

Willoughby Manor - Rise and fall

Ralph Bugge, of Nottingham, gained a toe-hold in Willoughby, in 1233, by buying the wind-mill and two acres of land. The multiple sub-divisions of Roger de Busli's land provided opportunities for the rich, acquisitive and ambitious merchant to keep on adding to his possessions, which he did with vigour. In 1240, Bugge was especially careful with one deal that was probably intended for a family home. He made sure the purchase was confirmed by the lord, John de Heriz, by the mesne lord, Robert de Vavassor and by the land holder John, son of Geoffrey, son of Odo. Old maps suggest that the Manor house was built where Field Farm once stood (before it became Field Farm Close) on Widmerpool Lane. In more recent times, a large old house near the Church was always known as The Manor, but it was more likely to have been the Parsonage (now part of Manor Court).

Ralph's son, Richard, was a well-established land owner by 1250, in which year he obtained the right to have a "free chantry in his Chapel situated in his court at Wylgeby". In turn, Richard's son, also Richard, was regarded by all as the Lord of the Manor and the Bugge family changed its name to Willoughby (however it might have been spelled!). There is a reference to Richard de Wyllughby in 1315.

The Bugge investments eventually encompassed the whole village and, with the Church, covered 90% of the land, so re-creating a feudal situation that had been lost by virtue of the earlier multiple sub-divisions. This new situation would last for well over 300 years.

After Sir Francis Willoughby built Wollaton Hall (1580-88), the family found itself deeply in debt. In 1591, the Parsonage and all that went with it, was mortgaged for £1550 to Henry Billingsley of London; to be followed by the Manor, mortgaged to a cousin, Lady Arbella Stuart, for £3050.

In 1596, Sir Percival succeeded his brother and found a need to spend £3000 on a lawsuit against his newly widowed sister-in-law on account of her "depredations". He had to sell the Willoughby lordship, and others, the sales of which were completed by 1616. Some of the manorial land on the north-east side of the village was enclosed to facilitate the sale - fields still existing on the north side of Bryans Lane. Some of the Willoughby farmers benefited by being offered their tenanted land for sale. 16 of them could afford to buy, as well as 3 cottagers. The farmers paid amounts ranging from £113 to £310 and the cottagers paid £25, £30 and £50. The rest was sold to Sir Thomas Hutchinson of Owthorpe Hall for £4150, including the Manor house, the Parsonage, the windmill, glebelands, a farm, cottages and some old enclosures. Thus the Bugge or Willoughby family left the village after 383 years, affecting all who lived here.