

History of Warboys

Warboys Village History

About 350 million years ago, Warboys was the site of an active volcano which existed just south of the old Warboys airfield.

People have lived in the area around Warboys since 7000BC as indicated by finding a boat of this age during the late 19th century in a field adjacent to Puddock Drove. Bronze age tools have also been found indicating a presence 3500 to 1200BC.

The Romans brought Christianity to East Anglia. The history of religion during the early centuries AD was probably a mixture of Christianity and Paganism. In 655AD the first Abbey in Peterborough was founded. The Viking invasions of the 7th century destroyed churches and monasteries but in 974AD Archbishop Dunstan donated the land known as Warboys to Ramsey Abbey. Christian activity is recorded in the Domesday book, of 1086AD, which stated there was a priest and a Church in Warboys.

The first recorded settlement was known as Wardebusc (Saxon lookout woods) and was positioned at a fork in the road which skirted the fen between St Ives and Ramsey. By 1150 this had been changed to Wardebois (French influence) which was shortened to Warbois before finally becoming Warboys.

Some history follows roughly in chronological order:

It is thought that the first **Manor House** (near the Parish Church) was built around 1250. Sir John Leman later modified the house around 1620 to what we see today with a Dutch Gable to the front of this grade II listed building.

Parish Church History

The original church was built around 1086 and was surrounded by a medieval village. Nothing remains of this building and the oldest part of the existing building dates from the 12th century. The church was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary, but this was later changed to St Mary Magdalene. The current Parish Church is on the same site but is now on the edge of the village, the village no longer surrounds the church.

The earliest part of the current church was built during the 12th century—this church consisted of a chancel, the present nave and a north aisle. From this Norman church only the chancel arch (see adjacent picture) and a small piece of walling in the south west corner of the nave have survived.

Early in the 13th century the north aisle was rebuilt followed by the building of the south aisle. During the mid 13th century the broach spire was built.

During the 14th century the south aisle was extended (by the side of the tower) and a south porch added.

The north aisle was extended (or rebuilt) in the 15th century when the north porch was added.

Sometime before the 19th century the chancel was rebuilt and shortened but during the 19th century (1832) the chancel was extended eastward to its original length and considerably altered.

At this time large galleries were erected in both north and south aisles and the tower, the floor being lowered a foot to give headroom under them. Some walls were plastered, such

In 1557 some 118 villagers died during an outbreak of the **plague**.

The **Warboys Witches**, Alice Samuel and her family, were hung on 6 April 1593. This is a case of what the rich and famous did to poor vulnerable people effectively on the evidence of children.

Warboys Baptist Church came into being in 1644. The Puritan preacher, Henry Denn, baptised the first five Warboys men: William Dunn (who became the first pastor of Warboys), John Ward, John Richards, John Kidson and William Askew. Up to the early 1900's baptisms took place in the Weir. The Baptist Chapel building was completed in 1831.

On 18 August 1835 a **fire** in the west end of the village destroyed 32 houses and cottages.

The Rev E Finch, Rector of Warboys, on 15 March 1860 conveyed to a Board of Trustees The National School, the Master's House and Playground.

The Board School was built in 1896 (the school buildings are now used as the Library, Youthie, Playgroup and Parish centre.)

The Clock Tower was built in 1887 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It was paid for by public subscription and cost £230. It was restored in 1987.

Warboys Railway Station was opened in 1889. This was on the Somersham to Ramsey line operated by the Great Eastern Railway. In 1923 it became part of the newly created LNER. During this latter period the line saw increasing competition with road transport.

as above the Norman arch. The vestry at the end of the north aisle was created.

In 1896 the spire was restored. Look towards the tower from the east end of the nave to see a majestic arch and elegant lancet window.

In 1926 the tower and south aisle were underpinned. Also the changes of 1832 (apart from the chancel) were removed i.e. the plaster and galleries also the floor was restored to the former level. You can see where the wooden joists were inserted in the piers. It is interesting that one of the piers is octagonal while the rest are circular!

The font is of the early 13th century, the square bowl is carved with crude foliage standing on one large and four smaller shafts mounted on the base. The wooden cover also has an interesting background: It was made during the restoration work of 1926 from old beams salvaged during the restoration work. The font was moved from the west end of the nave in July 2007 to its new position in the east end of the north aisle. Baptisms are no longer a separate service where people just gather round the font, it is now usually part of morning service and the new position enables most of the congregation to see the Baptism.

Church Bells: There are now six bells, the sixth one (the treble) being a recent addition (1953) in honour of our Queen. The original sixth bell was said to have been lost at sea, many years ago. Apart from the fact that the bells record that they were made by Joseph Eayre of St Neots, they have interesting inscriptions. The bells were hung and rung in 1765, and on them are recorded the names of the church wardens and rector of that time, namely, Edward Dring and Oliver Hills together with Allen Cowper, Rector. In addition, bell number two says: 'Cum voco nenite', bell number three says: 'Omnia fiant ad gloriam

Warboys Brickworks opened in 1893. Alfred Fuller employed 50 men to work on his hand-made bricks. Each man earned £1 per week.

Warboys Parish Council was inaugurated in 1894.

The three globed lamp standard was erected at The Weir in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

The Baptist Church was restored and 'beautified' and reopened in 1899. The chapel thus began to look as it does today.

16 houses and outbuildings, along Warboys High Street, were burned in 1900. Calves and poultry died, Mr Raby died of shock caused by the outbreak of the fire.

A wooden **Methodist Church** was built around 1900 but this was replaced by the current brick Church in 1938. The brick Church was built on a brick by brick basis by rebuilding a chapel from Great Raveley.

V.C. Cockerel raised £11,000 for the British Red Cross Fund in Warboys during 1914-18 war.

Warboys Women's Institute was formed on 14 July 1920. The current W.I. Hall was officially opened by Mr Frank Robinson on 6 June 1929. The hall cost £380 to build.

Warboys Railway Station was closed to passengers in 1930.

Warboys wartime **airfield** (1941 to 1946) was the home of 156 Squadron, also known as **The Pathfinder Squadron**, until it moved to Upwood in March 1944.

Dei', bell number six (tenor) says: 'Ego sum vox c1 amantis'. Translating with some licence the combined messages of the bells into one sentence, we might say, 'I cry aloud with my voice, all praise to our glorious God'. The bells are regularly rung.

The organ, paid for by donations, was made by Messrs Harrison and Harrison of County Durham and installed in the east end of the north aisle in July 1901. In 1947 it was restored and enlarged. In July 2007 the organ was moved from the east end to the west end of the north aisle and it had a full refurbishment and tuning.

War Time:

During the second world war there was an airfield at Warboys. Many forces personnel who lost their lives are remembered in the church on plaques or in the Book of Remembrance. 156 Path Finder Squadron has a lasting association with the church. A stained glass window in the south aisle marks this period.

During and just after the war the sermon was preached in German and English when 150 German prisoners-of-war worshipped with villagers. The POW chaplain, Pastor Schroeder, of Old Hurst Camp read a translation prepared by the then Rector (Rev Nelson Trafford).

Other Aspects:

The church has a fine 12th century bronze knocker consisting of a lion's face holding a ring of two dragons fighting although this is no longer fitted to the main church door.

The electrical switch gear at the east end of the north aisle has been boxed in using panels from the old pulpit.

sports field on 6 July 1946 between Warboys XI and G Gifords XI. Part of the ground was donated by local farmer Tom Longland and the remainder was paid for by public subscription.

As part of the Cold War defences, a **Bloodhound Missile Base** was established in the centre of the old airfield in 1959.

Warboys Railway was finally closed in 1964.

The new school – **Warboys Community Primary School** - was opened in Humberdale Way by the Marquis of Exeter on 22 November 1972. The cost of the building was £91,000.

Warboys Library was opened in 1975. The first consignment of rubbish was deposited in Warboys **Landfill Site** during 1996.

A **fire** caused enormous damage to the White Hart public house in 1996.

Warboys Landfill Action Group was formed in 1999.

The **Youthie building** was opened in February 2001. This provides a meeting place for village young people mainly aged 13 - 18 years. In 2010 the Youthie building closed due to subsidence.

In 2010 the **Duke of Gloucester** visited the village in recognition of Warboys winning the 'Cambridgeshire Village of the Year' competition for the third time.

At the east end of the north aisle is a bracket containing a 15th century lion. Look closely and you will find other gargoyles around the church (inside and outside the church).

A list of Rectors in charge of the church since the 12th century is on a plaque mounted on the organ.

There are two stained glass windows in the chancel (east wall and south wall). One in south aisle (already mentioned) and another in the south vestry.

In 2007 the traditional wooden pews were removed and replaced with upholstered chairs. This makes sitting more comfortable and enables a flexible use of the space.

In 2010 new staging, carpets and a gas heating system to radiators were installed.

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The History of Warboys and the Parish Church was compiled using information from a variety of sources including:

www.british-history.ac.uk/; H A Hyde—various including 'Warboys Baptists'; John Bell 'The Manor of Warboys' & 'Virginia Woolf in Warboys', Harold Shelton 'Warboys: Witches to Wings', John Rhodes 'Branch Lines to Ramsey', Joan Cole and Evan Tringham

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