

Worst Kept Village 1970

When Puddington was named the Best Kept Village in 1970 for the second year in a row, a sign was put on the Green stating Willaston was the worst kept village.

The sign had a message on the back which was from the 'Young Willastonians Action Group'. The message listed four points:

- The Old Red Lion should not be allowed to deteriorate any further and its façade must be maintained;
- The cottages by the green should be repaired;
- A derelict former grocery store should be removed;
- 'Buck up your ideas and start getting things done'.



The sign was later found to have been erected by 17-year-old Siri Taylor (pictured – source: Cheshire Life), along with four friends.

K. Evans responded to an article about the sign in the Liverpool Echo (see over) by writing the following letter:

Sir – Having read the report “Smarten up’ a village is told ...’ I feel it only fair that readers should know just what is being done to tidy up our village, Willaston.

The Hadlow Green Women’s Institute, which is only four years old, has for some months beenn exploring the possiblity of arranging a ‘tidy up’ programme and held a very successful ploughman’s supper to raise funds to this end.

The secretary has written to owners and trustees of derelict property, the brewery and the council nad now that funds are avialable, we will be able to start on the property where owners have given permission.

We are having difficulty finding someone responsible for the buildings near the Institute and hope that if somebody who knows reads this they will get in touch with us. I hope our efforts will bear fruit and that before long travellers will once again say ‘What a pretty village!’

July 30 1970

The Liverpool Echo

'Smarten up' a village is told ...



Mrs. K. Ruddock (left) and Mrs. R. Smith, both of Willaston, read the letter posted on the back of the notice on the village green.

People in the quiet little village of Willaston-in-Wirral were talking to-day about a sign which

has appeared on the village green.

Earlier this week, Puddington, four miles away, was named Cheshire's best-kept village for the second year running. Willaston is Cheshire's worst kept village, according to the sign on the green.

The sign was the latest reflection of a widespread feeling that the appearance of Willaston, with a history going back to Saxon times, is not what it should be.

The "mystery" sign had a type-written message on the back, which said it had been devised and erected by the Young Willastonians Action Group.

The message listed four points:

The Old Red Lion should not be allowed to deteriorate any further and its facade must be maintained at all costs.

The cottages by the green should be repaired.

A derelict former grocery store should be removed as soon as possible.

The fourth point is: "Buck up your ideas and start getting things done."

A group of elderly residents studying the message said they did not know the identity of the Young Willastonians Action Group, but endorsed its recommendations.

The first job undertaken by the Hadlow Green WI was to demolish and remove a barn at Ashtree Farm.

The following pictures and comments are from *The Chronicle*, on 28th August 1970 whose photographer came to Willaston to report on the 'Worst Kept Village' label.



'Once a centre of night life in the village, the former Red Lion forms a dingy backdrop to the village green - which was littered with ice cream cartons this week.'

'Buildings in need of attention just behind the Memorial Hall by the village green.'





'Old Hall, Willaston – as seen through a 'framework' of long grass and nettles across the road.'



'The overgrown walk alongside the churchyard.'



'To be fair, not everywhere that we photographed was a scene of neglect or dereliction. Just by the village green we saw 18-year-old Lorraine Hirst, a hair-dresser, helping to keep the garden of her boss's home neat and tidy.'