

## Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

### Interview with: Brian Duffield

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Interviewer: Lynne Fox

*This is Lynne Fox for the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project. It's the 23rd November 2006 and I'm talking to Mr Brian Duffield this morning. Good morning.*

Good morning.

*I wonder if we could start please by, would you tell me where and when you were born?*

Yes I was born in nineteen forty, at Fieldside in Crowle, opposite the catholic school.

*And have your family always lived in this area?*

Yes my family, I can trace my family back to my great, great grandfather who was the main coal merchant in Crowle, he died in eighteen sixty and records, we haven't managed to find records going further back but one would suggest that we were much longer in Crowle than that. So yes my family have been in Crowle quite a long time.

*And where did you go to school?*

Went to school at the catholic school, as I say that was just opposite my house. So I'd only half a minute to get to school in the morning. Left, work at fifteen and went to work on the local steel works. Hard work, put on shift work when I was sixteen, seven, seven shifts on and one off, in the melting shops. Worked there till I was in my twenties and then had a lifetime of contracting in different parts of the country, eventually retiring a year or two ago.

*And I understand that you sort of, been a very active member of the community in Crowle.*

Well I've been a councillor for many years yes, and tried to move Crowle along, etc. Get involved in many different projects, which hopefully will make Crowle a better place to live.

*It seems to me that the moors, Crowle Moor in particular which is part of, geographically part of Thorne Moor, is quite, seems quite distant from Crowle. Does it feel like that to the people who live here? Do they have an immediate association with the moors or is it something that they don't really know much about?*

I think it, you see the population of Crowle, there'll be very few of the people, perhaps, who've ever even been on the moors, even though it's only a twenty minute walk to get there, twenty five at the outside. But I mean it is, in my opinion, it's Crowle's greatest asset, you know, it is a lovely place, you know, wilderness and it is very much unpublicised I think is the word. People aren't aware of it and what it offers.

*Did you have an early interest in the moors, did you have an interest in it as a child?*

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I had an interest as a child, I can remember we used to go down the old light railway that's been closed down for many, many years now, in the school holidays with a mate of mine [Pete?] Jansen, whose mum and auntie worked in the peat mill. We would go down on our bikes to see them and ride on the little trains gathering, with the train driver, which went out gathering peat with his little miniature railway, Mr Stan Oughtibridge. It was a family who lived on the moors then the Oughtibridges, at the peat mill at Swinefleet [inaudible], which was about halfway in between Crowle and Swinefleet.

*So you, I'm sorry can we just go over that again?*

Yeah. Well we used to go, we'd go down in t' school holidays to the peat mill to see my mates mum and his auntie who worked in the mill.

*Which mill was that?*

This was the Swinefleet Mill, but I mean it's as near Crowle as what it is to Swinefleet, you got to it by riding down the side of the railway line, which went to Goole, which has been closed down fifty years ago now. And we'd go to see them but it was, the idea behind was we was then onto the little train and chugging out into the moors with Mr Oughtibridge on the little train when he went to collect the wagons which were filled with peat and bring 'em back to the mill. Which chugged all into Crowle and Thorne Moors, which, and that's how I got interested. We'd probably miss a load and go walking on the moors and then ride back to Swinefleet Mill on our bikes and back home.

*And what did the ladies do in the mill?*

The ladies was just labourers like, at that time peat was made into massive big bails with wire, you know, like imagine a big bail of straw, as straw is, but it was not with string it was bailed with wire. Very heavy, very dusty, very hard manual work in there. In fact, one poor lady fell in the chopping mill once and was never recovered, she was chopped up, Mrs Jackson. Yes it was very very hard, hard, noisy and dusty. You know, women, women were expected to work hard in them days and that's, that's what my mates mum did.

*Was this at the time when they were cutting peat by hand still?*

Oh yeah, yeah, I'm going now to the late forties and very early, more late forties, early fifties, you know, maybe fifty one, fifty two. Yeah there was no, there was all, there was little gangs out in the, but they'd all be in a certain little area, not scattered far and wide and they would be cutting, cutting the peat into, you know, they tried to do a chain a day. Some of like a, some deceased people down this road now, Mr and Mrs Parkin, Mr Parkin was the cutter and his wife was stacking behind him and then they would pyramid it up at the, you'll have seen the old pyramids out on the moors, pyramids of peat and then it was left to dry for a year and then it would be loaded up the following year, well, whatever as they went to the pyramids in the little trains. They had trains at Swinefleet Mill and horses drawing carriages, you know, drawing the peat away along the lines with horse drawn carriages to Medge Hall mill.

*That wa, still, you saw them doing that did you?*

Oh yeah. Mr Kempen used to, I used to ride with the, Stan Oughtibridge used to drive the little train at Swinefleet, show us these pictures of his younger days when, well he had pictures as a lion tamer in all the gear and tell us these fantastic tales of how he'd tamed the lions in the circus and he definitely had these photographs, you know, what truth there was in it I don't know, you know, it

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might have been he'd just gone in a lion's cage with the uniform on and had the pictures taken, but, he always told us he was the lion tamer and he'd tell us these spell binding stories about life in the circus you know and at Medge Hall end we'd go out with Mr Joe Kempen. He, he lived at Medge Hall and their houses are still standing. Mr Oughtibridge's dad was the foreman at Swinefleet Mill and they had an house right in the yard, you know, [inaudible] tumbled out of bed into the peat mill, Stan the driver, lived with his mum and dad there. So that was my first experience of the, getting out in the moors.

*Were they still using horses at Medge Hall when you were there?*

Oh yeah, yeah, horse drawn yeah. Go right out to the pony bridge wood farm would Mr Kempen yeah, bringing peat in with horse drawn trucks on the lines.

*And did people have, you said, you talked about Mr and Mrs Parkin and the way they cut a cable and then stacked it.*

Well they cut a chain.

*Chain, sorry.*

Forty two yards, I can't think, I can't remember how wide they were but they was three foot deep or more, maybe four foot, I can't remember you know the actual, and, you know we've seen the knives what they cut with and stacking. I had an uncle used to go there and do it as well and a cousin who was a much older cousin, obviously and then they used to, in the summer, well summer was the main time obviously, but they'd, they would cut, they would try and get started very, very, early you know and well into the day in summer to, and try and do a full chain a day. Which, you know. I have it in my head I can't remember, it's such a long time ago, I think towards the, say the late fifties, later on in the fifties when I remember 'em saying 'bye, they're getting two pound a chain now'. You know, 'a couple can earn two pound a day'.

\* If you want me I'm just here.

'Cutting a chain of peat a day and never got that when we was,' you know, the usual tales. But you can imagine cutting a chain probably, whatever it be, five or six foot wide and three of four foot deep and twenty two yards long out there on the moors, into small turfs.

*You might not know the answer to this, but I just wondered whether they had their own little patch or whether they went on every so often they were allocated a place?*

Well it seem to work as though there was a certain area that they was cutting and they carried on that, that nearly lasted all the time I was going there they were more or less on Crowle side, in their own area. Thorne, Mr Kempen, was fetching, I don't even remember Mr Kempen with the horses fetching it off Crowle, we used to go on a pony, the few times I was with him, Joe Kempen, he used to go over pony bridge which is over onto the Thorne side fetching peat in from there. But they did have their own, you know, you were set out, you didn't all go together, there'd be a couple. I can remember this Mr and Mrs Parkin working as a team. I can remember a Mr Padden who's widow still lives at Medge Hall near the mill, must be a very old lady now Mrs Padden, I remember her husband with perhaps an uncle or some other guy, I can just see the place now where they were cutting, this side of the warping drain, near the old duck decoy. 'Cause it took 'em many years to cover, you know, the very few acres, as you can imagine.

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*What did it look like at that time, you went out on the train and what did the moor look like?*

Well the moor was, obviously there was still a lot of silver birch but there was big gaps and it was very, you know it was very, it was a lot wilder now, because, as you understand there's a lot of the tree now being took down to, you know, trying to turn it back into a bog and they, but it was wild, you know magical place it was, you know. If you imagine, well, you know, sadly to say I was a shooting man when I was younger, I no longer shoot, I haven't shot for twenty five years, in fact more, maybe thirty years. But as I got into my teens we used to shoot, so you could tramp out there you know, no permission I hasten to add and poacher would be a better word of describing, and, but it wasn't the, you know, there wasn't any pheasants or anything like that. But it was a magical place to see, you could tramp from Crowle nearly to Old Goole in one direction or to Thorne in the other you know. You'd never a chance of meeting anyone ever out there. Often, I mean the only paths there were was the path what was, the tramway that was presently being used, all the others, you know there was no paths as there are now. [Inaudible] so what you did was beat your way through.

*Beat your way through what?*

Beat your way through the bracken and small scrub, you know, silver birch and that, but there was large open areas you'd come to, you know.

*And was it safe underfoot?*

Well you knew where to go, you went on boggy ground but you went round it you know, we got to know. See we'd been, as I said in my younger days I was on shift work on the steel works, which was, you know, having my day off, or being on two to ten shift, so I spent a lot of time out there on my own with being working unsociable hours. On there, when my mates would be working ordinary days, you know, as young bricklayers or fitters, etc. So I spent a lot of time on my own, out on, on my own out on the moors. That's how I come to get to know it really well with being a shift worker at a very young age.

*And you say you went out there shooting?*

I used to shoot yeah.

*Was that the only reason you went out there?*

Well, no, I've always loved the moors, you know, I find it, you know, I love the solitude of the moors, you know. I mean you would maybe go out ten times and never shoot nothing, but that didn't matter, you know, used to go, I've allus had dogs and then, I don't know how to say it, I would never want to condemn the people that shoot, it would be, a little of an hypocrite after enjoying, I used to love being out with a gun when I was young. But then, came to be a staunch conservationist, you know and so I haven't been on with 'em for the last twenty five, thirty years.

*Before we move on to talk about that, I want to just sort of fix an idea and impression of what the moor was like at that time and there were quite a lot of people extracting peat, digging peat by hand, maybe at that time. But, you still say it felt solitary on there?*

Oh yeah, because there wasn't, you know, the peat that was being dug, you know, I'd have to show you on a map where they was twelve years in just one little area, or maybe longer, you know, which was a fraction of the moors, so, you know, and it was only hand digging. You know, it was, I can't

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remember the actual dates, I mean you probably know better than me when first mechanical thing, I know they did a bit of harrowing up or disking up of peat at Crowle just near the house, you know, them fields immediately behind where the Masons live in Crowle and that, but, generally going further out it was still all graded, you know.

*Was it something that was a big employer in Crowle?*

No, no. No there wasn't, it wasn't a big employer. There was few people worked in the mill, you know, at Swinefleet, one or two worked in the mill at Medge Hall, but no it wasn't labour intensive. The mills or the digging of the peat.

*Now you say your interest developed away from the shooting side of it to the conservation side of it. Can you tell me how that came about?*

I could yeah, but I don't want to go down that line, it was just an incident that happened and I stopped shooting that day and never shot again but, no I don't want to go down that line.

*Okay. So tell me about your interest as a conservationist.*

Well, as a conservationist, I mean I have a bit of, bought a bit of land. I've spent this last few years and before I retired I started a bit and it's a couple of acre of land at the other side of Crowle. I've got so many hundred, well maybe twelve hundred shrubs down there, three or four hundred trees, you know encouraging birds. Apart from the moors there's very, as you know, Crowle is a pretty barren area of trees and hedges that have all gone since the Second World War. Unfortunately it's a change beyond all recognition. But it is coming back a little bit through this stewardship scheme which is paying farmers to replant hedges and a few trees, but it's a long drawn out job.

*I know you don't want to talk about that, a particular incident, was it that particular incident that made you interested then in a completely different aspect of it?*

Well I'll not say that day but that's the way I drifted after, shortly after you know.

*And why did you think it was necessary to have a conservation viewpoint in connection with the moors?*

Well, how it was radically changing you know. I said when I got nearer to retirement I would start looking into it, I mean. You know William Bunting who was, I'm not, haven't done anything of his category, but he'd done so much work for the moors, trying to keep the moors for future generations that I thought, well I'll have a go, you know. I think he was probably twenty, thirty or forty years before his time, you know, people weren't green, I mean, it still annoys me tremendously to read it even on modern maps where it says Crowle, Thorne Wastes, you know. It's far from a waste, but it gives the impression it's just wasteland, you know, it isn't waste. Anyhow I decided that I'd have a go and start looking into it and see if I could see, you know, what, English Nature were in there, you know, and, but things weren't going how, you know, it was altering fast.

You can imagine when people was cutting by hand it took 'em that long to cut a few acres, but it was more or less growing up behind them, you know, regenerating, but machines come on, they first started with the Hy-mac type diggers and then bought, you know innumerable roles of old conveyor belts from wherever they come from, the pits or the steel works, you know and tracked the machines out on there and then just, it was wholesale carnage then, you know everything. They just smashed the trees down and then dig down to bare sand and moving at a massive, massive rate

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of destroying the moors, particularly over on the Thorne side where you couldn't recognise it from one week to another where they'd do aerial spraying and then, then all the trees would be shredded and moved and dragged out and the roots, and then they brought in machine that could go up and down, as you know, all day long and night, and take it right down to bed sand and then move on and destroy another area.

*So you're saying they worked at night as well as during the day?*

What the, particularly Scotts, when Scotts got the deal with English Nature they immediately went on a night shift. They'd got, you know, they'd got seventeen million, was it, from the government, well they immediately had a night shift on and worked on Thorne Moors. Certainly they was working in the night. It was, they had, they had heaps of peat that resembled the alps, you know, so although they got the seventeen million and they said there was, they had enough stock pile, well you must ride down to Swinefleet Mill, which is non functional now, it was sold and now they're renting it back just as a store place, some's imported back but there's a huge amount there, they got out huge, well, how can I put it to you, you know, if, it's like you saying I'll buy this piece of land off you, because of it's top soil quality and I want it off you in a year, so I immediately take all the top soil and sell it to somebody else and you've been left with the hole for your seventeen million. They massively increased the output Scotts did. There was little anyone could do about it.

*And you talked about aerial spraying.*  
Yeah.

*What's that?*

Well they do, they do aerial spraying of the trees to kill the trees off don't they. They've done it, English Nature have done some trying to win the battle against the ever invading birch and bracken. Sprayed. They're now doing it with tractors and, you know, done some, just recently I think at Crowle, I've seen them, they go on with the all terrain pulverisers to keep, you know, try and keep areas of the bracken down and the other stuff comes through.

You see there were some massive mistakes made many years ago by English Nature or their predecessors when, and they finished up, they got people in off, they were young lads off the dole and things like, you know, was on the dole and giving them things to do, maybe thirty year ago, who went on there and cut the mature silver birch down, down to the, ground level, but all it succeeded doing was, they came up, you know, twenty fold. So whereas the sun was getting through to, in-between large trees, you know, normal gaps, it just, they just came up like thicket, that it was impenetrable, it really was a mess, to put it bluntly and so a lot of that still remains on there. Which they're now trying to rectify some of it.

*You mentioned Mr Bunting, did you know Mr Bunting?*

I didn't, no, I never knew Mr Bunting no. No, I'd always heard of him but I never was fortunate enough to meet him.

*Now you've got some land of your own which you are doing work on, to do what?*

It's just a little nature place, a couple of acres of you know, wild flowers down there and I tell you, trees and shrubs, etc, etc.

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*I know that your activity isn't just sort of confined to that sort of area, is it, in managing your own nature reserve.*

Well I wouldn't call it a nature reserve, it's only a two acre little field, you know, it's a little field I had, I bought and started putting an hedge round and the trees and it's, you know, I wouldn't call it a nature reserve, it might be, it's a little refuge for wildlife out there. I just took a quarter o' ton of apples and spread 'em out under the hedges for the birds this week. Well they feed more than the birds like, obviously. There's the redwings are in there now.

*So is it sort of from the nineteen eighties perhaps that you started to become particularly concerned about what was going on on the moors?*

No it, it was more, my concern was more, I've worked away you see for most of my life, coming home at weekends, so I never got a lot of time. Used to tramp the moors but you don't know what's happening. It's more in the nineties when, you know, started seeing how, how modern day equipment, how quickly it could destroy thousands of years of what, how the moors had been brought about.

*What was you feeling about the plan that was put forward to try and do something about prevent, or ceasing the wholesale milling of peat on the moor, the buyout I'm thinking in particular, plan to restore the moors.*

I was hundred percent behind it.

*And do you see what's happened since as a good thing?*

Yep, I mean, it's never enough for me, I'm an impatient guy, but, you know, I've had massive arguments with English Nature, I mean really massive as well, there's a lot of things I don't agree with what they've done, you know they way they've done it, perhaps that's I know best, you know, better, but, but overall definitely, obviously I didn't, I was saddened that when they came to the agreement that there was nothing probably they could do about when, as I say, production stepped up and you can imagine they was gonna hand over, for the money that they was offered, they was gonna hand over in a years time and in that year they just upped the rate of production that high that it, it caused more damage on the moors than had ever been caused in it's history. But that was to stockpile the peat before it was handed over to English Nature.

*Was there anything you could have done as an individual, that people did as individuals or groups that helped to sway the action that was taken?*

Yeah, but, see what, to be honest with you I've never been that involved, you know, that's more the Thorne and Hatfield Moor, you know, Moors conservationists, have been involved more in that. With me living in Crowle I've been more, you know, nearly all my effort has been confined to the mining at Crowle, you know. When I talk of frustration with English Nature. As I started delving more and more into it, more and more I was surprised, you know, there's a lot of research to be done, you can't just go and see something on the ground, you know it's been done, but you can only find information by going to the land registry and seeing who owns what. I spent weeks and weeks at Lincoln Archives, I spent weeks and weeks at Beverly, not, I don't mean weeks, if you added them all together, I'd go and have a day or two days, my wife would go helping me and then, you know, we found out different things through different ways and means, you know. In particular, you know, if you want me to name one or two, you know, people mining on land that had been purchased many years ago, say from Fisons/Levingtons, by English Nature, passed onto wildlife

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trusts, you know, I've got copies of the documents and deeds of transfer, sealed, all signed and sealed things that would never be used other than for, as a nature conservation area and there it was being openly mined by miners in Crowle and you was told to mind your own business and keep out, don't rock the boat.

You know, another one was a, a lady was mining an area and was given ninety thousand pound by English Nature if she would leave a full metre of peat in situ, rather than the half a metre that the planning permission, it has a better chance, you know of restoration and then turning back perhaps, not maybe to bog land, but certainly to heath, you know good heath and that, this can't be done overnight, you know, you've got the ninety thousand pound and then over a period of six or eight years in which it takes to mine it all right down to bed sand, keep the ninety thousand. Don't even, not only take the half a metre she's got from, out of public funds, but keep the second half a metre, but the half a metre immediately above the sand that even the planning permission calls for, that'd gone as well. You know, and it's so frustrating and then you have, you come across documents where English Nature Inspectors, if you like, or Officers, have signed things that they're inspecting it on a yearly basis and everything's hunky dory.

You know, I don't, that's, that's what I mean about frustration and you know, really serious rows with English Nature, why? You know and then you move on and you see people going down six continuous weeks burying, burying demolition rubble, rubbish, you know, burying it in Triple SI candidate SAC you know, and you can't, you can't get through to people to stop them. You know, the answer comes back innumerable times, 'we prefer not to be confrontational with peat land owners', or, adjacent owners and work together, but it's a bit late when you're, and I'm not talking of a few hundred tonnes I'm talking of thousands of tonnes. You know which are, you know, in Brian Duffield's opinion is disgraceful. As it's disgraceful that land that was bought from the public purse and then a blind eye was turned to people going on there mining, extensively mining in the full, you know, with the full knowledge of the people who ought to be, are supposed to be the guardians of it. So, although as I said to you I'm fully supportive of that buyout from Scotts, you know, there is numerous things that I vigorously disagree with what they've done or what they haven't done and should have been doing.

*Without mentioning names, because I've some ideas who you're talking about, we're talking about individual people who've got rights and own pieces of the moor. We're not talking about Scotts as the big concern. We're talking about individuals.*

No Scotts, Scotts have never mined on Crowle Moors, Scotts have never been on Crowle moors, you know, it was their predecessors that was, in fact Levingtons I shu'nt think ever came on it was Fisons, you know, before that, when I was a kid it was the British Peat Litter Moss Company.

*I think that there's a, you get an initial idea that the whole of the moor now is safe because of the buyout when in fact I'm starting to realise more and more that there are individual, smaller concerns that are still, have rights and so on, on the edges and they're the people, they're some of the people you're talking about?*

Yeah, yeah, there's very, there's not, there's no peat mining going on at the moment on Crowle Moors as you know, well if you didn't you know now, there is peat processing going on down there which, well have a look, you can see it from my gate [inaudible] from here now, where we are. As you can see most of the, see, from my gate you can see the Medge Hall end of the moors and if we walked down the drive there you can see right through towards the Swinefleet end, so.

*Now, Crowle Moors itself came over to the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust quite early on didn't it?*



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Well, what they did they leased, they leased the large area for a long time from Fisons, you know, it was leased. There was invasion then at that time, but, that's a little bit complicated and that would be libellous. [Note. Libellous comment removed from the original recording at the contributor's request] You know, so it was very difficult to stop them at that time if you know what I mean.

*So there must be money in it.*

Well of course, there's massive money in it, you don't have to plant anything do you. You know, if you plant corn and then do everything for it, cut it and thresh it and sell it or potatoes or any other thing, but with peat it's there, it just has to be dug up and milled and sold.

*What did they do with it once, these smaller producers, what did they and what do they do with it?*

Well they, I mean that one that's down there now has gone under innumerable different names, horticulture, it's all horticulture.

*But do they process it themselves?*

Oh yeah, yeah.

*So it's not like sold onto the mill at Scotts?*

No, no it goes out in bags. I mean I think that they can, you can buy bulk stuff you know, different grades, but the business actually is, you know, it comes, it's dug up and whatever, I don't know much about the processing of peat inside the mill, what additives they put into it, you know. Its dug and all goes away in bags to the supermarkets and garden centres and all over, its quite a well known company anyhow, that one a Crowle.

*So you think the problem is one of policing rather than intent?*

Policing what?

*Policing the agreements that already exist and the, policing the situation, policing the protection basically?*

Well as you know, mining's at a stand still now because this, this public enquiry will be finalised hopefully this coming summer. It's been a drag that's gone on many years too long but, what the decision will be is basically will it stop, or will it be allowed to continue. It's a lot more technical than that, but basically that's the yeah or nay will be found out this coming summer.

*You mean whether anybody will be able to dig...*

Whether anyone on, you know, well there only is these people that are, it's complicated because they don't really have planning permission, they're working to a Section 52 agreement that was signed up by a previous council in nineteen eighty nine, so it's not like planning permission but it's a kind of, an agreement they have with the previous authority. Which, North Lincolnshire Council inherited that through statutory instruments, so, it's North Lincs Council are now trying to stop peat mining for the damage it's doing and obviously the people are, they're making a living from it and have a right to take it to appeal, which they have done and it's just dragged on and on and on. But it is very, it's very, there's a lot of very technical things, you know, it's very involved, which would

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take a week to explain to you, you know, and you'd probably, wouldn't understand it all then. But, but that's basically it where there was, you know, not many in my lifetime even, just maybe two or three peat miners down there at Crowle, but this is the last one now. Basically after invading a new area that, actually right at you as you go down to Crowle Moors and come to the T junction there's about thirty acres looking at you there, on that T junction and the inspector will be giving a decision whether he thinks they have the right to strip the top soil off that and start attacking the peat underneath, 'cause this is a bit of warped land down there, you know, that's been used for agriculture, but it juts into the moor and our argument is that it'll have a detrimental effect on, you know, we think that everything, that every ton of peat taken out there, it helps to drain the moor, you know from other areas.

As you've maybe seen yourself, you know, when you dig, you can see where the last invasion of the nature reserve itself, you know, they dug it down to depths at some time [inaudible], there must be twelve, fourteen foot in parts. So you can imagine how far, if you dug a nine acre hole to a depth, you know, of twelve foot deep, how it acts as a reservoir and drains massive area from the surrounding moor, changes it all together.

*You said our view, our view is, who's the our?*

Our view of?

*Of what effect that would have, who are you speaking for?*

Well I've a friend, I'm a member of the Thorne, well I'm not a member, I'm an observer, represent Crowle Town Council on the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Group, Forum. And it's them that putting, they put a lot of effort in helping. I mean I was on my own for years and then they actually, I don't know how they got, I'd never heard of them actually at that time and they, you know, in the nineties, sometime, they contacted me, a member of the group and said they'd like to hear my views on it all, which they did do and then they came down, several of 'em, a party came down and had a look and I showed them the moors and what I was trying to do. Without a lot of success I hasten to add [laughs] and I've got to know most of them since then, you know, and as you know they are actively involved in this present public enquiry. So when I say we, I speak about some of the very hard workers in there, particularly Helen Kirk, you know, the quiet hero of it all, heroine.

*And what's the view of the, does the town council have any interest or involvement or concern about it?*

Well they've always give me, given me, you know, I was, you know, automatically, I'd deal with mainly, on the council, I mean we're just an ordinary council but environment, environmental matters or wildlife matters it's always, you know, Brian will see to that. So yeah, but they don't, they support things, they'll hear what I have to say and sanction the letters that's written, if they're on town council's name obviously. I campaign as, by Brian Duffield, not Crowle Town Council, it's just that Crowle Town Council have a view about things and are fully supportive of the, Crowle Moors should be saved for future generations.

*I wasn't quite sure how the town council, what the town council's role would be. Particularly I'm thinking in terms of, you know, where they would stand in, for example, the planning process or how they are linked in with the Lincolnshire Council with regard to things like that.*

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Well they're fully supportive Crowle Town Council, of North Lincs' action with this, which was a discontinued notice, then an enforcement order, etc, etc.

*What about public access onto the moors I mean they are, sometimes two separate things the conservation of the moors, and then encouraging people's access to it they can actually be, you know, the two sides of the coin and not necessarily coming together. What's your view and what's the town council's view about, well your view, about public access onto the moor?*

Well there is public access and that, you know, there's a, obviously they don't encourage you to stray from the paths, you know and there are parts where, I think there's one particular place where it says no access, there's a gate but it's locked up and no access to it, odd things, but in general you can do as much walking on the moors as you want, there is, as far as anyone would want to walk. You know, obviously there are dangerous parts as well, you would be dropping into bogs and could easily, still, even though it's massively different from when I'm going back fifty years ago you know, fifty odd years ago, it's changed beyond all comparison, it was then when you could really become lost but, you could still get very disorientated if you was out there and went off the paths tracking through some of the undergrowth and that you know.

*I know there was a big move about rights of way and so on and I know Mr Bunting was a big supporter of that but also later on there's been a lot of work on rights of way, onto and on the moors.*

Yeah. Well as you were saying earlier about you was told you couldn't go on there, well that probably was the case, you know, many years ago, but certainly from several years now, you know, there's just notices, there's stiles so you can over, over the gates and lot to the side of the gates and they're all way marked with arrows you know, to keep, which every walk you want to take. Way route marked, you can even get over onto Thorne Moors across the bridge, but the only thing they ask is that your dogs, you know there's livestock on there sometimes, hebridian sheep eating the, well supposed to be eating the silver birch down a bit slow like but, and you know, so there's just them basic rules which we agree with, you know, we don't want dogs worrying sheep or, if the birds are nesting, you know, rousting about, or young deer you know. I've come across many a time, come across you know, young deer, fawns. That's about the only restriction, you know, basic things that all wildlife people would hopefully agree with, but as regards access, no, it's quite open.

*Well I mean one of the reasons for doing this piece of work is to encourage people to go onto the moors and to encourage people to come from outside, sort of tourists and visitors to come over and go and have a look and go and have a walk and so on. It's envisaged that this might have a, hopefully, have some effect on the areas around the moor and do you have a view about that?*

Well I think it's a good thing actually, I mean you can go on there and you think for the solitude, but it'd be a bit selfish to think that it's only for Brian Duffield and a few, you know, the desolation of the place and the quietness of it all, you know, and I don't think you'll ever get it so that there's hundreds of people going on there because it's a vast area you know, you wouldn't be stumbling and tumbling over people like the Lake District or something like that. But I think it's the, I think the more publicity you see it gets and what a lovely place it is, could only hope to preserve it for future generations. You know, it'd be sad if it, if it had all gone, you know, if it had gone the final step and all the moors had, I mean it's, I couldn't even begin to describe the change in fifty years that I've seen the moors make you know, really, I just wouldn't know where to start. And I knew it very, very well, particularly Crowle Moors, I'd say the first mile of Goole and Thorne Moors beyond the warping drain I never used to go right over to the other side, so yeah, used to know it very, very well, in depth, the little paths where you could find your way back. As I say it's changed

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tremendously but, hopefully that, you know, there's enough of it left to give people an inkling of what it was like back in history.

*If we went on today what's the kind of things that we might see there, you obviously have an interest in nature and conservation, what would you particularly expect to go and look at?*

If it was, today if you went down you could see some, perhaps come across some roe deer, if you were extremely quiet you might come across the red deer, which can be quite frightening as they thunder by, thunder by you like a herd of cattle if they're alarmed! You know, obviously there's no nightjar now they've all gone, they've all gone back despite, despite the enquiry being told that they'd wintered well! [laughs] In the Appellants Environmental Impact Statement, which was a laugh to say the least. They'd put 'you've no need to worry about the nightjars they've wintered very well on Thorne and Crowle Moors last winter' this was a couple of year ago and in fact we all know they go back to Africa for the winter, so you can tell the things you're up against, you know, when you have experts trying to convince the inspector.

You know, we still argue a bit about how many trees should be left, you know, I argue with English Nature, they say well our interest is in, in bog and regeneration and the more trees down the better and I think it's a big enough area, that more pockets of trees as cover for the deer. You know, whether we like it or not the deer have made it their home, regardless of it being a bog. Nightingales, you know, it doesn't help them if they don't leave some good thick pockets of trees left, so we still, I realise that there's you know, massive amounts of the birch have to be take out if they want, you know that's all part of you having the money. You know, the grants are part and parcel of that, but I think it's such a vast area that we can afford to have, have large pockets of scrub and larger trees there you know, 'cause there is areas that are impenetrable, still, but there's very few of them but they're very small now, I think there's some of them that should be left like that for ever.

*I've had a few visits on there and had a, some, walking around and so on and we went onto the Crowle Moor bit of it and it seemed to me to be very different to the rest of it. Some of it's because, as I understand, it's never been mechanically dug on Crowle Moors.*

There is some that hasn't been mechanically dug yeah, yeah.

*But it does seem to have a lot more trees and feel a lot more, small woodland, if you see what I...*

Yeah, yeah.

*Whereas on Thorne it's quite open and so on, so different, quite different. So I think, you know the way that Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust are maybe managing their area of it is historically quite, perhaps a bit different to what it is, I mean I don't know that for sure.*

No, no it's not that it's just that, you see a lot, lot of Crowle Moor hasn't seen the big machines. As I told you Scotts and I don't, and Levingtons never, never managed to get over Crowle, you know, they never got round to coming over and, well they'd enough moor to go at at Thorne. No doubt if people hadn't become greener and, you know, over the years then they, I mean there's the bridge that they said they put over for the public, it's a load bearing bridge, so it was certainly, it wasn't built for the public, it was built, you know, getting ready for when they came over, over the warping drain with the big machines and that was the whole idea of it being a load bearing bridge. You don't build a load bearing bridge for walkers. But, you know, it never came to be because, because of public opinion and the likes of the conservation group. Conservation Forum.

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*You mentioned public opinion and the increased pressure that's come from the Conservation Forum, do you think there's any, do you think there was a sort of turning point, is there something that made people more aware, more concerned?*

I think that, to me as I see it, and I don't know as I'm right, but they drummed up a lot of support and I, you know, I'd gone on the moors and just to walk on mi' own and never see, you could go now and never see many people, but you will see a few odd people, you know, going down there. But you could go out and never see people, months and months, you know, might be odd people on there, but you perhaps wouldn't cross, but I thought well, and they used to see all the, you know, the machines ploughing into it and vast areas becoming, you know, turned from full of wildlife and flora and fauna into just a desert and very frustrating. I thought well there's nobody ever interested and then when English Nature tried to declassify that large area, was it in nineteen...

*Mid nineties.*

Yeah, I can't remember now whether it was ninety seven and I went through to this, to the meeting and as it happened it was at the school in Thorne the Grammar School, the old Grammar School and I'd never seen such, I was astounded by the number of people who were interested and came that night. And told English Nature, you know, straight out, you will not declassify it, you know. I think that was the turning point and when public opinion was seen, particularly by English Nature who are a government quango aren't they.

*And was there any particular reason why people didn't want it to be, I know it might sound a stupid question but, was there any particular thing that really made people think, you know, why they didn't want it to be declassified and the protection withdrawn.*

Well I think, what we discussed just a few minutes ago, I mean, people were convinced by, whatever, I would think by the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, you know, who'd got support from obviously all the people who were there who was, people who were conservationists and convinced them that, the moor was a special place you know, you know. The last six percent of raised peat land bog, you know, and it must be preserved and they convinced them people and then the people came along that night and gave their full support that yes and English Nature wouldn't be allowed, because you know what the declassification meant, it meant mining everything then, all the lot.

*What do you mean by that?*

Well there was, you know, there was areas where they'd started like, Willpitts Wood, they'd already started demolishing that, you know, that ceased and that was left in situ. The little wood at Pony Bridge never got, never got invaded.

*Do you think they were primarily conservationists then, I was thinking about what the local people think, thought at the time.*

Well I would think there's only, you know, people you know, it's a sad thing but each to his own and you don't live other people's life, but there's a lot more interested in Marks & Spencers than there are in Crowle, if there having a day out, you know. So all the people at, the way they were shouting and you know, [inaudible] and there were conservationists who were making their voices heard, and sending a clear message to English Nature, you know, you're not, they were putting forward, I can't even remember what they said the benefits were if they gave, if they gave them,

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declassified that, they would do this, you know, but it was a very poor deal. I mean it was a much better deal to give them the seventeen million, you know, it's just a pity they couldn't have restricted them to so many tons, so many tons a week, well a year, or you know.

When you're on about, I have some documents, I have an extensive file in there, if you'd call it files, the wife calls it the middle room wasted full of rubbish. But it's, whereas how many tons you were allowed to take off the whole of Crowle Moor which would, you know, this was for the planning permission that were given in nineteen forty nine and I forget how many it was, but it was, you know, you'd be amazed, perhaps only six hundred ton off top of me head, perhaps less, per year. When you're saying, you know, I mean they would take, they'd lift that, I don't say they'd despatched that in bags everyday, but on Crowle Moor they certainly, Scotts would and more than that. Certainly in a week. That was the annual, and that was the maximum, whether they ever reached the maximum we don't know, so.

*I was thinking that peat mining actually, although you say wasn't a big employer, it did employ some people.*

Oh yeah, it did employ people yeah.

*And I wondered whether, you know, how that balanced itself with the way the community felt. Whether it, you know, they were, how they felt about their jobs going and the industry going and what it was going to be replaced by.*

I never heard any, at that meeting there was no, you know, this end, from any workers about being put out of work by it. They, I mean, I don't think it was at that meeting but at one of the meetings, public meetings, there was a, there was, from the peat miners, said you know, it's, we employ so many people in the mill and so many on the machines, and lorry drivers and, bringing it off, but, I mean I'm not convinced you know, that they had the interest of the workers at heart, if a machine came out tomorrow that would do them workers job, as it did with the cutters, you know, one machine would do what fifty cutter did and that's just the way of the world in't it. You know it isn't, I don't, I never go for that story, we're doing this, you know, we don't want to lose any workers, and its to keep employment in the area and, it's good for, the economy, the local economy. As I say, if a machine comes out that does fifty cutters' work then the machine comes in and that's life. You know, that I take with a pinch of salt that they have the welfare of the workers, and the future of the workers at heart.

*Just to, before we close, you obviously are very active in support of the conservation side of looking after the moors and Crowle's interests in it. What form does that take, what form does your interest and your activity take. You said you were an observer for the town council on the Conservation Forum.*

Well no, I'm an observer more for the, I'm an observer for the Forum.

*What does that mean?*

Well, when they have the, it doesn't mean you go in, I do report on Crowle matters, you know, to them, but it doesn't mean you're observing it and then reporting back. If you're not a, you know, they have a committee and an executive committee at the Forum and anyone else who goes there, you know, say representing Crowle Town Council are an observer, you know and if I took you along, I'd ask permission if you could go to the meeting and you'd go, they would classify you as an observer so you was taking an interest in the meeting you know. You go by invitation you don't,

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it isn't a public meeting that they have when they have their meetings. So that's what it means, but, it maybe a bit misleading say I'm an observer, but I, there's nothing to take note of anything because they're not digging now, you know. The peat that's being sent out in bags now is peat that was stockpiled prior to the enforcement notice.

*And you've talked about sort of going and investigating the public record offices and so on in the past. Is that, do you still continue with that kind of thing or is that not necessarily any more?*

No, I know virtually everyone who has land on there now, but, you know, get a Christmas card from the land registry at Hull I've been that many times! [laughs] I haven't been for a long, long time now to Beverley because I think I've exhausted them, you know, and Lincoln, Lincoln Archives, you know and they're very interesting, I'd never been before 'til the early nineties and mid nineties. Finished up there, you know, you digress, I found, found my, was it my great great granddads will you found Joyce? I think I was there, you know, we'd come finding stuff about Crowle Moors and here we have my great great granddads final, on his death...

\* Do you want a drink and a sandwich or owt?

*No, I'm fine thank you.*

\* Are you?

*I hear you've been helping out with, you know, archive searching and so on.*

Didn't you find me great, great granddads last will and it was, where he'd, and he was a captain, so he must have been able to read and write because he was a captain you know. We never found out whether he was a captain in the army or a captain in the navy but. His last will and it was just, where they'd had a mark and pulled it right of the, you know, so they must have held his hand and...

Not that that's got anything to do with the moors, but that what we was hunting you know and then found his last will and testament and giving this to that body and he'd left his son, this was eighteen sixty, he'd left his son hundred pound. I suppose that was a bit in eighteen sixty, you know. Good strong labourers were making two pound a year, living in on the farms, but not to be given to him for a year and then he must have had a, changed his mind and got the solicitor to cross it out and change it to six months. Things like that, so you know, when I say we spent months and months in the archive we did, we got, you'd get drawn down different paths that, you know, especially with being interested in Crowle, you know, only studying papers on Crowle, but.

*And you, and you know all that information now, I mean how is that useful to you?*

What, about what the moors?

*Yes.*

Well it's proved beyond doubt, you know, there were pieces that, you know were in, this is that and it doesn't belong that person and it doesn't belong, and we found out where things do belong, you know and things like that. Who does actually own this and who owns that and who should be in this and who shouldn't be in that.

\* Do you want a coffee?

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*No I'm fine thank you I've still got this one. Well thank you very much, I'm going to end there.*

[Recording Ends]