



Willen Hospice Trail

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The project itself

Willen Hospice contacted the Learning Co-ordinator for MKHA with the idea of putting together a Heritage trail for the carers to use. Carers Day was the 14th June 2010 and the Hospice wanted a walk to be set up so that the carers could go out and find out about the area around Willen. It was then decided that a leaflet could be put together with all the information on so that people could go from the Hospice for a 30-45 minute walk, in their own time at any time.

The local school (Willen Primary School) was contacted and 11 children aged 10 and 11 volunteered to take part in the project. The children first had to decide where they wanted the walk to go and which landmarks they wanted to talk about. This was quite tricky because they had to take into account the fact that some people may be in wheelchairs.

Eventually 8 places of interest were decided on including the Hospice and Willen Village itself. The children then researched their chosen landmark in pairs and decided what to say and who was going to say it.

On a very blustery June day, the children led a small group on the walk and gave out their information. The adults who listened were very impressed and felt that they had learnt things that they didn't know about the area.

This leaflet is the work produced by the children at Willen Primary School for the walk. There is more information about each of the stopping points on the Willen Heritage Walk website website www.willenheritagewalk.moonfruit.com.

Willen Hospice

Willen Hospice opened its doors to its first patient on 1st January 1981 having already run a Home Care Service since 1979. The dream of a Hospice for Milton Keynes had started in 1974 and became a reality when Manor Farm, next to Willen Church came on the market. The farmhouse became the middle part of the Hospice. It was then extended on the ends to make more space for more people.

Manor Farm had been bought by Harry Whiting in 1881. Harry Whiting, who was married to Mary and had 11 children came from a large farming family and had a dairy business in London. He farmed the 385 acres of land along with 13 farm labourers.

The last farmer at Manor Farm was Henry Rees who came to Willen in 1929 as a tenant farmer. He bought the land in 1948 and it was sold to Milton Keynes Development Corporation in 1967. (Kai)



The Route

- Starting from the Hospice reception, leave through the main entrance and turn left out of the drive. The small red brick building in front of you is the school house. (1)
- Go through the gate to the left of the school house into the church yard. Follow the path round to the steps at the front of the church. (2)
- Go through the gate directly opposite the church door and walk along the avenue of trees alongside the play park. Go down the few steps at the end of the path, and you are facing the Well. (3) Wheelchair users can turn right just before the steps and go across the edge of the play park to avoid the steps.
- Turn left down the redway and follow the redway all the way along. This path takes you passed the Labyrinth (4) and the Peace Pagoda (5) and along to the Medicine Circle (6).
- There is wheel chair access to the Labyrinth and the Peace Pagoda to the right of each of these attractions; however it should be noted that the path is rather steep.
- Having looked at the Medicine Wheel, take the brown/gravel path along the edge of the lake. This takes you back to the Hospice passed their gardens.
- Continue on the path to the redway where older houses can be seen in front of you. (7)
- Turn left and go through the first car park which has a sign taking you back to the Hospice Reception.

1. The School

The school house was built in 1847 by the Busby Trust. A single schoolmistress was employed to educate up to 24 of the village children. Attendance was not compulsory, but most of the workers' children did attend until they were 11.

Children from affluent families like the Whittings tended to be educated privately, either by a governess at home or by a local preparatory school until they were old enough to go to a boarding school, such as Westminster School in London.

The school mistresses included Mary Whitehead in 1851, Mary Ferring in 1861, Elizabeth Jolley in 1871, Martha Barnes in 1881 and Janet Meads in 1891 (see photo from 1897)

In the 1890s the school had 29 pupils all who had fathers who worked on the local farm.



As Willen grew, the school became too small for all the children so in 1986 they built Willen Combined School which had 500 four to twelve year olds. It is now Willen Primary School which now holds just over 400 four to eleven year olds. It is a lively and thriving school that offers a wide range of exciting experiences in addition to the basic curriculum. (Amy and Kamille)

2. Willen Church

The church's real name is Saint Mary Magdalene. The church was built in 1680 for Dr. Richard Busby who was the Headmaster of Westminster School. He employed a former pupil, Robert Hooke, to design the church. It is thought that Sir Christopher Wren (who had also been at Westminster School as Hooke's contemporary) may also have helped because there is an open Bible carved into the ceiling of the church.

In the 19th century an apse was added to the nave and the cupola was removed from the tower. Mr. Hooke designed this church with the intention for it to be a simple nave and decorative tower.

Inside the church is a Prayer Board where anyone can leave messages for a prayer to be said. (Pradeep)

If you would like to know more about Robert Hooke then there is information about him in the play area on the right as you head towards the Well.



3. The Well

The Well at Willen (a work of the Society of the Sacred Mission) is a new way of looking after families in their homes, couples and single people who are trying to live together respecting each others thoughts and feelings. It is based around a large house with a library and meeting rooms in three acres of land which is next to Willen Lake. It is built in the old Rectory which is thought to date from about 1700. The Community, which was founded in 1997, is Christian based but welcomes people from other churches and works to create a feeling of happiness, understanding and acceptance. (Finley)

It is named after the story in John ch 4 of the Bible where Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well and offers her the water of life.



4. The Labyrinth

The Willen Maze (or labyrinth) is a turf maze based on an enlarged version of the Saffron Walden version of the Saffron Walden Rosicrucian Maze. It was designed by landscape artist Neil Higson. The four lobes of the labyrinth face north, south, east and west and in each lobe is a bronze face. The four faces represent the four faces of mankind and were designed by Tim Minnet. The maze unifies the four races and at the centre is an oak tree which symbolises the tree of life. It was built in 1985. (David, Harry and Vishwa)



The Peace Pagoda was built in 1980 by the monks and nuns of Nipponzan Myohoji. It is a Buddhist stupa and has sacred relics of Lord Buddha enshrined in it. It is a working temple with regular services and is designed to provide a focus for people of all races and creeds. The carvings tell the story of Buddha from his birth to his death. It was the first Peace Pagoda to be built in the western hemisphere. (Chenise and Mhairi)



5. The Peace Pagoda

The Circle of Hearts Medicine Wheel was built to celebrate the millennium and was also built as a universal symbol of peace. The Circle of Hearts has two concentric circles which was inspired by the Hopi Nation of North America and follows the Midsummer line which extends up through the Cathedral of Trees in Campbell Park and on to Midsummer Boulevard. It was built on the 'sacred' green patch and it is said that if prayers are offered at the centre (or source) of the wheel, those wishes are amplified but they have to be unselfish wishes. The Wheel is made up from 108 limestone from the village of Weston Underwood. Native chiefs from the Onodage tribe came to Milton Keynes and spent time praying and smoking their pipes of peace over the stones. The outer and inner circles symbolise our outer and inner worlds, the universe and humanity within. (Faith)



6. The Circle of hearts medicine wheel

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7. Willen Village

Willen dates back to the 11th century, but it was so small that it was recorded in the Domesday Book with Newport Pagnell and Caldecotte. And Willen and Caldecotte were classed as one parish until the 14th century. The name Willen probably comes from the word 'wylig' which means willow. In 1672 the whole area was sold to Sir Richard Busby who had been the Headmaster at Westminster school in London. On his death the Busby Trust was set up which kept Willen as it was for centuries, in fact until the 1960s there were never more than 100 people living in Willen. Willen became part of the new city of Milton Keynes in 1967. The lake is part of a series of balancing lakes throughout Milton Keynes to prevent flooding. There are many activities available at Willen Lake including sailing, wake boarding, a trim trail and Aerial Extreme.

For more information please visit www.willenheritagewalk.moonfruit.com