

Exterior of the Aisles

Gargoyles are mounted on the parapet of the wall of the south aisle and south porch. There is a tiny carved head located at one of the label-stops of the Decorated window between the porch and south transept. The other side of the hood of this window abuts against the stonework of the south transept, which was rebuilt in the 15th Century.

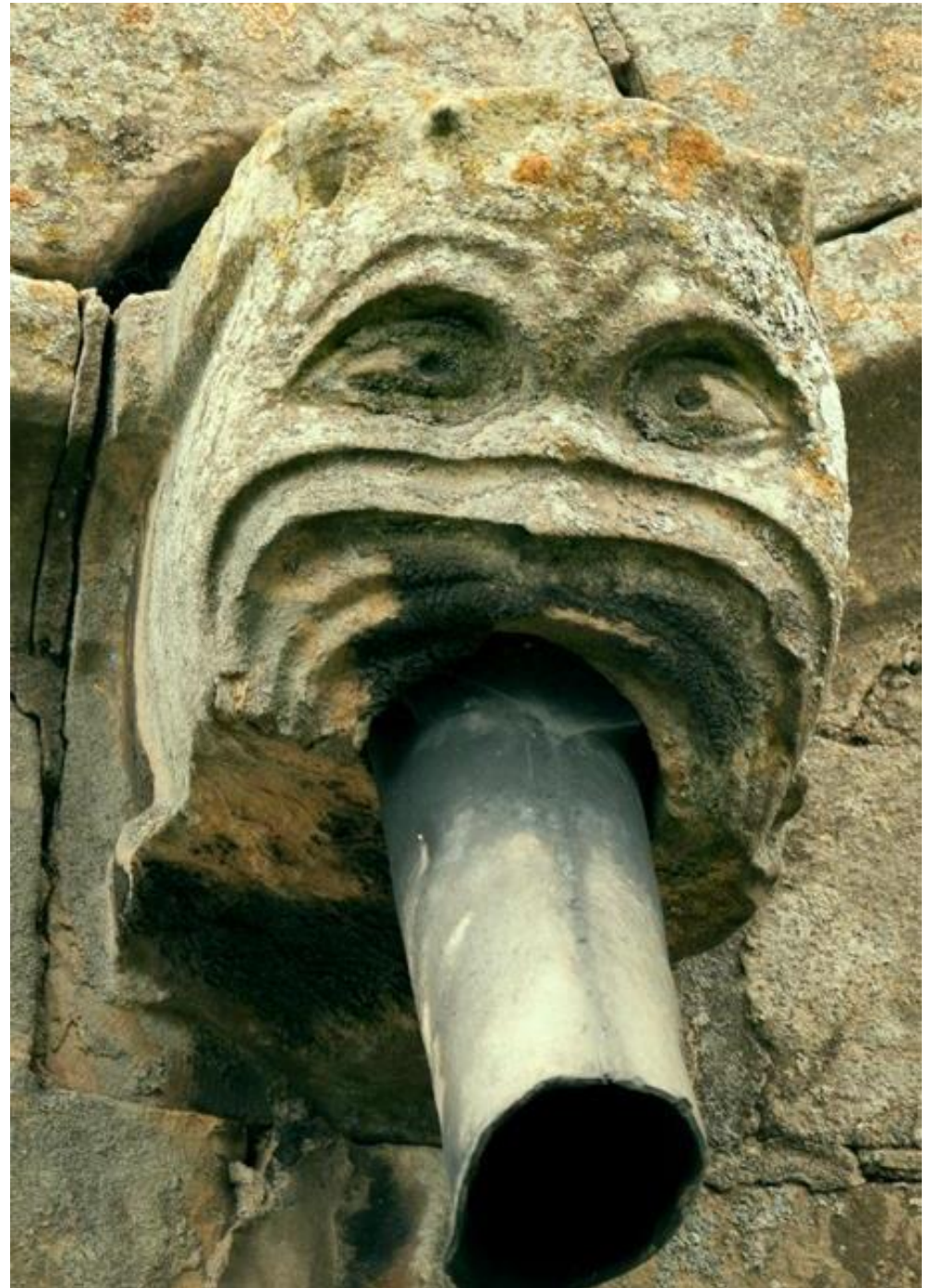
There are three gargoyles, carved as human and grotesque animal faces in a style that is distinct from the gargoyles on the tower (early 15th Century) and the south transept (mid 15th Century).



Carved face on the south aisle window.

The outside of the north aisle is different. Here there are carved faces at the ends of the hood moulds of the windows and the north door. There are also faces of unconfirmed age at the ends of the hood mould of the north transept window, and others on the capping of the buttresses supporting the corners of this transept. These are all beautifully done, realistic and emotionally expressive, full of character. Other faces are seen on the hood moulds of the gothic windows of the vestry, but these are simpler, like the windows themselves. The square-framed 'Tudor' windows of the vestry do not have carvings.

A gargoyle on the 14th Century porch. Rainwater stills drains through them, but nowadays channelled through more modern piping.

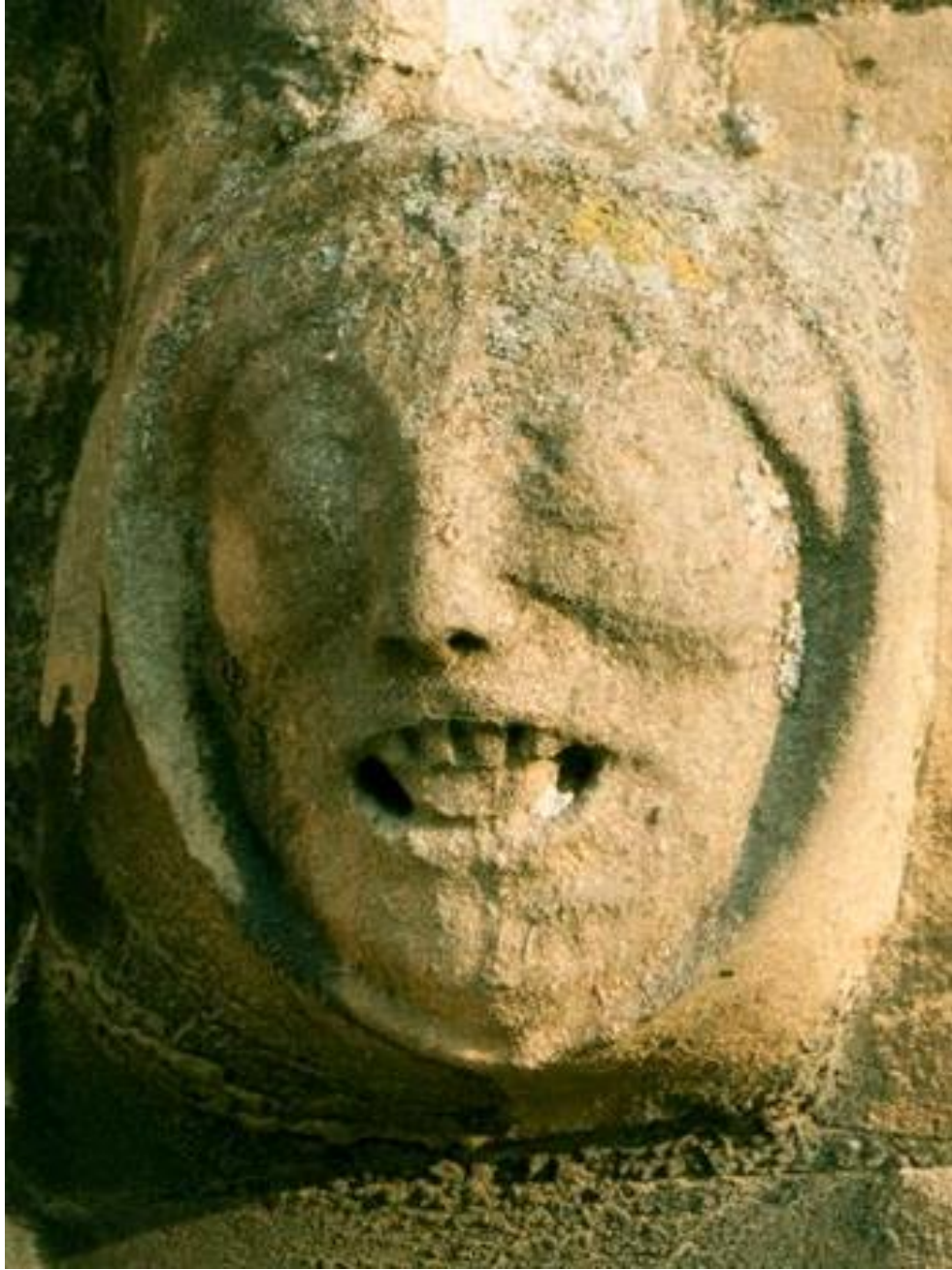




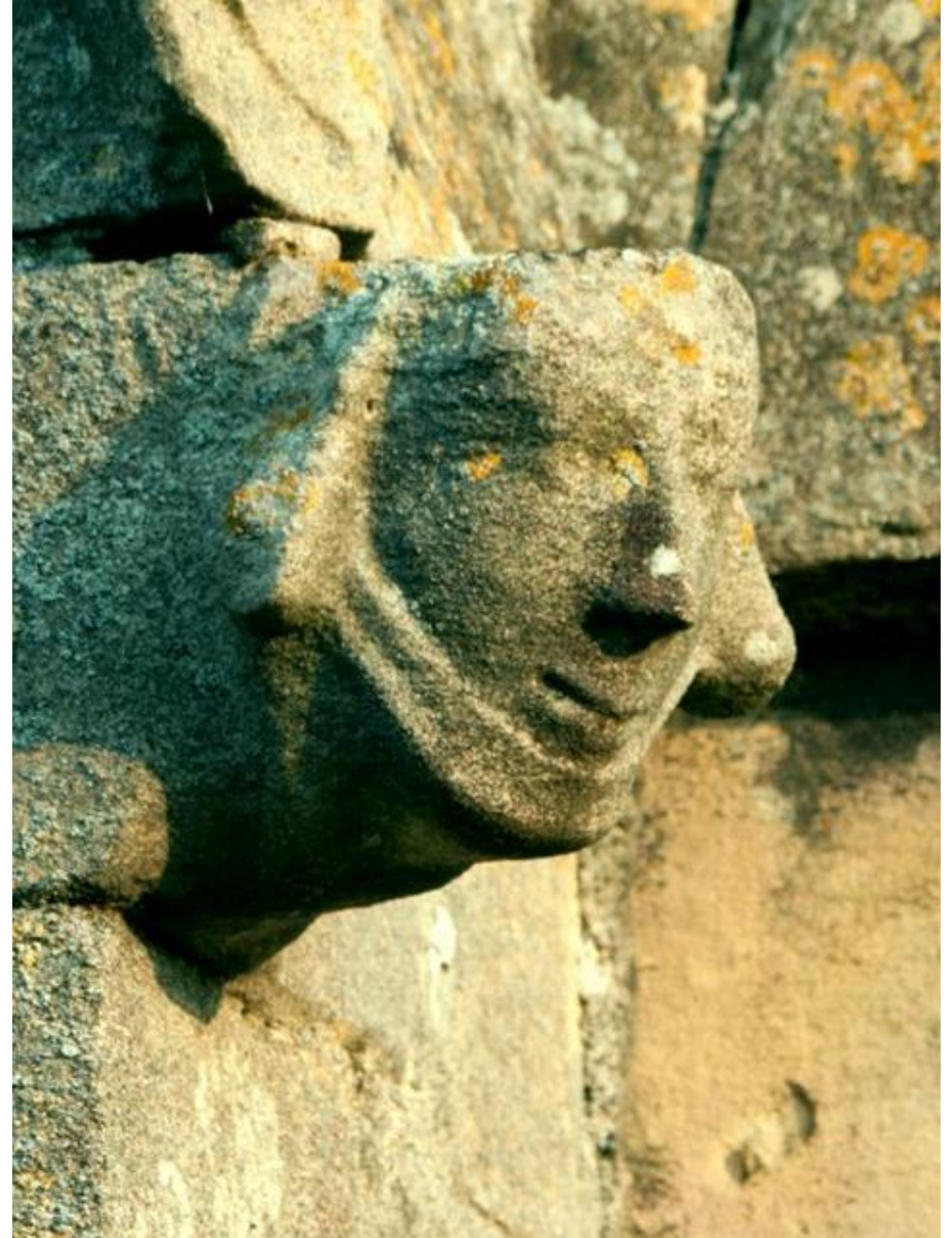
On the western gable of the north aisle, this face of terror is almost hidden behind the encroaching buttress of the tower.



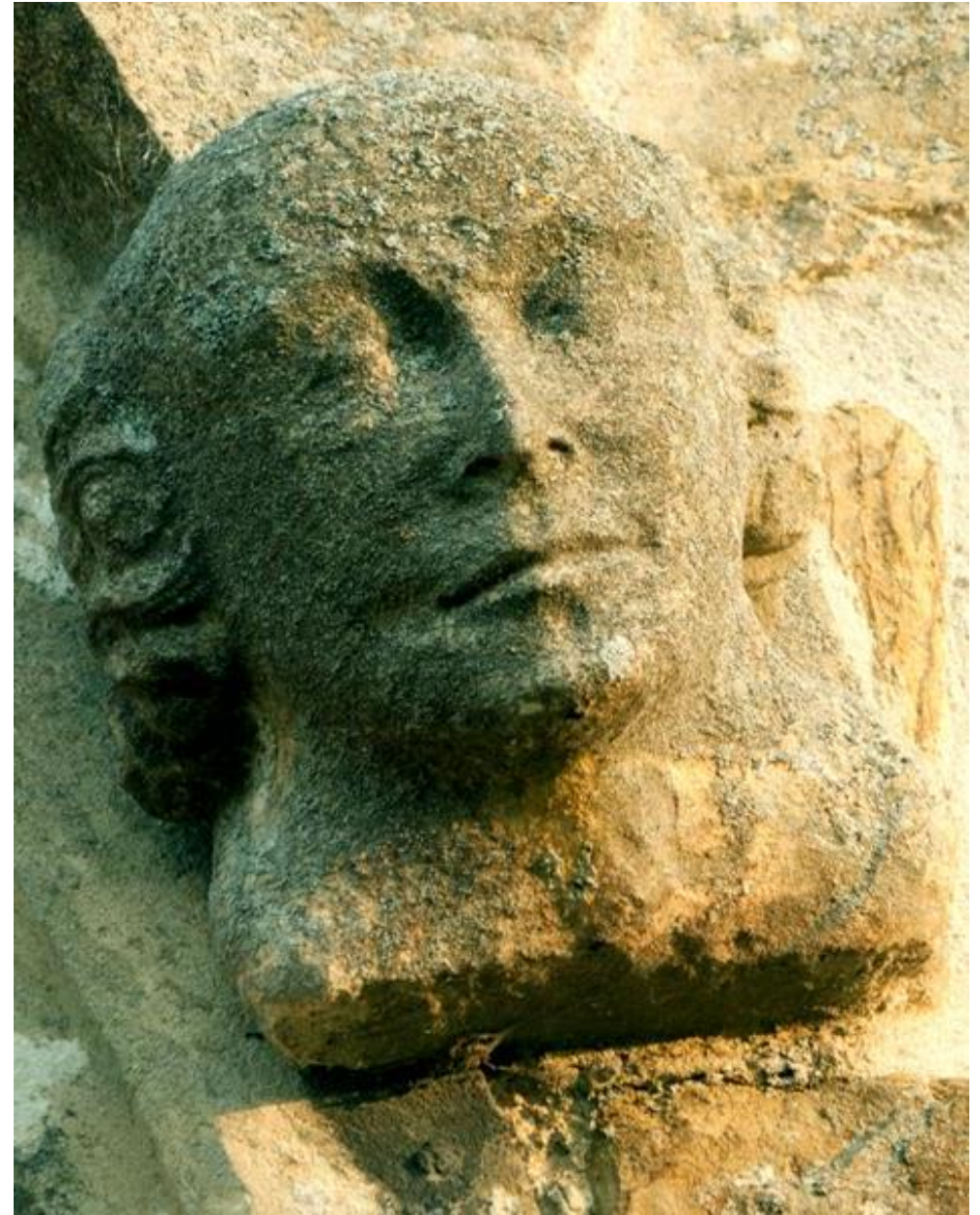
A serene face, on the doorway in the north aisle.



Two faces on windows of the north aisle.



Heads on the ends of the cappings of the buttresses supporting the north transept.



Two heads, probably both of men despite the long hair (perhaps a 17th Century hair style), at the ends of the hood mould of the north transept window, but seeming to be stuck on rather than an integral part of the structure, and thus later than the Perpendicular window itself.

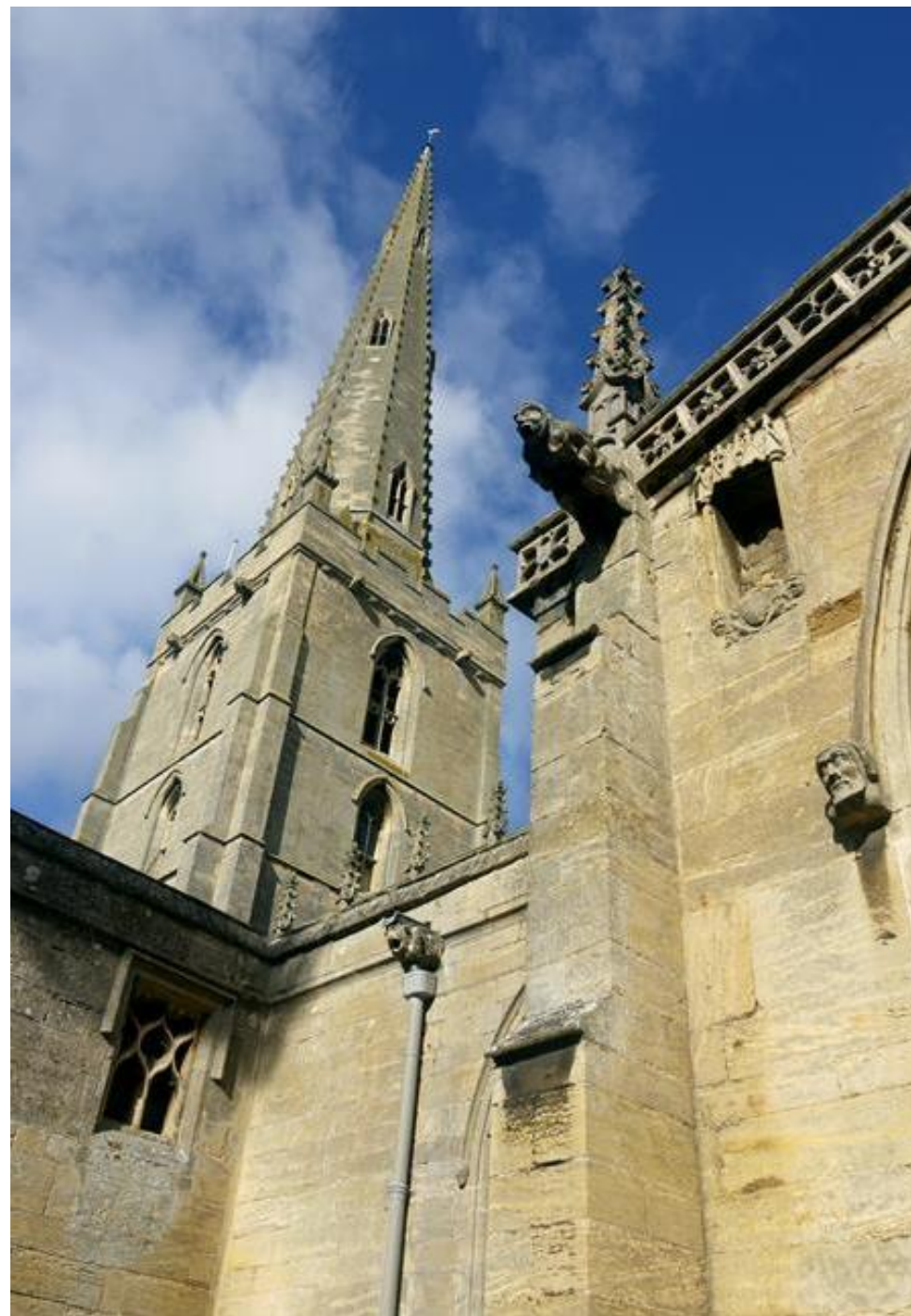
The Tower

The frieze which runs around all four sides of the tower, at the base of the parapet, displays a mixture of distorted, cartoon-like faces and fleurons (stylised flowers). The faces include mouth-pullers, cats or lions, and examples of a lady whose face is framed by a square head-dress (whose significance for the age of the tower is discussed below). The fleurons are of mixed designs, including one which is in fact a 'green man' with leaves emerging from his mouth. The frieze is also punctuated by gargoyles, two on each side, carved as human and animal forms including face-pullers and a bear wearing a bridle. Label stops of the windows immediately beneath the frieze are carved with more lifelike faces, one apparently of a prince, another a lady in a square head-dress.

These carvings, and hence the tower itself, have been considered to date from the early part of the 15th Century. The fleurons are reminiscent of those on the frieze of the Perpendicular Corpus Christi Chapel at St Wulfram's, Grantham, which has been dated to the period 1400-1440 by Philip Dixon (in *The Making of Grantham*). St Wulfram's is most notable for its Decorated architecture, including vividly carved figures and large numbers of ball-flowers. The contrast between Decorated and Perpendicular carvings there supports the conclusion that the carvings at Bottesford tower, and the tower itself, are of the early 15th Century.

There are about a dozen examples of women's heads framed by a square head-dress at St Mary's. Lionel Wall has discussed their wider occurrence and proposed (*personal communication*) that they belong within an end-14th to early 15th Century period, on the basis of comparison with trends in contemporary late medieval head-dresses fashions.

Looking up at the tower and spire of St Mary's.





Three gargoyles on the tower, with mouths for water spouts (behind each is an opening of the rainwater gutters): left - on the south side of the tower, a cat-like creature ; centre - again on the southern side, a man's head clasped between his hands; right - on the northern side, a lion displaying his teeth.



Three more gargoyles: left - on the eastern side of the tower, a man holding his mouth agape; centre - west side of the tower, a woman in a square head-dress holding her mouth stretched open; right - east side of the tower, a bear in a bridle.



Six of the small grotesque faces carved in the stones forming the frieze below the parapet of the tower.



Carvings of flowers (fleurons) and one of a green man on the tower parapet frieze. Though there is variety in the floral designs, there are none of the ballflower design characteristic of early 14th Century friezes.