

# The history of Willoughby

## The Willoughby Heritage Walking Trail



Discover some of Willoughby's history and the buildings and places that are part of its heritage.



Made possible with

**Heritage Fund**

Thanks to National Lottery players

### Taking the waters

The discovery of sulphurated water in a new well in the 19th century led to two spas in the parish; the first at a farm where Willoughby House is today and the other, known as the New Willoughby Baths (1824-1841), behind Tattlebank Cottages on the A45. When tested by Michael Faraday, the water was found to be very similar to the spa water at Harrogate. The spas were popular for a time but, sadly, neither enterprise was a success.

### Willoughby was a busy village



Main Street

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the village was a busy place with, at one point, four inns, a school, wheelwright/carpenter, smithy, post office, baker, butcher and grocers. As the 20th century progressed, employment and services were found elsewhere leading to the closure of traditional businesses.

### Willoughby modernised



Lower Street in the 1900s

On the left, the post office and Brooks Close.

During the 20th century, modern infrastructure arrived in the village - electricity (1931), mains water (1940), sewerage (1961) and gas (1990s). Gravel tracks became metalled

roads and, by the early 1950s, much of the cob and thatch housing had been condemned and demolished to be replaced by brick and tile houses.

### The Charities

The Willoughby Charity and Willoughby Educational Foundation are the current successors of The Willoughby Charity founded in 1437 by Margaret Hayward with investments in lands (some £20) to keep a light burning in the Church in perpetuity.

There are two other village charities which run the Village Hall and the Children's Playing Field.

### Acknowledgement

Thank you to the Willoughby Society for permission to use old photographs from their archive.

Visit [willoughbyweb.net](http://willoughbyweb.net)

### Walking the Trail

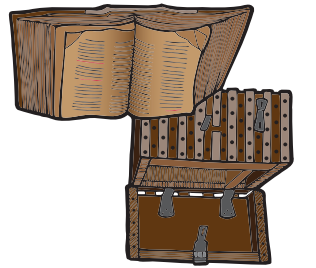
There is no set route for the trail. Please choose what interests you and enjoy your walk.



### Willoughby underwater!

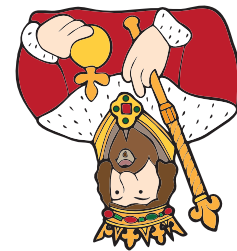
The parish sits on land which was the bed of a huge lake created during the Ice Age. Under your feet, there are pockets of gravel and sand in layers of clay. These pockets hold water and are called aquifers. Some contain fresh water and some mineral/chemical infused water that were used by the 'spas'.

### An ancient settlement



There are five entries in the Domesday Book (1087AD) which is a survey of ownership and use of land at the time of the Norman conquest. The name, Wilbi (later Wylbi, Wilby, and Wylughby), is old Norse for Willow Farm, perhaps the result of Viking raiders from the Dane law settling here.

### King Henry I gives land to a supporter



In the 1100s, Henry I granted land in Willoughby parish to Wigan the Marshal. In the 1200s, his family died out and the estate was given to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, Oxford. They later became the largest landowner and Lords of the Manor.

### Magdalen College, Oxford

In 1458, William Waynflete founded Magdalen College and persuaded Henry VI to endow it with the Hospital's land, including that in Willoughby. The College were the largest landowners for centuries until they sold the estate in the 1950s. Magdalen Road, College Farm and College Road are reminders of the college's ownership.

### The land was ploughed...

#### until 1760



For centuries before the Inclosure legislation in 1760, farming was based on the Feudal Open Field system. Villagers worked cooperatively tending strips of land in huge fields to produce food. The land was ploughed using teams of oxen resulting in the distinct ridge and furrow profile you see in the fields around here. These are a nationally important heritage asset.

### All change after Inclosure

After the Inclosure legislation, most of the land was given over to pasture. New owners had to plant hedges and dig drainage ditches to enclose their allotted land. The enclosed fields in the parish were given names. Many are still used for identification purposes today. Examples: Big Grounds, Lower Grounds, The Leys.

### A well-connected parish

#### The High Road



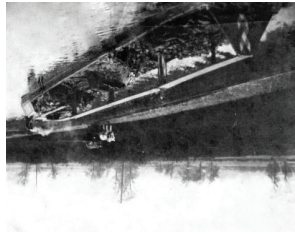
The A45 follows an important historic route from London to Holyhead. Ogilby's 1675 map describes the section to Dunchurch as 'bad way' because it was difficult for horse drawn coaches. Tarmacadam did not arrive until 1911.

#### The Railway



The Great Central Railway arrived in 1899 and provided a regular service to London. The line was not profitable and closed to passengers and goods on 1 April 1957. The remains of the embankment and bridge can be seen on the A45 by the Station Master's House on the way to Daventry.

#### The Canal



The Oxford canal was opened in 1790. A wharf and the Navigation Inn were built near the bridge on Longdown Lane soon afterwards. The Inn closed in 1953 but the canal remains an important leisure route today.



# The Willoughby Heritage Walking Trail

## 1 St Nicholas' Church



The church is Grade II\* listed. St Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors and children and is widely known as Santa Claus.

## 10 The Bakehouse



The bakehouse flourished from 1900 until 1984 when coke/coal fired ovens were no longer used. Residents used to take their Sunday joints here to be cooked.

## 16 The Smithy



Grade II listed. Built during the early/mid-18th century. The last blacksmith, Fred Wooldridge, took over in 1926 until his death in 1977.

## 2 Manor Farmhouse



Grade II listed and built in the late 18th century, the house is a successor of the farmstead at the Moated Farmstead to the south.

## 11 Rose Inn



Grade II listed. Built in the early/mid 18th century, this is the only thatched building left in the village. It is also the last remaining pub of four.

## 3 Pye Court



The name is a corruption of Py's Croft after the man who owned a small farm long ago. Three old cottages stood here until the early 20th century.

## 12 Village Hall

The original hall cost £978 and opened in October 1933. The freehold was purchased from Magdalen College in 1948.

## 4 'The Green'

The Cricket Club was formed in 1901. They played at various grounds around the village until 'The Green' was purchased in 1973 and the pavilion was built.

## 5 Church View



Probably built in 1640 as two cottages. In the 1800s, the barn on the left was a Primitive Methodist Chapel and the road in front was called Church Road.

## 6 Vale House



Grade II listed. Built in 1580 as a 3-bay, timber-framed farmhouse when Elizabeth I was Queen. In 2002-2003, a priest hole was discovered in the chimney.

## 7 Barrowfield

Evidence of a wattle and daub cottage (early 1800s) was found where the kitchen is now. From 1909, the post office was here.

## 8 Lower Street Cottages



Amongst the oldest buildings in the village. In the 1700s, they were cob cottages with thatched roofs but, after a fire in 1926 which burned down No. 3, the roofs were tiled.

## 9 Post Cottage

The first post office (1876-1909) was near Magdalen Road. From 1909, it was in Barrowfield and by 1936 it was here. In 2002, it closed and Willoughby no longer had a post office.

## 13 College Farm



1973, the farmhouse became a private house and the land was sold.

## 14 Whitehouse Farmhouse

Grade II listed, the main house was built from sandstone rubble in the 17th century.

## 15 Four Crosses



In 1725, the English satirist, Jonathan Swift, stayed in the 'Three Crosses'. After disagreeing with the landlord's wife, he wrote 'There are three crosses at your door, Hang up your wife and you'll count four.' Thus, the building became known as the Four Crosses.

## 19 The Old Vicarage



Built in 1836 for the Rev. Richard Tawney as the previous vicarage was not suitable. The house was sold by the Coventry Diocese in 1978.

## 20 Gate Farm

There was an inn here known as the New Inn in 1760 until about 1910. Its position on the High Road made it quite popular as a secondary inn to the Three/Four Crosses further south. *Beware: dangerous main road.*

## 21 Moated Farmstead

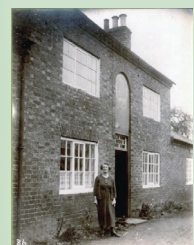
A scheduled monument, this site was part of the medieval settlement of Willoughby and is of national importance. It was unusual in having two islands, one for the farmstead and the other for geese.



## 17 Wesleyan Chapel

Built in 1898 at a cost of £250 to seat seventy people. By 1990, the congregation had dwindled and the chapel was sold into private ownership.

## 18 The Old School House



In 1816, a school and a school house were built at a cost of £430. From 1888, a 'reading room' was established where residents could go and read newspapers and play cards. The school closed in 1977.

## More information about the Trail

Visit [stnicholaswilloughby.co.uk](http://stnicholaswilloughby.co.uk) and click on Our Heritage - Heritage Trails - Additional Notes