

[http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/collectionsindepth/family/middleton/biographies/biographyofsirpercivalwilloughby\(d1643\).aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/collectionsindepth/family/middleton/biographies/biographyofsirpercivalwilloughby(d1643).aspx)

## Biography of Sir Percival Willoughby (d 1643)

Percival was the son of Sir Thomas Willoughby (d 1596) of Bore Place, Kent, a first cousin of [Sir Francis Willoughby](#) of Wollaton, and his second wife Catherine Hart. Percival went abroad soon after his arranged marriage to his cousin Bridget Willoughby, and on his return the couple lived alternately with their respective in-laws. By 1595 Percival and his family were living at Middleton. His father-in-law's second marriage that year threatened to disinherit Percival from his expected estates, but Sir Francis and his new wife had just one child, a daughter, who soon died. As no will had been left, Percival had to engage in lawsuits in order to clarify the division of the estates between Bridget and her sisters. He eventually inherited the six principal manors of Wollaton, Sutton Passeys, Cossall, Trowell, Middleton and Kingsbury, plus other estates in Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire. In addition, he inherited most of his own father's estates in Kent, although these were also disputed by family members.

Percival and Bridget moved into the new Wollaton Hall in 1599. In 1603 Percival was knighted, and entertained Queen Anne and Prince Henry at Wollaton Hall. Sir Percival was elected as a Member of Parliament in 1604. Hoping to raise some money to help pay his extensive debts, in 1602 Percival leased a coal mine at Strelley in partnership with Huntingdon Beaumont. He built the first railway in Britain there, using wooden rails, in 1605, but the pit was unprofitable. He also invested in a company aiming to set up farms in Newfoundland, and in a Wollaton glassworks company.

Sir Percival suffered many years of ill health after the death of his wife in 1629. He died in August 1643.

### Family

He married Bridget, daughter of Sir Francis Willoughby, in 1580 (d 1629), and had:

- [Francis, later owner of the Wollaton estate \(1588-1665\)](#)
- Edward, m Elizabeth Atkinson. Entered Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1607. Inherited the manors of Kingsbury and Cossall. His descendants lived at Aspley Hall near Nottingham. In the 18th century they included:
  - Francis Willoughby of Aspley, m Mary
    - Edward Willoughby of Aspley, m Margaret Bird (d 1795) in 1736

- Robert Willoughby

- [Admiral Sir Nesbit Josiah Willoughby](#) (1777-1849)

- Richard

- James

- Cassandra

- Frances

- Mary, m George Alexander in 1763

- Thomas. Sent to Newfoundland in 1616
- Henry. Lawyer.
- Percival (d 1685). Entered Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1621, and practised as a doctor in Derby. Author of *Observations in Midwifery: as also The countrey midwives opusculum or vade mecum* ; edited from the original MS, by Henry Blenkinsop (Warwick, 1863) [Mi LP 79/1-8]
- Robert
- Theodosia m Rowland Mynors c.1610
- Bridget m 1stly Nicholas Strelley in 1606, and 2ndly Henry Cavendish in 1615
- Elizabeth m John Gell in 1609
- 1 other daughter, died young

## Archive Collections

- Title deeds, settlements, estate and legal papers relating to Sir Percival's ownership of the Willoughby estates are part of the [Middleton Collection](#) held in Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham.

## Published Sources

Correspondence and details relating to Sir Percival Willoughby are contained within Cassandra Willoughby's two-volume history of the Willoughby family, part of the [Middleton Collection](#) held at Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham (reference Mi LM 26-27), and published as :

- Chandos, Cassandra, Duchess of, *History of the Willoughby Family* . Published in Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Report to the Commissioners on the*

*Manuscripts of Lord Middleton Preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire* (1911)  
[King's Meadow Campus East Midlands Collection Em. D2 HIS]

- Chandos, Cassandra, Duchess of (ed. Wood, A.C.), *The Continuation of the History of the Willoughby Family* (The University of Nottingham, 1958) [King's Meadow Campus East Midlands Collection Not 4H.V38 WIL]