

A Look at

Alvingham

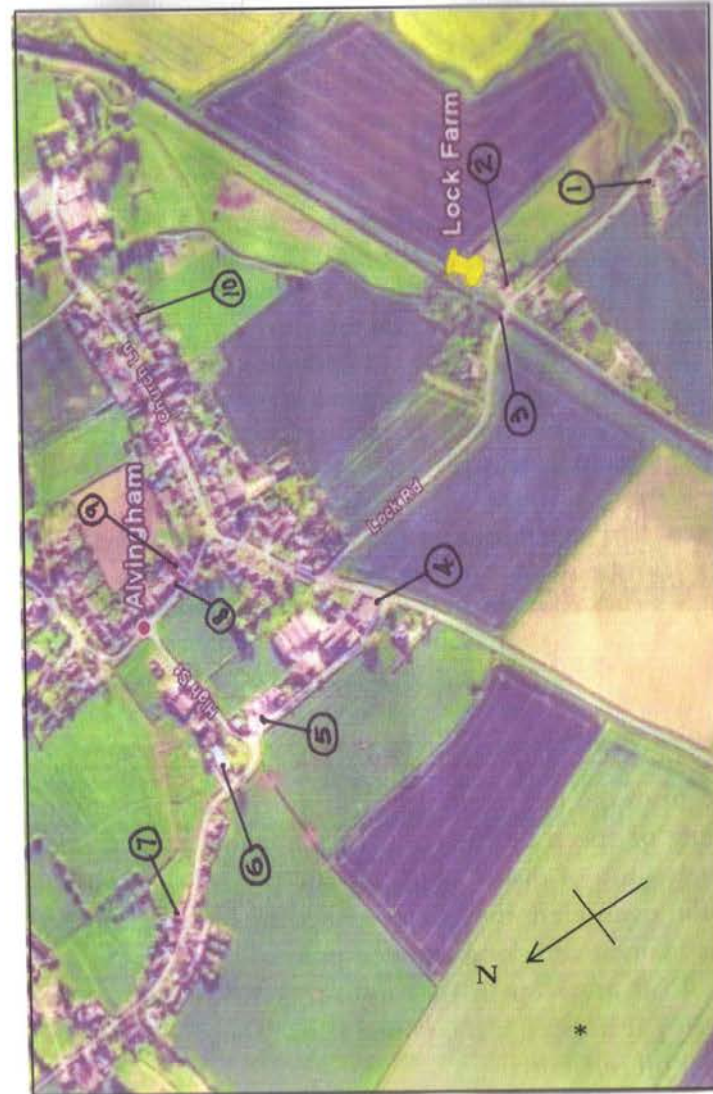
50 Years Ago And Today

Mike Hand

Index to Aerial Map of Alvingham

1. The Washdyke
2. Lock Farm
3. Bridge over Canal
4. White Barn
5. Wright's Corner
6. Village Hall
7. Blacksmith's Shop
8. Trafford's Store
9. Methodist Chapel
10. Priory Row Cottages

* Denotes photos courtesy of
Google Earth Street View





Washdyke Cottages 1936

In the early 1900's, the Washdyke cottages got their name from the use of the River Lud that ran by them for washing of sheep before shearing the wool. After passing through a tub of disinfectant, the sheep were then pushed into the river. Here they were washed by being pushed under by men with long wooden poles.

Dad grew up in that house as a boy, and as the owner of it in later years, rented it to "Shep" Norris who worked on our farm.



*Washdyke cottages location 2010 **

The cottages and adjoining property, about an acre, were sold in the 1950's to the Stainton family, and the carefully tended vegetable gardens deteriorated, as did the houses which were eventually demolished.

The property is now occupied by a number of mobile homes in various states of repair and tidiness, surrounded by corrugated steel fences of whatever colour was available when bought. The River Lud flowing under the road bridge is almost hidden by growth along its banks.



Lock Farm 1952

Lock Farm began life in 1773 when the Louth Navigation Canal (in the foreground) was dug from Louth to the North Sea coast. The house was built as an inn, and the locks adjacent to the yard was a busy location for loading and unloading of freight. With the advent of rail transport in the early 1800's, the canal became unused and the inn converted to a house and a farm developed around it.

My father began farming here in the early 1920's and this is where we all grew up as children.



Lock Farm 2010 *

Over the last forty years, a number of the deteriorated farm buildings have been razed and newer buildings added. No longer is the yard filled with straw and grain stacks. My brothers ran the farm until the late 1990's when most of the fields were sold as retirement approached, the three acre paddock remaining with the farm house. Jeff made many changes to modernise the house while living in it during the 80's and 90's, adding a large extension to the rear. Two bungalows were added in the field across the road in 1961, one in which my parents retired and one for Jeff. The former is now owned by non family, and the other is rented out by Jeff, who himself now lives in Louth.



South approach to Lock Farm 1955

This approach from Cockerington shows plainly the number of old brick buildings at the bottom of the farm yard. The huge willows which used to line the rear of the yard buildings have been removed only one or two years before this picture, to try and avoid further deterioration in the barn foundations from the many roots.

The house can be seen covered with ivy on its south and west sides, and the kitchen and south chimney of the house are still visible at this time. The mill beck, as always, appears to be in serious need of trimming, a continuing requirement.



*Lock Farm approach from south 2010 **

The trees on both sides of the approach to the Lock are now in a state of overgrowth, totally hiding the view of the house from this side. Some of the old brick barns at the bottom of the yard have been taken down before they collapsed as the walls were very unstable. New yard buildings have been built. The old cowshed barn (just right of the house) is still standing although not in too good a shape structurally. The mill stream is still in need of bank trimming and the fenced gateway entrance to the field (Hewson's) on the left (not visible in picture) has gone, as has the gate itself in the pursuit of easier field access of mechanised farm equipment and the disappearance of any livestock movements on foot.



Lock Farm from the road side 1956

In this view, the old buildings at the bottom of the yard can be seen, along with several straw stacks, and a farm wagon made in 1946 using army surplus wheels and tires. The old brick wall with inverted vee top surrounds the front lawn, with the old milk churn table and the thriving purple lilac tree. Century old ivy covers the front of the house.



*Lock Farm seen from the road 2010 **

The 230 year old house has undergone quite a few changes in the last 30 years. The right chimney stack on the house and the chimney in the kitchen have been removed, as has the brick wall that surrounded the front lawn. Windows and front door have all been replaced during the 1970's renovations.

Gone also are the big and small yard gates, with the adjoining fence and the large concrete gate posts. Many of the brick buildings at the bottom of the yard were demolished during the 1980's as the walls were no longer in a stable condition. The sight of straw stacks in the yard belongs permanently in the past.



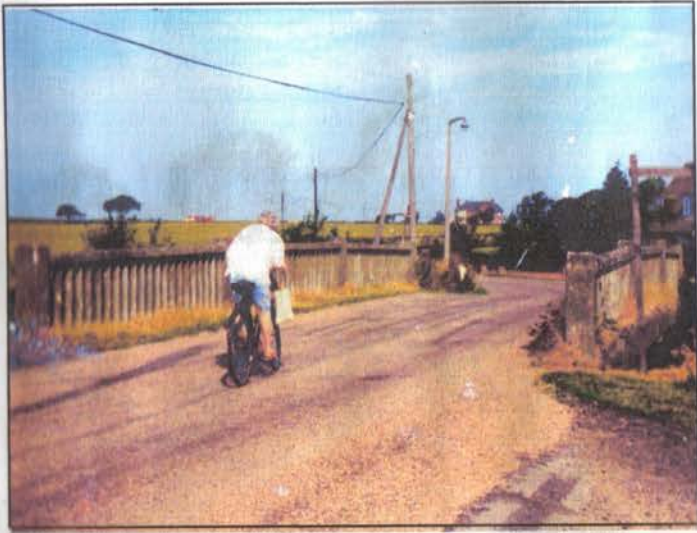
Lock approach from the village 1956

Old bridge with concrete railings shown. Note garage immediately behind bridge with totally blind back out on to the road. Could only have been possible in traffic conditions of the 1940's and 1950's!



*Lock Farm approach from village 2010 **

Note the garage behind the bridge is gone. New, stronger bridge with aluminum railings replacing the old concrete structure which had served also as an air raid shelter in World War Two. Sidewalks provided on new bridge to suit modern safety requirements with the higher traffic volumes encountered.



Bridge over navigation canal 1980

Turn of the century concrete bridge still in use here, with well mossed concrete railings, walked along many times in our youth in preference to walking along the road! Mum still using her bike to get to the village. Used by Dad to rest his Lewis gun on when shooting at a German bomber in 1940 that was heading along canal to the North Sea after bombing Louth railway station. Our air raid shelter was constructed beneath the bridge at the side of the water, and was our sleeping place all during the summer of 1940.



*Bridge over canal 2010 **

Bridge replaced a few years earlier to handle heavier traffic. Design of aluminum railings does not have the solid character that the old concrete railings had. Note absence of electricity lines which were buried around the time the bridge was replaced. Gone are the many inscriptions carved on the top of the concrete railing over the years.



White Barn corner 1938

In the 1930's and 1940's, the White Barn was quite a focal point of the village. Besides being quite a landmark, it was the stopping place for the Lincolnshire Bus Lines bus running between Louth and Grimsby. Part of the Shucksmith farm, it has always been kept spotlessly white-washed on a regular basis.

For the 1937 Coronation and the 1945 war ending celebrations, in the absence of any local hall, the barn was cleaned out inside and painted, and with long tables set up, hosted lunch for all the local citizenry after the festivities and sports held in the field opposite.



*White Barn 2010 **

Little has changed in the view at White Barn corner in the last 50 years. The trees are a little bigger, the roads now have white marker lines, and a large residence was built in the field across from the barn (out of view to the left) by the Shucksmith family.

The yellow mileage marker installed by the AAA in the early 1930's is still sitting on the wall facing towards London. It was removed in 1939 at the start of the war, along with the signpost at right, but did not regain its place once again until 1999 when it was found stored in a barn.



Wright's Corner 1953

Another focal point for the village in those days was this corner, housing the shop of the local carpenter and wheelwright, Len Wright. From this shop came furniture and many a farm wagon in the early 1900's. He also operated a bike repair shop, already removed in this photo, and the local petrol pump. The petrol was pumped up one gallon at a time by hand (no electricity until 1947) and then dispensed into the car. The large two storey warehouse at left, after carefully cleaning out the ground floor, housed many a whist drive for the community. The huge tree near the pump had one of the largest diameter trunks in the area, but in this photo was already showing its age as the top had to be trimmed off to remove dying branches.



*Wright's Corner 2010 **

This corner has changed considerably over the last fifty years. Gone is all trace of the petrol pump, the wheelwright shop, the barn used for whist drives and the huge tree that was a landmark. After Len Wright retired, the wheelwright shop was used for a few years as a pottery, but the building too has now been razed in the interest of building infilling.

The wheelwright's house can still be seen in the background but the rest of the property is now occupied with two new houses sadly lacking much of the character of the previous buildings.



Village Hall 1956

When the army base built on Tom Shucksmith's land during the war was closed in 1945, most of the buildings were removed. This one, however, was kept and the property donated by the family to the village. Local citizens fixed it up and converted it to a pool hall at one end, a regular meeting spot when I was in my late teens, and a community meeting hall at the other. It became the focal point for local meetings of all kinds.



Village Hall 2010

Over the years, as the village population grew and the village hall saw increasing use, the building was gradually modified and renovated until it now stands as a handsome brick structure which is the pride of the village. It now houses an improved kitchen and is used for any occasion required from meetings to weddings. I attended my sister's 80th birthday dinner there in 2008 along with many of my friend from boyhood.



Alvingham blacksmith shop 1938

One of the busiest spots in the village in this period, the local blacksmith made or repaired pretty well any piece of farm equipment, and did a steady trade in shoeing horses. Most of the farms in pre war days used many carthorses, ours included, for farm work. With a hand operated bellows to keep the fire hot, and a well worn anvil, the sound of the blacksmith's hammer (two hits on the anvil and one on the workpiece) was a common sound in the area.

Often did the writer stand in this shop as a boy, holding the cart horse's head while clouds of smoke billowed up as Fred Phillipson, who apprenticed there to the previous blacksmith, Charlie Douse, burned the horse's hoof to fit the new shoe.



Alvingham Blacksmith Shop 2007

With the passing of horse use on farms and with the increasing technological complexity of farm machinery, the local blacksmith operation is but a memory. The shop still stands, though and has since its closing taken on a new life as a source of wrought iron handcrafts.



Trafford's Store 1956

A mainstay in the village since the 1860's, Trafford's Store is now in the hands of the fourth generation of the family. Groceries and supplies were delivered to the outlying farms and cottages by horse and van, and later by motorised van.

As a boy, it was a place to go on Saturday to buy some sweets with one's Saturday penny. A daily trip was made here to pick up the newspaper. Mr Trafford was the first in the village to use electricity, installing an engine driven generator and batteries in one of the rear barns to light the house and the store in the early 1930's.



*Trafford's store location 2010 **

Closed in the 1990's when the fourth generation owner, Bob Trafford retired, the sign was taken down, the store window with its stock of items replaced by a standard home window, and the familiar door with its banana handle replaced.

As the population became more mobile with a car in every household, and large supermarkets became the norm in the local town, business became increasingly difficult to support profitability during the 1980's and 1990's, making the closing of the village store a foregone conclusion.



Methodist Chapel 1956

The Methodist chapel was built in the 1840's and has been in continuous use since then. It stands next to the village store which opened about twenty years later. Behind the chapel and attached to it is a Sunday schoolroom, also used as an overflow for the chapel at times, particularly on Sunday School Anniversary day.

Across the street can be seen a small stuccoed cottage whose age is unknown. My older brother John and his wife lived there after their marriage until around 1954 when they moved to Priory Row.



*Methodist Chapel 2010 **

The chapel sits almost unchanged externally although the interior now has electrical lighting and heating and the old coal stove has been removed from in front of the choir loft.

The small cottage that was across the road has gone, having been demolished in the late 1950's. Down the road can be seen the old red telephone booth, a well known symbol of Great Britain across the world. Sadly, through much of the country, these have been replaced by minimum protection phone booth stalls.



Priory Row Cottages 1956

Built in 1954, these were the first council type houses built in the village. My brother John and his wife were first occupants of the east house, moving from a small cottage near the store and revelled in the extra living space they provided, along with space for his beloved vegetable garden.



Priory Row Cottages 2010 *

When these were built in the early 1950's, they stood alone in the fields near the end of the road leading to the churches and the mill. Now they are hemmed in by housing on both sides and across the road.

The houses have a much more settled look than in the earlier photo, with porch additions, hedges and ivy. Front yard storage of a caravan is in keeping with modern styles of relaxed tidiness.

Over the last fifty years, the village has seen more changes than in the previous 150 years, when the land of the village was enclosed. From a peak population of some 350 in the mid 1800's, the population declined until the early 1900's when it stabilised. Not until the 1960's did infilling with houses begin in earnest in the village, rapidly increasing the population. With increased access to easy personal mobility in the form of cars, more people were able to work at distances from where they live, hence the growth of small villages. A count in 2010 shows that, in the period since I left the village in 1953, six houses have been demolished and not less than 69 new houses built within the village.

Having lived in North America since the early 1950's, the changes to the village in which I grew up are more pronounced when seen only on decades apart visits. Hence my desire to put on paper a few of the differences in pictorial form of sites with which I was familiar as a boy. With the nostalgia born of absence, I'm sure the changes are felt more by me than those who have lived with those changes over the years.

