

Thorne & Hatfield Oral History Project

Interview with: Dave Lyon

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Interviewer: Lynne Fox

This is Lynne Fox for the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project. It's Thursday 9th November 2006 and I'm talking this morning to Dave Lyon from Lindholme Hall, morning Dave.

Good morning.

First of all I wonder if you could tell me when and where you were born please.

Well I was born on the 22nd January 1962 at the Doncaster Royal Infirmary, mi' parents were living here at the time at Lindholme Hall. At that time when I was born there would be mi' mother and father that lived here, mi' two elder brothers, mi' dad's brother who was Harry and mi' dad's mother, who was called Minnie Lyon and we all lived in this one house, all lived at separate ends of it.

Did you actually live separately then, as different families?

Yes, yeah, mi', my grandmother used to live at one end of the house where we occupy at the moment and me mum and dad and family lived at this end of the house, they had separate kitchens and separate living accommodation, as such.

And you talked about your two older brothers, have you got any more brothers and sisters?

I've got a younger brother yeah.

Okay. Can you, do you know how your family came to be here?

My dad's parents, Minnie and Richard Lyon were farmers and they used to rent a farm called Don Farm which is next to Lindholme Lakes now, just off the Sandtoft Road and they rented that farm for some time and I believe that Lindholme Hall was part of a big estates that came up for sale and they had the option of buying this and I think the other option was buying Tyreham Hall, and they decided to buy this which would, I think it was in the late thirties, when they, when they got this. As far as I can remember mi' dad telling me, the farm, this house had been fire damaged, not been lived in for quite some time and all the fields around were, not been farmed for years and years and years, cause he always used to tell me that for the first several years all they lived on was rabbits, that they could shoot from the fields because they had no other income or anything, so, they did that and they gradually worked the farm to, to what it is now I suppose.

Were they originally local people?

I think mi' grandfather come from, Scottish decent, as far as I can think, I have got something somewhere that will give a family tree and I can perhaps dig that out and let you know who came from where and where they were born.

Don't worry, I wondered perhaps if you could describe the location, where we are today.

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Where we are today, well this is Lindholme Hall it's a farm house that is, if you look at an aerial photograph, slap bang in the middle of Hatfield Moors. There's two roads in, the road that we use which is a fairly decent road, is three miles from the main road. So as the crow flies, we're probably two miles from any civilisation, which is Hatfield Woodhouse, Sandtoft or Crowle, we're in the middle of that sort of area, with the nearest neighbours a quarter of a mile away, which are two, a pair of cottages that were part of the farm estate and then the next nearest neighbours will be Lindholme Prison at this moment in time, which is about a mile and a half away as the crow flies. So we're very isolated, but very quiet!

[Laughter]

You could say that! This house is quite a large house and it's not, is this the original, the house that originally, can you tell me a little bit, let's make a, start again on that question!

[Laughter]

Can you tell me a little bit about the history of the island and about the house and the farm?

The island I believe was used as a hunting island when all the land around was flooded before Vermuyden's time, so this would be a retreat for people who wanted to come hunting and that. We've got a drawing in sixteen ninety-seven, that has a picture of a small cottage on, whether that cottage is part of this building or not, or whether it's been replaced by this building I don't know. But I know that, there's certainly the middle section of this building, originally was a single storey for, several hundred years ago and since then it's been built up and built up as I suppose it's become more of a retreat for the gentry rather than a hunting lodge, which is what was originally.

So we've got the centre section that is certainly I would imagine, from the seventeen hundreds, early eighteen hundreds, from there there's been two towers built on either side and then in Victorian times there is a further extension to the east, no to the west of the building. That tower they built in Victorian times, the latest bit was the worst built bit because they actually built it on some sort of rubbish heap or dump or, from previous times because we've had problems with subsidence in this bit and when they've dug down they've found just rubble really from previous times and then there's a traditional sort of courtyard buildings round the outside, some of which have been demolished several years ago. Some are still standing. During the war of just after the war we had German prisoners of war here and they did a lot of concreting work, they used to do all the, all the inner courtyards concreted and that's what the German prisoners of war did, they also did certain walling and casting of balustrade and things like that, so it's got a varied history and it's been built up as the years go by.

These prisoners of war what, why were they here?

I think they, it was either towards the end of the war or after the war they were, initially they used to come and work on the land, I believe mi' dad used to pick 'em up or mi' granddad used to pick 'em up from all around the area. I think there was some from the sort of, Walkington area where they were held and they used to come on on day work on the land and then go back home. But I know there was several perhaps, four or five, half a dozen say that actually stayed here after the war. I can remember when I was young one of them actually returned back here just to have a look at the old place, there were, I think they liked it that much they didn't want to leave after the war, they stopped on and helped at the farm and that. And I know one of them was called Heinz and he ran some sort of refrigeration company in Germany after he returned. As I say, that was many years ago when he came.

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As well as the concreting and the balustrading they left something else in the house as well I understand.

Yeah they, and I don't know which one it was but they, they drew a freeze, or painted a freeze round one of the rooms which depicted the life at that time and that was painted in nineteen forty six, that's actually just after the war and it shows the working farm as it was then. So we've got pictures of vehicles that we used, the house itself, and some of the life that was going on, some wildlife and animals they kept and such like. Nice to have that as a memento of what they did, that was restored in the eighties by my cousin, I think, who's an art teacher at Doncaster College, then mi' daughter's redone it since. So it's in quite good condition and good to look back at what there were, and we've still got some of the vehicles that are painted on the freeze as well.

Oh right have you?

[Laughter]

Yeah, but they're not in the same state as they are now, probably a bit worse worn, but...

Were these farm vehicles?

Yeah there's tractors and there's some, almost ex army vehicles I suppose, that mi' dad used on the farm. Some were sold and some we've still got, some have been restored so...

Because your dad was a bit of a collector I understand?

A bit of a collector, I would say that's a bit of an understatement, yes. Mi' dad used to collect everything and anything he could find. His passion was guns and swords and arms and armour and things like that, but he often used to go to farm sales and if he saw one little piece in a heap of scrap that he wanted he'd buy the whole lot and get his treasured piece out and the rest of it would be stored somewhere. So there's just, or there was just tonnes and tonnes of stuff around. But yeah, he collected lots of things.

So he didn't dispose of the bits he didn't want?

He would never get rid of anything, no!

[Laughter]

No!

So aside from arms and armour and guns and things like that, what other kind of things were there that he had in his collection?

That he collected? He would collect anything that was interesting, I mean we've got, just in the corner there a ukulele that was owned by George Formby and it's got hundreds of signatures on and he just went because he liked George Formby to an auction and bought it. There's an old car in the shed, an old Talbot London, nineteen thirty four, he tells me that, I can remember him telling me that a scrap monger used to come down and take bits and pieces of scrap now and again and he had this particular car, the Talbot, and mi' dad swapped him a tractor for it, so, and that car's been in

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that shed ever since I've been, younger, so it's been in that shed for forty years, not moved, but it's just there and tractors and farm implements and all sorts of thing he would collect.

So where did he put it?

Anywhere he could, if you have a look in the barns outside, I mean, there's lot's of stuff that's, we've had to get rid of and in here, because we've had to get rid of it because it was just so full, but it was just like an Aladdin's cave. Everything would be stacked up and piled up and...it's taken some sifting through I must admit.

And do you not follow in that footsteps?

I must admit I am reluctant to get rid of things, but, it comes to a stage where you've got, there's just too much stuff to look at really. I can't see the point in having lots of things that you don't appreciate, where you could perhaps just have one or two things that are, you know, good items to look at. So, we have got rid of a lot of stuff that was just stored away that nobody viewed and nobody could enjoy. So there's a lot of stuff gone but we have kept a lot of stuff as well.

Was there anything that might have come, that you thought might have come from the house itself of the environment immediately around the house that was historically interesting?

I can't remember much I think there used to be, perhaps a bit of flint or, an old, not sure if it was a canon ball or not, I can't remember now.

A what?

A canon ball, or some sort of, I don't know if that came from around the moors or not I don't know. I know there were bits and pieces of aeroplanes that crashed during the Second World War that he had, but, I can't remember a lot of local stuff to be honest, most of it was bought in.

Now you've described already how isolated it is here, where did you go to school and how did you get there?

Well I used to go to Hatfield Woodhouse Primary School initially, so that meant me mum or me dad, usually taking me up every morning and fetching me back. As I said it's a three mile trip there and back. When I was a teenager, the only activity there was locally was the youth club at Hatfield Woodhouse and that meant cycling three miles up there and three miles back, which in light time is not too bad, but at night time when it's dark it's a little bit spooky with the mist over the moors and dark. So it was, quite isolated but there again it has it's advantage sides of that, you can walk round with your dogs, I used to go shooting or motorbikes round and nobody used to bother you.

And how did your mum get you to school when you were at primary school and junior school, did you walk or..?

No she used to drive, used to drive us to school. No she did have a driving license but she'd never passed her test. Cause apparently there was a certain period during the war when you could get a driving license without passing a test, so.

And coming back to what you just mentioned, did that mean that you, your sort of activities were very concentrated around here?

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Oh definitely, yes, yeah, I mean it's the same for my kids as well that's here they, I mean we've obviously all got cars now, we can get out, but if you've got three miles before you can get anywhere, to the local village and even then there's nothing to do in the local village, it's, it's more of a trek. But when I was younger mi' mates used to come down here because they thought it was wonderful. So we used to either ride round on motorbikes or we used to go yomping over the moors, or whatever.

And what, when you say yomping over the moors, what, what did you do, what did that involve?

Well when I was young the moors were obviously still peat moors, they were still being worked, but at that time it was, although cut by machine it was cut differently. There used to be perhaps a three foot wide trench that was cut down perhaps four or five, six foot deep, then the peat would be cut into small blocks and then would be placed on the side. So you'd got a series of trenches and then humps and then a bit of space where cotton grass 'ud come through. So it would be ideal for playing army and hide and seek and all sorts of things. The immediate area around the house is land that me dad owned and he resisted the temptation of selling it because he was a, I suppose a very early conservationist. He didn't want to sell it to Fisons that ran it down to destroy all the woodlands and that. So our piece of land was, and still is, at this moment in time the only piece that's got any trees on or grass on, so we used to play there in the woods as well.

And you've mentioned a bit about what it looked like from the peat-working point of view, did you ever sort of see people working the peat?

Oh yes, yeah. There used to be dozens of cars that come down with the peat workers, they used to park along the side of the road or at sometimes to the south of the house. There was a time when they were working there and there'd be half a dozen a dozen vehicles everyday that used to come round with the manual workers working on the peat and you know, we got to know quite a few of them [inaudible] they was alright and then of course when they fetched in the big mechanisation things all that went and just stripped all the land completely. So there was no cotton grass and no ups and downs to play on it was just bang flat quagmire I suppose.

Yeah, yeah, and I'd like to come back to that in a minute if that's okay, did it, you, I mean this was a working farm at that point, what kind of size and how many people did it employ?

I think this is about a five hundred acre farm, I can never remember having any livestock here, it was an all arable farm, but on a, when mi' dad first started they had cows and they had pigs and such like, there's still some pig places outside, some piggeries. But I always remember it as an arable farm and back in those days when I was young it was a lot more labour intensive than it is now, so all my holidays, or majority of 'em, autumn time I was potato picking, which is walking behind the machine for hours on end in the freezing cold picking up the loose potatoes because you couldn't waste any potatoes or anything and then, summer holidays used to be carting corn, transporting corn from the combines.

And so aside from potatoes and corn did they grow anything else?

That was the majority of the stuff to be honest, potatoes and corn, yeah that was all they grew, perhaps some peas or beans, but I think the beans mostly were for pheasant feed and things like that, cause me dad was a big shooting man, he used to love shooting and had his own shoots here as well.

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What does that, tell me a bit about that, about what that involves?

Well he used to just have his friends down, he had a group of shooting friends that come down, they used to rear their own pheasants and partridges and then in shooting season used to go out once a fortnight and shoot them. I used to go with him when I was a lad, all over the place, but I don't do it now.

And you went, you actually went shooting you didn't...

To be honest I didn't go shooting I went beating with him, which was the less cleverer side, walking through the bracken and the trees and shouting funny noises to try and get the pheasants up to fly!

[Laughter]

But it used to be fun.

Is this still a working farm?

It is a working farm, mi' dad died many years ago now and when he died mi' eldest brother Richard and mi' mother ran the farm. Five years ago mi' mom died and the farm's split up now between us three brothers. Mi' brother still runs the working aspects of the farm which is towards Fisons peat works and that sort of area, so he's got about, I think it's about four hundred acres of the farm land that he uses. I've got the house and about a hundred and sixty acres around it, some of which is arable land, but I don't, I don't farm it, it has been rented out to my brother but at the moment we're just seeing if we're going into some sort of countryside stewardship agreement either with Defra or with English Nature. Because as you know all the moors at the moment are owned by English Nature or Natural England as they're called now. So, conservation's still quite high on the agenda, we'll see how we can work with them.

And you're not a farmer are you?

No, you're right, I'm not a farmer. I think, I think probably working every holiday on the farm, maybe put me off a little bit. I did go to farming college for a year but I didn't learn a lot unfortunately.

Were you not interested in farming, well you obviously weren't interested in farming, but...

I think I was interested in farming but, not that interested, so I decided to take me own course and that was it, even though we've ended back up here.

And are you able to say what it is that you do?

At the moment I'm the police force, at the moment.

You've mentioned about conservation and I understand your parents were quite active, in their sort of stewardship of the moor, or their working with the moor, so they're only ones had, they'd got the farm but they were always very conscious of where it was situated.

Yes.

So can you tell me a bit about..

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Well obviously it was a working farm so they had to work the land as, as that was their living. Like I said before the, the areas especially round the island, there's a lot of woodland that goes out onto the peat moors that I'm sure they could have sold to Fisons but didn't and I know mi' dad turned down the prospect of quarrying all around the island as well. I think he was, he was prepared to do a little bit of quarrying but when the quarry firm wanted the whole lot then he refused that, he wouldn't do that. So, he's kept a bit and obviously that's I would imagine the only original piece of Hatfield Moors there is that's untouched and that's something I know that English Nature and that are happy about because they can see what the rest of the moors should be like so it's a good legacy to leave I think.

You've mentioned the rabbits, tell me something about the other wildlife that you see around here.

Wildlife round here? Well rabbits, there's quite a few of those about although not as many as there used to be, we have, there's quite a few roe deer, I mean the roe deer come into the garden and nibble the roses and nibble at the grass. There used to be a badger set on the edge of, I think on our land of the peat moors that me dad was, again he was very keen to protect and that. I'm not sure whether that's still there now or not, I've, I haven't seen any badgers round here for years and years and years.

Was he interested in the wildlife as well your dad?

Oh yeah, yeah. But even though he used to go and shoot the pheasants he was keen on protecting any wildlife round that there was. I mean, we used to have a pet fox at one stage that, mi' brother found or [inaudible] and we kept him in a pen for a short while, and I can always remember mi' dad showing off to his shooting friends once saying how tame this pet fox is, and he went to feed it and it bit his hand and wouldn't let go!

[Laughter]

And then, we released that after it was, I suppose well enough or old enough to look after itself, but it still used to come back, you used to whistle it and you could feed it dog biscuits. He was very keen on conservation, yeah.

Did that take any active form, I mean, in the sense of, I don't know, I don't quite know what that would mean, but, you know, building hides or building stuff or actively protecting or did he just appreciate what was there?

I think he appreciated what was there and he would do what ever he could to protect it, I suppose in his own way, and as I say, like the badger set, he would go and check and make sure it was okay and make sure that nobody was, you know, do owt, where it was or digging it up or anything like that. He would build, I mean, pens, pens were built for the pheasants and things to protect them, but I suppose he protected other wildlife as well.

Now, you, we talked a little bit about the original peat working if you like, when you were younger, which were very different to what came later. Can you describe to me what it, what happened when the practice, the way they won the peat changed?

Yeah, like I said previously the moors were dug mechanically but there was a series of troughs and hills with in between cotton grass and maybe silver birch trees growing, so you had a broken landscape and there was always something growing somewhere and then when they fetched in the

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mechanisation it just took all the top off the peat so it was just like a moonscape almost. I mean, as you drove down our road you could see both sides as far as you can see it was just, just like a brown field with nothing at all growing on it. Obviously taken away all the flora and fauna and anything where any wildlife could rest.

What kind of impact did that have on you and your family?

Well it didn't have any immediate impact, I think, I mean probably at that time I was away from here anyway when it started, but I don't suppose there's a lot you can do if they do it, that's...

I was wondering how, if members of your family talked about how they felt about that.

Not really, I know they weren't impressed by what was going on, I mean, obviously they had the same thoughts as most people I think that the land was just being raped, no benefit was left and that's why I think there was even more, I don't know, they were wanting to keep this place as it was even more so, so there was some habitat in the middle of all this desolate landscape.

Was your dad still here at that time?

I don't know, I can't remember now, when did they..?

Eighties, mid eighties.

I think he died in eighty-six, so maybe, I can't remember.

I mentioned that, particularly, I mean it's probably very different when you live here and you see it gradually, day by day. But when you do turn into this road and you drive down it it's really shocking because you go through these trees and it's all very pretty and then suddenly you emerge on to this landscape, like you say on either side of the road.

Yeah.

And almost as far as you can see it's just flat, brown, no vegetation.

Just nothing at all, no.

And this is two thousand and six, it's been ceased for quite a while now and it's still, nothing...

No. Well I'm, I'm sure they're trying their best to try and make it into how it was but only time will do that, whatever they're doing, it's only time.

Here of all places actually, when, I mean there's, I've been onto Thorne Moors and I've been other areas on Hatfield Moor but when you actually come across these big places where they milled, it is really, it's a real shock I think.

Yeah.

And I just, as I say, it's perhaps different when you're here everyday and you see it happening bit by bit, but..

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Yeah, I mean it's a gradual change, but it still doesn't make it any easier because as I say, if it wasn't for mi' dad and this place then there wouldn't be anything at all in this, how ever many acres there are, three hundred, three thousand acres, it's not that.

I presume you've seen this map have you? This is just an aerial photograph of the moors, in the centre of the map is our house, the only green vegetation is this area in the centre which is the fields that I own, the woodland, and then the rest, which spans a fantastic distance, this is just, as you say, it's just brown land, apart from the few fields that mi' brother works and again the fields that mi' brother works towards Sandtoft Road is on peat.

It's warp isn't it?

It's warp land and this was warped from Lindholme Lakes so they, they carted the warp from the Lindholme Lakes and put it onto the peat land to make it workable. But again I would imagine that anybody more unscrupulous than mi' parents could quite have easily sold this farmland for peat. It would have been a lot more, profitable than farming, cause farming's, from what farmers tell me, never any money in it. So, it's, as I say, it proves the fact that the family were dedicated to farming that that land was kept as well.

Now we talked about your, in fact, just looking at this map it's really, really clear how it is an island, right slap bang in the middle, in't it.

Yeah, yeah, it's, it's deceiving really because you, you obviously don't notice any sort of incline or anything but going towards the south of the house when you, when you stand in the fields, to the south there you can see you're several metres above all the land about. I mean, fair enough a lot of the land, I don't now how many metres of peat they've taken off, they must have taken quite a bit, but it is, you know, very visible, you're quite high above it.

And is there peat on the island, or what kind of soil is it?

On the, on the island itself on the centre of the island is sand and gravel, but where, where the trees are towards the edges and this is on peat land still. So that's what I'm saying, the land around here, especially, which used to be a Section 39 agreement with Doncaster Council, I mean that was all on peat, so that, that could have been sold for, for workings as well by my, you know, by mi' dad.

It's surrounded by, by milled fields isn't it?

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah I can see.

Yeah, look and there's the, the gas well.

Yes, I noticed the gas and I know that there's been drilling for, well originally they thought it was going to be oil didn't they?

Yeah they've had quite a few test drills around and again when I was younger up towards the end of Lindholme Bank Road, between Ten Acre Lake and the Prison they drilled for oil there and they did extract oil for a number of years, there were like a nodding donkey pump. I know mi' dad used to look after that while the, when the proper bloke was away and he used to take samples of oil and such like and the gas well that's there now, they were actually drilling for oil when they hit this gas

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pocket which blew the rig apart and it, I suppose just by chance they found this underground gas cavern, which is, what they're using at this moment in time.

Were you here then when it blew?

No I wasn't, no I was, I suppose I'd have been about eighteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old and I was working, I was, I think it was either just before I went to college or just after. Probably just after, and I came back just before Christmas to find the road blocked and firemen all over the place and wondering what had happened, but that's what had happened, yeah.

Was it still on fire?

Yeah, it was on fire, all over Christmas, whichever year it was, I can't remember what year it was, but it was on fire all year, and the gas well's probably thirty, forty yards from our road. I can remember coming down and I think once at Christmas Eve it was snowing all around, we went up because it was still flaring and all the trees around it were in bud, because it was that warm. It was, surreal, really, you had snow everywhere apart from trees that were in bud because they thought it was different season.

Fantastic.

And they fetched, they fetched a bloke over from America which was Boots Hansen, and he's, apparently he used to be Red Adaire's partner and they came and capped the well and after they capped it they built whatever device there was for the gas to escape controlled, but they had to light this gas and they had no means to light the gas at the top of this pipe. So mi' dad went up and mi' brother, with his bow and arrow, with a bit of rag wrapped round, dipped in diesel or something, aimed it up and ignited the gas well!

[Laughter]

Oh fantastic, fantastic. I've actually got the, the newspaper reports of some of that.

Really?

Yeah, yes, that's..

I'm sure we must have some somewhere, but that'd be interesting to see. I can remember it being on TV and that and I think it still is the only inland gas well explosion fire in Britain. So it's quite something.

I didn't know about the bow and arrow.

Oh yeah!

[Laughter]

And I'm sure we've still got the arrow somewhere that, that lit the, ignited the gas well after it was capped.

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So, we can see that there's gas and you've talked a bit also about gravel, sand and gravel extraction on the moor. So there was a company extracting sand and gravel, did that come close to you as well?

I mean obviously Tyreham Hall, which is again I suppose one of our nearest neighbours, perhaps a mile and half away, that was all sand and gravel that's been extracted, that's now Tyreham Lakes and I'm sure I mentioned it, but mi' dad had the option of buying Tyreham Hall or Lindholme and he picked Lindholme with the farm instead of Tyreham Hall with all the sand and gravel, but there you go, and I know they've got planning permission or had planning permission to extract sand and gravel all around, near to the airfield, which I suppose, between here and Woodhouse, which used to be called, Eastern, or East Down Hill. Which I presume is another raised island, and where sand and gravel's been exposed, but they haven't started, or they started taking some out but it wasn't good enough quality. But they've got, I think they've got plans for round the edge of the airfield within the Lindholme Bank Road to extract all that and whether they're going to or not I don't know. But we'll see.

It's an area rich in resources.

Yes.

Isn't it.

Yeah.

You talked about your dad and his interest and his input and reasons for being here, tell me a bit about your mum.

Mi' mum, well she was born in Walkingham, I think, her dad was a haulier and my dad knew her dad before she was born, and I've got no idea when they got married, again I'll be able to find that out but I've got no idea, but I suppose she was the typical farmer's wife who used to do all the home baking, went to the WI.

[Somebody in room]

Hiya.

Hello.

Have you seen the key to mi' car?

[Inaudible]

You were saying she was a typical farmer's wife.

Yeah, baking and cooking and going to the WI and things like that, making the meals, summertime they'd, when they were combining she'd pack up a picnic and go to the fields where they were combining so they'd just have a quick break and carry on like, so.

Did she ever actually work on the farm work?

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Oh no! Not that I can remember no, I'm sure she probably did when she first came down but not as far as I can remember no, no.

And was she also interested in the wildlife and the area around?

I suppose she was interested yeah, but not to the extent that mi' dad was I don't think, but, living here you can't be anything but interested I don't think, in it.

And how did she feel about your dad's collection? Did she participate, did she collect herself?

I didn't think she collected, I think she would go to a few auctions with him, but, no mi' dad was the collector and me mom put up with it!

I've been here before as you know and you showed us one or two things, I think there was a well, was it well that you showed us around the side?

Yeah, it's a well, to the west, that I can remember being a well, although I can't remember any water in it, but there's, I suppose there has been one or two wells around...

How, how do you get your water here?

At the moment it's from a borehole that's just outside. When I was younger we had another bore hole and the water was crystal clear, it was, you know, perfectly clear water and then that ran dry for some reason and they had to have another bore hole dug which went deeper than the original one, but when the water came up it was a rusty brown colour and still is. So even though we've got water filters on now it still doesn't take the sediment out and it just stains everything, any white shirts turn brown or yellow, it's a nightmare! And we have, water authority and local council come down checking it, in fact I got the results the other day and there's traces of cyanide and all sorts of things in it, but apparently it's still alright to drink so that's alright, and you've had your cup of coffee, so that's, you're still here!

[Laughter]

Thank you for that!

[Laughter]

Do you have to have any sort of purification on it or is it...

No I mean, we've never...

As it comes, out of the ground?

Never had a purification on it, I mean, when we moved in the water was, it was disgusting it was, they'd a galvanized header tank that had been there for, God knows how many years and there was so much sediment in it, the water ran through lead pipes, through old taps and it was, it wasn't good. We've tried to improve it, we've put new tanks in, we've put a new plumbing system in and a filter system but it's still an awful colour. We put up with it, we live with it, so you get used to, used to the taste.

And what about other services like gas and electricity?

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There's no gas, even though we've got a gas reserve about a quarter of a mile away there's no piped gas here at all. The central heating is run on oil at this moment, it used to be solid fuel, we used to have a straw burner or a wood burner in. Electric I think was brought here in about nineteen sixty two, prior to that we used to have a big ex army generator that charged a bank of batteries that would run the hundred and ten volt lighting system. Cause I can remember the generator and the hundreds of batteries that we used to have to charge up and that but they, as I say they did actually get mains electric I think about nineteen sixty, sixty two, something like that. So we're quite modern now with electric and running water.

It comes a long way doesn't it?

It does come a long way yeah, and if there's any storms then obviously it's quite usually, get knocked out, you can be without electric for days on end.

Is it on overheads?

Yeah. We've got the telephone now as well and Internet.

[Laughter]

As well in here we've got our own sewage system which, runs in underground pipes to a big brick built septic tank, I suppose it is, which I would imagine Victorian ish, and then the top water runs off into a pond, that used to be frequented by ducks but we don't get that many now. So, all mod cons.

One of the most famous old inhabitants of this place was William de Lindholme, the hermit.

Allegedly yes.

Yeah, do you know anything about him and about that?

Just the old stories that mi' dad used to say about, I mean there's plenty in books that we've read about and I'm sure everybody else can read about but, yeah, apparently he used to inhabit this area. There's a couple of big boulders just outside the house that he was, allegedly thrown from Wroot, which is some going cause that's probably two miles away as the crow flies. They're called the finger and thumb, the finger and thumb stone I think and if you look hard you can see what might be an impression of a finger print. But yeah, he's supposed to have lived here, there's all sorts of various stories about him being locked up in a barn, or him locking the sparrows, that's it, him locking the sparrows up because he couldn't go to Wroot Festival or something like that and locked the sparrows up for so long that they'd turned white and there's reputedly white sparrows that used to fly around here, but I've never seen any. And again his grave was somewhere in this building or in a building that was near here that Samuel Wesley came to have a look at in the seventeen hundreds and found some bones and things and altars and things. But again, we've had this place to bits and not found anything, so, what there is and what there isn't who knows. It's the stuff legends are made of though in't it. And there's also the thing that this always used to be inhabited by monks or religious people, again from stories that mi' dad used to say, that, used to be some sort of worshipping place here, but again we've never found any evidence of it. Whether there is or not.

This is a large and later have you ever found any evidence for, any, an older building, cause you've done extensive work in here haven't you?

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Yeah, I mean the only things we've found is while we've been re-plastering or painting or whatever is, there's on the, on the centre section there's a definition of a single storey roof that has been there, a sloping roof, so at one time that would have been a single story building, but there's nothing else apart from that, that we've found. Although we keep looking. I mean, it's like you'd have thought a house this size would have some underground cellars or something like that, the only cellars we've had go down three steps, but, we keep looking to see if there's any priest holes or cellars and things, but, not found anything yet.

You also mentioned about how eerie it was, particularly in the dark winter nights, have you ever sort of had any strange experiences?

Not personally no, but other people have. I mean, eerie yes, because, because of where we are and during the autumn, winter times you get a very low lying mist that does lie perhaps two or three foot above ground, so that is very eerie. I can remember when I was young that, that mi' brother and his mates used to do the ouija board when that was all the rage and you know, used to ask if anybody was there, and they'd say yeah, there's twelve spirits in this room and that, but I've not seen anything, but, there's been people here that have seen or think they've seen people and we've had a spiritualist down as well who's said, yeah, there's certain bad spirits around and they've supposed to have cleansed the house of that. So, I dare say there's lots and lots of people that's died here, so, perhaps something around.

And nothing out on the moor itself?

Again, not what I've seen, I can remember years ago somebody telling me about when they did the old fashioned peat stacking and that there was a couple of ladies working, stacking peat, and there was a bloke sat five or ten yards away dressed in what looked like a flying uniform. They used to be stacking the peat and as they moved up he moved up but they saw that he wasn't doing anything, so they'd, one said to the other 'I'm gonna ask him what he's doing'. So she went down the dip and up to ask him what he was doing and when she got there he'd gone. So there's the, there's various ghost stories about Lindholme as well, Lindholme airfield as it was, Lindholme Willy, he was a pilot, and there's certainly several planes that's crashed around here. One or two sites that still have bits and pieces but I think most have been, with the workings, most have been dug up and removed anyway. But no, I've not seen anything here.

Do you know anything about when, the time when Lindholme was an operational airfield particularly, war time, and I have to say that those crashed planes a lot of them are war graves, so we're not able to say exactly where particular places are.

No.

But I know there's been some crashes.

Yeah, I know there was, there's been several planes I think it was a Lancaster Bomber base during the war and then mi' dad said that he can remember planes coming down, quite frequently round this area.

Cause was your dad here in the war?

Yeah, he would be yeah, he'd be here while, I think he moved here thirty, late thirties, something like that. So he would be here yeah. As I say he's told me about planes that's, that's come down

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and things like that. My recollection is, often when I was young it was still, I don't think it was an operational base it was more of a training base the air field, cause our road, our only road that runs out to the, to Hatfield Woodhouse actually goes round the side of the perimeter track. I road used to run all the way through to Bawtry Road, the straight road used to run through to Bawtry Road, but when they built the airfield they had to divert our road back. So quite often we'd, going to school we'd have a set of traffic lights to say stop or go, there'd be an incoming plane and often had to stop for planes to land as we were going to school and that and then obviously that was disbanded by, quite soon after that and Lindholme was left empty for, for many years. Which was all right for us cause we could race round the airfield and mess about and things like that. I can remember 'em having gliders on and go-karts and things but then it went to the prison and, and that's it.

Does the prison have any impact on you?

No. I think where we are, if anybody escapes from prison the last place that they're gonna come to is the middle of nowhere in the moors, they want to be onto the main road and off, so we've never had any problems there at all.

And does it have any connection with the area around it or is it very isolated?

It's fairly well isolated I think where it is. I suppose it's a, a good use of the airfield. I think Lindholme airfield is one of the few that are actually owned by the government rather than rented, so I think they had to do something with it. I know they keep selling bits of land off and that but, obviously prison is here to stay. They keep adding to it don't they so..

I wondered if you, I'm not sure whether you would be here at the time, but I wondered if you'd any experience or ever saw any of the activities for some of the conservationists when they started taking an active stance against the peat milling.

No. When the, when they had all the demonstrations at the peat works and that I wasn't here, I was away, so no, I've never had any first hand experience of that.

And did any members of your family have any interest in that?

I don't think anybody would actively do anything, obviously they voiced their concerns and, but no they didn't have anything, any protesting, things in them.

So none of you had any direct experience of Mr Bunting then?

I'm sure mi' dad met Mr Bunting on a few occasions, but, I don't know, I would imagine that there were, they would have thought on the same, you know, similar sort of lines, to be honest and that but, I don't think I've ever met him so...can't tell you much about that I'm afraid.

And do you get sort of naturalists and groups and things wanting to come onto your land and...

We get quite a few bird watchers wanting to come and things like that, the problem is nowadays we don't know whether people are genuine or not. There's rare birds that breed on the moors on bits that we own and rare species and obviously, English Nature, who, Natural England, who run it now, they let us know when they nest and that and they'll let us know if anybody's gonna come down, all that, so we're worried that the wrong sort of people might come down and, you know, try and get their eggs or sabotage or whatever. But we do get quite a few that come down and have a look round, yeah.

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And do you get, like ramblers and long distance walkers and things?

Not too many ramblers, the road, the roads down is, there's signs on it saying they're private roads and that, so we try and discourage people coming down here for the sake of coming down here. English Nature they've got their own, Ten Ace Lakes and they're making their own walkways and again they're of a the same opinion that if they can keep members of the public in an area where they know they are, then they're not going to get lost or come to any harm, or more importantly they'll be able to, keep 'em away from areas that they want to protect, specifically. The problem that we have here is because we're isolated, people come down for reasons that they shunt do, they either come down to, I mean you've, a few years ago we had a spate of joy riders coming round, burning cars out and things like that, because it's in the middle of nowhere. So we've got to be, we've got to be quite protective about where we live to be honest to try and discourage that sort of thing.

Well thank you very much indeed.

[Recording Ends]