

A massive house with a moat once stood on the Jaguar Land Rover site

From being home to lords of the manor to growing peas for Birds Eye and later becoming a car production plant - the site has a fascinating history

By **Jess Molyneux** Community Reporter

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The Old Hutte gatehouse in Halewood in 1949, showing some of the roof damage caused by the war. (Image: Photo courtesy of Mike Royden)

Parts of the site of Jaguar Land Rover in Halewood were once home to a moat and a medieval gatehouse which stood on the land for centuries. Originally part of Hale, by the 15th century Halewood was a separate township within the West Derby Hundred and it is difficult to know when Hale and Halewood parted ways.

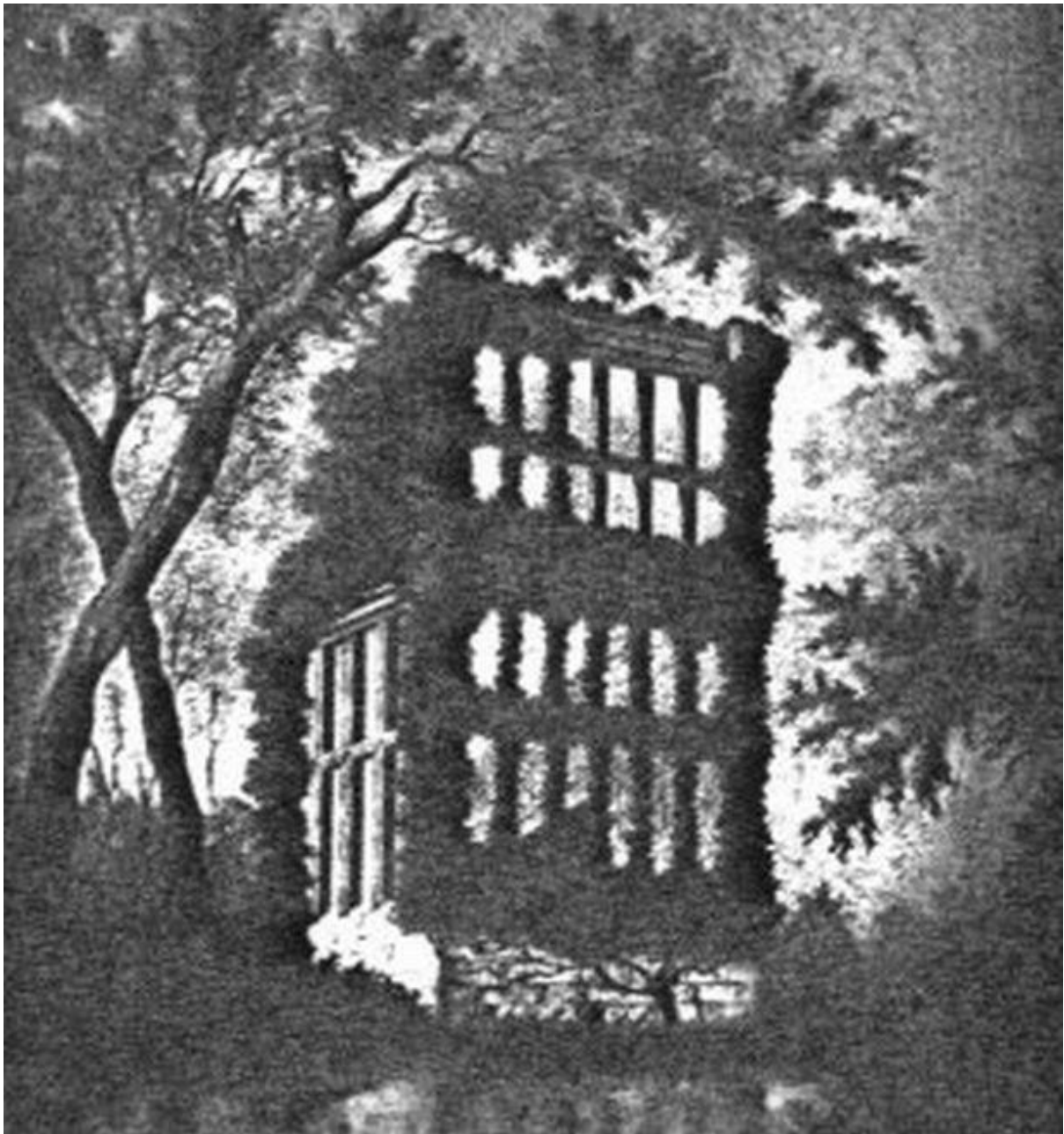
But for hundreds of years, the land was home to several moats and medieval residential buildings including the Old Hutt, a substantial, isolated moated house which stood on the site where Ford Motor Company later would have a car production plant. Now the site of Jaguar Land Rover, the remains of the Old Hutt which stood most recently was the gothic arch and fireplace of the original mansion.

Many local residents will have seen the gatehouse of the Hutt and believed it was the original manor house in later life. Here, local historian Mike Royden traces the lands history through some of its different incarnations over the years.

1300s - the Old Hutt

Situated in the south-west of the township, the area of land occupied by the Old Hutt belonged to the Irelands, Lords of Hale, for many years. It is thought that the moat and the known original manorial buildings contained within were built in the early 14th century by the family. Old Hutt was a substantial isolated moated house and on the eastern part of the platform, which was around an acre in size, were medieval residential buildings, which were grouped around a great hall. Across a courtyard to the west was a gatehouse, which was approached across the moat by a stone bridge and causeway, shown here in different illustrations and images.

Medieval in origin but modernised in the 17th century, the gatehouse was the most substantial building to survive in later life. Historian Mike Royden first found an interest in the site whilst playing around the area as a child, later researching its history across the centuries in more depth.

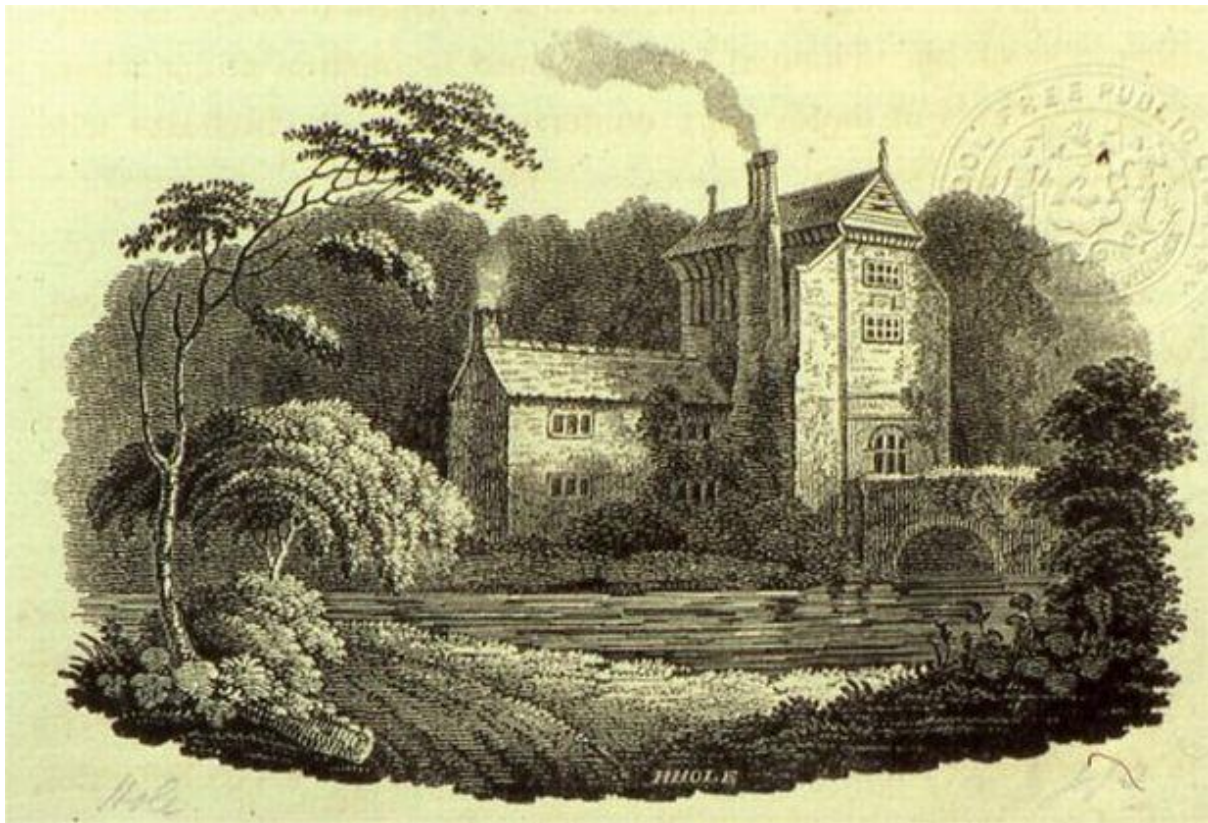


A sketch of the Old Hutt's Banqueting House window, circa 1804. (Image: Photo courtesy of roydenhistory.co.uk)

He said it is difficult to know what the Old Hutt would have originally looked like, but certain facts give an insight into the structure and its wealth. Mike said: "It was older than Speke Hall, Speke Hall being a Tudor foundation. It's difficult to know what it would have looked like at the time.

"It would have been a sandstone building that filled that area and it would've been the biggest building in that area, because it was owned by the lords of the manor. "If you look at the hearth tax at the time, many homes would have just one fireplace in the house, but in the Old Hutt they had 22. It's little signs that we have to use to know how big the place was."

1600s - modernisation



An illustration of the Old Hutt gatehouse in Halewood by T. Troughton, circa 1810. (Image: Photo courtesy of roydenshistory.co.uk)

The gatehouse, originally a three-storey timber frame structure, underwent two extensive stages of modernisation in the 17th century and was thought to date back from the 14th century. The first stage of alterations consisted of the re-fronting of the gatehouse in brick, as well as eight light mullioned and transomed window, which were added to the upper storeys.

A chimney stack was also erected, serving a fireplace in a room, and 'John Irelande 1608' is said to have been carved upon the mantelpiece. The second stage of improvements included an extension to the south side of the gatehouse, rooms on two floors as well as a chimney stack and brick-mullioned windows.

1900s - the last demolition

By the 19th century, the Old Hutt was in use as a farm and by the middle of the 20th century, the land around it was required for other purposes.

The Lyon family tenanted the Hutt from 1935 and continued to maintain the farm until the final destruction of the site in 1960.

Mike said: "My mum knew Mrs Lyon who was the last owner of the Hutt. I think she went to church with her.

"She asked her if she would write down all her memories and she gave me about six pages."

In her letters, Mrs Lyon said the family occupied the gatehouse, which had had extra living accommodation added onto the lower building, the structure now consisting of over a dozen rooms including bedrooms, kitchens, square halls and more. And she said the first special variety of peas for experiment by Birds Eye were grown at Old Hutte by her brothers.



Mrs Lyon, who was the last tenant of the Hutt in Halewood, sitting on the mounting steps of the courtyard. (Image: Photo courtesy of roydenthistory.co.uk)



(Image: Photo courtesy of Mike Royden)



A photograph of the gothic archway of the Old Hutt, Halewood, which was part of what remained of the original manor in 1960. (Image: Photo courtesy of roydenshistory.co.uk)

During World War II, the second floor of the gatehouse received extensive damage when it was the victim of an enemy firebomb attack in 1940. By the 1960s, all that remained was the gothic archway of the original manor house and a brick wall on a sandstone plinth incorporating a fireplace.

1960s - the Halewood car factory



The new Ford Corsair car on the production line at the Ford Motor plant in Halewood, Merseyside. October 1963. (Image: Mirrorpix)

The Ford Motor Company sought a site for car production in Britain in 1960 and Halewood was put forward as an option by the Government. By 1963 the plant was completed. Production began with the Ford

Anglia which was the very first car off the production line.

Halewood's Ford factory brought prosperity to the area but while it was built two ancient moated sites, the Old Hutt and also Wrights Moat were destroyed.

Mike said archaeologists were on site to carry out an excavation just before the Hutt was lost for good and prior to work starting on the Ford factory. He said: "It was a massive job done in urgency only weeks before it was demolished."

The present - Jaguar Land Rover



The Jaguar Land Rover site at Halewood. (Image: Photo by Andrew Teebay)

In 1997, it was announced that the European production of the Ford Focus, designed to replace the Escort, would be carried out in Germany and Spain. In 2001, Jaguar Cars, then owned by Ford, announced that the Jaguar X-Type would be produced in Halewood from then on.

By 2008, Ford sold Jaguar and Land Rover to Tata Motors, part of the India-based Tata Group, for £1.05bn. The two were eventually merged into a single company.

It is thought that a car park on site is where the Hutt once stood.

To find out more about the history of the Old Hutt click [here](http://www.roydenhistory.co.uk/halewood/history/history.htm).
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