

Gravel Dump Gets the beauty treatment

By ROBERT PITTAM

AN abandoned salt and gravel dump is being transformed into a beauty spot by villagers tired of looking at the "battlefield site".

Almost every one of the 400 inhabitants of the village of Willoughby, near Rugby, has been involved in the project.

Eight months ago the site, which was

once used by Warwickshire county council to store salt and gravel, was deteriorating into an eyesore.

but this summer it looks set to become an attractive nature reserve.

The transformation began last year when villagers swung into action led by the parish council. And their initiative has just been rewarded by Shell Oil which has granted the project £325 as part of their Better Britain Campaign. John Whitney, clerk to the council and village sub post master, said they decided to buy the 1½ acres.

"The site looked like a battlefield because the salt was killing off the plants" said Mr Whitney.

"It will be a pedestrians only nature reserve and education centre for villagers and their children."

Ugly concrete areas have been removed and the villagers have restored a pond on the site

Planting

The project is now nearing completion with the help of grants from the Best Kept Village competition, the Nature Conservancy Council and Willoughby's own education trust.

Next month a team of volunteers from the village will begin planting trees, shrubs and flowers in readiness for spring. Mr Whitney said the achievement was a reflection of the strength of community pride in the village. The development will be known as Hayward lodge.

Mr Whitney said: "The Haywards in the 15th century started a fund for charity in the village which has grown and grown."

"We are using some of that money to develop this area."



When the project began ... Pamela Whitby (WI), Gina Rowe (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), Mr Whitney and David Williams (Shell UK) inspect the work of clearing the concrete