

District Diary.. • walkabout In Willoughby

●Where 10 Baths once cost 10d and Guliver's creator rowed with a pub Landlady

BATH, Cheltenham, Leamington, Willoughby. Willoughby? Had events turned out differently the small Warwickshire village could have been another spa town to rival those which were famed for the healing powers of their waters.

In 1827, bathers using the not bath at Willoughby Lodge Spa were charged £1 for ten baths. while drinking water cost 4d per gallon.

Although the natural springs remained, the customers did not, and by 1840 the business was in decline.

Water provides the origin of one Domesday name for the village — Willbec, suggesting willow trees by the brook.

The brook still wanders through an almost sleepy village — yet one within yards of the busy A45.

Lynne Young, who has lived there since she was six months old, describes it as "a nice, safe place to live — peaceful and friendly, although a lot more people work out of the village than used to."

Two people who have lived and worked there all their lives are Sid Ivens and Jim Ellard, both from farming families. Jim's family have worked Home Farm since the late 19th century on land which has kept the medieval ridge and furrow.

Jim, 68, has seen plenty of changes in his working life but "the biggest has been the amount of form-filling!"

Sid has also spent his life on the

Hot heritage

land. usually on farms or cricket fields. Now 80, he can recall many changes.

The village was on the LNER line and the Flying Scotsman used to thunder through it. Farmers used to take ten-12 gallon churns by pony and trap to catch the 8.20am milk train.

Pony and trap was also used to take the cricket team to away matches on occasions.

"We didn't play that many games so when we did, we made a real night of it. The horses had to have a homing instinct," he recalls.

Cricket still plays an important part in village life and is but one example of Willoughby's remarkable ability to raise money.

The village hall was financed by the efforts of the villagers

between 1928-33. Fifty years later they repeated the process for the new cricket pavilion. Only a few weeks ago a flower

festival raised more than £2,000 for the village hall and church with more than 100 villagers involved and 22 gardens opened to the public.

St. Nicholas church reached down Brooks Close has a remarkable carillon installed in 1724 It plays five different tunes and used to require hand winding one of the jobs once done by Charlie Jarvis the former Dr. Barnardos boy still affectionately remembered by villagers.

He was also renowned as a rugby ball maker for Gilberts adding another dimension to the many sports in which the village has competed over the years - soccer, hockey, tennis, cricket, netball, and even rifle shooting at the Rose Inn

The Rose is the sole survivor of four pubs, an attractive thatched building off Main Street that date back to 763.

The Navigation Inn the New Inn and the Four Crosses have all closed, however.

The Four Crosses famous for the visit of Jonathan Swift. author of Guliver's s Travels. then known as as the Three Crosses. Swift added the fourth after an argument with the landlady. He is alleged to have scratched on a window; "There are three crosses at your door, hang up your wife and you'll count four"

Modern villagers are more charitable — as the Willoughby Society, the Women's Institute, The over 60's club and the moines and Toddler's Club indicate.

How to get there

Leave Rugby on the A426 for Dunchurch. In Dunchurch centre turn left onto the A45. Continue for four miles turning right after the sign for Barby and Willoughby as the road bears right by Angela's Pantry and the four garages Continue driving down Main Street for the pub and village.

Where to eat

The Rose public house is run by Cella and Tommy Tonks who came from Tamworth 18 months ago. They are open from 11am - 2.30pm and 7-11pm with meals available every night except Sunday and Monday from 7-10pm Meals run from beef burgers to sirloin steak (£6.25) or mixed grill known as "the works" (£6.50). Snacks and children's meals, Senior Citizen's lunches on Tuesday and Thursday are £3 for three courses. Sunday lunch £5.95. Beers are John Smiths, Ruddles and Beamish, lagers Miller, Pilsner, and Fosters. there is s free quiz night Mondays at 9 pm. There is a garden and children's play area, complete with small goal.

●ANGELA'S Pantry is on the left of the A45 just after the village turn. turn

It was bought by Michael Waddington in March and is now open seven days a week from 7am to 5.30pm. From tomorrow it will also be open Friday and Saturday evenings, from 7pm to midnight It has tooled breakfast from £2.50 and lunches range from £2.50 to £4.50 for sirloin steak. A range of snacks are available. "If we've got it, we'll do it" says Lynne Young who has worked there for six years

Other services

St Nicholas Church is reached by turning right off Main Street then left down the lane

Willoughby Post Office/Newsagent is open Mon, Tue, Thu and Fri from 9am- 12.30 and 2.30-5.30pm and from 9am-12.30pm Wed and Sat.

It is run by Advertiser village correspondent Peter Montgomery who sells newspapers, stationery and confectionery.

There is also a hairdressers and a nursery.

Where to walk

THERE is a village tour described in the booklet. Willoughby, A Warwickshire Village.

There are other signposted walks starting in the village

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VILLAGERS... Jim and Sadie Ellard with daughter Lucy

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CHEERS...regulars enjoy a pint at The Rose pub



MECHANICAL MARVEL... Sid Ivens admires the church carillon, which needs regular hand-winding