

Thorne & Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

Interview with: Ray Hodges

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Interviewer: Lynne Fox

It's the 2nd June 2006, my name's Lynne Fox and I'm here with Mr Raymond Hodges who's going to talk to us about Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Morning Mr Hodges.

Good Morning.

I wonder if first of all if you could, would mind telling me, where you were born.

I was born in South Wales in nineteen thirty five and the reason we came to this part of Yorkshire is that mi' father came up from the Welsh mines to the Yorkshire mines, obviously finding work, and Thorne collieries then had just started to open up. That was in nineteen thirty seven when the colliery became active and obviously there was different people from different parts of the country, Durham, Geordies, Scotch, Welsh and obviously they came to the new mine which was Thorne Colliery.

And where did you live then....?

We first came, we first lived in Thorne, the reason we lived in Thorne to begin with is 'cause that was the only accommodation that mi' parents could get at the time 'cause they was still building Moorends then and what we call the pit houses was being built, in the process of being built, so mi' mother and father had to find private accommodation till as such times as they got a pit house and that would be, that would be, as I say, between thirty seven and thirty nine and mi' father got a job at Thorne colliery. Mi' granddad had came down previous to that from the Welsh mines and that's how, most, well some of mi' relations came to work in the pit in Moorends and that's how we came to be in Yorkshire.

So how many people, members of your family were actually in Moorends?

At that time when we, when we came from Wales to Moorends, Thorne, there was mi' mother and father, mi' elder brother, Des, mi' eldest sister Vera, mi' elder brother Charles and mi' self and then along the way there were seven children of us all together.

And did you say your granddad was here as well?

Yes, mi' granddad and grandmother was here. They, they came for the, the mine, to work in the pit and I do believe one of mi' father's sons, brothers came mi' uncle Tom, I think he came to work in the mine, well he came, I think he came with mi' grandmother and grandfather, so that was like a, the grandparents to mi' father in the pits and subsequently there has been relations in the family that's worked down the mine and also mi' elder brother, he worked down the pits, which is Thorne Colliery.

And did this, did you granddad and all your other relations stay in Moorends, they didn't go back to Wales?

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No, no they didn't go back, they stayed. Mi' grandfather in particular got a pit house as it happens and he stayed in Moorends all his life from leaving Wales, mi' father and mother also. Mi' mother came from Bristol as a matter of fact, mi' father came from South Wales, same as mi' grandparents and they came here and they lived their life out in Moorends and, and as I say they're all buried here actually.

Where did you go to school?

I went to Thorne secondary, well first of all I went to Moorends Junior Infants and then from there, from the Junior School I went to the Thorne Secondary Modern school which is in Thorne itself, that's no longer there now, that's been pulled down and they're rebuilding a new housing estate there, so it was Thorne Secondary Modern School.

And who were your main friends at school?

Well obviously mi' main friends was, members of the school football team as I played football for the school team and mi' main friends was the school team members. Obviously ten other ones, if you like, I mean I can name most of them, but it was a school football team and we won a few trophies and we was, a pretty good team actually in the Doncaster area. We won the Daily Despatch Shield and we've won numerous others, things. And then I carried on being an amateur player with a local amateur team in Thorne and that was mi' main interest of, apart from, as I said, when I was younger during the summer holidays from school it was a question of making your own entertainment, and my entertainment involved mainly round moors. It was on the doorstep, mi' mother and father's house was literally a hundred yards from the beginning of the moors and, we used to go over there, doing various things, swimming in the lake, collecting firewood, collecting rhododendroms, flowers, you name it we were, just doing natural boy things. We obviously, with going over there, there was families living on the moors at that time to what I can understand and what I'm told by some older relatives of mine.

You were telling me when I first came, you took me along a track or something onto the moors didn't you, you took me along a track that you used to walk up.

Yes, you, we could go onto the moors in two different ways. We could go down the, what we call the allotments and go on the moors from the pit tip side, or we could go through the colliery and go round the colliery and go on the moors from that side, so we had two avenues of entry to the moors. If I went on the moors from the allotment side I used to go round the tip. Now that, in them days there was a track which led you round there, round the pit tip onto the moors, or if I went on the pit side, there was a track which led, a proper road that led you passed the various families living on the moors. So we could go from two, two directions on the moors.

So how many was there, was it like you and a few friends?

Well in general their was me and mi' brother. I was pally with the youngest son of one of the families, and mi' elder brother was pally with the eldest son of the family, so mi' elder brother used to do his thing with, with Ernie, that was the elder brother and I used to do my thing with Knocky, that was his nickname, but his name was Ronald, but Knocky, and we used to do our thing on the moors. Obviously there was other children that went over there but, they, they used to go over there on their own initiatives whereas we used to go with the family, the Bells family in particular, in fact mainly the Bells family, because although we knew the other families, the Bells was a family of children, I think there was eight, ten in, in total and obviously with them being a family of children,

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we, we related to them more than the other families. And that's, that was the general idea of going over there to play with the Bells family.

Did the Bells actually live there?

Yes, if you was, if you was going from the pit side, the colliery side and you walked round the screens and through the pit yard, round the screens, you went down the lane, as we called it then, and the first dwelling you came to was the Verhees's. Now the Verhees was a Dutch family, and I do believe they were, the elder generation of the Verhees family they was part of the draining of the area with the Dutch. Also with the Verhees dwellings there was a German family called the Smits. Now the Verhees was a family of, I believe there was eight children, there was five boys and there was three girls. The Smits was a German family and they was a, I believe they was part of the, the draining system and they was just a family of one, as far as I know one daughter and she was the local post woman later on. Then you carried on round the lane, you passed the big lake, as we called the 'pike lake' 'cause we were told there was pike in there, so we never swam in there. Then you came to the Bells and the Sharpes. Now this was a big rambling dwelling with the gable ends on the roof. Now the Sharpes lived in one half of the dwelling and the Bells lived in the other half. Now as I've said the Bells was a very large family, initially, I think when we was kids, there was, maybe five children there, but subsequently they had a lot more when they came off the moors. And the Sharpes, now the Sharpes had to what I can make out, two children a boy and a girl.

Now as far as recollection goes Mr Bell was unemployed from most of my recollection. And, as I say he lived in one half of the dwelling and Mr Sharpe and his family lived in the other. Now Mr Sharpe was employed by the colliery and at that time it was privately owned and that was owned by a, a company called Pease and Partners. Now there is, I think there is some photographs where the railway wagons have got that, the coal wagons have got that name on the side of 'em, Pease and Partners, and, Mr Sharpe worked for those. Now he had a, a horse and dray and what he was employed with was going on the local tip collecting surplus coal that hadn't been screened and he used to collect the coal up and take it to the, what they call the land sale area, which was at the, house at the beginning of the village before you went onto the pit and he used to collect that and give it back to the, the pit company Pease and Partners, in land sale. Now land sale was where the home coal deliveries came from, that was the, the section of where all the miners got free coal and they got coal every month or every two months I'm not sure which, and then they used to sell coal to private contractors and they used to come and collect coal and then they would do their business and sell it privately. But Mr Sharpe used to collect the coal for the colliery and that's how, that was his occupation and as I say he had a son and a daughter, but when I was a child they was much older than me, so we never, I never personally played with the Sharpes.

We used to go over there, as I say, in the summer months and we used to go swimming in the lake, playing on the moors, swings, and just in general roaming the moors.

Whereabouts did you go swimming?

They had, there was two big lakes at side of the Sharpes and Bells house, two, one really big lake, as I said that was called the pike lake and we was told there was pikes in there, we never knew, and there was a smaller lake right in front of the Sharpes and Bells house and then it, it had an off cut where there was a stream that came from the lake and that used to go across the moors. That went right down passed Bells house through the moors and I do believe that ended up somewhere in the Crowle area, but I never knew that 'cause I never, I never followed it passed, the other family which was on the, on the east side and that was the Emersons. Now they lived in a cottage down the east side of the moors and you carried on round the pit and you went down the lane, going towards

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Hatfield, that way, which was the east side, and they was called Emersons. Now they was a family of mother, father a boy and a girl but, we used to go up that end collecting rhododendroms. Also there was a big vast, now, damson orchard down there, we used to go collecting damson and all.

Did that belong to anybody?

No it was just a wild damson orchard, it was, but, we never played much down that end because, because of the big stream, we could never get across anyway and we used to go so far down for the rhododendroms then we would come back to the village and make em in bunches and sell em to the local population or neighbours.

Was there one particular area that the rhododendrons all grew?

Oh no, they, they grew wherever you wanted to roam, generally, but generally at side of the streams where there was water in general. When you went further into the moors it was fern and bracken and peat bogs, but the rhododendroms was vast, but they was always where there was water, round by the lake and the stream, near Bells and Sharpes and also what we call down at White City and that's where the main stream went across the moors. So they, they tended to grow there, if you went into the moors as I said it was, it was going into the moors proper then, silver birch mainly, that was the trees, ferns and as I say bog land, that was in the moors itself. But also there was quite a few larger trees, I never, not being a, I mean I never knew what make they was but they was large ones, but generally it was silver birch.

Why did you call it White City?

Because the rhododendroms in general in that particular area was white, whereas against the general run of rhododendroms would be purple, they would be a mauve colour and they would be a pink colour. But the reason we called it White City is because in there was a very big vast, not a vast area, but a large area of rhododendroms that was white but we could never get to those because it was the other side of the big stream. We used to get the purple, the mauve and the pink ones, but we called it White City for that reason.

And was it a deep stream down there?

Oh it was quite, I would say it would be maybe three metres across and we never, I never knew how deep it was because we never went across it but, yes it was, it came, actually I do believe I couldn't swear where the actual water came from, although there was, they pumped a lot o' water out o' the mine onto the moors, plus there were two lakes, and we understood there was an underground, reservoir somewhere that fed these particular streams and lakes. But I do know that they pumped out, a lot o', lot o' water out of the mine, because Thorne Colliery was noted for being, it was sunk and they hit water when they were sinking the mine and they had to pump it off, and in general it was in the shaft area and that was pumped onto the moors, so that was part of the, where the water came from but I was told that there was an underground stream that fed these streams and, and the lakes so, I never knew where that actual source was, but.

And there were farms and things around there I think you were saying?

There was, to my knowledge on the west side was the Thorne Goole area, that was generally thick vegetation, thick moor lands. On the east side, it, it was, a lot of the land, quite a bit of the land was claimed for farmland, that was to the east, in between Thorne and Hatfield. Now in general there was one farmer which farmed that land and that was Birtwhistle, and when I was a young boy the,

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the father was Harry Birtwhistle and he had a son and, two sons and a daughter and he used, he claimed part of the edge of the moors and he used to farm that, in fact it's still farmed to this day.

And what kind of things did he grow?

Oh, every, you know, modern crops. Wheat, peas, pulses, potatoes, in general and also he was, he was a dairy farmer, and he was a mixture of both, in fact Harry Birtwhistle was the farmer in the area in general. I mean he had a rather a large farm and I went to school with his son John and occasionally I played on the farm but very rarely 'cause Harry was a bit of a strict father and you had to mind your P's and Q's and watch what you was doing. But, yes he farmed to the east side of the moors on the edge, just, just adjacent to what we called White City and the Emersons dwelling, and that was that part of the moors. But, as I said, we used to go over there and when it was, when they was harvesting the crops and, in them days they di'nt have these mechanisms and they used to do it manually and they used to have wigwams of poles, eight foot poles, which they got off the moors naturally, and they used to put the stacks, wigwams, and then they used to put the, the peas to dry out, the beans to dry out and so on. But we used to go and take, occasionally, take a wigwam apart and have the poles for leaping the dykes over there and, where we couldn't get across where there was water we'd leap across on these poles. So Harry wasn't too pleased with us if ever he saw us doing that, Harry used to make sure we knew he was there and that was another part of growing up in, on the moors. And as I say, that was the families, the Verhees, the Smits, the Bells, the Sharpes and the Emersons and they was the people who lived on the moors.

So when you were getting up to mischief on Mr Birtwhistle's farm was it just you and Knocky or was it...?

Oh, no, no this was, no, Knocky, Knocky occasionally, Knocky used to come with us but, in general it's was the kids out of the village. I mean once they latched onto the fact that there was leaping poles about and we was, then we'd go down the dykes and we'd be leaping the dykes, course it caught on and then you'd get some of the other children going across and taking poles. But in general it was, it was the village children that was taking the poles mainly. I'd been across with Knocky and that but generally it was the village kids and that was, that part of growing up on the moors.

Did you say you made swings and things like that?

Oh yes, I mean, we'd get old ropes off the tip and belting and makes swings with, make seats out of the belting, belting's what they used to bring the coal along the pit bottoms and we used to cut pieces up and make a seat for the swing. We used to swing across the, the streams, oh, yeah, you name it we used to do it. I mean in general we used to just, just roam the moors, just getting up to whatever took us fancy. In the winter we used to go to the tip, come down the tip on bits of old belting, bits of sheeting, sliding down snow obviously and ice, sliding down the tip.

Also over there, funnily enough, in between the tip and the east side, Emersons, the home guard used to practice rifle shooting over there. And there was a rifle range and they used to, we used play on the actual contraption that went up and down with the targets on. And they used to go across the field facing the tip, so where the targets was was in front of the tip, so when they aimed at the targets the bullets was actually going into the tip itself as against being you know, random, and we used to go and, the actual target area was, was a contraption where they put a target on one contraption and, and then a target on another contraption and they pulled one down and the other one went up. Now when that target had been aimed at they used to lower that one and the other one used to go up, then they would replace or stick tape on where the bullet holes were on that one and

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then it'd be going up and down, and then they'd shoot from across the field towards the tip area and that was another. We never went, they used to fly a red flag whenever the home guard was practising rifle shooting. Obviously we could never go across the moors then, because there was people stopping you from going on either side of the moors, but that was another episode, we used to go as near as we could just to listen to the guns being fired and then we used to go on the tip to try and find, used bullet heads, you know. We used to find a few but I mean if you found one it was a real find and I mean being small kids, eight or nine year olds, if you found a bullet head bedded in the tip it was a good find actually.

What did you do with them then?

Well we used to keep 'em as souvenirs. I mean to find a bullet at that time, especially when the war was on, I mean it was like a wartime souvenir. We used to keep them, put them in a tin or in a box or whatever and that was, that was another part of playing on the moors..

So the home guard used to practice rifle shooting?

Oh yeah.

This was Thorne home guard?

Well it was the local home guards, well I'm saying local, I mean, I don't whether they came out of the area in general, oh it was done with live ammunition, and it was the home guards that, I think every so often they gave em live ammunition, for target practice. I think they may have had two rifles between one squadron I don't know but, I know they, as I said they used live ammunition 'cause we used to pick the bullets up, occasionally, when we, I mean if they wasn't imbedded too far in the tip, aye.

Now the moors was used for other things in the war as well wasn't it? There was an airfield on there wasn't there?

No, there wasn't an airfield on the moors. There was two airfields, one was at Lindholme and later on there was Finningley. Now Lindholme has, when I was a child was the main aerodrome, now that was on the edge of the moors but that was on the Hatfield side of the moors. Lindholme is between Thorne and Bawtry and Finningley is also, which now is Robin Hood Airport, and Lindholme is now the local jail. But Lindholme was the main bomber aerodrome when I was a kid and they used to fly from there, Wellingtons and Lancaster Bombers. Now during the war, there was a plane crash in Moorends and that was a, I do believe that was a Lancaster Bomber and that was manned by a Canadian crew and that, that crashed adjacent to what is now Darlington Grove, adjacent to the railway line. As then there was just the, houses on the main road of Moorends and back of those it was open fields then the railway line from Hull to Doncaster and, and Sheffield, and the plane didn't make it back to Lindholme and that crashed, as I said, adjacent to Darlington Grove. Now all, all the crew was killed in that and mi' elder brother can remember that, going, getting near to that and the ammunition exploding. We never got as near as that because you was stopped, but mi' brother and a few of his friends went the wrong way round and they went across the fields on the back side, and, he can remember the ammunition exploding from that particular crash.

When we was kids and there was one crashed over the moors and me and Knocky Bell we crawled through the bracken and the fern and the silver birch trees to the one that crashed on the moors itself. But, we, we got little bits of plane later on, when there was no one about, but in general there

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was the RAF, and police and all these service personnel was on the moors, we never did get too near to that because it was cordoned off. But that was another one. Mi' older brother told me that there was another plane but that made a forced landing, now that made a forced landing, what we know as the Warping Drain, that's a drain that comes from the River Don and it cut through the outskirts of Moorends, on the road to Rawcliffe and that went across the moors up to the edge of the moors and the farmers used to use that drain as irrigation, watering the land. Now this particular plane had to make a forced landing. I can't recall that because I think I was younger then, but mi' brother said he, he can recall it and he watched the plane, what they did, it made a forced landing but it didn't crash, I think it was a mechanical fault. And it, it landed in a field adjacent to the Warping Drain and what they did then they brought the RAF personnel out and they serviced the plane and repaired it for whatever reason it were force landed for and mi' brother said then they towed it across as far as they could to the river, facing the moors on the west, east side, and then it took off across the fields.

So, that was one plane that they reclaimed for the war effort, but mi' elder brother said he can recall that plane taking off across the field. I can't, I think it was when I was young and I wouldn't remember that. So that was like three, three aeroplane incidents within the vicinity of Moorends as I was a child.

Do you remember them coming across? Do you remember them flying over?

Oh yeah. We even, as a child, we even stood on our back door step, as I say, we was fifty yards, hundred yards from the actual moors. We was more or less the last houses on that particular site, edge of the village and we, we, many a night we stood on the back door step. I even saw em bombing Goole, we could see the flashes and the fire glow when they bombed Goole docks. And the planes came over and I mean they used to shake the house sometimes because, Moorends, the edge of Moorends was, I mean you're talking of a very short distance to Lindholme and they came across the moors in general, depending where they came from but in general they came across the edge of the moors, in fact where the local airport, planes are flying from now, they come across the edge of the moors and that was the general flight path. Yes, I can, oh yes, you can, I mean the bombers used to vibrate the houses when they came across or coming into land and I can recall them. But we always, we couldn't stand outside with the back door open or the lights. I mean ARP wardens would tell you under no uncertain terms to cover the lights up and put that light out, but we used to stand, I used to stand. And we had, we even had an old air raid shelter at side o' the house for the reason of, obviously, but we never ever did.

Goole was the nearest place to get bombed and they got quite a bit of damage did Goole. So yes we could see the bombers going across nightly, generally it was night, they did a lot o' night bombing from, Lindholme. Occasionally did daylight, but, in general it was night bombing.

And did you see much of the crews and things; did they come into the village?

The crews used to come in now and again into Thorne but in general they kept at the, the Bawtry side and, and the Finningley side. Obviously there was local pubs there, and in general they kept at the Finningley side of the airport, aerodrome. Occasionally, yeah, we, I mean we used to see air force personnel in town. We used to see American troops in town, this is Thorne, and they used to billet, soldiers in Thorne in the church, prior to moving, embarkation. Yeah we've seen American personnel, they were seen, British personnel in Thorne itself. But in general they never came into Thorne, only occasionally, occasionally when they wanted a night out, or to visit another local pub.

Were they, were they all, were they English, you say there were Canadians there..?

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There were a variety of crews to what I can understand, I know obviously there were British crews, I mean that stands to reason, and there was Canadians, I'm not sure what other nationalities, there could have been New Zealand, Australian. I mean in general during the War they manned the crews to whatever personnel they could get and a lot of Canadians and Australians and New Zealanders, even Poles, free Poles came over as air crews. I can only recall Americans, Canadians and British. Whether there was other nationalities I don't know. But at that time I didn't live in Thorne, I used to obviously come into Thorne, but I was, as I say, I lived in Moorends and we never, all we saw in Moorends was the, prisoners of war, walking, working on the farmlands in the area. Now we had, I think in general they was Italian prisoners mainly and they used to go about with big yellow round discs on their tunics, and, patches on their trousers, and they used to come and work on the land for the farms.

Was there a camp nearby or did they bring them in?

They used to bring them in. There was, there was a camp, what, it's a mile away from Thorne and that, that camp is in between Thorne and Hatfield. Now that was a, a, if I recall correctly that was a Royal Artillery camp and they used to billet soldiers their in fact it was an army camp and, I'm not sure whether the Italian prisoners of war was interned at that camp or what, I don't know because, very rarely we went past Thorne. Occasionally we used to go into Doncaster and that was a treat, beyond a treat. So, but, I mean the camp was there during the War and it is now, it was, then it become a borstal camp and at this moment in time it's the Moorlands Open Prison. It's where they rehabilitate them to leaving the prison service, prison itself. So that's now an open prison and that's still there, the site's still there.

And you said you saw the prisoners of war doing what? What did you see?

Oh the prisoners o' war used to come and work on the, on the farm lands in and around the area. As I say there was Birtwhistle's farm, there was another farm that, that was in the Thorne area there was farms on the Moorends side. There was two farms there to my knowledge and the prisoners of war used to come in and work on the farms. And we used to see 'em in the village and what capacity they came in the village in Moorends I don't know, I don't know, maybe they was doing jobs in the village, or chores I don't know. But I know they came and worked on the land in general.

So there seems to have been quite a lot of activity in the war time, on and around the moors at Moorends.

Oh yes.

Did it ever interfere with you playing on the moors or using them?

No, never, never. The only incidents we had as I said was the aerodrome, which was like, it wasn't restricted but it was like a no, not a no go area but you never went there. And also on the other side, it was the Goole and the docks. Well very rarely we went into Goole 'cause that was eleven mile away and in them days you didn't go far anyway. But no we was never restricted in any way. I can't recall, apart from rationing and things that, you know you couldn't get, but there was no restriction on movement, as I say, we used to talk to the Italian prisoners of war in the village, and also we had a lot of evacuees, came in the village from down south. We had a number of evacuees which was brought into the village, and that, that was another episode of the war era in Moorends, the evacuees. I mean, as a child we used to, we had a local, two, three local families who had

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evacuees and one in particular, two young evacuee girls would live with one family and being young boys we, naturally, we got pally with. I mean to hear em talk was a revelation to us, I mean we used to talk, obviously, broad Yorkshire and they'd be talking cockney, southern, you know and it, it was a revelation to hear them talk and being girls we used to try and get pally with them and well we did do. We played in the street, local games, but that was another episode the evacuees in Moorends. And they came from down south mainly, the two that we got, two young girls we got more, mainly pally with, they was really from London itself and they, as you know, they brought them over for safety and then at the end of the war they all got repatriated.

And were they like, were they just like the other children in the village or..?

Oh yeah.

They went to school and ...

Yeah they went to, we went to school together, we played together, they was just normal children apart from em being a bit curious, you know we were a bit curious with em being, talking different to us. Oh yeah, no problems, we played together, we went to school together, yeah.

Do you know what they thought about living in Thorne?

Oh, terrific, terrific, yeah. I mean to them you see, another thing was the open fields, the moors, the farmlands. Now we never discussed that because we was young, we wouldn't discuss that kind of a conception but yeah, playing in, down, what we call the 'rec', which was the recreation ground. Now the recreation ground was an area at side of the local colliery which the colliery commandeered for the local children, the swings, roundabouts, there was football pitches, and we used to play on there and we called it 'rec', short for recreation and, we used to play on the rec and play, oh, as I say, on the swings.

But then during the war, at sometime and I can't recall what age I would be but it obviously was before the war ended, round the recreation ground there was, iron railings all the way round. Now the, they came the, the squad, salvage squad and they removed all the railings, the high railings from round the rec, and also any railings, any iron, that they could commandeer they took. I mean there was iron railings, iron gates, and they, they'd cut the lot down. By that I mean they'd got their burners and cut the lot down as, for the war effort, iron, they were needing every bit of iron, steel they could get hold of. So then, the rec become open ground, but, and they never, they have, they've just recently renewed the railing round the rec but that's because, different company's took over the pit, or it did do and that was Budge, the company. Now he's the present coal mogul in the area, Richard Budge, but he did, renewed all the railings.

But that was another episode, taking the railings for the war effort. Or anyone who, anyone who had, even the local, what we call posh houses, they used to have railings, walls, and the iron railings round em, they even commandeered round the schools, they took all the iron railings. In fact there some, you might see an old wall to this day that's got the stub of the old iron railings still imbedded in it.

Now you told me that your granddad and your father and I think you said some of your brothers went to work in the pit?

Yeah, that's right.

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What did you do when you left school?

I, when I left school I, I worked locally. Mi' first job ever was selling ice cream for the local ice cream merchant. I used to go round the village in an horse and cart selling ice cream from door to door.

How did you keep it cold?

The, well, the actual, it was, it was an Italian family who had the local ice cream business and what they had, they had a, what, what they called, it wasn't freezers, it was, I can never remember, it was like a liquid, they used to put these, only way I can describe it was, there was boxes like thin square boxes, about an inch wide, 'bout ten inches, an inch thick about ten inches wide and about two foot in length, height and they used to, brine, they used to keep em in brine, this brine tank. And every morning, we used to go when we was going to get ready to go out on business and they'd put your ice cream tub, which was loose ice cream then, what you used the scoop with, they put those in a container, a double container and they would pack these, only way I can describe em, was like a tin box, packed round these containers, the ice cream containers, but when they took em out of the brine the brine was, the brine was cooled to a temperature where it was nearly frozen. It never did freeze but, brine when it's got these motors in that cools it really gets cold and they used to pack round the ice cream containers wi' these tin boxes and that's how it kept the ice cream, you know cool all day and that's how we used to, that's how it was.

But we used to go in a morning load the horse and cart up, this was the younger ones. At that time when I was, when I first started there they only had two vehicles because, well I'm saying petrol was very hard to come by after the war and they only had, they had two motor vehicles and three horse and carts. Oh and they had a trailer what they used to, a static trailer what they used to put near the local park. That used to stay there all day, then they'd bring it back at night time. And we used to go, generally in the village and Thorne and Moorends, just go round the streets with the horse and cart selling the ice cream. That was mi' very first job.

Then I went into their, as it progressed and they got more vehicles, the horse and carts become obsolete and then they went onto vehicles then, ice cream vans. And then I went from the horse and carts to the, to their garage, they had their own garage to maintain the fleet of vehicles. And from there, well, I mean I had various jobs then, but up to going into the army on national service, that was mi' next to mi' last job. Then I went to work for a local garage with working in the ice cream garage, then I went to work for a local garage, then I went in the army. Then I came out of the army and met my dear wife, well I'm saying, we, actually we was from sixteen year olds, we met at the ice cream dairy as a matter of fact and that's how we met at sixteen. So, me and the wife was in the, the wife worked in the ice cream dairy and they used to do ice cream blocks and chocolate ice cream bars and they used to deliver em to local cinemas and shops, outlets and the wife worked in the dairy and I was on the horse and cart. So that's how we met actually. So that was that episode, as I say, then I went in the army, come out, and then we got married and here we are today.

[Voice in background]

JH. Painting and decorating.

Well I did go painting and decorating yes, that was after I came out of the army. I was, I went painting and decorating then 'cause it was more money, then after that, I worked on the construction industry, doing, at the local steel works in Scunthorpe and Rotherham. Then from there I went to ICI and I spent all mi' life at ICI then, twenty five years of it actually.

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Where was ICI?

In Doncaster, they made man-made fibres. Prior to ICI it used to be a firm called Benburgs, and they made, during the war, they made nylon for the parachutes and that was manned mainly by women. As you know most of the men was commandeered for the forces and that was called Benburgs and then it became British Nylon Spinners, then it became ICI. Then ICI, from ICI it became, Duponts and from Duponts it became nothing, because it's not there anymore, they sold up and went. But that, that's, that was my working life from leaving school and in them days you left school at fifteen, and jobs was plentiful then you could pick and choose.

And when did you, what age were you went for your national service?

Eighteen.

So you'd three years between...

Two years, nineteen fifty three to fifty five and I served most of mi' time in Suez. And that was national service, fifty three, fifty five. Eighteen to twenty, just past twenty.

Go on, when you couldn't get onto the moor by the pit did you say?

No when we was younger you could go the pit way but you, you'd have the pit Bobbies, what we called the pit Bobbies there, and they would stop you, they wun't let you go through the pit because obviously safety and everything else. Now, what Jean's saying is that the school children could go through a farm on the edge of Moorends and you could go to the edge of the moors away from the pit to the left hand side of the pit. Now that was a, that was an entry of the moors rather than go through the pit. Now the other side the Hatfield side you couldn't get because there was no roadways there. So what Jean's saying is that would be an entry to the moors when the school children went across and they went across there, senior girls were talking of now, and they'd go across for the Mayday, for the rhododendroms and, and the flowers for the May Queen and all that. So that would, that would be through Atkinson's Farm. Which is a farm which is still there and it's the last farm in Moorends going out. So that would be another entry.

And Jean you'd come from Thorne wouldn't you?

JH. Yeah because we went to Moorends school.

That was the girl's school.

JH. Senior Girls School.

I've got photographs, modern photographs of the Senior Girls being demolished. But that was at Moorends and that was called Moorends Senior Girls.

JH. And you used to come to Thorne to Senior Boys.

But.

JH. You see, they used to come from Moorends to Thorne.

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But both, we interchanged, I mean, from Thorne to Moorends, from Moorends to Thorne, they dint all come from Moorends to Thorne, and vice versa. All the people, all the boys in Moorends and Thorne came to Thorne Senior Boys, which is no longer there now, and all the girls from Moorends and Thorne came to Moorends Senior Girls. Now as I say, that was demolished now, that's a private housing estate, but I've got photographs of em demolishing the Senior Girls School.

What I did want to ask you was, we had a look at some photographs of the cinema in Moorends.

Yes, the Empire.

Now, you used to go the Empire when you were small didn't you?

Yeah, it were what you called the 'threepenny rush'.

And what was that?

That was at Saturday afternoon, and you could go, yeah, you could go to the cinema on a Saturday afternoon, boys and girls up to a certain age and we, we'd go and watch the pictures. We'd watch the pictures, which is, you're talking of Buck Jones, you're talking Roy Rodgers, you're talking of Hop Along Cassidy, you're talking of the Three Stooges. Now used to, the reason we called it the threepenny rush were, it used to cost you threepence to go and watch the films. And, and the threepenny rush used to go down the side of, in between, it was the ice cream parlour, we used to go in between the ice cream parlour and the picture house, down here to the bottom end of the cinema, which was the cheap end.

JH. First six rows.

The first six or ten rows was, where you could get in for maybe sixpence and then they'd have a cord across, all the way across the cinema so you couldn't go out of the sixpenny ones into the shilling ones, or up in the balcony. But we used to go down there to the threepenny rush and that was every Saturday afternoon and that's how we used to have us Saturday entertainment, if you could get threepence. But you used to take jam jars back, we used to make fire wood, we used to sell firewood, we used to sell rhododendroms flowers.

JH. We used to go berry picking and...

Blackberry picking.

JH. You know.

Anything, we used to take the local bottles, beer bottles back to the jug and bottle at the Moorends Hotel, as then it was called Uncle Arthur's. Now the reason it was called, this is in Moorends which is there now, it's called the Moorends Hotel now, but it was called Uncle Arthur's, we all knew it as Uncle Arthur's. Now the reason it was called Uncle Arthur's was that the, the landlord of the pub was called Arthur, Arthur Wilson. Now the miners used to get tick, they used to go Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and get a drink on tick and they called him Uncle because Uncle was an old expression for a, a pawn brokers, they called em Uncles. So they called him Uncle Arthur 'cause he used to, they used to have it on slate.

JH. Put it on slate.

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Have it on the slate and then they'd pay him on pay day. Now that was something else, Uncle Arthur's, the miners having it on t'slate.

You told me a story about, about somebody coming to the pictures didn't you?

Yes, we did. Now one particular incident, that was the incident where the bomber had crashed in the village and that was where the Canadian crew got killed. Now we was, this particular Saturday afternoon when that was happening we was in the queue waiting to go into the picture house, the Empire, waiting to go in the threepenny rush, now, there was the local teenager, and I can only remember his first name, funnily enough after all these, they called him Gordon. Now this particular Saturday afternoon he came along the queue of boys and girls and what his, his first thing was, 'would you like to see something off the plane crash, the bomber crash?' 'Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, what have you got?' Now he had a box, he took a box out of his pocket and it was similar to a mouth organ box and what he did then he took the lid off the mouth organ box, a long one about six or seven inches by about an inch, and he lifted the lid off and inside as then, as what we knew was a human finger, in cotton wool with blood all over it. Now obviously most of the lads was, it was summat to look at, but most of the girls was squeamish and they dint want to see it. Now it appeared that one of, I don't know whether it was a boy or a girl went and told the local commissioner, a Mr Simpson and he came out and he collared this Gordon and he said 'Right! Come here you, what have you got there?' and then Gordon, then now he has to confess, 'It's not real Mr Simpson, it's only mi' own finger look', and what he'd done he'd pushed his finger through a hole in the bottom of the box, laid it on the cotton wool and put red ink round it. Now Mr Simpson obviously then took it off him and so that was the end of Gordon's, episode of having a relic of the crash in the village.

Now that was something very, mischief effort, if you want to call it that, but that was something that stuck in people's mind whether any of the kids remember that today, but, that something I will remember because we actually thought we'd seen a finger from the crash. But this was Gordon with his finger through the box laid on cotton wool with red ink. And that was, that was a child hood prank but, it backfired on Gordon I'm afraid, 'cause he lost the box and his, well he di'nt lose his finger because he pulled it out of the box. But, that was Gordon's episode to our childhood, you know memories, and that was as I say that was local.

[Recording Ends]