protective energies within the building from the traced outline to the individual who made the mark (Hoggard 2021). It is important to note, however, that similar marks also occur on secular buildings, which may undermine this line of reasoning.
- 8.7 A similar range of marks, including 172 footwear outlines and 7 hands were recorded on lead roofs at Bolsover Castle (Sheppard 1998). Sheppard notes that 'The practice may well have been common in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but folklore literature appears to have generally ignored this curious and perhaps widespread activity. One can speculate that perhaps the shoe or boot had some peculiar significance as a form of signature – a personalised means of leaving one's mark for posterity, especially at a time when footwear was hand-made and probably more varied in appearance. ... It probably came to be considered lucky to leave such a mark, and there are parallels for this idea in other cultures' (Sheppard 1998, 146).
- 8.8 Merrified makes brief reference to the phenomenon as part of a wider discussion of concealed shoes and other traditions and superstitions associated with footwear: 'It is curious, however, that even the drawn outlines of shoes were apparently considered to have some strange virtue, for they are sometimes scratched on lead roofs, especially of churches' (Merrifield 1987, 135).
- 8.9 A character in a short story by M.R. James, first published in 1911, mentions a 'ghost's footmark' on the stone staircase of a private school he attended as a child, consisting

of 'the shape of a shoe, with a square toe'. He considered it odd, in retrospect, that there was not a supernatural story associated with the mark (James 1994, 108).

#### *Plumbers' marks?*

- 8.10 The term 'plumbers' marks' implies that workmen employed in repairing or relacing lead roofs were responsible for making such marks. Sheppard notes that 'in historical times, the occurrence of such markings is usually associated with plumbers leaving their 'signature' on newly-laid lead sheeting' (Sheppard 1998, 10).
- 8.11 Amongst an extensive series of marks on the roof of the tower at St Oswald's Church, Filey, North Yorkshire, is one that reads *J Hill plumber*, and around a dozen examples recorded on the roof of All Saints Church, Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham, included the attribution plumber/plumer/plumar (Buglass 2016, 17; Richardson and Dennison 2014). These marks were evidently made by lead roofers who referred to themselves as plumbers.
- 8.12 It is clear from the analysis of the marks at Bolsover Castle and St Oswald's Church, Filey, that individuals other than plumbers were responsible for making some of the markings at these sites (Sheppard 1998, 10; Buglass 2016, 17-19). Sheppard suggests that the earliest marks at Bolsover Castle, dating from the 1820s, were made by workmen and that these were then imitated by later visitors (Sheppard 1998, 145).
- 8.13 At Willoughby-on-the-Wolds it seems probable that *S. Jose*, *D. Hopkins*, and *R. Unwin*, whose names occur together on an applied welded lead plaque, along with the date 1985 [01], were plumbers employed to repair the chapel roof (Photo 16).
- 8.14 The only other named individual is Thomas Borrington who made his mark in 1829 [22] (Photo 19). This is an uncommon surname and a search of historical directories has identified a James Borrington, plumber and glazier, resident in Derby in 1852 (*Freebody's Directory*, 12) and also in 1855 (*Post Office Directory of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire*, 56). It is tempting to suggest that James Borrington was the son of Thomas, though further research (beyond the scope of the present commission) would be required to confirm this. The fact that James Borrington was a plumber certainly suggests a family link between the two.
- 8.15 Other individuals cannot be identified with confidence from their initials alone. It is therefore impossible to suggest whether a majority of the marks were made by plumbers employed in roof repairs, or were the work of other individuals.
- 8.16 Another potential way of testing whether the marks on the roof of the Willoughby Chapel were made by plumbers is to look for any correlation between the dates that accompany the marks and documented episodes of repair.
- 8.17 It is recorded that Lord Middleton's workmen repaired the chantry chapel and the Willoughby effigies in 1781. No 1781 dates certainly occur on the roof of the chapel but



there are two 1783 dates and another uncertain date in the 1780s [12], [13] and [57]. These are the earliest dated marks on the chapel roof. Since there are no earlier dated marks, this might be taken to indicate that the lead sheeting was renewed as part of the 1781 renovations.

- 8.18 It was agreed at a vestry meeting in 1891 to apply for a faculty 'to replace the present roofs of the north and south aisles'. However, these repairs were not implemented at that date and the lead roof of the north aisle was eventually replaced in accordance with a faculty submitted on 17.03.1908 and granted on 29.04.1908. It is recorded that restoration work on the Willoughby Chantry was undertaken at the same time, at the expense of Lord Middleton. There are no plumbers' marks on the chapel roof dating from this period, though as noted above the tradition of making such marks appears to have died out some time before then.
- 8.19 It is recorded that restoration work on the tombs within the Willoughby Chapel was undertaken in 1984. Roof repairs were also undertaken in the following year, evidenced by marks [01] and [03].
- 8.20 As mark [02] appears to be a tracing of a child's shoe, this individual was presumably not a plumber (Photo 21).

*How the marks were made*

- 8.21 As noted above, scribed marks were probably made with a knife blade or other sharp implement. The single example of a pricked mark [21] may have been made with a nail, punch or other pointed tool (Photo 14). The series of concentric circles [37] must have been made with a pair of compasses (Photo 22), as was the hexafoil within [49] (Photos 23-24). What type of implement (or implements) was used to make the tooled marks is less clear.
- 8.22 It was suggested that one or more saddler' or other leather-workers' implements were used to make similar marks at Bolsover Castle, described as having a rouletted appearance (Sheppard 1998, 143).
- 8.23 Buglass describes similar marks on the roof of the tower at St Oswald's Church, Filey, as 'wrigglework', a 'technique where a suitably shaped tool was pushed over the surface at a 45° angle, whilst being rocked (wriggled) from side to side. In engraving a specialist tool known as a "flat scorper" or graver tool was used (Maryon, 1971, 153). A similar effect could also be achieved with an item such as a small woodworking chisel or a V racer used in leatherworking' (Buglass 2016, 65).
- 8.24 At Willoughby-on-the-Wolds some of the tooled marks were so regular in form as to raise the question of whether they had been made by a wheeled implement with a repeating pattern around its circumference, something akin to a fudge wheel used in shoemaking, except that these typically leave a pattern of parallel lines, rather than the V-shaped impression of the plumbers' marks on the roof of the Willoughby Chapel.

- 8.25 Another type of wheeled implement that creates a similar (though again not identical) pattern is a pastry cutter. Practical experimentation with a Victorian pastry cutter, with 1 inch diameter brass wheel, established that with firm pressure this could be used to trace the outline of a shoe on sheet lead.
- 8.26 Close inspection of marks where an initial scribed line was subsequently traced over using a tool, shows that in some instances the tooled line deviates significantly from the scribed line. Obvious examples of this are [02], [13], [26] and [27]. In the latter three examples the deviation occurs at the toe, with the tooled lines forming a much sharper point than the scribed line (Photo 25). A wheeled implement being pushed towards the toe, first on one side of the shoe and then the other, could result in such a mark.
- 8.27 Whatever implements were used to make these marks, they do not appear to have been lead-working tools routinely used by plumbers. Several roofers experienced in laying and repairing sheet lead were questioned on this point and none were aware of a roofing tool that would leave such a mark. Nor were any tooled marks of this type visible on any of the old repairs to the lead roof of the Willoughby Chapel. This suggests that the individuals who made the marks came equipped with a suitable tool. This same point is made by Buglass in respect of the graffiti on the roof of the tower at St Oswald's Church, Filey, who suggests that it indicates a high degree of preparedness and preplanning rather than the marks being created as a spur of the moment impulse (Buglass 2016, 65-6).

## 9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 The existence of a particular type of graffiti, typically consisting of the traced outlines of footwear and hands, often found in association with other types of mark or inscription, on the lead roofs of churches and other buildings, appears to be a fairly common phenomenon. However, relatively few examples seem to have been recorded in detail and the results published, and this is a field that clearly warrants further study, in order to better understand the motivations behind the practice, the people involved, and the practicalities of how the marks were made.
- 9.2 Several of the better examples from the roof of the Willoughby Chapel were cut out by the roofing contractors as they removed the sheet lead and will be retained by the church for posterity (Photo 26).
- 9.3 No early roof timbers were affected by the roof repairs and the only timbers replaced were modern (probably 20<sup>th</sup> century) boards forming the valley gutter between the Willoughby Chapel and the north aisle of the church.
- 9.4 This record of the marks on the roof of the Willoughby Chapel, in conjunction with the associated archive, addresses the research aims and objectives of the project.

## 10.0 Project Archive

10.1 The project archive consists of:

- 1 x annotated permagraph drawing sheet
- 9 x A4 paper pages of field notes
- 2x A4 paper copies of architectural drawings
- 95 x colour digital photographs (in high resolution .tiff format)
- An unbound copy of this report

10.2 The project archive will be deposited with Nottinghamshire Archives, in accordance with their current *Acquisitions Policy* and *Terms of Agreement for the Deposition or Donation of Records*.

## 11.0 Publication

11.1 A summary report on the results of the investigation will be submitted for publication in a suitable regional or national archaeological journal within one year of completion of the project. The length and content of the report will reflect the significance of the archaeological discoveries.

11.2 The full report will be made available via the Archaeology Data Service's OASIS website.

11.3 Copies of the full report will be issued to the Client, Client's Agent, the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor and the County Historic Environment Record.

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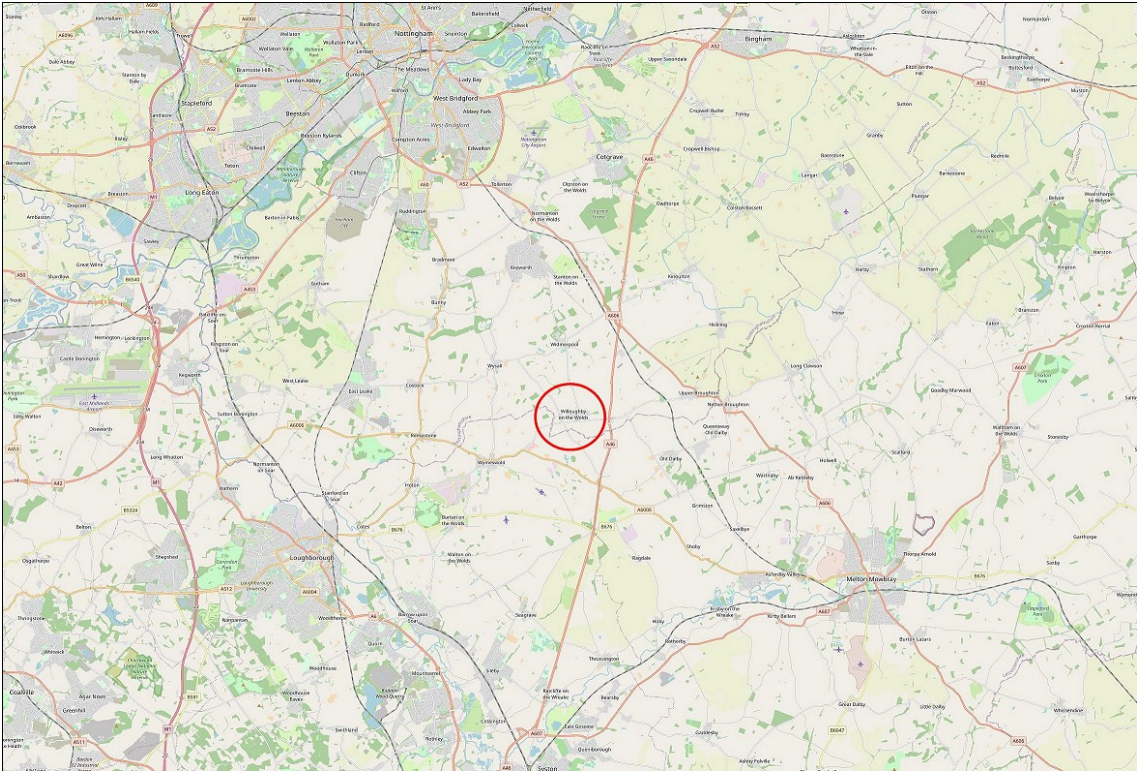


Figure 1. General Location Map. Willoughby-on-the-Wolds circled in red.  
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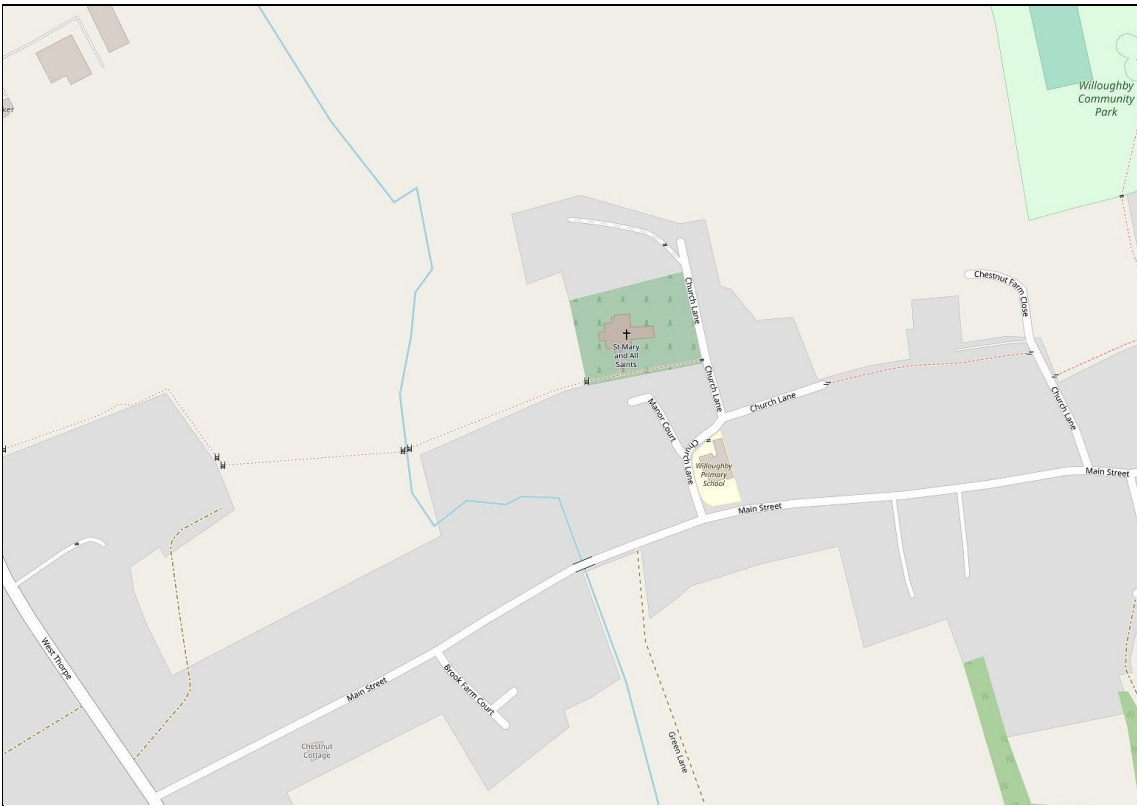


Figure 2. Site Location Map. Church of St Mary & All Saints named.  
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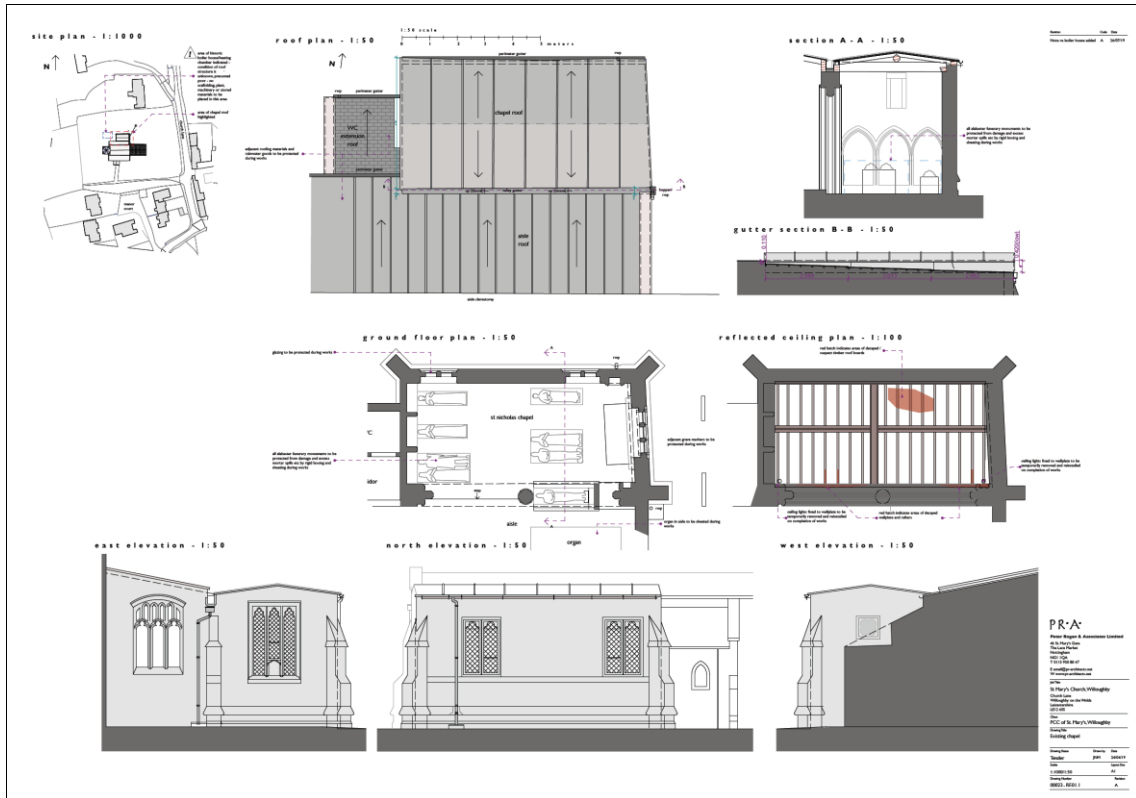


Figure 3. Existing details of Willoughby Chapel. Supplied by Jamie Mayers of PRA.

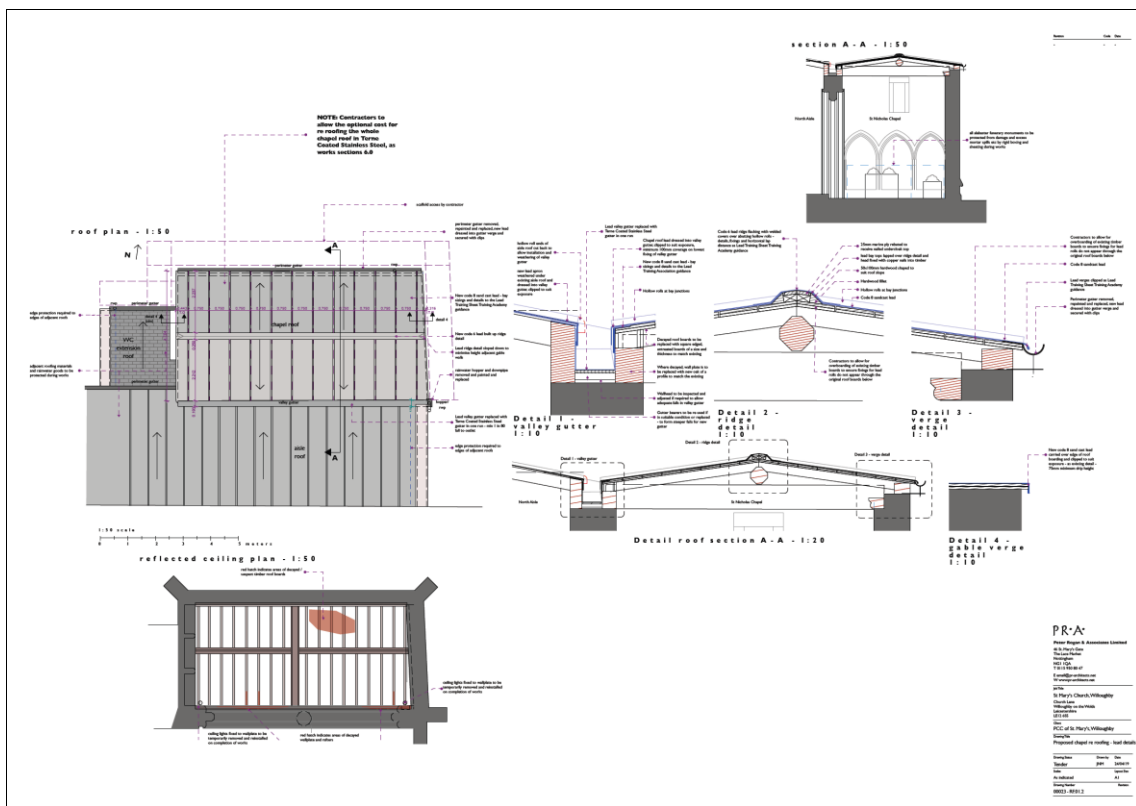


Figure 4. Details of proposed repairs to Willoughby Chapel. Supplied by Jamie Mayers of PRA.

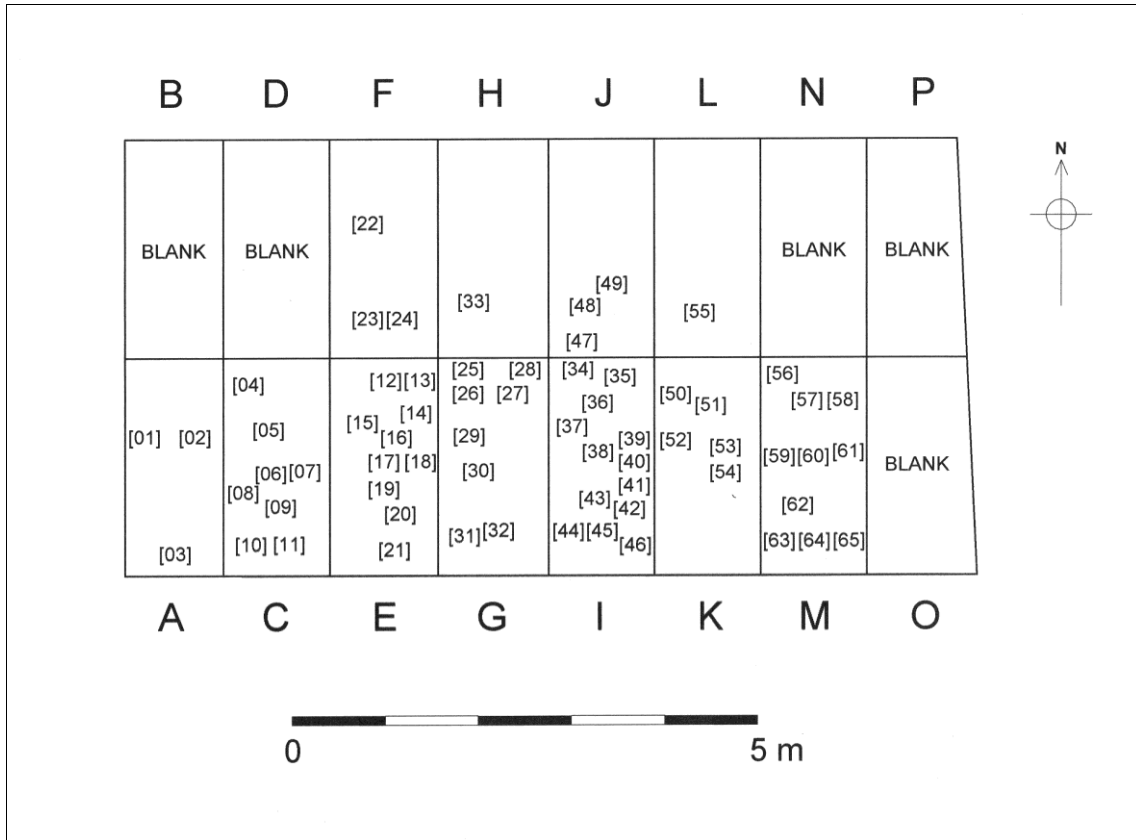


Figure 5. Plan of Willoughby Chapel roof showing locations of plumber' marks [01] to [65].



Photo 1. General view of the Church of St Mary & All Saints, looking NW.



Photo 2. The Willoughby Chapel against the north side of the north aisle, looking SW.





Photo 3. East end of the north aisle and adjacent Willoughby Chapel (on right), looking W.



Photo 4. View of the lead roof of the Willoughby Chapel prior to replacement, looking NE.



Photo 5. View of the lead roof of the Willoughby Chapel prior to replacement, looking NW.



Photo 6. North slope of the Willoughby Chapel roof following removal of the lead, looking SE.



Photo 7. North slope of the Willoughby Chapel roof following removal of the lead, looking SW



Photo 8. Repair to valley gutter between north aisle (left) and Willoughby Chapel, looking W.



Photo 9. Repair to valley gutter between north aisle (right) and Willoughby Chapel, looking E.



Photo 10. Example of tooled footwear outline, cat. [33].



Photo 11. Example of tooled outline of hand, cat. [39].



Photo 12. Example of scribed footwear outlines (that on left partly tooled), cat. [06] & [07].

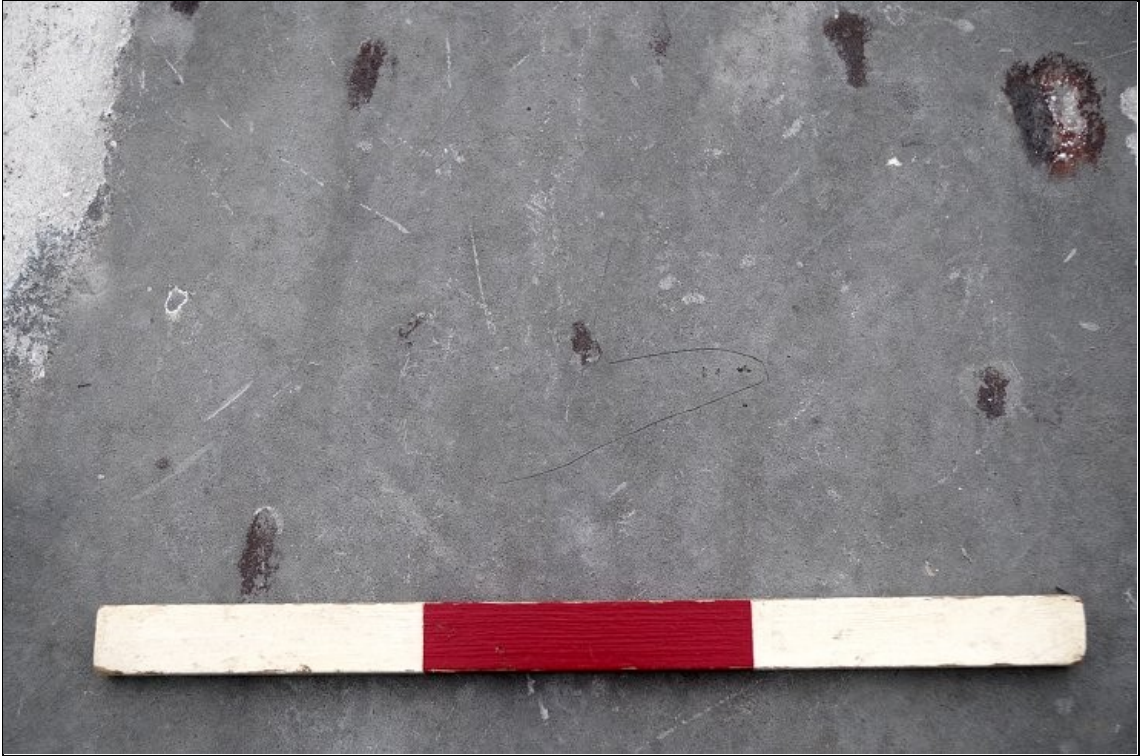


Photo 13. Example of incomplete scribed outline of hand, cat. [56].



Photo 14. Example of pricked footwear outline, cat. [21].



Photo 15. Example of partly scribed and partly tooled footwear outline, cat. [31].



Photo 16. Lead-welded plaque commemorating roof repairs in 1985, cat. [01].

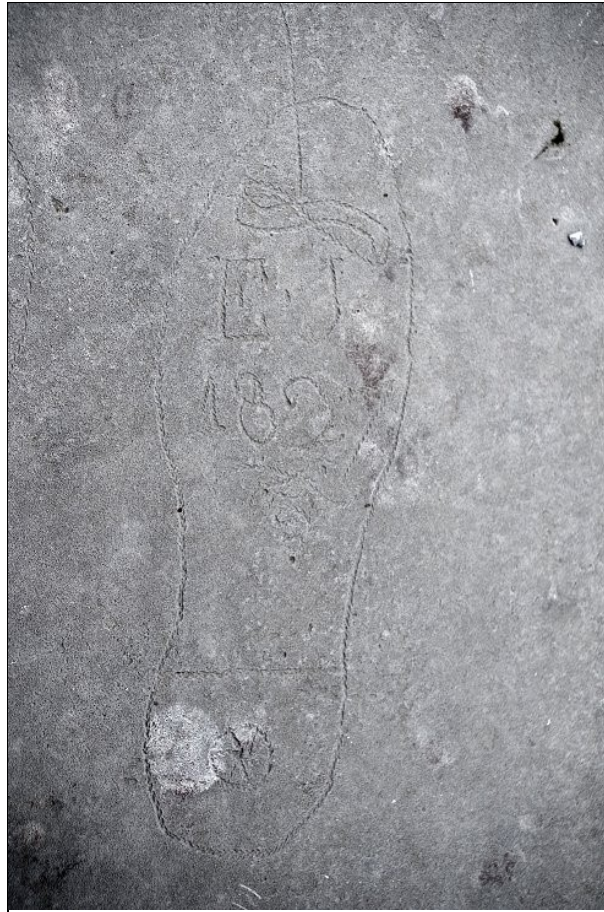


Photo 17. Example of tooled footwear outline with initials and date: *E.J. 1827*, cat. [24].



Photo 18. Detail of tooled footwear outline with initials and date: *J.S. 1878*, cat. [63].



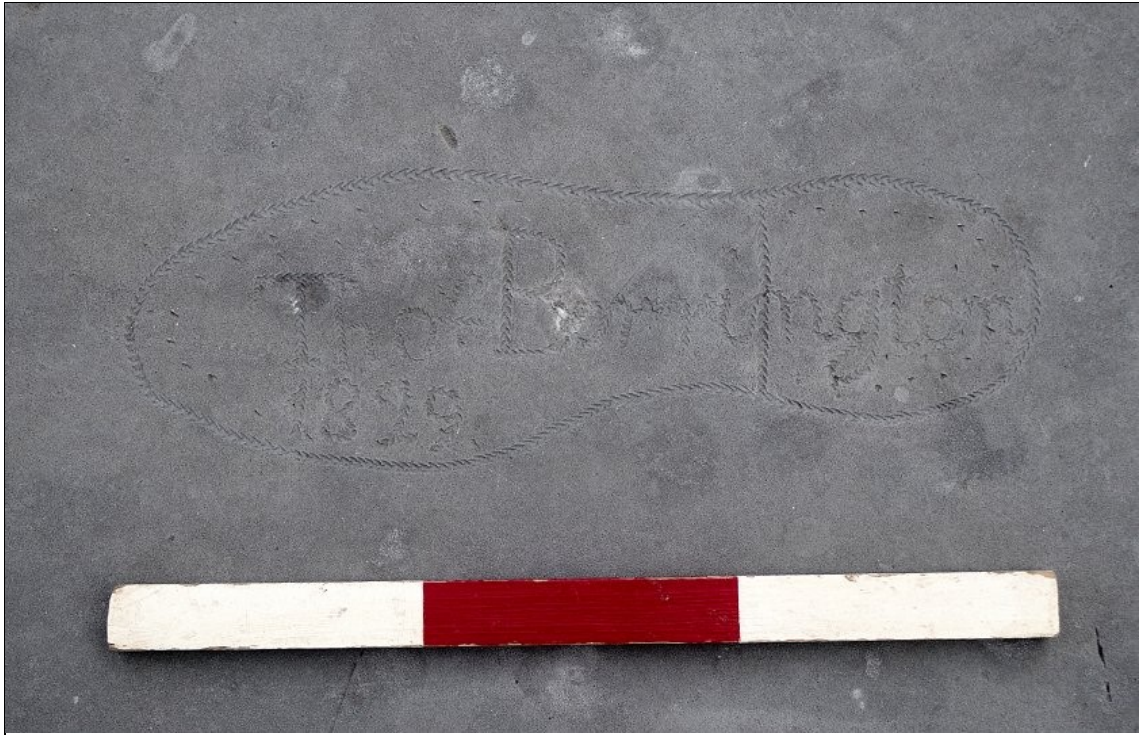


Photo 19. Tooled footwear outline with full name: *Thos. Borrington 1829*, cat. [22].



Photo 20. Inscription on lead roof of north aisle commemorating 1908 restoration.



Photo 21. Child size footwear outline, tooled over scribed line, cat. [02].



Photo 22. Concentric circles scribed with a pair of compasses, cat. [37].



Photo 23. Tooled footwear outline with compass drawn hexafoil, cat. [49].



Photo 24. Detail of compass drawn hexafoil associated with cat. [49].



Photo 25. Tooled footwear outline deviating from earlier scribed line at toe, cat. [26].



Photo 26. Example of footwear outlines cut from roofing sheet and retained, cat. [23] & [24].