

Villages Round Rugby

WILLOUGHBY—A LINK WITH KING WHO FLED



The Four Crosses Inn at which Dean Swift is said to have stopped in 1730.

WILLOUGHBY, for all its proximity to the busy A 45 London Road, is a quiet village of stone houses with a population of just over 300.

It is an ancient village with a church register, incomplete, dating from 1625. The church itself, 14th century and dedicated to St. Nicholas, is in the decorated style and contains a bowl-shaped Norman font and early 17th century pulpit.

The tower has a chiming clock which originally came from Southam and plays four different tunes on alternate days.

Name Changed

It was indirectly through the death of a Willoughby man that James II lost his throne and fled to France. Henry Clark, who died in 1687 was Lord of the Manor and President of Magdalen College, Oxford.

When Clarke died James attempted to appoint a Roman Catholic as College president and brought the wrath of the country down on his head.

Both the villages public houses are ancient buildings and Dean Swift, the biting 18th century wit, by legend, held responsible for having "The Three Crosses" changed to its present title "The Four Crosses."

The story goes that when Swift stayed there in 1730 he suffered the rough edge of the landlady's tongue and on departing is said to have written on the window with his diamond ring; "You have Three Crosses at your door; Hang up your wife and you'll count four."

Duck Pond

More recent travellers have tended to pass by the village, for the London Road with its roar of heavy traffic forms one side of the village perimeter. The other three sides are no more than half a mile long in all.

The main street with the brook trickling by is a pleasant sight in a stolid way, while the village has one or two interesting buildings, a smart, tiny green, and a muddy duck pond.

One of Willoughby's most pressing problems at the present time is the same as at Barby—the proposed establishment of a Borstal institution on the disused Army camp, which is really nearer Willoughby than Barby.

When the plan was originally put forward Willoughby villagers were almost solidly against it. Perhaps now that the Prison Commissioners have given more details of the scheme some tempers may have sweetened, although perhaps the general feeling is still one of mistrust.



The 18th century Rose Inn with its gravelled forecourt and thatched roof.