

Introduction



TSB Willerby Branch housed in a former dwelling known as Alma Cottage
(photo 2020)

In late November 2019 the following announcement appeared in the local press:

The Willerby branch [of the TSB] will close in May [2020], according to the company which announced its full list of stores to close on Thursday [28th November 2019].

Explaining the decision to shut the Willerby branch, a spokesman for the company said: "We have seen a fall in the number of people using the branch and only around 20 customers regularly use the branch each week now.

"85 per cent of the branch customers actually already use other branches, mobile or online to do their banking needs.

"We will be writing to impacted customers so that we can help them, they can obviously continue to use other TSB branches or their local Post Office on the Square, which is around 100 metres away."¹

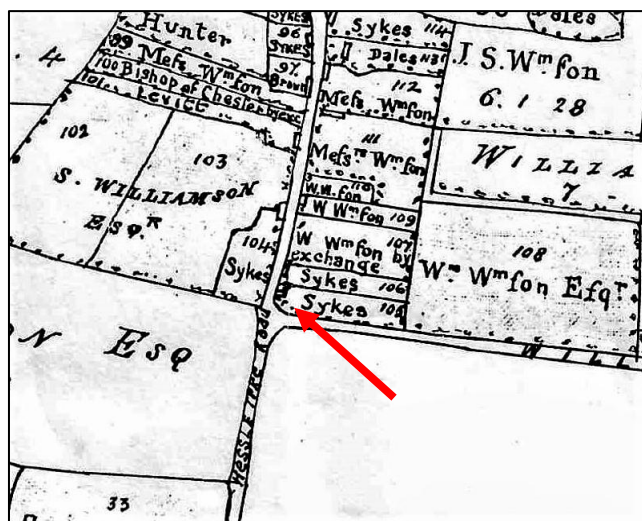
The bank at the corner of Carr Lane and Main Street, Willerby, finally closed its doors for the last time on 12th May 2020, thus ending the long association of the building with banking which began in 1946.

This milestone in the history of the building that housed a bank for more than half a century has prompted some interest in knowing more about its former life and times. The following account has been written in an attempt to provide some answers.

¹ Hull Daily Mail, 28th November 2019

A House Through Time

Every house has a story to tell and this is especially true of one that is two hundred years old. A house of some description has stood at the corner of Carr Lane and Main Street, Willerby, since the end of the eighteenth century and maybe for longer than that. In the following account, we shall trace the lives of men and women who have owned and lived in this place over the past two centuries. They were ordinary folk who have made their own unique contribution to life in Willerby and the surrounding area. In the main, it was the rapid growth in industry and commerce of the town of Hull after the onset of the industrial revolution that brought them to Willerby. Some came from distant corners of the country and even from the near continent. Their stories have remained silent, that is until now.



Enclosure map of 1796 showing a dwelling with a small plot of land at the corner of the Hessle Turnpike Road and Willerby Carr Lane.

The first indication of a building on this plot of land is revealed in a map of 1796 showing the allocation of land and property resulting from the enclosure of Willerby. The map shows the plot of land on the corner of the Hessle Turnpike Road and Willerby Carr Lane had been granted to Joseph Sykes of West Ella Hall. He was related to the Sykes family of Sledmere and had gained his wealth from the import of iron ore from Sweden.

Along with various members of the Williamson family, Joseph Sykes was a major landowner in Willerby and Kirk Ella at this time. Income from rental of fields and houses added to his considerable wealth. Although his name is unknown, the tenant of this corner plot would have paid his annual rental to Joseph Sykes.

It is unlikely that the house indicated on this piece of land on the 1796 map is the same as the one that stands there today, although the present building may have been built soon afterwards. However, the exact date of its construction remains unknown.

Joseph Sykes died in 1805 and an impressive memorial was erected in his honour in St. Andrew's Church, Kirk Ella. After his death, it is probable that this corner plot of land was bequeathed to his youngest son Henry, who, in 1805, had



Memorial to Joseph Sykes in St. Andrew's Church, Kirk Ella

bought a house in Melton. In August 1808, Henry Sykes sold the plot of land in Carr Lane, Willerby, perhaps already occupied by the house which stands there today, to J.C. Cankrien of Wolfreton House, Kirk Ella.

John Christopher Cankrien was born in Rotterdam on 21st February 1775 and was for many years Consul to the Netherlands. He forsook his native land and took English nationality by Act of Parliament, in 1795. Three years later, at Holy Trinity, Hull, he married Frances, daughter of Hugh Ker. John Cankrien was a wealthy ship-owner and between 1817 and 1825 he had five ships, all of about 350 tons, registered at Hull. The names 'Trafalgar', 'Lord Wellington' and 'Duncombe' suggest that Cankrien had become an Englishman at heart as well as on paper.

A daughter, Frances, was born in Hull in 1800, but the Cankriens were in Rotterdam for the birth of their eldest son, Hugh Ker Cankrien, in 1803, and soon after their return to these shores Cankrien opened negotiations to buy land in Kirk Ella. In 1804, building of Wolfreton House began and when completed it housed John Cankrien and his family for the next ten years.



Wolfreton House built by John C. Cankrien in 1804.

In 1814 John C. Cankrien sold Wolfreton House to John Burstall, a Hull merchant, and lived for a couple of years in West Ella before finally settling in Beech Lawn, Anlaby, a farmhouse that had been rebuilt by the Voase family. This is where John C. Cankrien lived out his days. He died in 1853, aged 77, and both he and his wife are buried in Kirk Ella in a table-tomb on the north side of the churchyard.

Information is scarce about the tenancy of the house and land in Carr Lane during its possession by John Cankrien. It is assumed that he received rental income throughout his ownership. However, in 1840, it is known that he let the property to William Ashton, who moved from Anlaby where he had begun a fishmonger's business. William, was born in Sutton, Hull, in 1796, and married Mary Southwick (born Sproatley, 1797) around 1816. They seem to have settled



Beech Lawn, Anlaby, the home of John C. Cankrien from 1814 to 1853

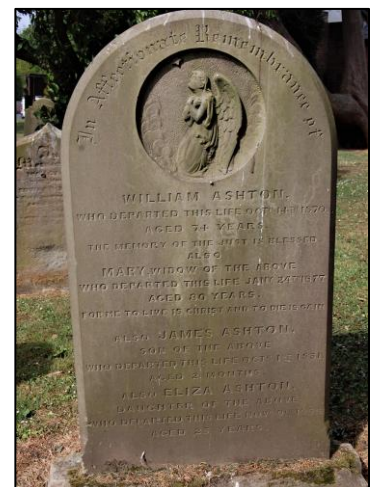
in Anlaby around 1823. William and Mary had at least ten children, six of whom were baptised at St. Andrew's Church, Kirk Ella where the register describes him, in 1824, as a labourer until, in 1831, he had progressed to become manager of his own fishmonger's business. It is probable he was a supplier of fish to John Cankrien at Beech Lawn, and this relationship enabled him to gain the

tenancy of the cottage owned by Cankrien in Willerby.

William Ashton and his family took up residence in the corner house in 1840 and continued to live in Willerby for the next sixteen years. During this time, their eldest son, another William, left home and in 1851 was to be found with his wife, Ellen, and infant daughter, Mary Ann, in Aldbrough earning a living as a butcher. However, William junior was back in Willerby in 1854 and, sadly, we find him on his deathbed. He was buried in the churchyard at St. Andrew's Church on the 2nd May 1854. The family had little time to mourn the loss of William, before tragedy struck again when a daughter, Eliza, died at the age of 25 years. Another son, James, had previously died in infancy in 1831. By the mid-1850s, William and his wife, Mary, were living alone, their other children having left home to make their own way in the world. Maybe it was as a consequence that they gave up the tenancy of the house in 1856.

However, William and Mary Ashton remained in Willerby and, by 1861, John had relinquished his fishmonger's business and taken up market gardening. At this time, he was living next door to his former residence and was, perhaps managing the plot of land that stood alongside, which, at that time, was described as an orchard.

William Ashton died on 14th October 1870 and his memorial stands in the churchyard at St. Andrew's Church. Following his death, Mary moved to Ferriby, perhaps to live with the family of one of her children. She died in January 1877, aged 80, and was reunited with her husband in the churchyard in Kirk Ella. Her epitaph reads, 'For me to live is Christ, to die is gain', a quotation from Philippians chapter 1, verse 21, indicating that the Ashtons were a religious family of

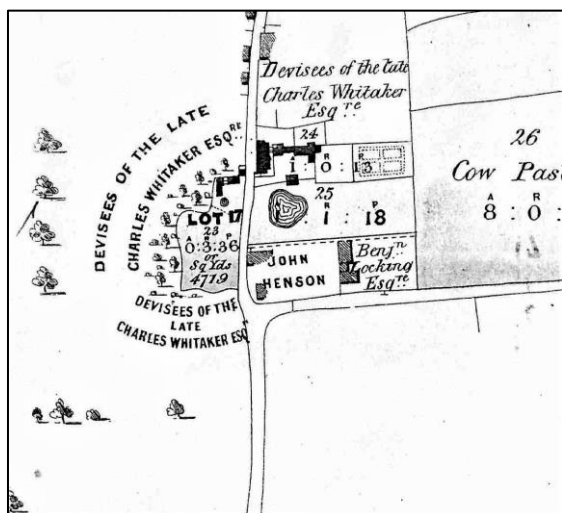


Memorial to William and Mary Ashton in Kirk Ella Churchyard.

churchgoers. They would have been found sitting on the benches in St. Andrew's Church every Sunday while the Cankriens occupied their own private pew.

When John Cankrien died in 1853, it was left to his eldest son, John Ker Cankrien, to handle his affairs and in August 1856 he conveyed the house and grounds in Carr Lane to John Henson.

John Henson was born in 1807 in the small village of Bunny, a few miles south of Nottingham, and settled in Willerby during the 1850s. Before this, he and his family had led a somewhat peripatetic existence. Sometime, around 1835, he married Hannah "Ann" Lakin (born 1812 in Middlesex) and soon they were living in Rawmarsh, near Rotherham. By 1839 they had moved to the Brightside area of north Sheffield. Two years later they were in Woodside in the leafy southern outskirts of the same city. By 1851, the family had removed to Caistor in Lincolnshire. During this time, Hannah had borne five children: Henry (baptised at Rawmarsh), Charles, Charlotte, Frances (all born in Brightside) and George (born in Caistor).



Plan dated 1868 showing the plot owned by John Henson. The second house on the plot was possibly the residence of William Ashton in 1861. John Henson's neighbour on Carr Lane was Benjamin Locking a physician and surgeon who lived in the newly built Albion House.

John was a groom by occupation. Although, by this time, the days of the stagecoach were numbered, being rapidly superseded by the railways, horses were still widely used as a means of traction and transport for more local journeys, both in the country and in the town. Men to tend them and ensure the horses were 'roadworthy' and well turned out were very much in demand, particularly by the gentry and wealthy merchants. It is probable that John Henson was employed by such men. No doubt, he had moved around to better himself and by the time he arrived in Willerby he had gained the means to buy

himself a fairly substantial property with grounds attached. After some years of continual uprooting in south Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, John and his wife settled in Willerby for the rest of their lives.

Doubtless, throughout its life the house in Carr Lane had possessed a name but, perhaps, it was during the ownership of John Henson, the house became 'Alma Cottage', a name by which it was known until the mid-20th century. The name derives from the Battle of Alma (September 1854), considered to be the first battle of the Crimean War. The name was far from unique to the house in Willerby and was an appellation given to many houses up and down the country in the aftermath of the battle. Indeed, in subsequent years, Alma² began appearing in birth registers as a Christian name for both male and female children, with some frequency.

By 1871, all the Henson's children with the exception of the eldest daughter, Charlotte, had left home. A grand-daughter, Agnes Henson, aged 4, born in Walkington, had joined the household and appears to have remained there for the next twenty years or more. The second son, Charles, had married Mary Clayton (originally from Church Fenton) around 1860 and after having spent time working in Kirby Misperton, was now living with his family in Kirk Ella. He was managing his own omnibus business, carrying passengers from Kirk Ella, Willerby and Anlaby into the town centre of Hull. However, in late 1874, Charles appears to have died suddenly and it is possible that John Henson ran the



Ordnance Survey map 1889 showing the location of Alma Cottage.

business for a short time as, in both the 1881 and 1891 censuses, he describes himself as a "retired coachman". Eventually, the omnibus business was taken over by William Palfreyman and, when he died during the 1890s, Samuel Binnington, Palfreyman's brother-in-law, acquired the business. Samuel continued to run the service from his home in

Main Street, Willerby, until the early 1930s, when he eventually sold out to East Yorkshire Motor Services. So, when one steps on to a Number 54 or 154 bus today at Willerby Square, one is participating in a tradition dating back to the 1870s when the Henson family established their omnibus company in Kirk Ella.

² Alma is the Crimean Tatar word for "apple".

When John Henson looked out of the front windows of his house in the early 1880s, he would have seen in front of him a major construction site. The Hull and Barnsley Railway was coming into being and Willerby and Kirk Ella Station was being built right on John Henson's doorstep. However, he may have been preoccupied at this time by the health of his wife, Ann. Sadly, she had a terminal ailment and died in 1883 at the age of 71 years. John was now left at home with his granddaughter, Agnes, for company. She remained there with John until he died at the age of 85, in 1893. What became of Agnes is not known.

Following John Henson's death, his two remaining sons, Henry and George, let out Alma Cottage for a year to John G. Merritt with his wife and family. They had moved from 69 West Parade in Hull. John Goforth Merritt was a draper, selling hosiery and baby linen, with retail premises at 33 Prospect Street, Hull. His business there would have benefitted from its proximity to Bladon's fashionable department store known at that time as 'Hull's Bon Marche', 38-41 Prospect Street.

John Merritt's tenancy agreement was initially for one year, and in 1894 the house and grounds were sold by Henry and George Henson to John Fisher, timber merchant, of Willerby Manor. However, Henry and George, as trustees of their late father, appear to have agreed to pay rent on the property under a tenancy agreement. The detail of this arrangement is not clear but a sight of the deeds of the property may clarify this. The house may have been sub-let for a period, although this is uncertain.

Cook's Directory of 1899 reveals that John Woodhouse, a hay and straw merchant, was renting the property, but how long he had been living there is not known. However, he vacated the house during 1899 and George Vincent, a manufacturer of slate and marble goods, took possession with his family. Born at Donna Nook in Lincolnshire, George Vincent moved in to Alma Cottage with his wife, Alice, and four daughters, Alice D., Elice M., Kathleen and Adrienne E. The family had not moved far, they had previously lived just around the corner at 3 Victoria Terrace, a recently built row of houses in Main Street. Prior to this he had lived in Hull and Beverley. The Vincent's third daughter, Kathleen, died at the house on 30th July 1899, aged 3.



Memorial to Kathleen Vincent and her mother, Alice Vincent, in Mill Lane Cemetery.

The landlord of Alma Cottage, John Fisher died at Willerby Manor in 1900 and in April 1901, ownership of Alma Cottage was transferred to his eldest son, John Henry Fisher of Willerby Hall. Later that year, he signed a further tenancy agreement with George Vincent. The following year, Alice Vincent, George's wife, died at 4 Sunny Bank, Withernsea in 1902, aged 30, and she is commemorated in Mill Lane Cemetery along with her daughter Kathleen.



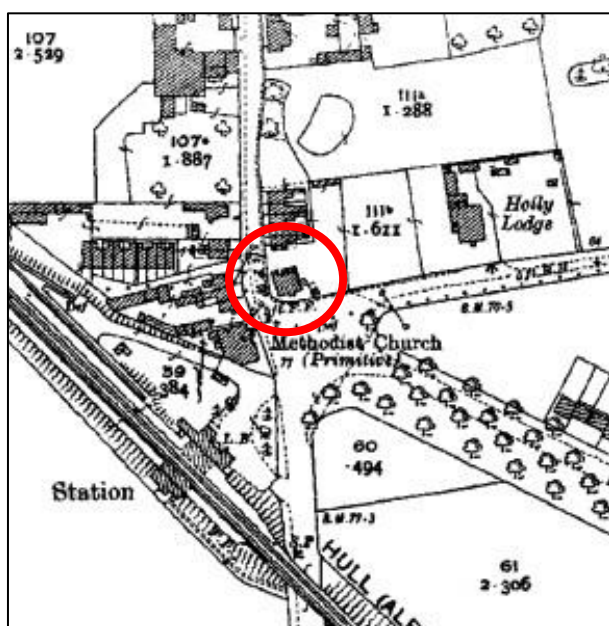
Alma Cottage c1910. Photograph taken during the tenancy of William Abbott.

Whether the whole Vincent family had moved to Withernsea is not clear but it seems that by the time George Vincent's wife died he had severed his connections with Willerby. In April 1902, John Henry Fisher signed a tenancy agreement for Alma Cottage with W. E. Abbott. William Edward Abbott hailed from Grimsby, where he was born in 1856, and he was employed as merchant's clerk at a local timber importer. He may have worked in the offices of Tealby & Co., timber importer of Garrison Side, Hull, the company owned by John Henry Fisher. William Abbott and his wife, Amy Elizabeth, remained in residence at Alma Cottage until at least 1911. They had no children, although one child died at a young age before they moved to Willerby. Prior to his marriage in 1893, William Abbott had lived at 17 St. George's Road, Hull.

John Henry Fisher's wife and mother of his five children, Elizabeth Leaper Fisher, had died in 1894 and he remained a widower until 1902 when he married Elinor Jane Whittaker. She had formerly been governess to the Fisher children at Willerby Hall. In November 1902, soon after their marriage, he transferred ownership of Alma Cottage, and the land attached, to his new wife.



Flooding in Willerby c1910. Alma Cottage can be seen through the bridge. William and Amy Abbott must have witnessed this scene.



OS map 1920 showing location of Alma Cottage. Note: Albion House has now been renamed Holly Lodge and new houses are appearing on what later became Kingston Road (lower right), which was completed in 1927.

In 1908, when the house was occupied by the Abbotts, Elinor signed a tenancy agreement for the land with Neville Stephenson, a local builder, who lived at 1 Main Street (a house that since the 1940s has been converted into shop premises and currently houses LH1, the hairdressing salon). In 1921, Stephenson purchased this 'garden land', which he held until his death in 1945. The plot is still remembered by some older residents of Willerby as 'Stephenson's Farm'.

Documentation of the fortunes of Alma Cottage during the First World War (1914-1918) has not been

consulted but shortly after the end of the war, the house was occupied by John William French, his wife Lilian Jane and daughter, Gladys Hampton French.

John William French, a school teacher by profession, was born in the Newland area of Hull in 1865. He married Lilian Jane Hampton (born in Camden Town, London in 1866) in October 1888. Their daughter and only child, Gladys Hampton, was born in 1890, at which time the family lived at 3 Granville Street, off Anlaby Road in Hull. After a time living with Lilian's parents³ at 305 Anlaby Road they moved back to Granville Street (this time to No. 11) where they were resident in 1911. By this time, Gladys had qualified as a school teacher and was employed at Selby Street West School, a short distance from the family home in Granville Street.

The exact date of the French's move to Willerby is not known, although the following evidence suggests that it was sometime between June 1921 and January 1923. In June 1921, the French family were living at 13 Hamlyn Avenue in Hull, William Hampton, widower, Lilian's father, being a member of the household. The Parish Register of St. Andrew's Church records that William

³ In London, William and Sarah Ann "Annie" Hampton had lived in Kensington, where William Hampton was, by trade, a china and glass dealer. However, when he and his family moved to Hull, sometime between 1871 and 1881, he established an estate agent's business and is recorded in a trade directory of 1892 as having an office in Saner Street, with his home address being 10 Canton Place, Anlaby Road.

Hampton of Alma Cottage, Willerby, died on 19th January 1923, aged 84. It appears that William had moved in with his daughter and son-in-law following the death of his wife, Sarah Ann “Annie”, in December 1918. Perhaps Alma Cottage had provided more suitable accommodation than the house in Hamlyn Avenue for the extended family.

William and Sarah are both commemorated in Mill Lane Cemetery, Kirk Ella:

In loving memory of William Hampton who died 1st Jan 1923 aged 84 years. Also, of Sarah Ann (Annie) the beloved wife of the above died 28th Dec 1918 aged 82 years. Cremated at Hull. Peace perfect peace.

John French was a stalwart member of St. Andrew’s Church, Kirk Ella, where he became both a churchwarden and lay reader. In the latter role, his offices were regularly called on between 1927 and 1932 during a long illness of Revd. James Foord, the Vicar. It was during the period from the mid-1930s until 1942, perhaps following his retirement from teaching, that he filled the role of Vicar’s churchwarden at St. Andrew’s. He was invited to this position by the Revd. Richard Foord who became Vicar in 1932, succeeding to the incumbency after the death of his uncle, James Foord.



Memorial to William and Sarah Ann Hampton in Mill Lane Cemetery, Kirk Ella.

By this time, a telephone line had been connected to Alma Cottage, the number being Hull 46235. Indeed, a telephone may have been installed many years earlier - the local Kirk Ella telephone exchange having been located in the house behind Alma Cottage at 1 Victoria Terrace since 1908.

In 1935, John French was a member of a committee of trustees from St. Andrew’s Church who purchased a parcel of land in Willerby from William Marsden, builder, in what is now Chestnut Avenue. The purpose was to establish a new church for the growing population of Willerby, where many new houses were being built at this time. No doubt, he and his fellow-trustees would have anticipated work on construction of the new church commencing soon afterwards. However, St. Luke's Church, Willerby, was finally built in 1967, long after the death of John French and his colleagues.

In 1946, the year before he died, John French had let a room at Alma Cottage to the Hull Savings Bank and this was the start of the association of the house with

banking. Until 1935, there had been no bank within the parish boundaries. In June of that year a branch of the National Provincial Bank was established on Beverley Road opposite Willerby and Kirk Ella railway station.⁴ This was followed in August 1937 by the opening of an evening branch of the Hull Savings Bank. This was open once a week at Willerby and Kirk Ella Parish Institute on Main Street. In October 1946, this bank moved into the room provided by John French and a full-time branch immediately opened.



Alma Cottage in 1946, showing the side entrance to the Willerby branch of Hull Savings Bank.

Gladys, John and Lillian's daughter, lived with them at Alma Cottage for some time. At the age of 18, she started teaching at the newly built Selby Street West School from the day it opened on 10th August 1908, having been appointed as an Uncertificated Teacher. This was at the time the Frenches lived in Granville Street. During the school year 1909/10, Gladys French was in charge of Standard



Gladys Hampton French in her later years after her retirement. This is the only picture of one of the residents of Alma Cottage that has come to light so far. *Photo: courtesy of Christine Pinder.*

VII and Ex VII, with 17 girls. During this school year she was absent from school for three months suffering from typhus fever, a potentially fatal disease. Thankfully, she made a full recovery and for the 1910/11 school year, she was in charge of the same classes, but with 18 girls. In school year 1912/13, she was in charge of Std V, with 54 girls. By 1912, Gladys French had become a Certified Teacher, and had been given charge of a much larger class of younger pupils during the 1912/13 school year.

Gladys French continued to teach at the school until, probably, the early 1930s. Her speciality subject was music and in 1925 she gained a licentiateship, as a singing performer, at the Royal Academy of Music in London. One of her music pupils in the early 1920s was Muriel Thompson who, under the tutelage of

⁴ National Provincial Bank merged with Westminster Bank in 1968, the new entity becoming National Westminster Bank. The Willerby and Kirk Ella branch of Nat West bank still occupies the same building at The Square, Willerby.

Gladys French, became an accomplished pianist and singer. When Muriel left school, she kept in touch with Miss French and the two became great friends. Following Muriel's marriage to Frederick Gibson in 1938, Gladys French became known as 'Auntie French' to their daughter, Christine, who was born in 1950.

Sometime during the 1930s, perhaps in 1934 when changes were made and the school became known as Springburn Street, Gladys French moved to Bicker, near Boston in Lincolnshire, where she lived at The Villa in Morley Lane.⁵ The house was a residence for single female elementary school teachers and it is assumed that she taught in a school in the Boston area. Whether she ever returned to live at Alma Cottage is not known but, on retirement, she moved to Worton, near Askrigg in Wensleydale, where she lived out her days in Summer Tree House. In 1976, her funeral service was held in Darlington.

Gladys' retirement may well have coincided with the death of both her parents, who both died within a month of each other in the summer of 1947.

When Lilian Jane died, she left £2,537 in her will (c £100,000 in 2020) but when John William died less than a month later, he left only £531 (c £4,000 in 2020). It seems that Lilian Jane was the wealthier half of their marriage. Estate agencies can prove to be lucrative businesses, and maybe Lilian Jane French had inherited her wealth from her father.



Memorial to Lilian Jane French and John William French in Mill Lane Cemetery, Kirk Ella.

John William French's funeral took place at St. Andrew's Church on 4th July 1947 and he was laid to rest with Lilian Jane, who had died less than a month earlier on 6th June. They are both commemorated on the same memorial stone as Lilian's parents:

In loving memory of Lillian J. French who died June 6th 1947 aged 81 years beloved wife of John W. French who died July 2nd 1947 aged 83 years. At rest.

The plot of land on the east side of the bank, as we have seen, belonged to Neville Stephenson. He, too, had died a few years before the Frenches and in 1946, the land that he had owned changed hands being conveyed to Willerby Methodist Church Trustees. A year later, two prefabricated buildings that had

⁵ 'The Villa' still exists and is a Grade II listed building.

seen wartime service at the RAF station at Leconfield were erected on this land by the church to house meetings of the local youth club. These remained in use until 1966.



View of Willerby Square c1955 showing Alma Cottage. The two huts used by the local youth club can also be seen on the plot of land to the right.

In 1947, following the death of John and Lilian French, the life of the house as a private residence ended. Later that year, the Willerby branch of Hull Savings Bank took over the whole house and a new chapter in its life began.

Alma Cottage as a Bank

Following the acquisition of a lease for a room at Alma Cottage in 1946, a side entrance was constructed in order for staff and customers of Hull Savings Bank to gain access. This enabled the Frenches to remain privately in the main house. In 1947, after the death of John and Lillian French, the bank took over the whole ground floor of the house.

Extensive renovations were made to the building in order to accommodate the bank. The main staircase was removed and the staircase at the back of the house, formerly leading to the servant's room, was modified to allow access to the whole of the upper floor. This was then rented out as a self-contained flat.

During the 1950s, the flat was occupied by Roy and Nancy Roach and their two daughters. A decade later, a Mr. and Mrs. Brown and their son were in residence. Mr. Brown was a manager at another branch of the Hull Savings Bank.

The first manager of the Willerby branch was James "Jim" Reveler and he remained in place for many years. He is still well-remembered by older customers of the bank. Staff at that time remember these early decades as halcyon days. The head office of Hull Savings Bank was in George Street in Hull and the many branches of the bank in and around Hull are remembered as being one large family. Christmas parties were run for children of the employees and there was even an unofficial pitch on the beach at Hornsea. When employees visited the resort at weekends this part of the beach was the place to meet their

colleagues. Many long-lasting friendships were established during this period. The board of trustees and senior management were all very much part of the family including Stanley Kershaw, the chairman, and senior inspector, Edwin Cornwell, who both lived locally.

There was also a great rapport with other businesses in the area, and the annual Christmas Eve lunch at The Star on Main Street provided an opportunity to meet up with employees from Willerby Caravans and some of the other businesses in Willerby Square. Some of the friendships made at that time still exist today.

The story is told that on one winter's morning in the late 1960s, the snow was so thick that only a few members of staff at the bank were able to get to work. After opening time, the person with keys to the safe had still not arrived, the reason being that they had to walk the three miles to work through the snow. It was necessary to have some cash available for customers and £300 was borrowed from what is now the National Westminster Bank across the road. This was paid back (without interest!) once the key to the safe arrived.

When he retired in the 1960s, Jim Reveler was followed as manager of the Willerby branch by Keith Robinson. Other managers who are remembered by former employees are Mr. Slingsby, Iain Rintoul, Howard Joy and Julie Withey. Jackie Harrison was the manager at the time of closure.



The view from Alma Cottage in 1966 prior to demolition of the railway bridge and Willerby and Kirk Ella Station.

Earlier in our story we imagined John Henson, in the early 1880s, watching as the Hull and Barnsley Railway, and Willerby and Kirk Ella Station was being built. Just over eighty years later, in 1966, the view from the front windows of Alma Cottage was very different. Willerby Square, as we know it today, had taken shape and the continual

motor traffic would have been beyond John Henson's imagination. He would have been surprised to see that the railway, built as a symbol of progress in his day and now considered outdated, was closing and its infrastructure dismantled.

Changes were also afoot at the bank. In 1976, there was a rationalisation of local trustee savings banks, and Hull Savings Bank was amalgamated with other savings banks in the region to become part of the Yorkshire and Lincoln Trustee Savings Bank. Later, in 1983, a further restructuring saw all Trustee Savings Banks integrated into one entity known as the Trustee Savings Bank. Many will remember its slogan in those days as “The Bank That Likes To Say Yes”.



Trustee Savings Bank, Willerby (August 1982)

By this time, two single storey extensions had been built, one to the front and the other to the right of the house.

A further change took place in 1986 when shares in TSB were floated on the London Stock Market.

In 1995, Trustee Savings Bank merged with Lloyds Bank to become part of the Lloyds Banking Group, which meant the signage on the building underwent a further change. There was little other outward alteration until, a few years later, a window was removed and replaced by an ATM terminal.

There was a branch of Lloyds Bank just across the road from the Trustee Savings Bank, at No. 1 Main Street. This is where Neville Stephenson had lived and following his death in the 1940s the building was converted to shop premises. It is thought that Lloyds Bank took up the lease in the 1970s before finally closing in 1995 when the merger with TSB took place, the combined business being consolidated in Alma Cottage.

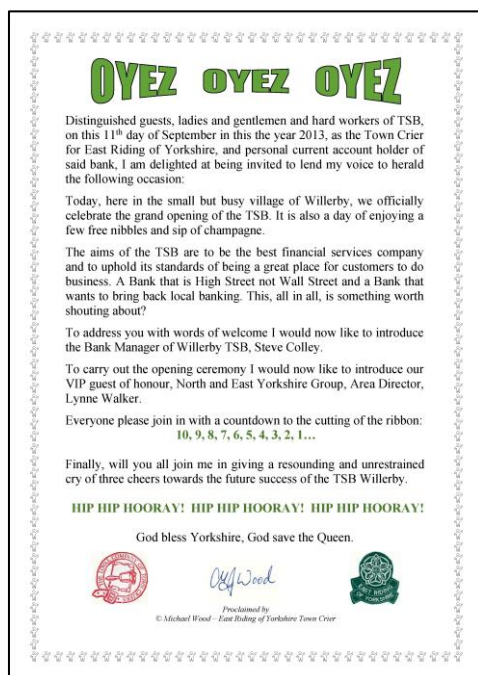
In 2013, Lloyds was forced to split off and rebrand the TSB branches, as a result of the £20bn taxpayer bailout following the financial crisis of 2008. The Willerby branch

became a TSB bank again with the signage on the building once again changing. TSB was floated on the London Stock Exchange on 20th June 2014 and a year later was delisted after the group was acquired by the Spanish bank, Banco Sabadell.



Lloyds Bank, 1 Main Street, Willerby 1990

Photo: Margaret McGlashan



The formal reopening of the TSB on 11th September 2013 was accompanied by a colourful ceremony. The Town Crier for the East Riding of Yorkshire was engaged to lead the proceedings, and waiting customers were welcomed by the manager, Steve Colley. A ribbon was cut by the Area Manager, Lynne Walker, and the bank declared open.

The proclamation by the Town Crier (seen on the left) and pictures of the occasion, illustrate the colourful scene outside the bank on that Wednesday morning.



Since the late 1940s, other significant changes have taken place on the plot of land to the east of Alma Cottage. In the mid-1960s, the prefabricated huts, which had provided good service for the young people of Willerby after the Second World War, were removed and replaced by the present Willerby Methodist Church building, dedicated in 1966. This resulted in the closure of the church's former building across Main Street that had been its home since 1897.



Willerby Methodist Church, built 1966

At about the same time as plans for the building of the new church were going ahead, a small parcel of land lying between the church and Holly Lodge (formerly Albion House) was purchased by Frank Clark, a builder, and on it he built a house in which he, his wife, Margaret, and his family were to live for many years.

In 1989, a small plot belonging to the Trustee Savings Bank was purchased by the church for £1,500 and, following an initiative of Willerby Parish Council, was later transformed into the community garden, the grand opening of which took place in the summer of 2013. The garden can usually be accessed by the public during the opening hours of The Square Well café.



Shortly after the turn of the millennium, members of Willerby Parish Council were looking into the possibility of commemorating those people of Willerby who lost their lives during the two World Wars and in other conflicts. In October 2005 these plans came to fruition and the bank kindly agreed to allow a commemorative plaque to be affixed to their wall.

Many Willerby residents have fond memories of the bank at Alma Cottage. It was where some, as children, started to save their pocket money. In the early days one could open an account with a penny (1d.). One elderly resident claims to have held an account at the Willerby Branch for 80 years! Others, opened accounts as students and, of course, countless businesses and private customers entrusted their hard-earned money to the bank. The loss of the friendly branch that ‘liked to say yes’ is a sad blow and many will mourn its passing.

Loyal staff and customers, alike, have seen many changes over the past 74 years during the life of this old building as a bank. The house itself has seen around



Alma Cottage, 14th May 2020, awaiting its next occupants.

200 years of history. It has housed generations of occupants, many of whose stories have now been told. We now wait in anticipation to see who will give this attractive old building its next lease of life as it looks forward to the next 200 years.

Acknowledgements

Many people have assisted with information and research in the compiling of this story of Alma Cottage. The contributions of both Christine Gibbs and Christine Pinder have been invaluable. The stories of former occupants of the house from the Ashtons to the Frenches would not have been possible without their painstaking and enthusiastic research.

Chris and Rose Aldred, together with Alan Hopper provided valuable information about Willerby Methodist Church, including a summary of their deeds, which provided a basis for much subsequent research. Contributions on the history of Alma Cottage during its time as a bank have been provided by Gillian Irwin, Jean Moon, Judy Sangwin, David Thomas and Steven Wilson. Enid Dean, Caroline Handforth of Willerby Parish Council, Andrew Lang, Margaret McGlashan, Frank Oliver, Adrienne and David Robinson, Clive Smith, Hilary Vint and Michael Wood have also made valuable contributions to the story.

In addition, a number of publications have provided useful sources of information. These include:

Bulmer's History and Directory of East Yorkshire, 1892

'Hull Gent Seeks Country Residence', K.J. Allison, East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1981

Kirk Ella Churchyard and Cemetery Monumental Inscriptions, East Yorkshire Family History Society, 2000

Kirk Ella and West Ella Heritage Trail, edited by Margaret Raymond, Kirk Ella and West Ella Parish Council, 2003

Memories of Bygone Years: Willerby, Kirk Ella and West Ella, Kathleen Johnson, 2002

The Register of Kirk Ella (facsimile copy), edited by Rev. James Foord, 1897

The Vicars of Kirk Ella, James and Margaret Bickford, 1983-2004

It should be noted that throughout the period of compiling this history, archived documents held by The Treasure House, Beverley and Hull History Centre have not been accessible due to Coronavirus restrictions. More might be added to the story once these repositories reopen and relevant documents examined.

Finally, if any reader can provide additional information about Alma Cottage or point out any inaccuracies in the above account, the author would be delighted to know. We can be contacted through our webpage (see back cover).

Francis Davies, July 2020 (revised August 2022)