

Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

Interview with: John Hitchcock (part 1)

Date: 14 August 2006

Interviewer: Lynne Fox

Summary

John Hitchcock has had a relationship with the Moors all his life. As a child he collected food from the moor, as a young adult he sometimes shot game there and eventually he became a gamekeeper. He now works as a volunteer for Natural England.

He has spent his whole life in Thorne & on Thorne Moors

Family history.

Childhood memories. Playing around the colliery & fishing & swimming in Bell's Pond.

School. Helping out on sister's farm.

Out on the moor. Bird nesting, collecting eggs for fun & food, fishing, field sports

Lifelong interest in guns & shooting. Initially to scare birds off crops & shoot vermin on farm

How the family made a living – including netting partridges – description.

Apprenticeship at Dunstan's shipyard. Qualified as shipwright. Subsequent career.

Some information about local shipyards on Humber, Selby & Thorne

Work in power stations

Poaching. Getting caught. Common rights on Thorne Moor. Strikers cutting wood on Thorne Moor for fuel during Miner's Strike of 1985

How he became a gamekeeper

Other gamekeepers & shoots. What happens on a shoot, beating etc.

Details of rearing birds for the shoot.

A gamekeeper's jobs & responsibilities

Peat extraction prior to surface milling allowed moor to regenerate.

Drainage for surface milling was destroying the moor

Regenerating the moor. Good work done by Scotts UK since cessation of peat extraction on site.

His spiritual connection with the moor

His involvement with William Bunting – became one of 'Bunting's Beavers' blocking drains etc.

Bunting was moors saviour.