

The Church of Saint John the Baptist, Hugglescote Leicestershire.

A Brief Historical Sketch
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'It is a very powerful building and is certainly the most imposing village church in the area' (1)

'Easily the best 19th Century church outside Leicester.' (2)

The church at Hugglescote can be considered large for a village church and can be seen for miles around as a local landmark. The church was constructed using the locally quarried Bardon Hill stone with dressings of Doulting and Alcaster stone or Bath stone (3). The interior walls are also made of locally produced Ibstock bricks. It was designed by local architect John Breedon Everard (b.1844-d.1923), who went on to design Hugglescote's sister church of Saint Peter, Bardon. It is an impressive building in the Early English style (4) or Conventional Gothic (5)

This church is not the first to serve the village of Hugglescote. In total there have been three churches. The previous church of Saint James was situated a few metres away on Dennis Street. It was built in 1776 and was removed in November 1881 after entering a state of decay. All that remains of this church today is its graveyard, which was officially closed by the Queen's Council in October 1984 (6). During the 19th Century Hugglescote's population increased massively and the small medieval church could no longer cope. In 1871 the population was 2,327, occupying 485 houses (7), and at the time 'Hugglescote with Donington le Heath' was not a parish of its own, but was a chapelry of Ibstock parish.

Towards the end of the 19th Century the Reverend Henry Ellis Broughton became curate-in-charge and was instrumental in planning the building of the new church. By May 1876 lots of money had been raised (8), but Reverend Broughton still campaigned and as funds came in the first phase of the church, consisting of nave, aisles, transept and baptistery, was built in 1878. The cost so far had been £5,000 and the church was dedicated in 1879 by William Connor, Bishop of Peterborough. William Connor, by an instrument of his own hand, certified to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that the new church would be for the convenience of the population in November 1879 (9).

1. Brandwood, G. K. *"Bringing them to their knees"*, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 2002.
2. Pevsner, N. *"The Buildings of England -Leicestershire & Rutland"*, Yale University Press, 1984
3. There seems to be a conflict here- one source says Douling and Alcaster and another says Bath.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugglescote>
5. Canner, C. "Some historical notes on the chapelries of Hugglescote with Donington le Heath up to circa 1900", @ Hugglescote P.C.C.
6. A copy of this is available at Wigston Record Office.
7. Taken from 1871 Census.
8. An original letter campaigning for funds by Reverend Broughton and Churchwardens can be found in the church.
9. A copy of this Instrument can be found at Wigston Record Office.



The previous church of Saint James, Dennis Street.

As more funds came in the second phase of building took place in 1888. This consisted of the chancel, organ chamber and vestry. Finally, the tower was added which was originally intended to have a saddleback roof with a small spirelet. This was the design that Everard would use at Saint Peter's, Bardon.

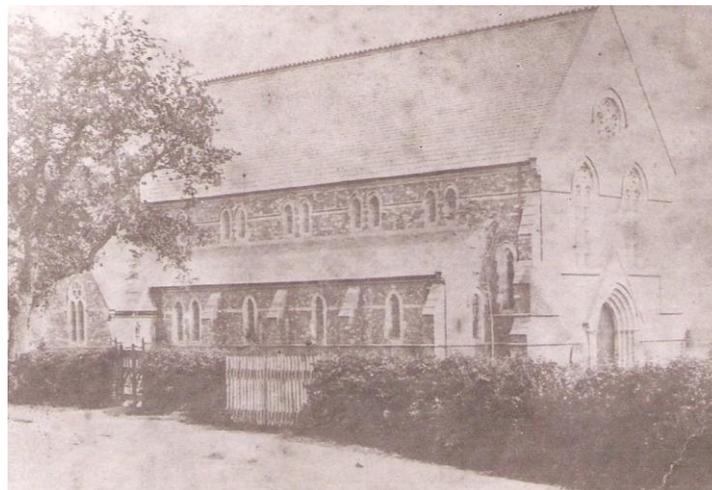
The total cost of the building was £9,000. 'Hugglescote with Donington le Heath' separated from Ibstock in July 1889 and became a parish in its own right, with the Reverend Henry Ellis Broughton becoming the first Vicar. In 1891 the Vicarage was

built, at a cost of £1,350. Due to copyright reasons plans of the two phases of the church can only be viewed at www.churchplansonline.org

The high quality stained glass windows were designed by A. J. Davies of Bromsgrove and installed in the 1920's. The best of these is the beautiful stained glass east window above the altar, it was erected in memory of the first vicar, Canon Broughton. It depicts the scene of the Resurrection.

On this website are two plans: the original plan for the nave and transepts and the second for the chancel, organ and vestry. If you look carefully at the first plan you will notice no provision for an organ and no pews in the south transept. In the second plan you will find that the completely finished church had pews facing towards the chancel where the Lady Chapel is now and the pews in the south transept were also facing inwards, unlike today.

Also, on both plans we can see the font placed in its original position in the baptistery (north transept), not in the north aisle where it is today. At the west end you can also see that there were pews where the kitchen and toilet are now. A few pews have also been removed to allow for more space in front of the pulpit and also where modern gas heaters have been fitted.



The first phase of the church with no tower or chancel.

There have been very few changes in the external appearance of the church over the 130 years since it was built although inside a variety of modernisations have taken place over the years.

Major changes include a complete roof replacement in the early nineties, the addition of the kitchen, lobby and toilet at the west entrance and the decorated blue carpet covering most of the interior.

A copy of the faculties required for alterations to a church building can be found at Leicestershire and Rutland Record office, Wigston and at the church itself.

Changes include:

1. Addition of stained glass window in memory of the Reverend Canon Henry Ellis Broughton in 1926
2. A new altar, reredos and paneling of sanctuary - 1932
3. Placing of Hubbard memorial tablet - 1933
4. Addition of two memorial windows in south wall of Lady Chapel - 1939
5. Installation of electric lighting - 1946
6. Addition of war memorial plaques - 1948.
7. Completion of war memorial - 1955.
8. Lady Chapel updated: removal and lowering part of wooden floor by three inches thereby lowering it to the level of existing tiles, provision of prayer rail, aumbrey and sanctuary lamp - 1954.
9. Provision of burial ground for ashes and books of remembrance in cases - 1956.
10. The heating of the church has been updated on a few occasions with the old Victorian hypocaust system being replaced. The boiler for this was housed underneath the vestry (accessible from outside). There are still a number of entrances in the church allowing access underneath the floor.
11. The font was moved from the Baptistry (north transept) to the north aisle and marks on the wall behind the font show that the pews were moved to house it. The baptistry is now a children's chapel.



The interior of the church before and after the new altar and panelling were installed. Notice the hanging gas lamps (the supports are still there today) and the wooden *fleur-de-lis* and crosses on the stalls in the chancel, which have now been removed.

Please note that the County Records Office in Wigston now holds all the old church registers for weddings, baptisms and funerals which have taken place in all three churches.

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Leicester,
LE18 2AH

Tel (0116) 257 1080

Email <mailto:recordoffice@leics.gov.uk>

Website:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/researching-your-family-history>