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## Peat exploitation on Thorne Moors. A case-study from the Yorkshire-Lincolnshire border 1626-1963, with integrated notes on Hatfield Moors

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## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In the history of Thorne Moors, there are three major themes in human usage, namely drainage, reclamation and peat exploitation. There are also lesser subjects, like harvesting the organic resources of the moorland, and in situ commercial horticulture based on raising rhododendrons. In this thesis, the third of those major themes, peat exploitation, is addressed and explained. There are general accounts of such exploitation on Thorne Moors, and also on nearby Hatfield Moors (Goodchild 1971-73, Limbert 1985, 1986, Dinnin 1997, Miller 1997, Booth 1998). In parallel, there has been a long-term investigation by the writer of exploitation methodologies on Thorne Moors, constructed against a contextual history of peat usage there. These actions are accompanied by the creation of bibliographies and lists of published images.

The first substantive result of this research was the publication of two editions of a report on mechanised peat winning and transportation on Thorne Moors (Limbert 2002, Limbert & Roworth 2009). The report describes the last phase of peat winning: the introduction and deployment of machines and associated working practices. Mechanisation began in peat transportation, in 1947, and the local industry – totally mechanised – finally ended in 2007, after 60 years of unprecedented change. The present thesis travels further back in time, and provides an examination of muscle-powered exploitation at Thorne, plus its interface with early mechanisation. The period covered extends from the time of the first unified drainage of the region, which commenced in 1626, to the arrival of the first peat-cutting machine in 1963. For completeness, information is occasionally included concerning later years (to 1975).

There is a wealth of information on peat winning and transportation at Thorne, although it is not always easily found. It comprises published output, including journalism; archives and artefacts; photographs; transcripts and notes from interviews; specialist narrow gauge recording; and other fieldwork. In addition, during the period to 1963, some similar material is available for Hatfield Moors, barely 3km to the SSW, but in lesser quantity. All sources are exploited here. In addition to the photographic plates, the text includes references to known published photographs, to aggregate into an inventory of such images. Textual apparatus is employed to provide explanatory notes, and a consolidated bibliography is integral to the thesis.

Within the information available, there are elements of study that are less well documented. Of particular difficulty was the garnering of local data on the layout and methodology of Dutch peat winning. Research on this has extended over a number of years. In 1986, an unpublished working paper on Dutch peat winning was produced by the writer, to summarise information garnered at that time and to invite comment. There has been subsequent investigation, including contact with, and information from, Dutch researchers.

Documenting all the exploitation methodologies was mostly achieved in eight ways:

- Searching for descriptive information in published sources: books, booklets, reports, periodicals, directories, Acts of Parliament, maps and ephemera
- Searching newspaper microfilms
- Examining unpublished sources, including archives and manuscripts
- Examining unpublished photographs
- Making contact with ex-workers
- Making contact with people having relevant specialist knowledge
- Examining surviving artefacts/rolling stock
- Fieldwork on Thorne Moors

In compiling the text, the following data sources/contacts were accessed:

- Working at Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery provided access to literature and contacts associated with Doncaster Museum Service, and the opportunity to spend time searching Doncaster newspaper microfilm
- Local Studies Library, Doncaster
- Other public libraries e.g. Goole
- Specialist libraries e.g. Brotherton Library, University of Leeds
- Doncaster Archives
- Newspaper microfilm searched (directly by the writer, or by others as a by-product of their research), especially – from their inception – the *Doncaster Gazette* (1794 onwards) and *Goole Times* (1870-1919)
- Lists of references in published papers searched, and potentially relevant references pursued
- Membership of Industrial Railway Society (people, publications, members' library)

- Temporary membership of Narrow Gauge Railway Society (as above)
- *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society* (also source of contacts)
- Contact with a maritime shipping specialist (Brian Masterman) via Goole Public Library
- Contact with Dutch research workers
- Fisons plc (particularly Fred Gee, former Secretary of the Horticulture Division)
- Interviews with local people, especially ex-workers
- Contact with people via newspapers/periodicals
- Contact with NCC/English Nature/Natural England staff
- Field knowledge of Thorne Moors, and occasionally being guided

In undertaking the research on exploitation methodologies, most noteworthy, especially for the years after World War II, was the generous assistance of Jack Eversham (British Moss Litter Co.). Others to whom a large debt is owed for such information or other help are Asher Eastwood (British Moss Litter Co., Fisons Horticulture Division), Joe Kempen (Dutch methods), Stan Marshall (British Moss Litter Co.), Sid Pickett (Scientific Peat Co., Poly-Peat Products) and Wilf Watson (British Moss Litter Co.). Fred Gee (Fisons Horticulture Division) was a helpful source of company history and related advice.

From The Netherlands, contact with Henk van de Griendt was uniquely significant, providing and clarifying information on the Griendtsveen Moss Litter Co. and on Dutch exploitation methodologies. He supplied copies of photographs and documents, and presented me with two published Griendtsveen histories. He also shared the results of his research on relevant moss litter companies at the Public Record Office, and provided translations of Dutch elements in family and Doncaster archives. Jan van der Sleen was a source of information on Dutch immigrant *turfgravers*, especially those from Drenthe, but again including information on methodologies. He also supplied photographs, documents and press cuttings, and copies of his published work. Kerst Huisman, of the *Leeuwarder Courant*, similarly provided Dutch press cuttings, and also a copy of his 1986 article in that newspaper. All three discussed the Griendtsveen involvement and associated immigration during visits, and materially assisted in the documentation of these linked events. For the translation of Dutch sources, I was greatly helped by Trevor Howell and especially Marc van de Velde.

The research for parts of Chapter 2 relied heavily on local newspaper sources. The author's visual scanning of the *Doncaster Gazette* and Goole newspapers was greatly augmented by peat references as a by-product of research by others using local newspaper resources. A number of people offered references and photocopies over the years. However, the systematic and long-term searching of the Doncaster newspapers by Peter Tuffrey (Doncaster Museum Service) and Andrea Marshall (The Friends of the Doncaster Museums) was of particular assistance.

Further help in a variety of ways was forthcoming from many people. Relevant organizations are bracketed, and named as at the time of contact. It is known that some of the people listed have now died, but as this information is doubtless incomplete, they are not indicated as such. This convention is also followed elsewhere in the acknowledgements. Thanks are due to: Rachel Ackroyd (Local Studies Library, Doncaster Library & Information Services), Liz Astin (Local Studies Library, Doncaster Library & Information Services), Dr Brian Barber (Doncaster Archives), Alan Berry (*Doncaster Star*), André Berry (Clwyd Archaeology Service, Clwyd County Council), Adrian Booth (Industrial Railway Society), J.H. Boyes (Railway & Canal Historical Society), Margaret Brockbank, Dr Paul Buckland, Peter Butler (*Goole Times*), Frank Carpenter (Doncaster Museum Service), J.J. Cherowbrier, Hugh Compton (Railway & Canal Historical Society), Ken Darley, Godfrey Davidson, Jim Dickinson, Edwin Dixon, Malcolm Dolby (Doncaster Museum Service), Norman Ellis, J.B. Foley, John Gardner, Stephen Garner, Michael Gleeson, John Goodchild (Wakefield Archive Service), Gordon Green (Narrow Gauge Railway Society), Geoff Harrison, Julie Harrup (Doncaster Museum Service), Ernest Hibbard (Fisons Horticulture Division), Sid Hill (British Moss Litter Co.), Malcolm Hobson, Dr Colin Howes (Doncaster Museum Service), Jacki A. Hulse (Cheshire Wildlife Trust), Barry Hunsley, John Isle, Pat Jones (Waterway History Research Group, Railway & Canal Historical Society), Colin Judge (The Oakwood Press), Margaret Julian, John Knapp (Local Studies Library, Doncaster Library & Information Services), Tim Kohler (English Nature), Ben Limbert, Andrea Marshall (The Friends of the Doncaster Museums), Brian Masterman, John McGarry, Andrew Neale (Plateway Press), Stan Oughtibridge (British Moss Litter Co.), J.V. Oxenham, Ron Parkin (Poly-Peat Products), Stephen Pickett, Don Ramery, David Robinson (*Lincolnshire Life*), G.G. Robinson, Janet Roworth, Peter Roworth (English Nature), Ken Scanes (Narrow Gauge Railway Society), Barry Sharpe, Terry Smithstone, Mike Swift (Narrow Gauge Railway Society), Jack Stasiak, Dr J.S. Taylor,

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Relevant officials answered queries, or facilitated access to further references and documents, from the following, as named at the time of contact: the British Library, University of Cambridge (Library), University of Leeds (Brotherton Library), University of Oxford (Bodleian Library), University of Reading (Rural History Centre), University of Sheffield (Library), Yorkshire Archaeological Society (Library), Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (Directorate of Recreation and Culture, Directorate of Development and Transport), Humberside County Council (Humberside Libraries), Leeds City Council (Library Services) and Manchester City Council (Department of Libraries & Theatres).

Many diagrams and drawings are the work of Peter Tuffrey (Figures 6, 10-20, 25, 29-31) and Paul Leonard (Figures 4-5, 9, 21-24, 26-28), to whom especial thanks are due. Peter Roworth copied on to CDs a range of photographs originally borrowed or received to illustrate the events and methodologies described. The photographs used in Plates 1-6 were chosen from images loaned for copying, or given, by Godfrey Davidson, Jack Eversham, Henk van de Griendt, Margaret Julian, Joe Kempen, Wilf Watson and Mary Woolley. Keith Heywood, of the Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, gave assistance with digitising paper diagrams and photographs, and provided advice on effective ways of inserting digital images into the manuscript. Figures 1 and 2 are published courtesy of the Forum, and Figure 3 is reproduced with the permission of Natural England.

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