

GB/NNAF/F87749 (Former ISAAR ref: GB/NNAF/F4814)

The Willoughby family, descendants of Ralph Bugge, a Nottingham merchant, took its name from Willoughby-on-the-Wolds (Nottinghamshire), where he had bought land in the early 13th century. It held lands in Derbyshire and Leicestershire by the early 14th century. Sir Richard Willoughby (d. 1362) acquired the manors of Wollaton and Cossall (Nottinghamshire), Risley and Mapperley (Derbyshire) and Dunsby (Lincolnshire) through his marriage to the daughter of Sir Roger Morteyn, and purchased further lands in these and other counties. Risley descended to the illegitimate offspring of his son Hugh, a priest, and other estates, including Mapperley and Sheringham (Norfolk), passed out of the family. Most of the estate, however, was inherited by Sir Richard's son by his second marriage, Sir Edmund. Further lands in Nottinghamshire (Gunthorpe, Loudham, etc), Warwickshire (Middleton, etc), Staffordshire and Herefordshire were acquired through the marriage of Sir Edmund's grandson, Sir Hugh (d. 1448), to Margaret, sister and co-heir of Sir Baldwin de Freville of Tamworth (Staffordshire).

Their grandson Sir Henry Willoughby (d. 1528) bought land in Holborn (Middlesex) formerly belonging to Malmesbury Abbey. His son Sir Edward (d. 1540) gained the Woodlands (Dorset) estate, with lands in Hampshire, Hertfordshire (Standon) and Essex (Steeple Hall), through his marriage to Anne, daughter and co-heir of Sir William Filoll. Their grandson Sir Francis built Wollaton Hall but sold land, including Cossington and Wymeswold (Leicestershire), and left the estate in considerable disarray on his death in 1596. The Holborn property passed (c1570) to his illegitimate brother, George Fox alias Willoughby, and the Woodlands estate to his second daughter's husband, Henry Hastings, younger son of the 4th Earl of Huntingdon. The Wollaton and Middleton estates, however, passed to his eldest daughter's husband, Sir Percival Willoughby of Bore Place (Kent) (d. 1643), a descendant of the Willoughby family of Eresby (see Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, Earls of Ancaster), who in order to retain the other family property found it necessary to sell his own estate in Kent, lands in Essex and Smallwood (Cheshire), and Willoughby itself.

Sir Percival Willoughby's grandson Francis Willoughby, the eminent naturalist, was bequeathed further Nottinghamshire lands (South Muskham and South Carlton) by Sir William Willoughby of Selston in 1671. His second son, Thomas Willoughby, succeeded his brother, Sir Francis, 1st Bt (so created 1677), in 1688, and was created Baron Middleton in 1712. He had already acquired, through his marriage to Elizabeth, daughter and co-heir of Sir Richard Rothwell, further lands in Nottinghamshire (Newark, North Wheatley, etc) and Lincolnshire (Stapleford, etc). His second son, Thomas (d. 1742), married Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Sir Thomas Sotheby of Birdsall (Yorkshire, East Riding); their son Henry succeeded his cousin as 5th Baron in 1789. The 6th Baron bought an estate in Wharram Percy (Yorkshire, East Riding) in 1833. Lands, mainly in Gloucestershire (Westerleigh, etc), which had been held jointly with the Colston family of Bristol, to whom the Willoughbys were related by marriage, were sold in 1858 by the trustees of the 7th Baron, but the 8th Baron bought the Applecross estate (Ross-shire) in 1862. In 1921 estates in East Nottinghamshire (Saundby and North Wheatley) were sold and, following the deaths of the 9th and 10th barons in 1922 and 1924, most of the estates outside Yorkshire, including Wollaton, Middleton, Stapleford and Applecross, were also alienated.

Estates in 1883: Notts 15,015 acres, Yorks N and ER 14,045 acres, Lincs 3,809 acres, Warwicks 3,641 acres, Staffs 50 acres, Derbys 16 acres, Ross-shire 63,000 acres, total 99,576 acres worth £54,014 a year.