

Thorne & Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

Interview with: Trevor Sharpe (1 part 1)

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Interviewer: Lynne Fox

This is Lynne Fox for the Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project. It's the 10th August 2006 and I'm talking to Mr Trevor Sharpe. Morning.

That's alright, good morning to you.

Erm, I'm wondering if you could start at the beginning and could you tell me when and where you were born please Mr Sharpe?

TS: I was born in Moorends but me family was born on the edge of the moors, er, not born on the edge of the moors they finished up on the edge of the moors. So, my brief part of my childhood were brought up on the moors, which was an unbelievable site to live. You'd got the moors to roam on, the fishing, fishing, shooting, trees, everything, it were a wildlife sanctuary for us. So we were brought up better than the normal people of Moorends.

[Voice in background]

BS: Aye, we were fetched up like animals.

[Laughter]

We've just been joined by Mr Trevor Sharpe's brother Barry. Barry?

BS: Yes.

Morning Barry. Erm, can you just tell me a little bit about your family, before we move on to talk a bit more about the moors? So can you just tell me how many there were in your family, when you were...?

TS: There were six in my family, four boys, two girls. Obviously the boys are a lot older so they were brought up on the moors and the er, the girls, er, left the moors and were brought up in Moorends. So they all know the area. Me brother and me self have worked on the moors from leaving school, I did thirty eight year. So I've studied the moors from word 'go'. Photographs to prove it. All the family, family history, where we lived er, photographs of the houses that there used to be on moors and the way o' life. And like I've pointed out it were a way o' life different to anywhere else.

TS: In them days you suffered in some ways, but, I'll never forget the enjoyment we got, it compensated for it's not having no electric, no water, we drunk out o' wells, but we had us own swimming pool, as Sharpe's Pond, er, used to be a brick work. The houses, existing houses, they were built from this brick works and that's why the houses were built there, cause they thought they were gonna get a lot o' clay and build a lot of property from it. It dint occur because they run out of clay, so

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they turned, turned the houses into a shooting lodge, where the money people, Pease and Partners, the big, who owned the pits, rented out for shooters, as in these game, game, er, shoots and all this lot, pheasants, deer, er, rabbits, everything that were wildlife on the moors.

Can I ask you to describe exactly where it is that you lived?

TS: We have an area of Thorne Pit and at back of Thorne Pit on the edge, it, it covers a big area, it's, it's not like saying we lived at, at an address, it was Moorends Moors, and the moors stretched from Moorends, moor edges, through to Goole, Goole fields, the opposite way from Crowle to Rawcliffe, er, it covered a vast area, er, square miles, I ant a clue it were that big.

And where exactly was your house?

TS: Our house was situated on the edge of the moors. There was four houses, Smits, who were foreign, Verhees', they were Dutch, er, Smits, Verhees, Sharpes and Bells. Separated by about a third of a mile all these houses. So they all lived as family as in them, olden days, everybody looked after each other. Er, there was no problem of theft, of any description, it wasn't mentioned of any, anything like that. So we lived happily, fed off the land, er, gardening, you know, allotment and all that was already there so you, you know, you grew your own vegetables and everything like that. The water came from a deep well, on both properties, both Smits and er Sharpes, Bells, Sharpes, and the favourite thing about it, it was Sharpe's Pond, it was called Sharpe's Pond because me Great Granddad first arrived from Crowle er, he hired the property from Pease and Partners so he could find work at the pit. Bells, who was our neighbours, they came from er, Middlesbrough. Same again, they brought loads of people from Middlesbrough by coach to live in Moorends to work the mines, in all areas and it happened that we finished up at Moorends.

So, how did you get to your house from Moorends?

TS: There was no, there was no other way, but by walking. Me father walked from Moorends to er, Fox and Duck, to a school that housed about twenty kids. So we had to walk two, three mile there and back everyday. Me Granddad used to do shopping on horse and cart, or we all jumped on the horse and cart and toured into Moorends which local shops, minimised, probably one or two at that time and this is all before Moorends were built. So there were no such thing as a village, the village came for the pits.

What was there?

TS: Er, fields, and a farm. The farm is still standing in Moorends in the centre which is now a council yard, or was a council yard until it shut down, and is now an old folks home. And er, you could see for miles, you walked for miles. People used to walk from, through Moorends, down lanes, across Thorne Moors on a footpath right through to Crowle, but, the only way was walking in them days. If you had a pony or a pony and trap you couldn't get through moors on pony and trap the bog was too dangerous. Hence there were canals at side o' these tracks, which Thorne Moors was full of canals to er, extract peat, in, in them days in the 1800s the canals were visible, they used to make barges of steel and fetch peat off the moors by barge.

And you remember Moorends being like that do you? You remember Moorends having no village?

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TS: Well, we were so, we was young, too young to, a lot of Moorends yeah. But a lot of the pit houses were already thriving and building up the area.

Can I ask you, when you were born, so we know how long ago that might be?

TS: Yeah, sixty year ago, so obviously I'm sixty. So in sixty year I've, er, collected the information and kept it, of er, Thorne, Moorends, moors, and funnily enough I finished up working on moors all me life so, you had no choice but to accept this knowledge and it sticks.

So can I take you back to what we were talking about earlier about how, what was there, why your house was there and then how your family came to live there. The house was there because of what?

TS: It was an hunting lodge to begin with and then in them days hunting started dropping off and everything else. So Peas and Partners, who owned the mines, er, rented the er, property off, and er, me Great Granddad was one of the first to er rent this property and the only way to the property, there were no vehicles of any description, so they had to travel on foot, push bike, old push bike, or by horse and cart.

And why was the house there in the first place, why had it been built?

TS: The house was built primely because of they thought there was a lot o' clay to build a lot more houses to make a lot more money, so they made bricks, at this property in question. The brick foundry was there, which is then turned in, when they shut the quarry, turned into a stable for horses. So everything, everything alters in life, grows. Moorends Pit Tip is now sat on the land that used to be fields for horses. The houses have been knocked down, but the actual quarry is still there and I do believe, I'm told that there's still stuff down in the bottom of the quarry, as in railway lines, and tubs, or whatever. And the quarry itself is a running spring, a cold water spring, so it'll always be flourishing wi' cold water.

And tell me a bit about your Great Granddad.

TS: He was a gentleman actually. I mean er, the history of him, they don't know his date of birth, they don't know anything about him, when he were born or anything. I've got a story when he died and they assumed that he was hundred.

What was his name?

TS: Bill, William Sharpe. William Sharpe.

And where did he come from?

TS: He came, he originated from er, Crowle, the roundhouse at Crowle, near Godner Bridge, which is still standing and evidence is still there. And he's, he left school like most people at the age of fourteen or fifteen, I think it was fourteen, hired out as a farm hand, because families in them days were big families, had no money so, started young, they had to. I mean, they were working down mines at thirteen from what I can recall. But he started as a farmhand and it wasn't a job where you went, you had no cards or anything like that. You were told to go to each different farm in them days. Your

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labour is needed at such a farm, your labour is needed wherever, and then apparently he got a job, er, draining the land at a pumping station on er, Scunthorpe Road, which he thought a lot of, from what me grandparents have told me, which he spent a lot of his time.

For some unknown reason we haven't found out why he left that job, because they tell me he was so happy there, he found this, our house on the moors, the property on the moors was up for rent and there was a full time job waiting there from Thorne Pit, which was working for himself, not Pease and Partners. He had the horse and carts, so he collected all the waste coal off the pits that had been disregarded and instead of it being buried he collected it and resold it back to the pit, so actually he was working for his self. In them days, I mean it were a big thing, you worked for yourself. He also delivered for people in Thorne and Moorends, with horse and cart using it as transport. He did do the funerals in Thorne, so he travelled the mile and a half from Moorends, er, back o' the pit where he lived, to Thorne to hitch up for the funeral cart, with a, with a black horse called Kitty and did the funerals. That was a spare time, back o' the pocket, whatever price it was, I don't know in them days. Er, and er, back home again on a night. So really, he was a grafter.

And you've got a picture here of him with...

[Both talking]

TS: I have a picture, I have a picture of his wife, himself, stood at the back door on the moors and in them days photographs were more or less a non extinct, er, people sometimes had a camera, you know. Cameras, were not mentioned. But this photograph's absolutely beautiful of the dress, mainly of the dress, you can back date it, er, a long way, with the dress they're wearing.

And what, this is your Grandmother, your Great Grandmother?

TS: Great Grandmother.

And what's her name?

TS: Lavinia. She originated from Epworth. These two met on the farming side, they were both working on the farms and they met that way.

What was her job?

TS: I an't a clue what her job wore, whatever she did before that, I've no idea. Er...

Do you know what she did on the farm?

TS: Field work, 'tato pickin', you know, hoeing everything that had to, I mean women were farm labourers in them days. During the war, if you're a woman, you finished up on the farm 'cause' all the men went to war. So I imagined, I can imagine that she was on the land, er, what they call 'em, land work.

Land army.

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TS: Land army. So I am assuming that's what she did.

And you told me something about her family.

TS: Right, her family. There was a story that this one, names I can't remember, but...

No Lavinia's story.

TS: Oh Lavinia's. That's going back a long way Barry into it.

BS: Mmmm. Her forefathers founded, founded the Salvation Army.

TS: That's right.

BS: William Booth. Henry William Booth, from Epworth, that's as far as I found out.

And that was, do you know what relation that was to Lavinia.

BS: No, er, she were the...

TS: Daughter.

BS: Grand daughter.

Granddaughter of Booths, of the Salvation Army.

BS: Henry William, Henry Booth, yeah.

TS: Now there's still, er, whether it's connected or not there's still a name of Booth in Doncaster. There's one or two names of Booth, but we've never gone that far back to connect it. But er, I do believe it could be done.

BS: The property where they used to live in Epworth is still standing, and it's still in living, there's still people live in it.

TS: Oh, right.

So go on, you were telling me about these two children.

TS: The younger one was, in Moorends the drainage people, Vermuyden put big drains in to drain the land in all this area which is mentioned in the manuscript of the red box, a book well read. Warping drain....

BS: It were warping drain at er...

TS: Swinefleet. Yeah.

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BS: Swinefleet, 'cause he were working on the farm.

TS: Yeah.

BS: At Swinefleet, and in his dinner hour he went for a swim and he, he got

[Inaudible]

[Both talking]

So he, this younger one, this baby sitting on your Great Grandma's knee, he was working at Swinefleet?

BS: At Swinefleet.

TS: He were working on land at Swinefleet, er dinner hour, like me brother Barry said, decided to go for a swim in the, warping drain. Someone, unknowing to them, miles away, opened the sluice gates, flooded the warping drain and took him down with the current, obviously killed him. Er, and that er, and me Great Grandma, there was a problem in her life with her husband, so she put herself in the er, the pond next to where we lived, drowned her sen. As people commit suicide through marriage breakdowns, everything else, that's what happened to her. So we lost her that way.

TS: Me Great Grandad went on to live, till he, no proof, no er, documents, 'cause in them days many people dint have 'em, till he was hundred. Er, right up, say where he lived and what happened to him on the back of the page as I am showing you now the write up and everything about him. They just assumed his age, because he had no proof, no birth certificates or anything.

And there was a third child you say?

TS: The third child, I'm not sure he wasn't... Joe, Joseph.

BS: Joe.

TS: Joseph, that one, I don't know what happened to him, he died later on in years dint he?

BS: He were thirty two.

TS: Thirty Two.

BS: With stomach cancer.

TS: Oh, that was it, he died of stomach cancer at thirty two, so...

BS: He worked at the gas plant on er...

TS: Union Road.

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BS: Union Road, and he lived in number twelve cottage on Union Road and when he died, this is how me Grandparents got back to go on moors. When he died the, the minute he died the gas company threw 'em out o' the house. Threw 'em out o' the cottage. So they had to go back on the moors to work.

TS: So they went to live with me Great Granddad and me Grandma got in toll wi' Great Granddad and hence the mix up of....

BS: I know, I know it's er....

So this, this, which, which is your...?

TS: That's me Great Granddad.

Yeah.

TS: That's me Great Grandma.

Yeah.

TS: That's Joe who died of stomach cancer.

BS: Our granddad.

TS: Our Granddad.

That's what your saying, the two over there, standing between the two is your granddad?

TS: Yeah, it's one of our granddads obviously on me dad's side and that one died in swimming...going for a swim.

And there was a daughter?

BS: The daughter, as she got older she married a, an Irish man and they went to live at Skegness. Now we never heard anything more about 'em. So, her offsprings, are still in Skegness, but we don't know owt about 'em like.

TS: This is another, another story actually, separate story. With her living on the moors and bringing her up on, the eldest daughter up on the moors, they brought the Irish in from Ireland to cut the trees down, the fir trees down that were on t' moors for the war.

The government brought them?

TS: The government brought 'em in and hence, coupled up, went away and got married. This one, er, I did know her name, er, she went to live at Skegness, like you said but no contact ever after that, none whatsoever. Tried to trace her, like everything else, we don't know the last name and that, and, can't trace who they are, where they are.

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So was this the First War?

TS: Yes, er no Second World War, yeah, yeah. Just before Second World War, well they brought the Irish in. They're the size of tree, that's only half of it, that was on the moors. They were all big pine trees, all around the moor edges. There is a story that I've seen and I have brought this photograph to show you, of why, why I've brought it. But, we'll get onto that a bit later on, when we get onto about the bog. Cause that's a different story.

Can you, so your parents, your grandparents, moved back to live with your great granddad?

TS: They did, yeah, Sharpes.

And you stayed there until when?

TS: Well, we dint, we spent all us life on moors. We used to come home from school and had to get straight on moors for us tea or whatever. During that time we had to go through the peat yard. Me gran worked in the canteen, and I definitely remember calling in every night for us tea at this canteen before going back onto the moors to me parents.

We then, well before that me er, me mother and father got married obviously and had us and we got moved into a house. We went to, er, we went to Sandtoft in Nissan huts, what are disused Nissan huts from the war. Billets, as you understand from the RAF. We then got houses back into Moorends and where we were brought up all us life. But moors has been us contact, while ever Bells and Sharpes, granddad lived on the moors that's where we headed for. We dint have playmates in Moorends, we headed onto moors 'cause that were our life. We were brought up round rhododendrons, shooting, fishing, hunting, er, 'cause mi' dad did. We went with him every night, or every day we were off school, and spent us life until being fourteen or fifteen.

Can you tell me a bit about that, you say hunting and so on, tell me a bit about it?

TS: Well we used to shoot, or go fishing for pike and all the rest in the rivers and the, er, and eels in the dykes and obviously this pond. Another day we'd go shooting rabbits and er pheasants and anything that were on moors. We always followed him. There was me father and a string of kids. He shot, we run and picked 'em up or caught whatever, er and that's how life was. We had a luxury that we thought were luxury. I would say five people living off farm, just walk out o' door and go shooting, or do what they like. Maybe today, but we did it sixty year ago, you know, fifty year ago. We were brought up as kids, three of us especially, er, remember that, because we were the oldest party of our family of six. So, and we never went short. We never, we never ever went short of meat or, er, stuff, like other people had to go to shop. We just couldn't go out of our backdoor and say 'We'll nip to shop, we've forgot the cabbage, we've forgot the carrots'. Nip out o' back door and go and pick some carrots and tomatoes and lettuce and me dad already had this stuff in from the moors, what, you know, what he shot.

What did it look like, the moors?

TS: Fantastic, unbelievable, you can't, I cannot tell you, I can't. If I could get painter and paint what's

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in my mind of rhododendrons down each side, not only your reds, as your normal ones, but there was white rhododendrons and red, there were pink, er, for maybe about ten foot high, fifteen foot high. And our track was made up of ashes, when we burnt us coal and whatever, we put it on the track to make up. But the moors was, heavily densed, er, just an unbelievable playground.

BS: When we were young, even me, well I used to go out shooting on the moors and if it were getting dusk we used to have to climb tree to look for pit gear so we'd know which way to walk, because it were that thick. And if it were ever foggy, well, you were lost.

TS: You walked wherever you went, found a track and followed it. If ever it were dusk or foggy you found that track and you followed it, because bearing in mind there was no lights in them days as well, when it got dark, it went dark. Nowadays there's a light on every corner, you can see where you're going, even you know, er....

BS: We used to follow pit head gear.

TS: Yeah, follow pit head gear, wherever it wah. Yeah, they did us a favour when er, the Germans built the pit, er, sunk the pit, because it were er, a skyline for us to follow. So if we were, as, as young as six, seven and eight, we finished up on the moors where people would say, 'I can't go out today, I can't go through the gate 'cause it's dark'. We just lost us sen on the moors. Moors are a dangerous place and still is, through bogs and water. We knew these, 'cause we knew the tracks and we knew the movements of all the area of the wildlife and everything else, and followed 'em. In fact, hunted 'em down, if er, if we steer dalkin, steer stalkin', deer stalking and all the rest of it, you know, we did all this as six year olds.

You say deer stalking, do you mean deer stalking with a deer?

TS: Yeah, yes, follow the deer and the deer, it were that heavily dense you could hear 'em in the distance so you're went as, you know stalked 'em up, as close as you could get. And today, in fact as from last year, I've been, I've walked on the moors in the same footsteps as I did years ago, because that's me going back, and I still see there's deer on now. And it's getting a lot of deer on now, so it's coming back. The letting it, they're letting it go wild again because of the peat cutting ceasing and all this lot that stopped 'em cutting peat. The rhododendrons are coming back, but they can never build them houses, the stables, er in the same place. They will never put that picture back. I've got a embedded picture, imprinted on my mind of what I would like somebody to paint and if they could do what I'm, how I tell 'em it, it'd be a fantastic picture.

And you talked about there being big trees?

TS: Oh, oh, big trees, I mean, pine trees. The Irish came in, they brought the Irish in for the war. Every bit of wood, every bit o' steel, every bit o', buying iron gates, iron, was destroyed for the War and so was these trees. They brought a bunch of Irishman in, Paddens, er, Gleasons, all Irish names and they brought 'em in to live, er, in area, to cut, nothing else, to cut these trees down. So the Moorends people dint stand a chance 'cause they brought the Irish in, 'cause they were navvies, they were grafters and when they set to work they just kept going. And a lot o' time they lived at our house, in the barns, what we had as stables. A lot o' time they dint leave the moors they came and lived at the back o' the house. Er, they had big saw mills, er, in front of the house and they used to drag the logs wi' the horses to the

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saw mills and, er you're looking at, you see it on television now, cowboys, you really do. We sit back and see what we used to look at and accept as natural, the work that were going on. And the Irish used to come and er, start, you could hear 'em in the distance, sawing at these trees and 'em falling and, you know. You can't take that away from you, you can't take that sound and the knowledge and the, I would say the past has been, it's far better than it is now.

Can you describe your house then?

TS: The house was a, a doll's house. It was made of handmade bricks. On the gutterings the soffets and all that was made of wood and there was patterned, pretty patterned, there was nowt straight forward, it was such, a, an house, big chimneys, fancy doors, everything was done by hand. If you had a saw, er, there were no such thing as electric in them days, they would saw it by hand. But the joiners were joiners and they made a nice patterned for ya. The houses stood out as you can see on the photographs here. They were so patterned, they were so beautiful. They resembled the railway houses of today, the old railway houses that you see. But all the skirtings and everything were patterned there were nothing straight, they spent a lot of time and patience making 'em nice.

What colour?

TS: There was different colours 'cause the, the clay, er you got a, a, a bronze a blue a black, so the bricks were, they wasn't uniform. When you make a hand-made brick it comes out and that's it turned out and that's how it is. It might be bent, it might be straight, er but there were different colours in every form like, you know. So the houses were, were unique in every way. Today's building, today's bricks, you buy one brick, every one has to follow suit. In them days, if a brick got burnt you built with it, if a brick were undercooked, you built with it. And that determines the colour, how long they've been in the kiln, but nobody bothered about how long they've been in kiln. They opened the door, they looked alright, brought 'em out. Some were burnt, that's how you get your hard brick, your black brick, some were undercooked so that's how you get your yellow brick and, and so on.

And was there a lot of land around?

TS: There were more land. We had no boundary. Hence, the hundred metres of moor land, nobody came and said 'that's yours, this is yours', you had the lot. In other terms we had the best back garden you could imagine. I mean, a substance of peat, er, in them days it had no er fertilizers or anything like that. You'd just grow on peat, which, is the moisture, er tomatoes, lettuces and all that ninety five percent are water. What does peat hold? Water. So everything ud grow. So you dint have to feed 'em. Water.

So what did you do with the land?

TS: Well, dug it over. Got an horse and, er, pulled it with a plough, a wooden plough or summat, and ploughed it up. And there were no soil it were just peat, so the horses had no trouble. They had trouble in wet seasons digging in like, and er, going up to knees and damp but after that the horses, they had a season. Everything had a season, nowadays it's anytime. In them days you ploughed when that season came up, you set when that season came up, you picked when that season come up and every fruit has a different season. So all round the hedges were blackberries, brambles and everything else, then there were orchards, apple trees, and such as, fruit trees. Then there was allotments for cabbages, lettuces,

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tomatoes. We had, homemade green houses, when plastic came out, er kept all the bags and stuck 'em together wi' sellotape or whatever and made a green house of it and that were the greenhouse in them days. Wood, from the trees, 'cause we cut us own wood, er, and as fencing, well wood from the moor, branches we used to break down, er, cut down and make fences all around and that's how we made the boundaries so you could er, imagine, er, in the wild west. So everything was done from the land, nothing was brought in. Even, I do remember, even to no nails, we drilled a hole and put a wooden peg in and there were nails in them days obviously, but for cheapness, it was stick a wooden peg in and that's how everything were held together.

And you talked about horses.

TS: Horses, my granddad had two horses, one black with a white star, which I always remember, Black Kitty and then he had a brown one, but I never knew the name of that. Did you know name o' that one?

BS: No er, I dint know name o' that one.

TS: 'Cause that were the late horse to come, 'cause he was frightened Black Kitty would die and he had to have a back up horse, er, but there were two. Black Kitty did all the work, the brown one, that were a standby.

BS: He lost that, it jumped over fence and it dropped on some tines.

TS: It did.

This brown one.

TS: Yeah, yeah.

BS: Brown one jumped fence and dropped on some tines what were stuck up and he had to have it shot, 'cause it'd gone straight through its hoof. And I remember him, well I remember me parents saying it broke his heart, yeah, and he wunt let nobody touch them horses, nobody.

TS: Nah, they wunt, er, me dad used to, he dint, all he did used to drive 'em on the dray but he wunt allowed to feed er, 'cause they knew me granddad's voice.

BS: In fact me dad only used to take 'em out when me granddad were out.

TS: That's right he did, yes.

BS. Bring it, get the horse and cart back before granddad come back. If we went to market, he used to take one o' horses, knowing granddad were out you see, 'cause he used to play hell up we 'em, nobody could touch them horses.

And they were kept near the house?

TS: They was kept at back o' the house. A disused, er, it wah a brick works, like I have pointed out, and they converted the brickworks into a stable. So about hundred yards I do believe, they were a bit of

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a forecourt in front, er behind us and then the stables, and then there was all open fields. This is before the mining. During the mining, but the pit tip didn't approach this land at that time. But then as we got older, growing up, we could see the pit tip growing to where it is now and it covers ninety percent of the land that we used to play and run and, open fields next, adjoining the moors. And this is where it's gone today, it's er, it's nearly touching the land that we used to play on.

And I see the house is actually two houses.

TS: There's two houses, there were two er, Smits and Verhees was the first houses down the lane and then there were Bells and Sharpes, er, hundred yards?

BS: Yeah.

TS: Hundred yards further on into the moor. So they were on the land side, we was actually into the moor itself. So we were surrounded by moor land, on three sides. We had fields to back of us, where the horses and that roam and obviously the chickens and the geese and everything else that he used to collect, probably for debts. I have been told that people paid him in er, fowl. He did a job with no money, I'll take the chickens, or whatever. So he used to let them free on the moors and what the foxes dint get like, we did!

[Laughter]

BS: I always remember me mam and dad telling me, when er, Doctor...

TS: Henry?

BS: No, he used to live up here.

TS: Aldershot? Barlow?

BS: No, he used to always ride a push bike.

TS: I know, oh, I know who you mean yeah.

BS: Old Doctor.

TS: Aldershot, no?

BS: He, when my granddad was very poorly, go see him, he took in payment, he took all me granddad's, harness, brasses off the harness in payment. Well in them days, well now they are worth a lot o' money the proper brasses and me granddad give him 'em all to pay debt off you see and that's how he lost that, but er....

TS: It's been a wild, it's been a wild family, ant it? We've been wild, we've been brought up rough, but none of the family have ended anything, or, we've all lived a good life, er, and me personally, I cannot knock what's happened.

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You described how you lived in your house, you were self sufficient to, quite a large extent.

TS: Yeah.

You had horses and things. Was everybody the same in that, you know, the Bells the Verhees, and the Sharpes, and, and the Smits, were they all the same.

TS: That was a family that lived in one house.

All at the same time?

[Both talking]

BS: Yes.

TS: Yes

There's hundreds of 'em?

TS: There's fifty, I've forgot, but that was Bells, and that's all they had to do were make babies.

And that's your neighbours?

TS: That's my, my uncle and auntie and her family.

They were the people who lived in the other half of your house?

TS: Yes, yes.

BS: Well it were me uncle what put his own electric in his house by a generator, and he also put electric in me grandmother's house...

TS: Because we had gas, we had paraffin lighting you see.

BS: 'Cause they were only paraffin.

Right. So it sounds to me like you're joined by more than bricks and mortar to the Bells then?

TS: We are.

BS: Yes, yes, yes.

TS: Yeah, my mother's a Bell. My Uncle Lester's sister, obviously. She was brought from er, Middlesbrough, to live with me Uncle Lester, to lodge, er, to make his family bigger!

[Laughter]

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TS: Er, but er, she lived there for some while when she met me, obviously, father next door, and er, two and two made five!

[Laughter]

TS: As it does.

BS: I know we are going off o' Sharpes now, but, my mum's side, the Bells, her mother were a school teacher, and her family dint want her to marry me granddad because he was a miner.

TS: That's right there was a bit o' trouble on about that.

BS: And they come this way and it was my granddad what first started the blue line.

The what?

BS: The blue line. Buses.

TS: He used to run the bus company in Middlesbrough.

BS: Arh, he started taking 'em we horse and cart, to Doncaster. Then he got a little open latted seat bus, and that started the Blue Line off.

This is your mum's dad?

BS: Mmm.

How did they come to live next door?

BS: Well, me mum used to visit me Uncle Les, and me Auntie, got the house. And me mum used to come and visit.

TS: They came, to, they came to live next door 'cause' they came to work the mines. They brought 'em from Middlesbrough to work the mines and they're giving, this belonged to Peas and Partners who owned the mines, giving that as a living accommodation, 'cause' he was going to work down the pit and that's how he come to live there.

BS: And me mother used to come and visit, she was only thirteen, at the time and that's how she met me dad.

And so you mum is his sister?

TS: Sister. So she went to lodge there, me dad lived next door and hence, I can't say no more!

[Laughter]

TS: To that one!

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BS: Me mum used to come to baby sit and that's how they got going like. Er, well that's as far as I know. It's what me mum told me and me dad told me an, yeah.

TS: It's, it's all hearsay, we've got proof of photographs of this obviously, showing you, er of what happened, where we lived and the houses and the ponds and everything else.

Can you just tell me about the inside of the house before we move off the actual bricks and mortar?

TS: Yeah, some slept upstairs and some slept downstairs.

How many rooms were there?

TS: It was one, one up and one down and back, a little porch on the back. There was no such thing as, er, rooms, it was one up, one down. Bedroom upstairs for me grandparents and any kids slept downstairs and me granddad mostly slept on the floor in front o' hearth. Come home from work that tired, head on the floor, on er, stone floor, no carpets, no nothing, and fall asleep there, as he came from work. If he wanted a wash he'd have to pump his own water from the well. Couldn't be bothered, too tired, sleep. In front of a, a log fire and coal fire what we had. Big fires.

Were they, big, big rooms?

TS: No, no, I would say, from what I can remember, no more than nine foot square, they were very premature houses and how they lived, I do not know to this day. First up, first dressed, bed time, first in, got the best bed, best place.

There must be twenty of them Bells?

TS: Yeah, there is, yeah I would say I think there was er..

BS: I think there was eleven on there, if you're counting.

TS: There's fifteen.

Fifteen.

TS: And one missing. There were sixteen kids altogether, and they used to walk around moving each other out o' bed and there were a song made after 'em, we used to say, 'move over' 'cause there was no room in the beds.

And was there a bed downstairs for children?

TS: No, no, they slept on whatever. In them days it were hessian sacking, for tatoe bags. No, they had lines of tato bags and that's how we lived, laid on 'em sat on 'em. Furniture, me Uncle Les were a bit of a joiner, he used to make a lot himself. Grown out o' trees off o' moors. No fancy covering, no, er, we lived that way, hilly billys.

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What about cooking?

TS: The cooking stove were a big black range. A fire range on both sides. They had one, we had one, where you'd, the kettle were on all the time boiling, er, summat was in the oven, big, black oven and er, from what I can remember if it ever got cleaned it were a miracle. I mean cleanliness in them days were another thing, you just didn't bother. You come home from school, you played in the dirt, you played, but you had a sandwich, you dint get washed, you just got a sandwich and ate it. Never suffered with anything in them days, but I mean, has cleanliness come, gone too far? We used to just dive in the, er, pond. That were our shower, that were our wash. Dive in and that's it, you come out, dried off and went in for summat to eat!

So you didn't have a bathroom then?

TS: There were no such thing as bathrooms.

BS: Toilet were at bottom o' yard.

TS: Toilet were, yeah, hundred yards! And you backed in. If you walked in you couldn't turn round, you hit your head and all there wah, you know in them days there were er, what you call er, open toilets, you, er, a wooden seat to sit on and it dropped in a pan.

And what happened to it then?

TS: They came and took it away from the back entrance. They had a slide. The council had a cart, er, and if they didn't come they were chucked on moors obviously and buried. But nine times out o' ten the council come with a cart and took the bin away chucked in back and carted it away. But er, cleanliness, like I say, in them days, I mean it just warn't...

BS: I know er, granddad, great granddad he dug a big hole for waste. Never covered it just, dug hole and chucked it all in.

TS: It were same...

BS: One of me, one of me cousins, she were only a small girl and I always, I never forget 'cause me mum and dad telled me, she'd, they were all playing, she went missing, they found her in..

TS: Slop.

BS: In slop, she'd, up to her neck in human, ya know.

TS: Yeah, yeah.

BS: She dropped in. All they did were shove her in pond, wash her off, wash her clothes off, take her clothes off and she got her inside like and dried 'em off and that was it.

[Recording Ends]

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