



Great Wilbraham
Little Wilbraham
Six Mile Bottom

PARISH PLAN

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Parish Plans - An Introduction

In 2006 ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) in Cambridgeshire were encouraging parishes to undertake the production of Community Plans, and were assisting by providing grants. A Community Plan is a structured assessment of the current community and a document which provides guidance for the communities to develop in the future, in line with the wishes of the residents.

The Parish Councils of Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham/Six Mile Bottom agreed to develop a joint Community Plan, as the two parishes share many facilities and are close, geographically. Following an initial open meeting held in December 2006, a steering group was formed from volunteers, who represented the communities involved.



Church Street, Great Wilbraham

The first task was to create a questionnaire, which would provide not only relevant current information about the communities, including any problems, but also seek out ideas for the future wishes of residents. In order to involve other organisations a draft questionnaire was circulated to various clubs, businesses, the church and the school for comments and additional questions.

Taking into account the replies and comments received, a final list of questions was agreed. A separate Youth section was included in the questionnaire. Various old and new photographs were used as illustrations in the document, which was then printed and circulated to every household in March 2009.



The Common and Little Wilbraham Mill

The Plan is a process, not just a document. It will be refreshed from time to time. It is also hoped that funding can be found to achieve some of the aims. Ultimately, the Community Plan combined with the Action Plan is a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years.



High Street, Little Wilbraham

This introduction will be followed by a brief history of the villages and current community profiles, then the document will go on to describe how the survey was undertaken and the results. Finally, we present the proposed Action Plan.

The Community Plan is designed to help maintain and extend the facilities outlined in this brochure, ultimately sustaining a comfortable, safe environment for future generations, with a strong community network. It is now up to us all as a community to begin the process of putting these plans into action!

History of Our Villages

The area around the Wilbrahams and Six Mile Bottom has been settled by humans since prehistoric times. Traders used a nearby track to transport flints from Grime's Graves near Thetford to sell in areas to the West. After the area was colonised by the Romans in AD61, a settlement was established near Shardelow's Well, close to the Western boundary of the present Parish of Great Wilbraham. This settlement flourished for several hundred years but fell victim to a Saxon raid after the collapse of the Roman power in the fifth century. The Saxons created a fresh settlement close to Temple Springs between Great and Little Wilbraham and there is a Saxon burial ground nearby, just within Little Wilbraham.

During this time the area gained unexpected strategic importance, as it occupied the only traversable route between the fens to the northwest (re-flooded after the departure of the Romans), and dense woodland to the southeast. In the 7th Century the route was defended by a number of substantial earthworks, one of which, Fleam Dyke, lies just to the southwest of the present villages.



Fleam Dyke

When the defences fell and the area was overrun by King Penda of the Mercians he bestowed it to his daughter Wilburgh, from whom the villages derive their name.

As England was unified the Wilbrahams lost their short term strategic importance, thereafter developing and growing as ordinary rural settlements. By the 10th Century Great Wilbraham had a church of its own and by the time of the Domesday Book it

was indicated as having a population of thirty families. William the Conqueror divided the Parish into two manors. The smaller of these, centred round the Temple grounds, he retained in his own gift, so that it became known as King's Wilbraham. When the manor was acquired and developed by the Knights templar in the 13th Century the village grew in affluence, with a weekly market and a six day fair each September.

The villages continued to grow and during the 17th Century Great Wilbraham became a centre of religious dissent. There are records of meetings of Free-will Baptist meetings being broken up by the magistrates, and of the arrest of organisers. The manor had changed hands on a number of occasions through the centuries.

During the 19th Century the Hicks family were intensely involved in village life, contributing greatly to the building of the school and donating land for the enlargement of the churchyard. The Parish Council once had considerable powers, maintaining roads and drains in the villages with income from parish properties. The decline in this income after The Great War lead to many of the Councils responsibilities being transferred to the Rural District Council, and after the Second World War the Council lost its power to appoint a village constable.

The Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground were in effect given to the villages by Captain Hicks in 1920 and 1948 respectively. Their management was entrusted to an independent committee. Only with the increased tendency for contested elections in the 1950s did the Parish Council once again begin to widen the scope of its activities.



Memorial Hall & Recreation Ground

At the time of the Domesday Book the manor and land of Little Wilbraham, known as Wilbraham Parva, was held by Aubrey de Ver. By 1279, records show 2 manors in Wilbraham Parva in the ownership of the Chamberlain and Talemache families. Later, the ownership of the Talemache Manor passed to Prior of Anglesey, until the Dissolution of the property of Anglesey Abbey.

The church, St John the Evangelist, dates from the mid 13th century. There were close links to the Order of the Templars during the crusading period. The tower was added in the 14th century.

The Hole in the Wall is the only remaining public house, and dates from the mid 16th century. The name of the pub derives from the method of providing ale to the farm workers.

In 1900 three cottages were built as almshouses and are now managed by the Mary Layton Cottages Trust.

Six Mile Bottom existed in name before it developed as a settlement, deriving this from its distance from the start of the Newmarket Racecourse and the fact that it lies in a valley bottom.



Green Man, Six Mile Bottom

Although there has always been a connection with hunting and shooting in the area and there has been an inn for many hundreds of years, the hamlet grew as a result of two local estates. Colonel George Leigh and his wife

Augusta moved to the Lodge at around 1806. Incidentally, Augusta was a half sister to Lord Byron who was known to visit the Lodge, now called Swynford Hotel, Restaurant & Bar.

The Hall family were the next to make Six Mile Bottom their local seat and lived at Westley Cottage until it was destroyed by fire in 1899. It was replaced in 1900 by a Tudor style property called Six Mile Bottom Hall. This estate became known as one of the best partridge shoots in England and was frequently visited by the Royal Family and many other distinguished guests. When the Hall family decided to move to Oxford, the estate was sold to Sir Ernest Cassel, a very wealthy financier. His two granddaughters inherited most of his great wealth and the younger one, Ruth Clarisse Mary Ashley inherited the Six Mile Bottom Estate. Her first husband was Alan S Cunningham-Reid with whom she had two sons, Noel and Michael. This marriage ended in divorce and she married Captain EJ Gardner. They divorced in 1943 and she was finally married to TPH Cholmondeley, Lord Delamere, but this marriage also ended in divorce in the 1950s. Mary, Lady Delamere, lived at the Hall until her death in 1986.

Alexander and Favell Helen Hall instigated the building of St. George's Church in 1910. Due to the outbreak of World War 1 and the Hall family moving to Oxford, the Church was not built until 1935.

The Halls were a philanthropic family and built dwellings, a store and a school for their estate workers. Thus the hamlet of Six Mile Bottom was put on the map.



St George's Church, Six Mile Bottom