

The following article appeared in the Liverpool Echo online site in 2022.

Life in village with railway station stuck in the 1950s

A picturesque village holds a railway station stuck in the 1950s, but has everything people need.

Willaston lies in the middle of the [Wirral](#) and is a conservation area which holds a rich history. When the [ECHO](#) visited the village on a sunny autumn day, it was met with greenery, charming houses and independent businesses.

One unique feature the village holds is Hadlow Road Station - a Grade II listed heritage railway station that's now a free museum and café. It's situated on the [Wirral](#) Way footpath and has the look and feel of when it was still operational before it closed to passengers on September 17, 1956.

The station opened on October 1, 1866, and had a single track on the Hooton to West Kirby branch of the Birkenhead Railway. After it closed to passengers in 1956, the track continued to be used for freight transportation and driver training for another six years, before permanently closing on May 7, 1962. The tracks were lifted two years later.

People visiting Hadlow Road Station today can explore the authentic ticket office and waiting room that's full of original furniture and items. This includes the guard's uniform and hat, leather suitcases, and old money. There's even a toy cat fast asleep on the worn leather chair.



Hadlow Road Railway Station, Willaston Village, Wirral. Photo by Colin Lane© Liverpool Echo

A red telephone box stands proudly on the station platform alongside a cart carrying milk churns, a luggage carrier and vintage signs. A small waiting shelter is situated on the opposite platform, plus a signal box further down the platform.

The station master's house has been turned into a café, aptly called [The Station Master's House](#). You can enjoy food and drink inside the old building or sit out on the platform overlooking a short section of track that was re-laid by [Friends of Hadlow Road Station](#) (FHRS).

FHRS is a community organisation that helps to maintain the station. Over the last six years since it formed, volunteers have undertaken considerable improvement works and raised thousands of pounds for various charities.

It will be holding a pop-up café with entertainment provided by Western Approaches on Sunday, October 16, where the money raised will be put back into the station's maintenance, restoration and development.

Other notable buildings in the village was the former Red Lion pub. It was a half timbered inn built in 1631. It turned into a pub in the 19th century but in 1928. Today, it is a private house.

Willaston Windmill was built in 1800 and was the largest windmill on the peninsula. It was used for the production of flour and to grind cattle food and remained working until around 1930. Sadly the windmill's sails were destroyed in a storm and this is now also a private house.



Willaston Village, Wirral. Photo by Colin Lane© Liverpool Echo

Today, situated in the heart of the village and towards the green are thriving independent businesses. Tracy Fender runs one such business, florist shop Jillian Dawn Floral Designs with her family.

When speaking with the ECHO, Tracy said she has always had a connection with Willaston. The 58-year-old said: "We started in 91 here.

"We have always had a connection to Willaston from a young age because kept ponies from when we were little, my sister and I. We always had a love Willaston and moved here around 1991.

"We brought up our families here, so they are now onboard and joined us in the family business."

Tracy said there is a strong sense of community in the village and it has everything people need. She added: "We just love it and everyday is different. The village community here is really close and very strong. Events take place here from time to time.

"We are blessed with all of the vendors here. The Spar shop which serves the community, which sells what people need on a day-to-day business and so you don't necessarily have to get in a car to pick up essentials.

"The gift shop is beautiful - White Feather Home is wonderful. The ladies who run that are just lovely and we have a café."



Tracy Fender outside her florist shop in Willaston© Liverpool Echo

Walking along the road are rows of charming houses, including the Elizabeth Cottages which were built in 2013 on the 60th anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. These cottages are on land gifted to the church by Isabel Johnston.

The church hall stood where the cottages are now until they were sold in 2012 to fund the reordering of Christ Church for sustainable multi-purpose use. Towards the village green, Willaston appears to have everything people need. There is a dog groomers, a cafe, hair and beauty salon, bakery, gift shop and pub.

One resident told the ECHO, it was a "lovely place to live", with many activities put on for villagers to enjoy. Another said: "It's handy because you have the doctors, the dentist and the chemist and so everything is in walking distance. Now we have a few more shops and a good bakery.

"We have a lot going on. This weekend we have a fish and chip shop popping up." She said there are also plant sales, stalls at the weekend for people in the village to sell things, events for pensioners among other things.

A newer business in the area is Victoria's Sandwich Artisan Bakery owned by Hannah Victoria Batson who grew up in the village. Hannah's mum Cherry Batson, who helps her daughter with the running of the bakery, spoke to the ECHO about life and business there.

She said Hannah was a pastry chef at the Grosvenor Hotel in Chester before opening her own bakery. Hannah realised she had the potential to run her own business during lockdown when she sold out of doughnuts she had made almost instantly when she put an advert out.

It was on March 17 this year that the bakery opened in the main part of the village and has been a hit since. People in and outside come to taste the delicious cakes, freshly baked breads, pies, sausage rolls, doughnuts and handmade sandwiches there are to offer.

Cherry who has lived in Willaston for 22 years said there is a strong sense of community in the area. She said: "Willaston is such a lovely place, everyone is so friendly. A lot of the older people who come into the bakery we know them by name.

"There is a lady who lives directly and the girls from the bakery deliver a fresh loaf every Saturday for her. She was the first customer to buy the doughnuts. It is a community atmosphere, definitely here in the bakery."