

WILLOUGHBY, PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE PAST

Willoughby an ancient village, 100' - 300' above sea level, lime soil on a bed of blue lias clay was in the Knightlow Hundred of the Anglo Saxon Kingdom of Mercia. The main feature of the central part of the village is the stream that flows through it and it is thought the name Willoughby is derived from the willow trees, which border the stream. In Domesday Book 1068 it appears as Wilibere, Wilibei and Wilibec. The latter seems relevant with its connection with 'bec', Anglo Saxon for a small stream. The ownership of the village passed from the Hospital of St John, Oxford to Magdalen College in 1456. In 1952 most of the ownership was sold back to the tenants. Pye Court was the original site of a large house which was used for the Court of Justice when the fairs and markets were held. A Charter for a weekly market on Tuesday and a 2-day annual Whitsun fair had been granted by Henry III in 1247.

There is record of the existence of the Church of St Nicholas in 1215. It boasts a fifteenth century square embattled tower, Jacobean pulpit and Norman font made from a single piece of red sandstone. Five well known tunes can be played on a carrillon, bought from Southam in 1724 and restored in 1983. There is a good peal of 6 bells.

Willoughby Charities established by John and Margaret Hayward in 1437, John Brooke in 1535 and other benefactors has provided money for the village, the Church and relief for individual inhabitants. Its monies built the School and Schoolhouse in 1816 and supported it until closure in 1977.

Spa water reputed to cure gout, rheumatics and skin complaints was discovered in 1796. Bath Hotel, now Willoughby House, was erected in 1827. The New Inn, now Gate Farm, The Four Crosses and Tattle Bank catered for visitors to the Sulphurous and Saline Baths. All were conveniently situated on the Telford Turnpike.

The oldest dwellings are Vale House and the Rose Inn. The latter formerly known as Red Rose Inn is at least 400 years old. Navigation House and Cottage were built by 1812 originally used by boatmen and canal workers as an Inn and Stables for their horses. Kilns provided lime for farmers and the canal wharf was used for coal. Unfortunately the L.N.E.R. line constructed in 1898 was closed to freight and passengers by 1960.

PRESENT

The Village Hall built in 1933, extended in 1989, is used by all village organisations for meetings and social functions and is also let to outsiders. A playing field was bought by the village through donations and social functions, opened in 1955.

Hayward Lodge was bought by the Parish Council as a Conservation Area. The site originally housed a palatial residence, Willoughby Lodge, until it was burnt down in 1951. Subsequently it was used as a Council Sand and Gravel dump. Now it perpetuates the name of the Willoughby benefactors

Organisations are well supported; Cricket Club founded in 1901; Willoughby Society whose main aim is the beautification of the village, was born in 1962, the year of the consecration of Coventry Cathedral; Mother's Union was formed around 1920; Willoughby 60 Club's first meeting was held in January 1986; The Youth Club is awaiting the appointment of a new Leader. The Women's Institute was founded in February 1920, its first President being the Vicar's wife, Mrs I M Trethewy.

Meetings were held in the School room until 1933, then in the Village Hall. A founder member, Mrs Hilda Jarvis still enjoys her W.I. Help has been given to various village appeals and local charities. Groups have competed successfully in Leamington Festivals and in many varied W.F.W.I. County Events. Monthly meetings educate and entertain members in a wide variety of subjects. Visitors are always welcome.

FUTURE

There are no immediate plans to develop the village beyond its present boundaries.