

Brooks Close.

To the east of the church are thirteen bungalows which are built around two sides of the meadow known locally as Brooks Close. Very little definite evidence can be found of the history of the meadows; but there are a number of reasonable assumptions that can be made. That which certainly is fact is that the old mansion house stood on this site prior to its demolition in the year 1775 (approx:). In correspondence between the Rev. Oddie,, steward to Fellows of Magdalen College and Thomas Deacon (History of Willoughby 1828), reference was made to the ancient manor house and also a quotation from Thomas Deacon "Those who recalled it claim it to have been of ancient appearance". The entrance gateway was at the 7.E. corner of the meadow and it is still possible to expose this at certain points in the corner garden. The remains of the two stone gateway pillars were subsequently removed in 1966. They were each 3ft. square and were 3ft. into the ground, being made of blocks of Blue Lias held together with a primitive cement. A further certain fact is that this house was the residence of the family Miers (or Years). The Rev. Miers lived in the house in 1754 and he was only one of the line of the family who resided there for many years. Brooks Close cannot be identified positively as belonging to anyone of that name, but it appears that one John Brooke did, by his deed in the 27th. year of the reign of Henry V111 (1535), assign to eight trustees certain property, i.e. "one messuage, one craft and one half yard of land in Thurleston". One of the earliest entries in the Parish Register is that of the babtism of Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas and Elizabeth Brooke dated January 5th. 1642. It is reasonable to assume that as the mansion adjoined the Church it was occupied by the incumbent. We find that shortly after the assignment by John Brooke the living was held by members of the ancient family of Clarkes; Henry 1621 and Richard 1689.

THE Clarke pedigree is probably the oldest that can be traced in Willoughby and can be seen to go back through Clarke and Hammond to Hammond (Alias Clarke) 1199. In the records Hammond was styled "'esquire of the whole manor". One is lead to believe therefore that this Hammond may have lived in the old manor house. The Visible reminder of this ancient manor which remains in this year of 1974 is the entrance porch with twisted banisters which stands at Vale House, opposite to Brooks Close. The porch, it is reputed was removed from the manor at the time of its demolition and re-erected at the entrance to Vale House. The building bears all the evidence of antiquity and was, at one time, certainly occupied by members of the Clarke family.