Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project

Interview with: Richard Walker

Date: 10 August 2006

Interviewer: Lynne Fox

Summary

Richard Walker’s family have a long history in Thorne as farmers and businessmen. He has played an active role in trying to reverse the loss of industry by promoting the interests of Thorne Moorends. He has acted as Town Councillor and Mayor and currently serves as a Councillor on Doncaster Council.

Long family history in Thorne. Grandfather’s farm (Nun Moors Farm) bordered moors so free access to moors all his life
Description of grandfather’s farm – strips/cables of land. Moor Owners Association / Church Commissioners owned much of land. Each cable had dyke & hedgerow
Potato picking by hand – potato ‘pies’ for storage over winter
Family business, farmers & butchers – own slaughterhouse still extant in Thorne
He worked in slaughterhouse & deliveries whilst at school
Description of moors when he was a child
Maintaining dykes
Working with peat gravers as teenager
Filtering insects out of drinking water
School. Early working career. Working in iron-ore mine in Scunthorpe
Working in management for MECCA – work with the Miss World contest
Return to Thorne. Ran taxi / ambulance business
Eventually settled in funeral business
Elected to Thorne Moorends Town Council, became Mayor 2 years running
Elected to Doncaster Council – representing Thorne’s interests – Vice Chair of Council
Some of the things that he has been involved with as Councillor – Peatland’s Way, Ings Wood, 2 Royal visits
Thorne’s connection with whaling industry – his relative was Captain of a whaler
Thomas Crapper born at Waterside
Makin Durham’s improvements to the moor – warping
Ropery & Rope Walk connected to maritime industries at Waterside. Boating Dyke
Thorne historically thriving place – 3 railway stations
How a rope walk worked
Organised 2 Royal visits to Thorne. First War Memorial refurbished & rededicated by Duke of Kent & Bishop of Sheffield – trade exhibition in park
Dedication of new bridge over canal ‘Princess Royal Bridge’ – royal permission & opening by Princess Anne
Promoting interests of Thorne – adopted Ghurkha Regiment
Loss of industries, Dunstan’s shipyard, Darley’s Brewery etc.
New development & industries
Thorne Pit
Some historical details of Thorne
Promotion of the moors - Peatlands Way