

Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

Interview with: Dave Chappell (part 1)

Date: 13 December 2006

Interviewer: Lynne Fox

Summary

Dave Chappell's farm, Boston Park Farm, is on the edge of Hatfield Moor. It is a model farm built in 1846 in response to the economics of the time. His land has not been warped or included in any historic 'improvement' schemes. It is a good example of the topography of the area and the problems this can present to modern farmers. The course of the old river Torne (redundant after Vermuyden's drainage scheme in the 17th century) lies through part of his land.

Dave is also involved in competition ploughing at World Class level. He has been British National Champion 3 times and competed in the British National competition 45 times as well as coming 10th in the World Ploughing contest. He has also acted as coach and judge for the England Ploughing Team for 20 years.

Description of the location of the farm. Historic roads and trackways. Description of the model farm & how it worked. Workforce.

Historic importance of God's Cross as boundary marker, meeting place etc. He found some 3000 year old flints there.

He came from Pontefract in 1975. First action was drainage. 330 of the farm's 500 acres had never been ploughed because it was so wet & low. Problems of 'bog oaks'

Description of soil types on his land, peat, sand, clay. How he made it usable arable land.

How the land had been used previously

His early history prior to 1975. Grandparents sold their farm. He grew up in a council house near Pontefract. His father contracted then bought small farm. Attended agricultural college in Leeds then bought small farm. Could only afford to expand if he rented a farm that was poor & needed improving. Came to Boston Park Farm.

Family background. Childhood memories riding tractors with his dad.

Fractured skull – life changing experience

How he feels about where he is & what he does.

Difficulties & problems making a living. Diversification. Stables & livery. Maize Maze. Visitor attraction.

How the farm operates. Crops & their uses & markets.

Large family. One daughter also qualified agronomist & works on farm.

Managing the land to encourage wildlife. Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

The reasons for the construction of the farm in the 1840s. High agricultural prices due to Corn Laws

[pause to take bread out of the oven! Continued in part 2]