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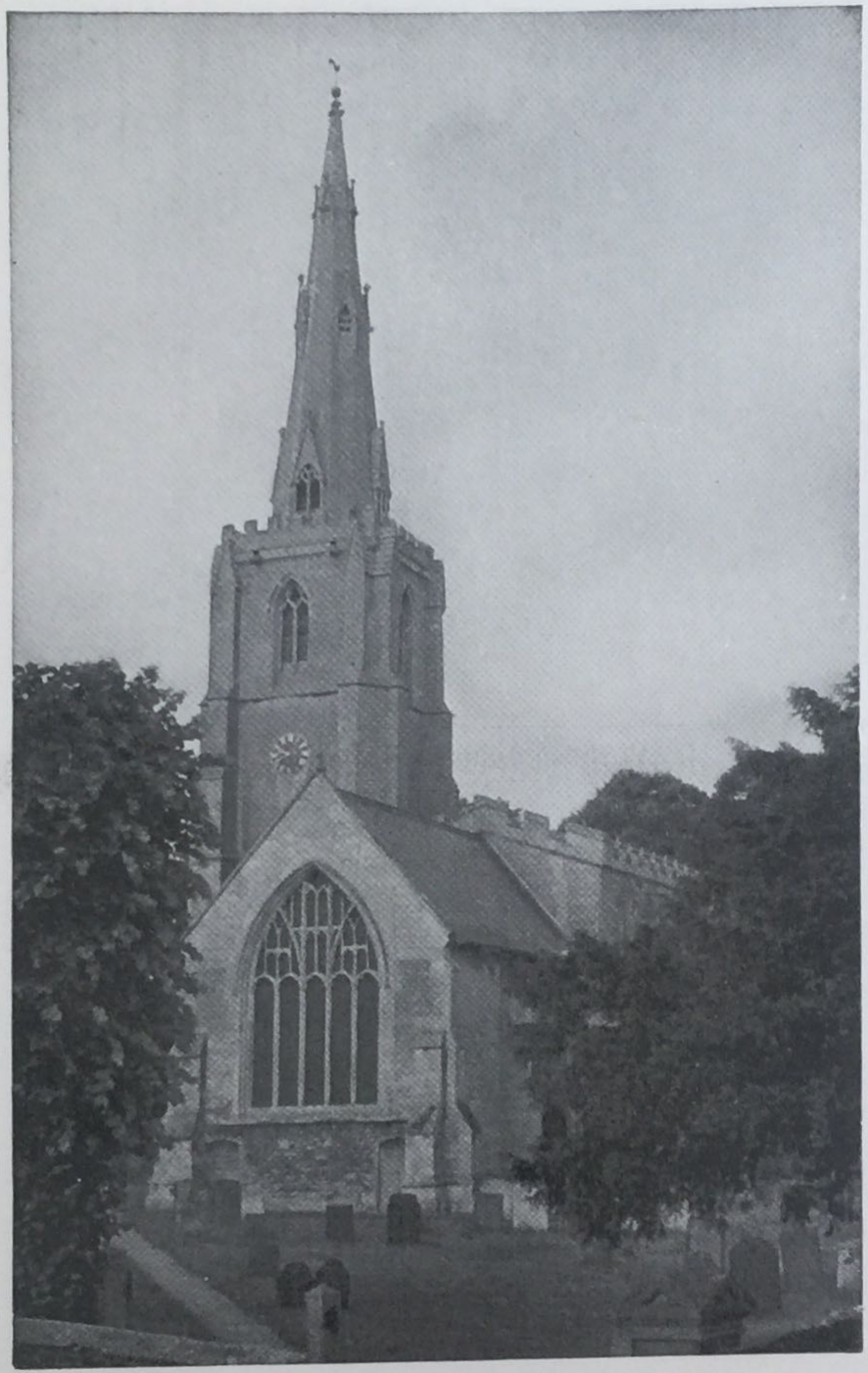
DONINGTON

Parish Church



ST. MARY AND THE HOLY ROOD

in the

DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

Price 20p

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY AND THE HOLY ROOD
DONINGTON
IN THE DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

DONINGTON, though now a large village-type community, was once a market town and the centre of the local hemp and flax trade with, up to the 19th century, three hemp fairs a year, in May, September and October. The May and October fairs survived as horse fairs until the 1940's: amusement fairs still visit the Market Place at these times. It is probably because of this town status that Donington possesses this large church.

THE CHURCH, dedicated to St. Mary and the Holy Rood is a history in stone of remote ways of life and of architecture. It is one of that splendid constellation of parish churches located in the Marshland and Fenland parishes of south Lincolnshire and western Norfolk where wealthy peasants with a church-building interest were to be found in considerable numbers in the 13th century. Many of these churches have spires, a decorative characteristic of a broad belt of country running diagonally across England from Lincoln to the north coast of Somerset, and Donington is no exception. Its splendid **tower and spire,** surmounted by a fine ball and weather cock, rises to about one hundred and forty feet. **The building** is mainly **late Decorated and Perpendicular** in style (1300—1400), but traces of earlier Norman (1100) and Early English (1200) masonry are to be found in its walls. Its **dimensions,** in round figures, are

Chancel, length 45 feet, width 19 feet

Nave, length 81 feet, width 22 feet

South Aisle, width 16 feet, North Aisle, width 14 feet.

THE LIVING was in the gift of the Knights Templar from 1228 to 1331 when it was appropriated by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, who continued as Patrons until 1540. When the Order was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1541 the presentation of the Living passed into the patronage of private gentlemen and so continued, except for the period 1593 to 1671 when it was a Crown gift, until 1887, when it was acquired by Simeon's Trustees who exercise this right to-day. Simeon (1759—1836) was a Cambridge divine who was Vicar of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, and a founder of the Church Missionary Society. Worship at Donington follows the Evangelical tradition of which he was an exponent.

View of Chancel and Nave

THE CHANCEL walls, built of irregular rubble masonry, often a sign of local peasant labour, incorporates some of the oldest part of the building. The **east end** once had three or four narrow vertical lancet windows. Their positions on each side of the present **large 15th century window** can be traced by the remains of their quoins, or side angles. The **13th century priest's entrance** in the south wall is ornamental with the nail head moulding and, just inside it, is an **elbow arm of a sedilia** carved with the same pattern. The **piscina** nearby is also 13th century. It has slots as for the hinges of a door and for a bolt, which suggests its having been an aumbry. **Two doorways,** one on each side of the Holy Table and now walled up, seem to indicate that a chapel for relics once exisited, the doorways being used for processional occasions. Again, on the north wall, masonry, in the form of **steps,** suggests a staircase leading to a room above these doorways. The **bottom step** has grooves in it and was probably either a solder or candle mould.

The chancel was evidently **remodelled** in the 14th century and in the early years of the 15th century as shown by the windows. The large one above the Holy Table shows by its vertical mullions its 15th century origins. As recorded by a brass plate on the wall behind the Holy Table the **chancel** was **again restored**

in 1865 by the Reverend John Wilson, Vicar of Wigtoft and Patron of the Donington Living. His coat of arms is carved on the south-western hammerbeam bracket. His father was Vicar of Donington from 1835 to 1850 and his memorial tablet, a very fine piece of work, hangs on the south wall.

The **choir stalls** are of richly carved oak and the **sanctuary rails** are inlaid with ebony. An archway, cut in the north chancel wall and now filled by the organ, communicates with the **vestry,** built at the time of the 19th century restoration. The **Holy Table** design harmonises with the stalls and its Victorian-Gothic **reredos** is enriched with the signs of the four Evangelists in marble mosaic

On the chancel north wall are tablets to the members of the **Flinders family,** the one of particular interest being that to **Captain Matthew Flinders, R.N.** (son of the then Donington doctor), cartographer and hydrographer of the south-eastern Australian coast and inventor of the "Flinders' bar" for correcting a ship's compass for induced magnetism.

The **east window** depicts our Lord's Ascension and, together with the **east window of the south aisle,** commemorates Sadak (d.1852) and Omar (d.1862) the sons of George and Elizabeth Freer. **One of the south windows** in the chancel commemorates the Reverend John Grenside and another his wife Mary, who was one of the Gleed family.

THE NAVE AND ITS SIDE AISLES date from the 14th and early 15th centuries. The general appearance of the nave is lofty. It has a colonade of **seven arches** on each side and **clerestory** above lit by windows overlooking the side aisles. the **roof timber** is severely plain, but was evidently to have been ornate as carved corbels are built in to support wallposts. The fine **chancel arch,** now clear and open, must have been a striking feature with its rood beam, still plainly indicated by the stone bracket on which it rested and by the masonry behind the pulpit containing a narrow stone spiral stair leading to a small doorway showing in the wall above. This stair also leads to an exit over the north aisle. The arch was at one time coloured with chevron bands, traces of which are still visible. The arch is out of centre with the chancel axis towards the south. The seven nave arches on each side are supported by hollow-curved-faced octagonal **pillars. Five** pillars on each side have capitals with battlement ornament, while the **two** west ones have plain mouldings. Maybe the difference is due to the fact that a gallery once occupied the western end of the church. The pillar on the north side of the crossway has traces of mediaeval writing on it. The recent (1964) cleaning of the stonework has shown up the finely carved **corbel heads** finishing the arch label mouldings and these are seen to

illustrate subjects such as Baptism, Marriage, Preaching, Charity, Avarice, Pride, and so on. Satan, as usual, is at the north door.

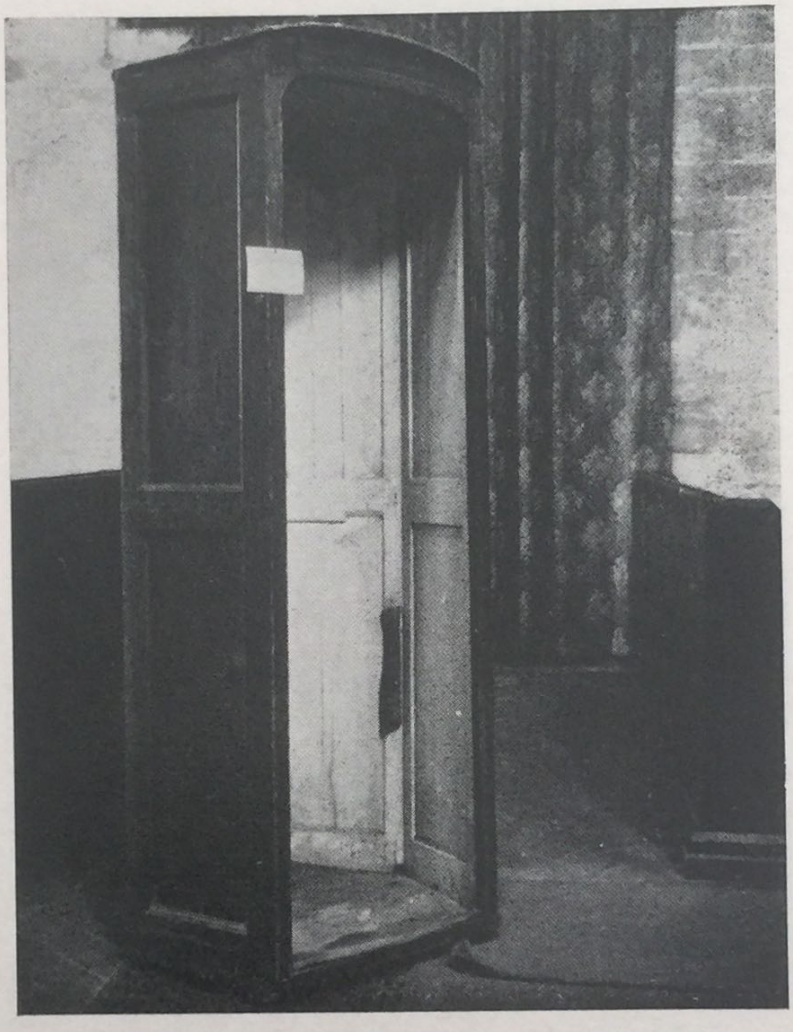
The **east ends of both aisles** were once side chapels as is shown by still existing piscinae and, in the south aisle, a horizontal groove in the masonry showing the positions of the Holy Tables. The **east window of the south aisle** has tracery of exceptional beauty. The **roof of the south aisle** is 19th century and is made of pitch pine: that of the **north aisle** was renovated in the early 1950's. In the north aisle are traces where box pew rails were let into the wall.

The **font bowl** has been replaced by a modern copy of the mediaeval one. The original bowl is now near the doorstep to the tower stairway and shows evidence of being more finely carved than its successor. It is probable that Captain Matthew Flinders was baptised in the old font.

In 1968 an additional vestry was built. Situated in the West end of the South Aisle, this vestry, donated by his wife and former parishioners, is a memorial to the Reverend George Alfred Elson, M.A., Vicar of this Parish from 1927-1945.

The church is rich in **masons' marks. Consecration crosses,** about three inches in diameter, can be seen, one on the south wall of the chancel arch base, another in the porch. A **carved stone panel** rests on the floor at the base of the column near the south entrance. It depicts someone kneeling at an altar on which is a Chalice. A bone under the altar seems to represent a relic and, since it was a mediaeval custom to place relics under the altar, it may well be that this is a pre-Reformation piece of work.

THE FURNITURE includes some interesting items. **Pew ends** at the east end of the south aisle are carved with the emblems of John of Gaunt. The **eagle lectern,** made of oak, was carved by a Donington man named Millson. The **council table** was given in 1951, the year of the Festival of Britain, when a service commemorating Captain Matthew Flinders and attended by his descendants, the Flinders Petrie family, and representatives of the Government of Australia and of the Royal Navy, was held in this church. It was designed, made and carved by William Edward Taylor, a parishioner, when he was eighty-two. He also designed, made and carved the **oak book rest** for the Holy Table at about the same time. **The churchwardens' staves** were given in memory of the wife of the late Mr. Thomas Gadsby, churchwarden from 1934 to 1964. The **oak chest** near the entrance is secured by five padlocks. The key of each padlock was held by a different person, the incumbent, the two churchwardens and 2 others, and so the chest could only be opened when all the people responsible for its contents were present. A **second chest** near the west

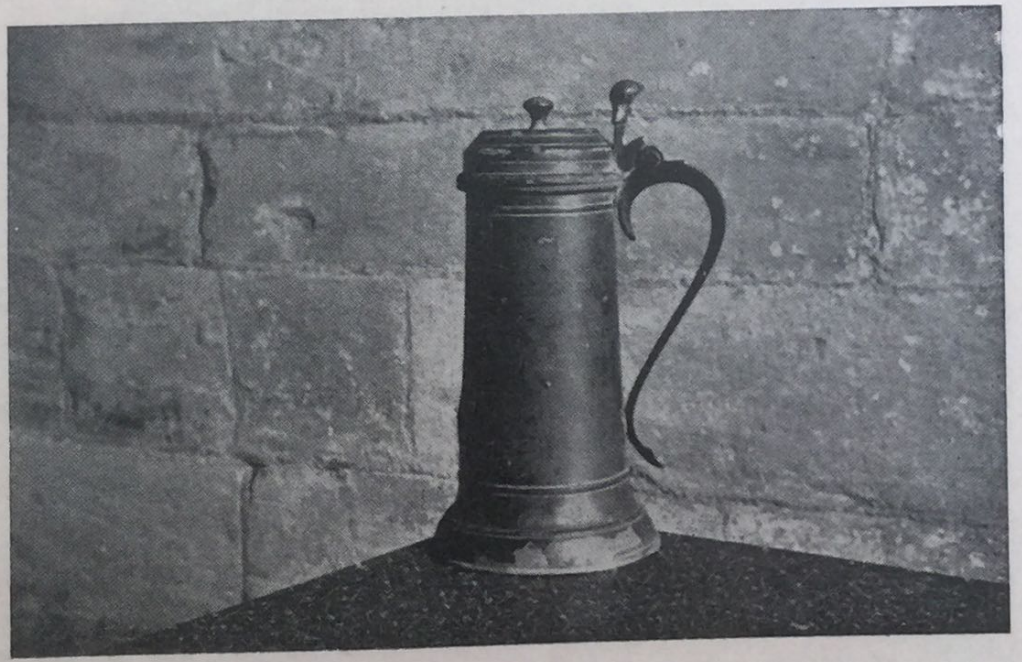


Georgian Hude for Priests use at graveside

door was the gift of Miss Hannah Pell in 1953. By the south door can be seen what, at first glance, seems to be a sentry box. It is a **hude,** or hood, and it was placed at the head of the open grave to shelter the parson during the committal of the dead in the churchyard. Not many specimens are found today, but there are others as near as Pinchbeck, eight miles away, and as far as Brookland in Romney March, Kent. The church possesses a **pewter flagon** carrying the arms of Thomas Cowley and inscribed "Hoc sidus nostro bene contigit orbi". The **church registers** are complete from 1642 and contain the entry of Matthew Flinders baptism. A photograph of this can be seen near the Flinders' memorials. **Other interesting records** in the keeping of the church are two volumes of Flinders' "Voyage to Terra Australis", a letter from William Wilberforce, the service of thanksgiving for the preservation of the life of Charles II after an attempt to assassinate him, a fragment of mediaeval illuminated MS. John Wilson's letters to his son at school and university, a first edition of Bunyan's "Advice to a Sufferer", several account books of the church-wardens and constables of the parish, a number of documents relating to rogues and vagabonds, a good collection of apprenticeship indentures and several old wage and rent books. One wage book just over one hundred years old gives the wage of a man who worked on the parish roads as one shilling a day and six shillings a week.

Besides **THE MEMORIALS** to the Flinders family and to the Reverend John Wilson already mentioned the church contains several mural tablets and grave slabs of interest. **Thomas Cowley,** the founder of the town's school in 1719, who died in 1721 at the age of ninety-six, lies buried beneath a simple slate slab in the centre aisle. The Cowley Sermon is preached every Easter Tuesday according to the terms of his will. **Enoch Millson,** who founded Millson's Charity and whose trustees administer the Dial Hall, the town's public hall, is commemorated by the **west window** and by a brass mounted on Hoptonwood, a Derbyshire marble, on the wall beneath. Members of the **Gleed family** are remembered by a tablet in the north aisle and by the paving in the entrance porch. **Lieutenant Harold Dods** of the Coldstream Guards, killed when the Guards' Chapel at Wellington Barracks was wrecked by a flying bomb one Sunday morning in the 1939-45 war, is commemorated, with his father, on a tablet near the lectern. On the left of the south door is a memorial to **Anthony Birks,** who was co-author with his brother John of an Arithmetic Book when they were masters at the Free Writing School of Donington (Cowley's School) in the mid 18th century. The **Donington men** who gave their lives in the Great War of 1914-18 and in the World War of 1939—1945 are remembered by bronze tablets near the pulpit and by a window in the north aisle.

Memorial Tablet to
Captain Matthew Flinders, R.N.



Thomas Cowley's Flagon

OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, on the south aisle wall, is a slate tablet, whose inscription is as clear as the day when it was cut in 1779, to the memory of **Tycho Wing,** aged ten, a pupil of Donington School. South-east from the church stands a Portland headstone to **William Moses,** Master of the Free School. William Moses the father and William Moses his son were headmasters of Thomas Cowley's School from 1796 to 1856. Near the priest's entrance to the chancel stand the slate headstones to **Matthew Flinders' parents.** In the north-east part of the churchyard is the grave of **Samuel Ward Flinders,** Matthew's brother, and, nearer the church, that of **Matthew's grandfather,** described as "grazier". By the main church path is a stone to the memory of **James Nunnery, a blacksmith,** inscribed at the top with the tools of his trade. The epitaph is now undecipherable, but according to W. F. Rawnsley's "Highways and Byways of Lincolnshire" published in 1926 it was the same as, or similar to, that to be seen in Bourne Abbey churchyard. This reads,

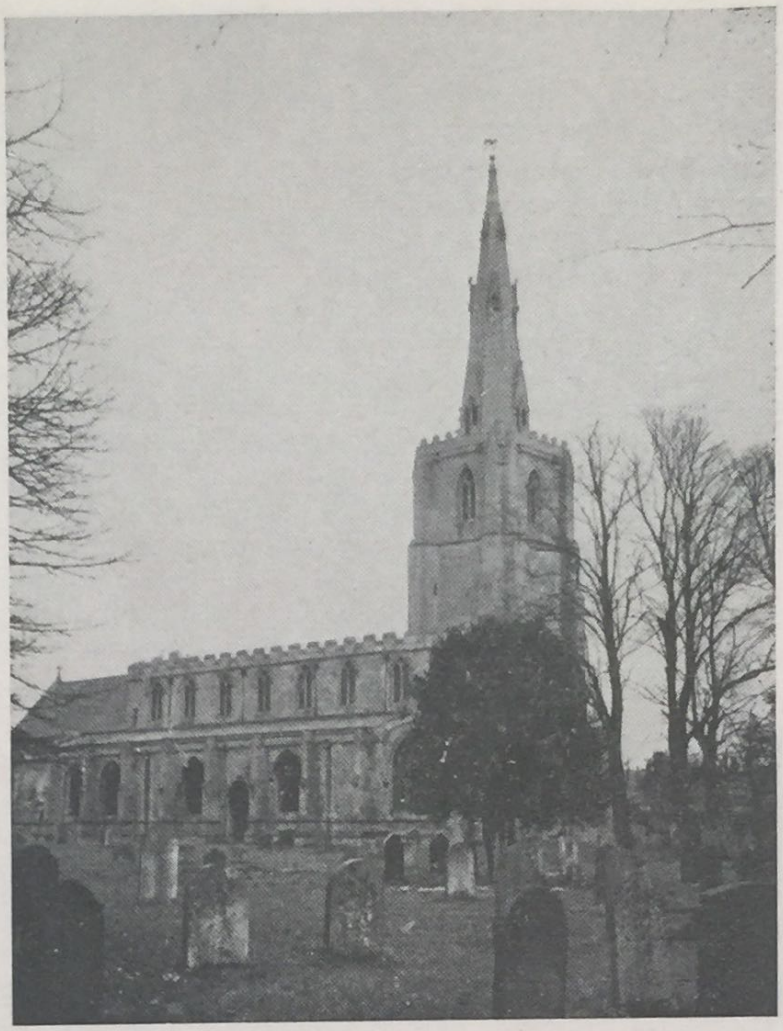
My sledge and hammer lie reclined,
My bellows too have lost their wind,

My fire's extinct, my forge decayed,
And in the dust my vice is laid.

My coal is spent, iron's gone,
My nails are drawn, my work is done.

My fire-dryed corpse lies here at rest,
My soul like smoke is soaring to the bles't.

When **THE CHURCH EXTERIOR** is examined the building is seen to be simple in plan and to consist of a long rectangular nave with side aisles and narrow extending chancel. It is richly decorated with heads and gargoyles. The 14th century tower stands alone, but adjoining the south aisle at its western end. With a wide open arch its lower portion forms a handsome **entrance porch** with a grand vaulted and groined ceiling. The inner arch opens directly into the church and has deep cut mouldings. Above this inner arch is a figure of **Our Lord in Majesty** pointing to the wound in His side. Traces of the paint by which it was originally coloured are visible at close-up view. Buttresses on each side of the tower have **canopied niches** with carved corbels for figures no longer there. To the left of the main porch doorway containing the gates and about twenty feet from the ground is a carving of two men in a coracle-type boat. The subject probably depicts a scene of local life of the 14th century when water fowling was a main occupation of the people. The **spire** is decorated with heads and gargoyles. The 14th century tower



Exterior View from the North-West

scratch dials; maybe old materials were used for such dials are usually found at the priest's (chancel) door, being used by him to determine the time of Mass. Small **worn grooves** are visible in the main doorway stonework and were most likely caused by arrows being sharpened there. In the reign of Edward III all boys had to learn archery and they practised on Sunday afternoons on the south side of the church. Their equipment was often kept in the church itself. The **iron gates** of the porch were made some years ago by the local firm of Holt.

The tower carries a ring of **eight bells,** some of which date back to 1743. Previous to 1909 the peal, hanging in an oak frame, consisted of five bells with the following weights and inscriptions:

	dates	cwts.	qrs.	lbs.
1. "God save His Church"	1743	5	2	0
2. Richard Bowles and Thomas Tenney, Churchwardens	1776	8	1	21
3. James Harrison, Founder, Barton	1820	7	2	23
4. John Ward and Wm. Tooley, Churchwardens, Thomas Hedderley	1743	9	3	25
5. Suscito Voce Pios Tue Jesu Digere Mentes, John Flinders, John Waterman	1747	14	1	24

In 1909 a sixth bell, a Treble, was added. It bore the inscription:
Mears and Sainbank, Founders, London

Day hung us "Fideles Voca Ad Domum Dei"	1909	4	3	5

The Vicar at this time was the Reverend Edmund Freeman, M.A. and the Churchwardens Captain Richard Gleed and Mr T. B. Hague.

In 1936 the bells were tuned and rehung in a new steel frame by Messrs. Gilbert and Johnstone of Croydon and were rededicated on the 2nd of October by the then Vicar, the Reverend G. A. Elson, M.A. The Churchwardens were Captain Richard Gleed, B.A., J.P., D.L. and Mr. T. W. Gadsby.

In 1953 two new Trebles were added. These have the following inscriptions:

1. To the Glory of God this Bell was given by Allen Wright of Dovecote Farm, in this Parish, in memory of his Wife MAY who died August 19th, 1952.
   Revd. J. B. Macgowan, B.A., Vicar.
   S. E. Taylor and T. W. Gadsby, Churchwardens.
   Mears and Stainbank, London, 1953.

2. This Bell was hung to the Glory of God in the Coronation year of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 1953.
   Revd. J. B. Macgowan, B.A., Vicar.
   S. E. Taylor and T. W. Gadsby, Churchwardens.

The bells are rung regularly for Sunday services and the tower is often visited by campanologists from all parts of the country.

The Church Clock is a fine specimen of mechanism driven by two weights with an eight-day movement. It strikes hourly on the tenor bell. The age of the clock is not known, but on the inside face is the inscription "Preston, Spalding, 1859".

The **west doorway** to the church is highly crocketed over a curved gable and is an outstanding piece of work. The **north doors,** decorated with tracery moulding, are original. In the mouldings of the window just west of this doorway are carved initials which may have been cut by the masons.

The nearby **Ancaster quarries** provided the stone for this grand building whose spire, visible for miles around in its Fenland countryside, reminds men, as they go about their daily work, of their duty to God and whose bells summon them sabbath by sabbath to His worship.

LIST OF INCUMBENTS OF DONINGTON PARISH CHURCH

The English Church in communion with the Church of Rome

Rectors.

1.	Master Richard de Stableford	Sub-deacon	1228-1229
2.	Guy de Montiniaco		died circa 1285

Vicars.

3.	Master Ralph de Ellerker	Chaplain	1286
4.	Thomas Auneysburton	Chaplain	1302, resigned 130[illegible]
5.	Robert de Kerneteby	Chaplain	1307
6.	William Fynch	Deacon	1331
7.	Reginald Newman	Priest	1390
8.	Sir William Hert	Chaplain	1406
9.	Robert son of William, son of Richard	Priest	1415, resigned 1418
10.	John More	Priest	1418
11.	Edward Lyttyl	Priest	1430
12.	William Gybboson	Priest	Feb. 1432
13.	Richard Brian	Priest	Aug. 1432
14.	Sir John Leyton	Priest	died c. 1445
15.	William Edward	Priest	1445
16.	Sir John Cleymond	Priest	1458
17.	Master William Smyth, Bachelor in Degrees		Mar. 1483
18.	Sir William Bysshopp	Priest	July 1483
	For the sake of an exchange of the vicarage of Donington with the vicarage of Frieston.		
19.	Sir Richard Nicholle	Priest	1503. resigned 1506
20.	Sir William Panke	Priest	1506
21.	Sir John Gibson	Priest	1511

The Post-Reformation Church of England

22.	Sir Richard Loveden	Priest	1540

	Presented by	Served during the reign(s) of	Contemporary events or persons
1)	Knights Templar	Henry III	Stephen Langton d. 1228
2)	Knights Templar	Henry III, Edward I	Simon de Montfort
3)	Knights Templar	Edward I	Scottish Wars: William Wallace
4)	Knights Templar	Edward I	Robert the Bruce
5)	Knights Templar	Edward II, Edward III	Battles of Crecy and Poitiers
6)	House and Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England. (Knights Templar suppressed in 1312 and 9000 of their manors were given to the Hospital of St. John)	Edward III, Richard II	Capture of Calais. The Black Death. The Black Prince. The Peasants' Revolt and Wat Tyler, John Wyclif, reformer The Lollard Bible.
7)	ditto	Richard II, Henry IV	Agincourt
8)	ditto	Henry IV, Henry V	
9)	ditto	Henry V	
10)	ditto	Henry V, Henry VI.	Joan of Arc.
11)	ditto	Henry VI.	
12)	ditto	Henry VI.	
13)	ditto	Henry VI.	
14)	ditto	Henry VI.	
15)	ditto	Henry VI.	
16)	ditto	Henry VI, Edward IV.	Wars of the Roses, Caxton.
17)	ditto	Edward V, Richard III	Princes in the Tower.
18)	ditto	Richard III, Henry VII	The "New Learning" John Colet, Thomas More.
19)	ditto	Henry VII	Cardinal Wolsey.
20)	ditto	Henry VII, Henry VIII	Flodden. The Reformation.
21)	ditto Right of Presentation made over by the Hospital of S. John to Alexander Popham and by him in turn to John Skott.	Henry VIII.	Cranmer. English translation of the Bible to be in every church. The English Prayer Book.
22)	John Skott of Camerwell in the County of Surrey, Esquire. Order of St. John dissolved 1541.	Henry VIII.	

23. William Alle	Clerk		1550
24. John Stradlinge	Clerk		1554, resigned 1557
25. John Stradlinge	Clerk		1557, resigned 1563
26. Ralph Shawe	Clerk		1563, died 1577
27. Sir William Browne	Clerk		1577
28. George Pyke	M.A.		1593
29. William Moone	M.A.	14th March	1605
30. George Picke (or Pyke)	M.A.	15th May	1605

28) was compounded for first fruits March 9th, 1593; deprived February 1st, 1605.

see Note 1 below. George Pike, late Vicar, was admitted as a public preacher of the Word of God 29th March, 1605. He signs the transcript as Minister in April, 1605. He signs also in 1610.

31. William Simonds	M.A.	January	1611
32. Samuel Hall	M.A.	April	1611
33. Brian Godley			1612
34. Thomas Gayton			1639, still Vicar 1641
35. Robert Randolph	Vicar		1662, signed transcript for 1662
36. Joseph Swift	M.A.		1671, died 1676
37. Andrew Smyth			1676, died 1709
38. John Wallet	B.A.		1709, ceded 1729
39. John Michael	LIB.		1729, died 1753
40. Simon Cole	B.A.		1753, died 1766
41. Thomas Marsham	M.A.		1766, ceded 1772
42. Lewis Powell	Clerk		1772, died 1794
43. Robert Pugh	B.A.		1794, died 1835
44. John Wilson (see Note 2)	Clerk		1835, died 1850
45. John Doughty Grenside	M.A.		1851, died 1886

23) Alexander Popham of Northepetherton in the County of Somerset, Gentleman.	Edward VI.	
24) ditto	Mary I.	
25) ditto	Mary I, Elizabeth I.	
26) John Popham	Elizabeth I.	
27) ditto	Elizabeth I.	Drake's voyage round the world. The Armada.
28) Queen Elizabeth	Elizabeth I, James I.	Growth of the Puritans, 'High' and 'Low' Church.
29) King James	James I.	
30) King James	James I.	
31) King James	James I.	
32) King James	James I.	
33) King James	James I, Charles I.	Pilgrim Fathers 1620
34) Charles I.	Charles I, Cromwell	Civil War
35) Charles II. The Living now passed from the Crown to private patronage.	Charles II.	Thomas Cowley Born 1625
36) Cornelius Hall, Esquire	Charles II.	
37) Cornelius Hall, Esquire	Charles II, James II. William and Mary William III, Anne.	Union with Scotland 1708. The Duke of Marlborough Blenheim, etc.
38) Edward Legh of Stamford, Baron in the County of Northampton, M.D. Value of the Living £13 17s. 3½d	Anne, George I. George II.	Thomas Cowley founded his school in Donington. He died in 1721.
39) Elizabeth, relict and widow of Edward Le(i)gh.	George II.	John Wesley
40) William Cole, Gentleman	George II, George III.	
41) Edward Brown of Walcot in the County of Lincoln.	George III	
42)	George III	U.S.A. declared independence 1776.
43) John Pugh, M.A., Vicar of Rauceby and Cranwell in the County of Lincoln.	George III, George IV William IV	Captain Matthew Flinders, Trafalgar, Waterloo.
44) William Mussom, Esquire	William IV, Victoria	
45) Rev. John Wilson of Wigtoft in the County of Lincoln.	Victoria	

46.	Arthur Allwork	M.A.	1887, ceded 1890.
47.	Wilson Griffith Braugham Butlin	M.A.	1890, ceded 1897
48.	Harold Metcalfe Fowler	M.A.	1897, ceded 1903
49.	Edmund Freeman	M.A.	1903, ceded 1918
50.	John Charles Chapman	M.A.	1918, ceded 1927
51.	George Alfred Elson	M.A.	1927, retired 1945
52.	Henry Peter Cole	M.A.	1945, died 1949
53.	John Boby Macgowan	M.A., A.R.C.O.	1949, ceded 1957
54.	Frank Cyril Hodgkinson	B.A.	1957, ceded 1965
55.	Francis Alfred Howard Tompkins	B.A.	1965

Note 1. First Fruits, or annates, was the first year's income of a newly appointed bishop or incumbent which, until the Reformation, was paid to the Pope. Henry VIII diverted first fruits to the Crown, Mary restored them and Elizabeth seized them again. Under Anne they were restored to the Church again as Queen Anne's Bounty.

In 1604 a new Revised Prayer Book was issued. Its use was rigidly enforced and all clergy who refused to conform were deprived of their Livings. Possibly George Pike refused to conform, but then changed his mind so that he was able to be admitted as a public preacher of the Word of God.

Under Elizabeth a clergyman was required to sign a statement that the Prayer Book "contained nothing contrary to the Word of God" before he was allowed to preach. To-day a clergyman has to make a Declaration of Assent (that the Book of Common Prayer is agreeable to the Word of God) on being instituted to a Living.