

LOSTOCK GREEN'S LOCAL HISTORY

August 2020 update

Information on Lostock Green's origins and distant and recent past has and is being gathered, collated and updated from lots of local residents and many other sources by Rosalind Todhunter, resident since 1981. If you have any items of local historical interest contact Lach Dennis and Lostock Green Parish Council Website <https://lachdennisandlostockgreen.co.uk/>

Some of this material has been on display at Lostock Green's History Weekend in October 2007, some published in Gossip on the Green / Village Links (former local newsletter) and some available on the Lach Dennis and Lostock Green Parish Council Website <https://lachdennisandlostockgreen.co.uk/>



Source : Ordnance Survey Map 1872

<https://www.cheshirearchives.org.uk/latest-news-and-events/Cheshire-Tithe-Maps-Online.aspx>

The Meaning of Lostock Green?

Lostock Green has been known in the past as *Lostock Parva* (Little Lostock) and as *Nether Lostock* (Lower Lostock). Green doesn't need any explanation but what about Lostock?

Wikipedia tells us Lostock is derived from Old English *hlose* a pig and *stoc* means a farm, now 'stock' or 'Stoke' in place-names, but here refers to a pigsty. So some of us live in **The Pigsty on the Green!**

The Normans

In 1070 Hugh Lupus divided Lostock into Over Lostock and Nether Lostock. Where was **Over Lostock**? Over means a hill in Anglo-Saxon. Is Over Lostock present day Lostock Gralam? Gralam was the name of the Norman landowner of Lostock. Where was **Nether Lostock**? Nether means low. Is there a Lower Lostock? Where is Nether/ Lower Lostock? Is it Lostock Hollow? Is it Field Number 292 which is named Lower Lostock on the Cheshire Tithe Maps? Or is it the part of Lostock Gralam near the Trent and Mersey canal?

Hame held Lostock [he was slain at the Battle of Nantwich]

1070 Hugh Lupus subdivided Lostock, Over Lostock went to Robert Grosvenor, Nether Lostock went to Hugh de Runchamp; whose grandson Gram assumed the name "de Lostock" and his descendants of this name held the property till Edward 2nd [1315-1316] when it was alienated to the Vernons. In Edward 3rds [1336-1337] it was held by Sir Thomas Danyel {or Daniers} and subsequently by the Holfords.

Later the manor together with Holford Hall estate in Plumley was in the possession of Peter Langford-Brook Esquire of Mere [died 1840] and then his greatnephew Thomas William, In 1902 Col Langford Brook of Mere Hall was the Lord of the Manor.

Source: Lostock Green History Weekend 2007 Display

Was there a "Castle" in Lostock Green?

The original field between Park Farm and the last house on the left as you leave the village going towards Lach Dennis is called "Castle Croft" on the c.1845 Tithe Map. Was this where a castle or manor house used to be?

Large blocks of sandstone have been found around Park Farm and taken for other buildings and gateposts in Lostock Green. Some blocks of this sandstone are at Spring Bank Farm on Birches Lane in Lostock Green on the north side of the A556 bypass. Could these be from the "castle"? Have you got any of these sandstone blocks in your garden?

Source: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches lane

The Mediaeval Manor of Lostock

Where was the Manor house? Possible Locations:

Lostock Hall originally in Lostock Works (since removed 1980s)

Hame Farm – between Crow Brook and Holford Moss.

Historical records mention that "Hame held Lostock" and he was slain in a battle of Nantwich in Norman times.

Castle Croft Field (now under 73 to 81A Birches Lane) was a rough 'lumpy field'.

May have been excavated by the Langford- Brooks in the 1800s



Source: Paper Map from local resident

Formation of The Townships On Rudheath

Source: Tony Bostock's History Notes: Rudheath ©Tony Bostock, 2009

<https://www.tonybostock.com/home/local-history-articles>

Lostock

Lostock was probably the first township to be formed on Rudheath. Somewhat confusingly the place-name 'Lostock' occurs in relation to three contiguous townships to the east of Northwich – Lostock Gralam, Lostock Green and Allostock. But which of these, if any, is the original Lostock? The Lostock which is referred to in a grant to Chester Abbey in the 1090s?

As already said the medieval Lostock seems to have contained a number of separate estates which eventually became townships in their own right. These were Birches, Hulse, and Lach Dennis which lie between Lostock Gralam and Allostock, and within the ancient bounds of Rudheath.

Both McNeil Dodgson and Eilert Ekwall suggest that Lostock derives from OE *hlose* meaning 'pig-sty' and *stoc* meaning 'secondary settlement of farm', hence we have something like 'pig-farm', or a hamlet associated with the pasturage of swine on the wastes of Rudheath. Alternatively the first element of this place-name might derive from *loose* meaning "small", thus a small settlement or farm. 'Allostock', according to the same authorities, might mean 'Over Lostock', 'Old Lostock' or the 'the hall of Lostock'. Spellings have resulted in Lostoche (late 11th c.), Lostocke (mid 12th c.), Lostoc (1212), Lastok (1279), and Lostoke (1301). Similarly Allostocke (1234), Allelostocke (1310) and Alstoke (1312). There are also references to Parva Lostoc in the early thirteenth century.

The place-name Lostock is not referred to in the Domesday Survey but first occurs in documentary sources from the last decade of the eleventh century: occasionally we find Lostock described as being 'upon Rudheath'. Allostock first appears during the mid-thirteenth century. From the late thirteenth

century the place-name Lostock Gralam also appears in the records. 'Gralam' was affixed to the name to refer to Gralam de Lostock, who held the manor, or a part of it, in the mid-thirteenth century. Similarly, I would suggest that Allostock refers to the other Lostock held by Alan de Lostock who held that part in the mid-thirteenth century, rather than the suggestions made above.

The early history of the manor of Lostock is difficult to determine and one reason for this is that prior to the fourteenth century the name "Lostock" can mean either Lostock Gralam or Allostock. The chronology of the first appearance of the various place-names seems to suggest that there was an original Lostock which was subsequently divided up between younger sons. This division may have occurred at an early date in view of the fact that Hugh 'fitz Norman' and his brother Ralph gave their part of Lostock to the Abbey of Saint Werburgh in the 1090s.

A tradition dating from 1386 suggests that the whole of Lostock was once held by a Saxon thane. Evidence submitted by John Holford during the course of the armorial dispute between the families of Grosvenor and Scrope in 1386, stated that the manor of Lostock originally belonged to Hame. Following this man's death at the Battle of Nantwich his lands were seized by Hugh, Earl of Chester, and granted to Hugh Runchamp, who had Nether (Lower) Lostock and Gilbert Grosvenor who had Over Lostock. This seems to support the suggestion that the division of Lostock was as early as the 1070s following an otherwise unknown battle which was presumably a part of the Cheshire rebellion of 1069/70. If this were true one might expect one or the other, or both, to have been mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. What is more likely is that for some reason, and as a reward is perfectly plausible, the manors were created from the wastes of Rudheath sometime in the twelfth century. 84 Whatever the truth there can be little doubt that post Conquest the family of Runchamp held Lostock and Hugh's son Gralam became known as 'de Lostock'.

One of the earls, perhaps Earl Rannulph II (1129-53) and not Hugh, granted to Hugh de Runchamp, a man with much property in Lincolnshire, an estate or manor based on the township of Lostock. According to Ormerod, this Hugh has a son named Richard who then had a son named Gralam. It would seem that this Norman family who took the name Lostock eventually had extensive land holdings with rights stretching along between what is now known as the Wade (or Bradshaw) Brook and the Peover Eye, for as we shall learn the townships of Birches, Hulse, Hulme and Allostock were all under the lordship of the Lostock family. The family also held the manor of Lees (a manor on the other side of Allostock between Byley and Cranage) which this Gralam, about the time of King John, gave to Liulph de Twemlow in return for five shillings a year and a hawk. A little later, in 1234, this same Gralam, or his son of the same name, gave an estate at Hulme in Allostock to Ralph Grosvenor.

The younger Gralam had three sons. Richard continued to live at Lostock and took that name; Geoffrey was given the manor of Rode and settled at Little Moreton and took the name Moreton or Morton; and Robert of whom nothing else is known. It is just possible that this last named man, or some other close relation may have resided at Church Lawton and was the ancestor of the Lawton family. The Lawtons held property in Hulse, originally a part of the manor of Lostock and seem to have had close links with the Lostock family.

A question that needs to be asked is what connection was there between Hugh 'fitz Norman' who granted part of Lostock to Chester Abbey and the Runchamp family? In Domesday, Hugh is mentioned as being lord of the two contiguous manors named Lawton, a part of Goostrey and Byley all of which had been the property of a Saxon named Godric. In addition to part of Lostock, Hugh also granted one of the Lawton manors and part of Goostrey to Chester Abbey.

Richard Lostock, son of Gralam of Lostock, had two sons who both died without issue, leaving their sister, Joan to inherit the family's manor of Lostock and pass it on to her husbands.

About 1240 Gralam granted to Bertram one of his sons land from his demesne called "Whitfield" with three butts towards the west and the land of "Mossefield", reserving the field and wood of Plumley and Lostock, for a pair of gloves. He also gave Bertram, with consent of Richard, his eldest son and heir, another 4 butts of land. Witnesses to these grants included Geoffrey de Runchamp, Adam his brother and Ralph "Turneveglyn", a person who figures frequently in property deeds of the time. "Turneveglyn" is probably from the Norman family name "Tourneville" from the place of the name.

During the reign of King Henry III, Gralam de Lostock, son of Hugh de Runchamp, granted the Premonstratensian canons of Warburton land in Lostock that had apparently been marked out by them with a series of crosses in the ground. The area named "Caldecote" was described as starting at "Livildesforde" and then following a ditch as far as the lands of a Ralph T.....e, perhaps Ralph Turnevilleyn who held lands in Hulse, following his lands as far as a stream which was then followed up back to the starting point.

The main line of the Lostock family terminated in the first decade of the fourteenth century. Richard de Lostock had a daughter Joan who became heir to her father and brothers, Richard and Thomas. In 1307, the elder Richard sold lordship of the manor of Lostock to Ralph Vernon of Shipbrook, with the proviso that Joan's descendants continued to use the estate. She married firstly William Toft from whom are descended the Holford family who held lands in Holford, Lostock Gralam, Lache Dennis and Stubbs Lache. Joan next married Ralph Vernon's second son, Thomas, from whom are descended the Vernons of Lostock Gralam and Haslington; during the reign of Edward II Thomas held the 'vill' of Lostock and lands in Parva Lostock and Plumley.

Richard de Lostock, Gralam's grandson, died about 1315 when his widow sued certain individuals for dower of messuages and lands in Lostock which amounted to some seventy acres, (about 150 statute acres), five messuages and half of the mill there.

As the Vernons were now lords of the manor it is not surprising to find Ralph Vernon's widow suing for dower of property in Lostock. In 1320 Margaret Vernon sued her son Thomas for twelve messuages, 160 acres of land, five acres of meadow, ten of wood 100 of pasture (about 580 statute acres) and two parts of the two mills in Lostock Gralam.

From this time on it seems that the lordship passed to Joan's other family the Holfords who were descended from her first husband William de Toft. In 1359/60 John Holford successfully recovered from Richard Vernon of Lostock Gralam the manor of Holford and in 1372 John, son of William Holford, is described as 'lord of Lostock' when he granted lands here. However some lands did remain with the Vernons of Lostock.

Other proprietors of lands in Lostock are the Grosvenors of Hulme; the Lache family who had two messuages and twenty-six acres of land in 1315; the Winningtons who had two messuages and thirty-four acres in 1335; the Fittons of Gawsorth and then the Davenports of Henbury, who, during the fourteenth century, held property known as 'Bancroft' which consisted of two messuages and twenty acres; and a younger branch of the Lostock family. It seems that all these properties were held from the Holfords as heirs of Richard de Lostock.

Hangman's Lane

Have you heard how Hangman's Lane got its name?

Former local Lostock Green resident Jessie Bond had this explanation.

"A man was trying to commit suicide. He climbed over Hangman's Stile into a field and in to a pit. But when he got in the water he regretted it and scrambled out losing his finger nails as he pulled himself out. He then he hung himself from a tree"

Is this what happened? When did it take place? Which pit? Which tree? Have you heard another explanation?

What is the true story behind Hangman's Lane?

Another former local resident Judy Pass gave her version

"When I moved into Hangman's Lane over 20 years ago, I was told the tale that salt, a precious commodity was taken by horseback from the diggings in Northwich, across back country roads to Macclesfield. Soon robbers learned the value of salt and robbed horseman, sometimes killing them. Several thieves were caught and hung up on the corner of the lane, thus incurring the name Hangman's Lane. I believe the gibbet was left as a warning to others."

Hangman's Stile

Hangman's Stile is now overgrown beside the gate to the fields on west side of Birches Lane opposite Hangman's Lane. This footpath is the "Salter's Way" and at this stile the Salter's Way crosses the major turnpike road of Birches Lane from Warrington south towards London. Birches Lane was a toll road and is recorded in Parliamentary records when the tolls were removed.

Cheshire was renowned as a county of outlaws – with its own laws. Moving salt commanded tolls – perhaps salt smugglers were hung. Hangman's Stile may have been at a major cross roads where outlaws were hung.

Source: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches lane

More on Hangman's Lane

How much do we really know or for that matter how much do we really care? Are our lives too busy or is it just a lack of interest that we know so little about the village where we live. Myths pass from generation to generation, each generation adding a little bit more spin to the story. Do we ever spend time to research facts that we have read in a book or magazine or have been told by a native are true? Do we accept the fact that it is written in a book or magazine, or that the old lady/man in the village told us so, that it must be true.

Hangman's Lane is a subject for much debate. I personally have heard or read of at least six different stories of why it got its name. Each story, however, telling of it being given its name because of hangings that took place there. If we research it a little deeper and contrary to the many myths that surround the name, Hangman's Lane probably derived its name from the fields named Hangman's field, one of which in c.1740 was part of the tenement known as "Priestners."

The field lies to the south westerly side of the Lostock to Holmes Chapel road (Birches Lane) and opposite to the road leading to Hulse (Hangman's Lane) and known as Hangman's Field and Ten Butt.

In c. 1845 when the tithe map of Lostock Gralam was surveyed, the field known as Hangman's Field was still recognised. Two further fields (which formed parts of the Township of Birches (Birches Hall) which were owned by Lord Delamere and occupied by William Okell) were called Far Hangman's Field. This is the field that forms the junction of Birches Lane and Hangman's Lane and near Hangman's Field which borders Far Hangman's Field and fronts Birches Lane. It is not unreasonable to see why Hangman's Lane derived its name as the fields were named a long time before the lane took its name.

John Field in his book "A History of English Field – Names" makes reference to Hangman's Field on the common boundary of Birches, Hulse and Lostock Gralam; he states "the field may be a perquisite of the executioner rather than a site of hanging".

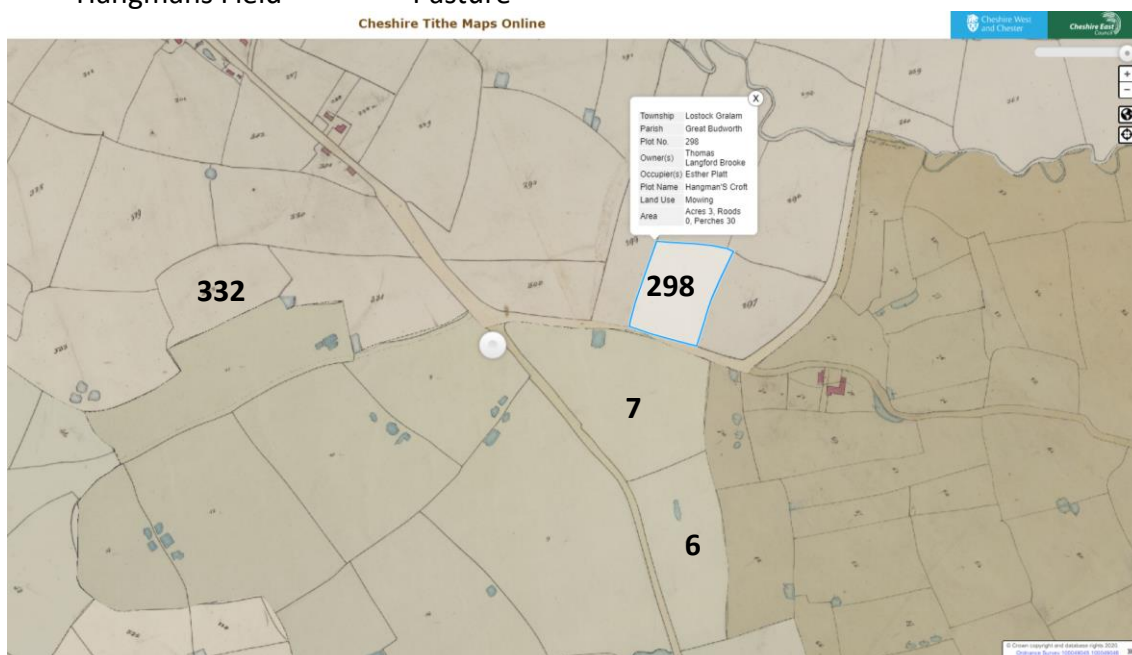
However, it would not be unreasonable to believe that a gibbeting site may have existed here on the junction of Hangman's Lane and main the Wilderspool - Holmes Chapel Road (Birches Lane). Gibbeting was common law punishment, which a judge could impose in addition to execution. This practice was regularised in England by the Murder Act 1752, which empowered judges to impose this for murder. It was most often used for traitors, murderers, highwaymen, pirates, and sheep-stealers and was intended to discourage others from committing similar offences.

The structures were therefore often placed next to public highways (frequently at crossroads) and waterways. Gibbeting being a visual deterrent for all other would be criminals, a gibbet being a wooden structure resembling a gallows, from which the bodies of executed criminals were formerly hung to public view; gibbeting was made redundant in 1834.

Source: Wayne Porter of Birches Lane 28th March 2011

1845 Tithe Maps Hangman's Field Names

Field No	Field Name	Field Use
6	Near Hangman's Field	Pasture
7	Far Hangman's Field	Pasture
298	Hangman's Croft	Mowing
332	Hangmans Field	Pasture

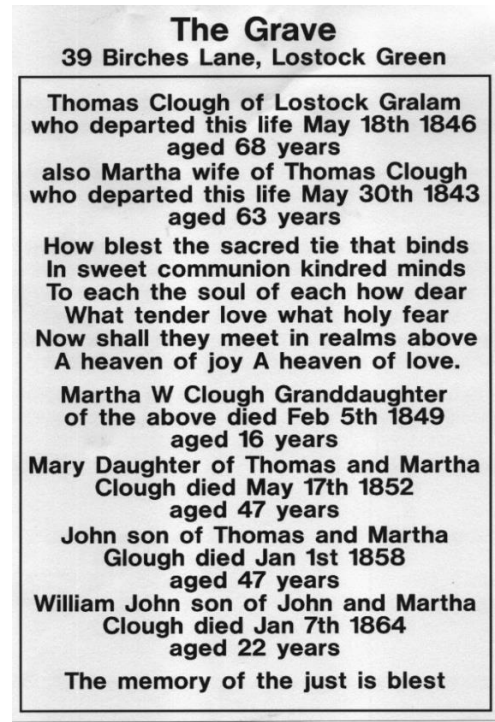
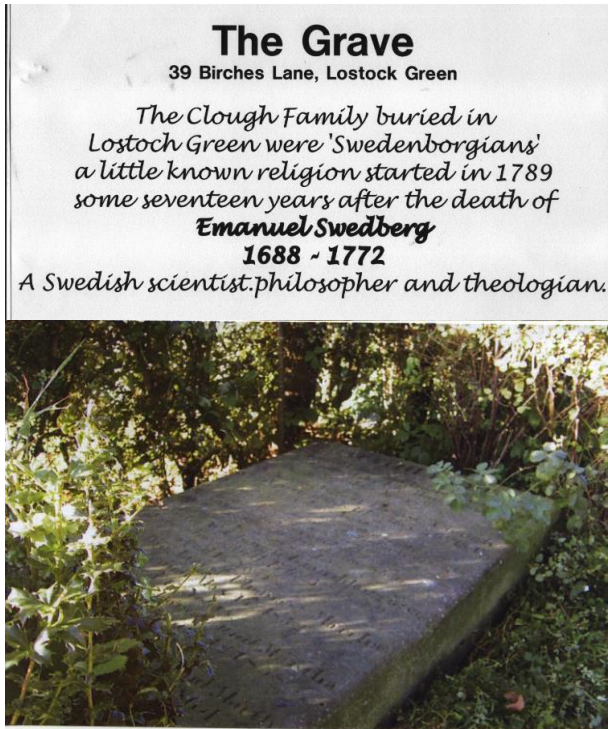


Source: Cheshire Tithe Maps Online

Burial Grounds

Sources: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches Lane, Rosemary Head of Birches Lane and others

- **Castle Croft Field:** Was there an ancient burial mound in Castle Croft field between Park Farm and Castle Croft Farm? And if so was it excavated archaeologically by Longford-Brooks in the 1800s?
- **Bells Funeral Home:** In 1700s there was a burial ground in lawn area in front of present day Bells Funeral Home (former ICI labs).
- **Back garden of 39 Birches Lane:**



PARK FARM

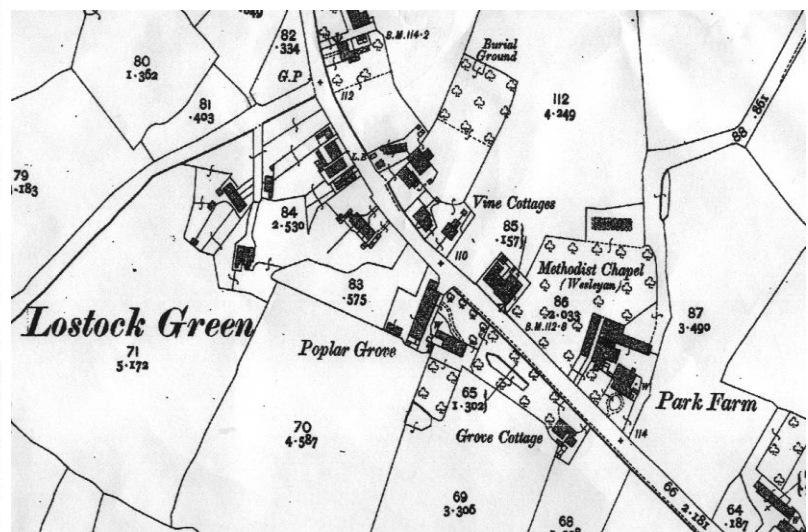
1902 in the Kelly's trade directories Mr John Millington farmed at Park Farm.

Park farm was then farmed by Peter and Mary Carter (nee Rutter), and they had four children Peter b1899, Fred b1902, Florence Mary b1903 and Rowland James b 1904. None of the children were born in Lostock Green.

I am not sure when they moved into Lostock Green but Peter died in 1931 and Mary continued to farm at Park Farm. She died in 1954.

Fred the eldest son took over the farm from his mother until it was sold to ICI. Fred had previously lived at Castle Croft, Lostock Green.

Information from Margaret Weedall Birch Grove
Lostock Green (Great Grand daughter to Peter Carter)



Ordnance Survey Map 1910

Source: Cheshire Tithe Maps Online

2nd World War German Plane Crash

During the 2nd World War when Mr Sadler, Jessie Bond's dad was on watch as a Fire Warden a German Plane crashed down on Kinsey's Fields near the Crow Brook. Mr Sadler was one of the first people to get there. The German air men had got out of the plane and were wandering across the fields. They were captured and taken prisoner. Hundreds of people came to see what was going on and Cookes Lane was blocked all the way up from Rudheath. Jessie's husband-to-be Sid Bond came all the way from Weaverham. Jessie and Sid had yet to meet each other!

Source: Jessie Bond October 2007

The blast from the plane crash cracked the thick glass of the shippen window at Springbank Farm, Birches Lane and it wasn't replaced as it would be weaker thinner plate glass. This cracked window was only replaced in 2000.

Source: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches Lane

Colin Lynch's Memories of Lostock Green

Local Historian Mr Lynch has deposited books in Northwich library which mention Lostock Green and Birches (township) in the index. These books date from 1805 and 1830 and include : Slater's Chronicle and the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, 50 volumes of the Cheshire Sheaf, White Gazeteer of Cheshire

Nightingales were heard in Lostock Green in the 1920s and 1930s.

Mr Lynch's father bought old farm machinery from **Kinsey's farm** (Field House Farm) – they had threshing machine and steam engines, bailing wire.

After the 2nd World War Octel ICI Holford at **Ascol Drive** used as storage Mr Lynch's father took material there for storage by lorry and took scrap back.

Northwich by-pass was built in three sections the Lostock section in the 1960s.

Thomas Clough and his wife were the last people to be **buried in a private plot** in Lostock Green – there are about 5 graves

'On the Green' 1940s & 1950s

Jessie Sadler was born in Lostock Green and spent her childhood here moving to Lostock Gram in 1949. Jessie played in the lanes and fields. **Kinsey's Fields** down the lane from Robin Hood Farm to Crow Brook were a favourite play area. The slope to the brook was good for tobogganing but you had to be careful, Rose Higgins went straight down on her toboggan into the stream.

Jessie was born in Cookes Lane (now Village Close) in the house next door to Simla Villa and lived as a child in two cottages in the **Cinders** (now Cinders Lane). Her mother was a bit embarrassed about the name – Cinders - and when the doctor visited and asked for the name of the road her mum said it was just Lostock Green. But the doctor thought it was something to do with a fire grate, so Mum owned up to the name 'Cinders'. Jessie's house had no indoor toilet or bathroom, it was down the yard.

Jessie started school at **Lostock Infants** on Manchester Road but couldn't get home for lunch so her Mum would make up a lunch to take with her. Jessie made friends with an older girl – from Wincham Farm, being war time – the farm girl would have more food to share with Jessie at lunch time. Her dad worked for ICI and cycled each day to Winnington.

Mr Pownall had an allotment roughly where Village Close is now. **The Hut** was built on here after the 2nd World War and the youngsters of the village would meet up there and play billiards and darts. At the end of the War “there was a bit of a do” – a street party celebration, centred on the Hut

Jessie family used to buy farm produce locally from Caulker’s **Robin Hood Farm** and **Rathbones Farm** (No 31 Birches Lane) – eggs, milk and butter – Jessie remembers seeing Mrs Rathbone making up the butter. There were deep water filled pits along the Lane next door to Rathbones - where people dumped rubbish – “they are full of old pianos – they would sink and disappear”. These pits were filled in and the bungalows built on top of them.

Gerald Winstanley sold and delivered milk from **Wrenches Farm** (Poplar Farm). This farm was owned by George Bell and then the Basfords.

Undertakers

In the 1940s there were two undertakers on Lostock Green.

George and John Bell in 37 Lostock Green (now Birches Lane) and Bramhalls opposite in Chestnut House (now 36 Birches Lane). They made their own coffins in sheds on the premises.

Coal Merchants

There were two coal merchants on the Green. One coal merchant was run by Willy and Harry Kelsall

Castle Croft

In the 1940s Miss Topham lived in Castle croft she was like the ‘Lady of Lostock Green’ and rode around in a horse and trap. When asked by Jessie’s dad why she never married she replied ‘Shoes never came, clogs I’d never have!’

Source: Jessie Bond October 2007

Rathbones Farm

In the 1940s and 1950s Number 31 Birches Lane was a small holding where Mr and Mrs Rathbone lived and grew vegetables. No 33 was built in 1977 in the orchard of the small holding and there is an apple tree still growing beside the road.

Sources: Mr Les Thornton September 2007 Mr John Davies October 2007

Travelling Shops & Delivery Vans

In the 1940s and 1950s and up to 1980 Iredale the bakers and grocers from Northwich was selling and delivering to Lostock Green folk and also Hewitt, the butcher from Rudheath, would come in a van each week.

Source: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches lane

Lostock Field Day 1950s

This was held on a field near Robin Hood Farm and Platt’s (the milkman’s house) across the lane to Kinsey’s Fields roughly where the By Pass A556 is now.

Lostock Green Field Day Lostock C of E Church Queen Edna Riley in 1950s

Source: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches Lane

[illegible]

Source: Map drawn by Joyce Allman

Spotlight on Lostock Hollow

Lostock Hollows are tucked away on the north side of the CWAC parish of Lach Dennis. Here the Wade Brook (Crow Brook) has cut a deep valley separating Lostock Green from Lostock Gralam. It's where Birches Lane takes an abrupt bend crossing over the Brook on a narrow sandstone bridge showing the scrapes of many a near miss by passing traffic.

After crossing the bridge as you go up Birches Lane just glance to your right and you will see down in the *Hollow* a small holding with a variety of creatures from ducks, geese, hens, pygmy goats and Hebridean sheep to pigs.

Lostock Hollow is appropriately named, from the Anglo Saxon meaning **Place of the Pigsty** *hlose* (pigsty) + *stoc* (place). .

Illuminated Pigs of Lostock Hollow

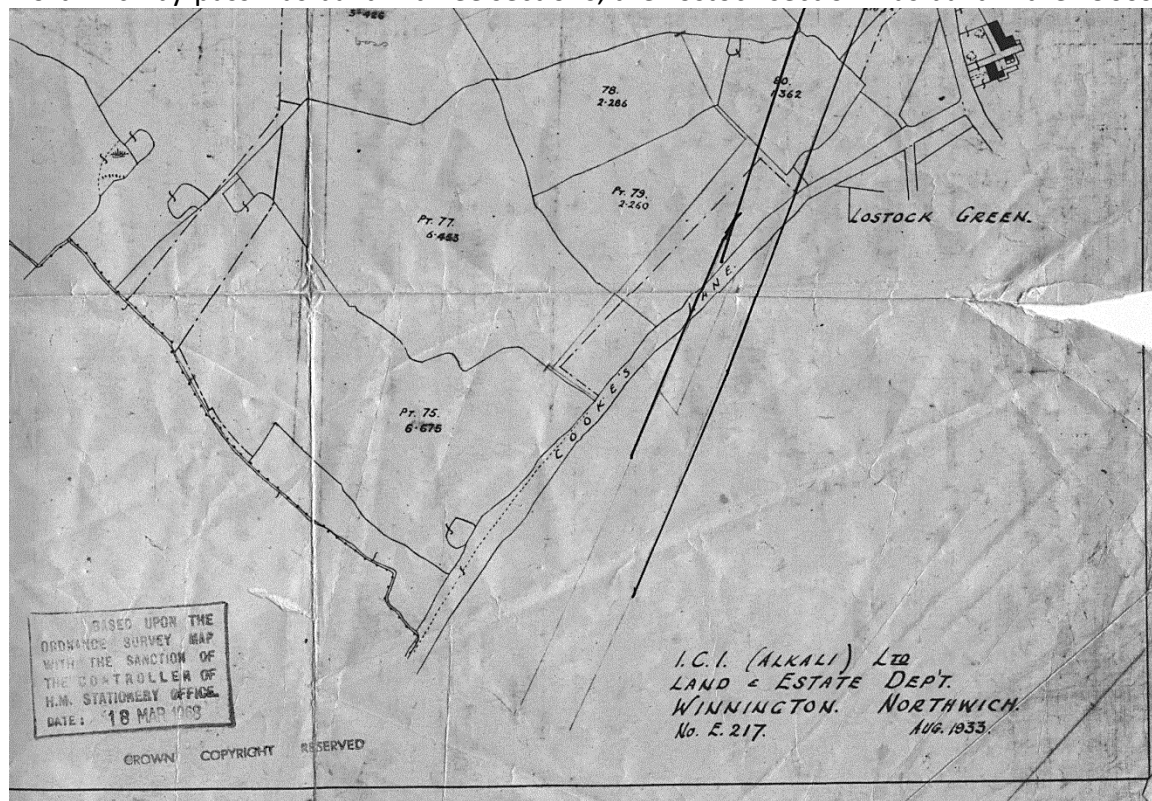
There's even a legend that ghostly pigs haunt the *Hollow*. The illuminated pigs of *Lostock Hollows* are apparitions seen where Birches Lane crosses the Wade Brook. The pigs are meant to have candles on their backs.

- Were the pigs really salt smugglers trying to avoid the salt tolls?
- Was there a salt smugglers' footpath following the Crow Brook from Northwich south-eastwards out of the district?
- Did the ghostly legend grow up to scare people away from the smugglers?

Source: Barbara Griffiths formerly of Birches Lane

Northwich By Pass A556 Dual carriage way

Northwich by-pass was built in three sections, the Lostock section was built in the 1960s.



Northwich Proposed By Pass Route: 1933

Source: Paper Map from local resident

Social Life in the 1970s

Barbara Kelsall, married to Geoff Kelsall, son of a coal merchant in Lostock Green, moved back into Lostock Green in the 1970s.

As a young mum she restarted the **Sunday School** about 1974 and in about 1975 started up the **Youth Club** – Geoff making the games table. The Youth Club raised money to buy the wooden benches on the playing field – see the inscription on the seats. The Youth Club also raised the money for the red carpet in the Church. Barbara also organised the **Monday Social Club** and arranged Fashion Shows in the Church which raised money to take out the pensioners for meals.

In the late 70s she ran the **Lostock Green Fete**. This was in the first week in September when all the children would be back at school and the mums were available to help out. The procession was in decorated sports cars and the fete was held on the field between the church and the Park Farm. This was a small field for young cattle and only made a playing field in the early 1980s. Teas would be served in tents on the lawn in front of Park Farm.

When the Church started holding an annual Sunday School Queen Fete in early summer – the September Village Fete was brought to an end.

Source: Barbara Kelsall formerly of Birches Lane

Holford Brine Field between Lostock Green and Plumley

On the first Saturday each month walkers from Lostock Green cross the fields for coffee, tea and cakes at the monthly Plumley Chapel Coffee Morning, where we've met have Alan Ward who grew up locally and has a passion for the local industrial history of Plumley, Holford and Lostock.

One Saturday we had just walked by the old and mysterious Ammonia Soda Works building in the woods near the railway crossing and Ascol Drive. Alan showed us old photos of the early 1900s including his grandfather working in the Soda plant. He gave us a copy of a Brief history of the Ammonia Soda Company / Brunner-Mond Works (1901 -1926) and the discovery of the brine field. Here are some extracts:

The first test boreholes were drilled on the site in 1901. No brine was found. These are still to be seen opposite Holford Hall. A second larger hole was drilled near to the present lake. Brine was found. Two pumps were sunk in the shaft. Each of these pumps produced 6000 gallons of brine per hour. Work on the site started in 1904 and a series of small houses were built along the small cart track leading to Holford Street (now the A556). This area later became known as A.S.C.O.L. Drive named after the company: the Ammonia Soda Company Ltd.

The plant started production of soda ash in October 1908. By 1911 the company had severe financial problems. Brunner-Mond had considered buying the company and in 1911 carried out an audit but decided not to buy the works.

By 1915 Bunner-Mond had contracts with Alfred Nobel to produce munitions for the French Navy and the British Armed Forces and needed a site away from the built up areas of Lostock and Northwich. They purchased the Ammonia Soda Company and in early 1916 the production of munitions commenced. Over 500 people were working at the site and a special station - Plumley Halt - was built next to the signal box. Between 1916 and 1918 91,210 tons of tetrahydrate calcium nitrate and 62,119 tons of calcium nitrate was produced. A total tonnage of 153,329 of nitrate.

Source : Alan Ward formerly of Plumley