

[Start of Side A - 00:00:05]

WRM [How long has the Yorke family been] associated with the Dales?

EY About 400 years.

WRM And how did it come into the Dales actually? What were the circumstances?

EY The property was bought by Sir John Yorke at that date from Sir Christopher Hales, and we have the deed which shows our ownership.

WRM What was the extent of the property and where was it to be found?

EY In Nidderdale.

WRM Ah, yes.

EY It was a very big property. We have all the books about it; but I think it was eight or ten thousand acres.

WRM Where was it generally to be found, at the dale head?

EY What is called Stonebeck Up and Stonebeck Down...

WRM Oh, yes.

EY And the Manor of Ramsgill and the Manor of Beaulieu, and finally the Manor of Appletreewick.

WRM Oh, I see; yes. Who had previously owned that property?

EY It had been Abbey property: the monks of Byland, the monks of Fountain's, and the monks of Bolton Abbey.

WRM Where did Sir John Yorke come from?

EY The first Sir Richard Yorke who we can authenticate died in 1498 and he was Lord Mayor of York, a member of Parliament for York in three Parliaments, the Mayor of the Staple of Calais (which was the head of the wool trade), and he was knighted at Neville's feast, which date I can't remember but I can give it you. And he married twice and had a large family, of whom we have records, and it was one of his descendants who bought the property after it had been given by Henry VIII to first of all Sir Christopher Hales and then Sir Richard Darcy.

WRM I see. Did the member of the Yorke family who bought that property, did he build a house within the estate?

EY Yes, first of all they lived up at Middlesmoor, of which house we have no trace. Afterwards they lived at Gouthwaite Hall, which is in the middle of the Gouththwaite reservoir now, and that property was requisitioned by the Bradford Corporation from my husband's grandfather in 1883 and the house was pulled down and a house on the shore of the lake was built with some of the stones; and we have all the plans and pictures of it, but that was the end. And after that they migrated down to Bewerley where there was a very nice, old Elizabethan house which I have a picture of in about 1815. Then of course they turned it into a castellated mansion, like all the Scottish ones, [and] in

about 1918-1921 it had turrets and towers and that great grandmother was the first person who altered it.

WRM What is known about that early period when they first bought the estate and lived at the head of the dale? Is very much known about their way of life?

EY Yes, the Yorkes of course were Catholics and recusants, and there is a well known story that although they lived in a very remote part of the country they acted a play at Gouthwaite Hall and during the play the Protestants chased the Catholics off the stage, and for this reason when the news got to London that Sir John was fined very heavily by the Star Chamber. And I had an American professor to see me once and he was beginning to write the story, and he said that he was fined more heavily than anybody else and that he was fined £8,000 which of course in those days was almost... but I haven't any proof of that.

WRM No, no.

EY He said he had. And after that of course they had to conform, and eventually of course gave up being Catholics. But the Ingilbys and the Yorkes were related also by marriage. It was a very strong recusant faith; they did say there was a priest's hole at Gouthwaite but I [of course] never saw it.

WRM The wealth would be represented by land and the use of the land wouldn't it in Upper Nidderdale, so it presumably was a farming estate was it largely?

EY A what?

WRM A farming estate, agriculture.

EY Oh, yes. Of course, originally...I mean, we have the documents when the Forest of Nidderdale was given to Roger de Mowbray, and I have had students who were writing theses coming to ask me about Roger de Mowbray and we've got quite a lot about him. But that was way back, and he gave the land to the monks. So that's of course going back to 1100.

WRM How did the Yorkes develop their estate? What use did they put it to?

EY It was agricultural entirely. Of course a great deal of it was moorland property and there were a lot of sheep gates on it, and of course grouse shooting. But the River Nidd, as you know, runs down and this property was entirely on the west of the Nidd and it was very long strips of land. But that was the first property.

WRM They would have tenants wouldn't they at the various farms? Or did they run the whole property themselves?

EY Oh no, they had tenants. Yes, oh yes, it was all let, and my son tells me (and he goes there for various reasons) it's all in very good repair and it had been very well kept up. A lot of the barns and things are standing well now.

WRM What was the year when Sir John Yorke went to Nidderdale? That was in the sixteenth century was it?

EY Yes, I can give you exact date if I can show you the charter.

WRM Yes, do any documents remain which tell of the sort of activity that went on at that time, perhaps the legal activity such as Courts Leet or anything like that?

EY All the Charters have most of that detail, as to how the monks were allowed to cross the land... some of the property went as far as Kilnsey and the monks from Byland were allowed to cross, but they weren't allowed to stay more than one day or one night or something like that. And there were a tremendous lot of very good laws, and of course they had the Manor Courts which they kept it up until 1923. And we have all those books.

WRM What form did the Manor Court take?

EY I never saw it but it took place at Appletreewick, and my husband's grandfather was ninety two when he died and he kept Court going until within a very few years of his death.

WRM What was his name?

EY Thomas Edward Yorke.

WRM Oh yes.

EY The last squire. And not very long ago I was asked to go to Bewerley to open the Church Sale, and I told them all how John had lived there and how much they'd done for the district: the Churches they'd built at Greenhaulgh and Ramsgill and Pateley Bridge, and they were all very interested; and they made £800 so I was quite pleased.

WRM Very good.

EY Yes... *[Laughs]*

WRM Were they involved in lead mining?

EY Oh yes, always; in fact my husband still has the rights to mine. It was mined back to the Roman times, but chiefly of course from the '30s. And there are a tremendous lot of workings now, but on the whole most of the lead has already been got out and there's not much left now. [Unclear 00:09:42] a little bit.

WRM Did the Yorke family actually mine the lead themselves, or did they grant...?

EY Oh, yes. No, they had a smelting house and it was called Yorke House and I know where it was, and I've been down the mine shaft. It was forty years ago, but I don't think you can go down it now. *[Laughs]*

WRM Where was the smelt house?

EY Well, do you know where Craven Cross is?

WRM Yes.

EY Well, it's on the right hand side, it's marked on all our maps. Then of course there was another mine at Merryfield which was nearer Bewerley, at the bottom of Stean Moor, up there. I've been to there too.

WRM Did they employ labour?

EY Oh, I think so, yes. For many of those old men who lived up there it was a way of life and a very hard one, and there were all sorts of rules like lead having to be taken to be smelted at the right place and that sort of thing.

WRM So possibly the local men undertook contracts did they?

EY I think so, yes.

WRM And then they got out the lead and were paid a fixed amount for the...?

EY I think so, I think so, yes. But it was quite profitable until about... well, in 1740, Commander Hall made quite a good sum of money out of it, because of course lead was valuable. Then in about 1920 it was down to nothing.

WRM Yes. Did the Yorke family excel in agriculture? I mean, did they take a special interest in local breeds of sheep or anything like that?

EY Oh yes, they took great interest in all the agriculture and had very good farms. We have all the field books of the farms, and they took a very great interest. And Grandfather of course was President of the Pateley Show for many years and took a great interest. The fact that they were people who lived in the country [meant that] they were never absentee landlords.

WRM What is remembered about the grouse shooting at the head of the dale?

EY Well, it was some of the best shooting in Yorkshire. And when the estate was sold, which was not too long after the first war, I think the trustees (my husband was only 19) thought that the end of the world had come and that

nobody would ever shoot grouse again. In which they were wrong, and of course there are still very good moors now.

WRM Do records indicate the way in which they went about it?

EY Oh, they walked with dogs.

WRM They did?

EY Oh yes, they shot with the dogs always until... I think it was really only the Victorians who started driving, and of course all the farmers who had sheep gates came and drove and helped. In fact they all enjoyed it, and enjoy it still very much.

WRM I wonder if you could tell me please about Yorke Folly, so-called?

EY Ah, yes I can. That one there in the brown coat was a very well spoken of man and that is his wife, and he was married about 1740 and so I presume he was born about 1700 or somewhere like that.

WRM What is his name?

EY John, they're all called John in the family.

WRM Yes.

EY And he was a very great philanthropist, and it was said that he built the folly to give work to farmhands who were out of work, but of course it hasn't been kept up and now it's rather a ruin. I go and look at it occasionally. But he was a very good man and he's very well spoken of, but unfortunately

his wife only had one child who died and so his nephew succeeded. You see, he's not a direct ancestor but he's got a nice face, hasn't he?

WRM Yes. So the first member of the Yorke family to come into the Dales was John...?

EY Yes. He was Sir John.

WRM And indeed John has been the common family name since, has it?

EY Well, and Thomas, but on two occasions a John didn't have children and a Thomas inherited, and this case occurred and the case of the one in the hall too. At the present moment my husband is called John, my son is called David John, and my grandson is called John.

WRM Oh, I see. Yes. I seem to remember right at the back of my mind some mention of deer, was it deer poaching or something, or some legal action concerning deer?

EY Oh well, we have a pardon for John Yorke killing a deer in Bardon Chase, but we don't think that it was justified because in those days boundaries were very moveable and we've still got several stones up there with JY on them. It looks like 'IY' but it is JY. And as they had property running from Appletreewick to Kilnsey nobody could really prove it, but we have this pardon.

WRM What were the circumstances that led to the granting of the pardon?

EY Well, John Yorke had undoubtedly killed a stag at Bardon Chase, but of course

in the days of the Star Chamber anybody with a title got very much priority, and the Yorkes hadn't got a title and so the Earl of Clifford was much more likely to win the case, so we always understood. And there were a tremendous lot of boundary disputes.

WRM Some of the old boundary details are quite fascinating, aren't they?

EY Well, we've got all sorts of papers about beating the bounds, and one of them said that they had one Samuel Swires and he came to adjudicate after some dispute. This was only about 1700 or so. And the note at the bottom of the thing says, 'Mr Swires never even went and looked at the boundary and was drunk.' And when I went to Beverley the schoolmistress was called Miss Swires, so I asked her if she was a relation and she said, 'Yes, he was my Grandfather.'

WRM Oh gosh.

EY Yes.

WRM What remains in the Dales now, that speak of the Yorke family? First of all in Nidderdale, you mentioned the Church at Ramsgill. This was indeed built by the Yorke family.

EY The one in Ramsgill was undoubtedly. He gave the land and I've got all the details of what else he gave. He gave the land, and a lot of money, and Grandmother gave the lectern, and somebody else gave something, all of them; and also Greenhow. And then the old Church at Beverley, where the

cemetery is, that became obsolete and they helped then greatly to build the new Church at Pateley where our memorials to my husband's grandfather and father are. And his great-uncle was the first person to be christened there; and he is another John who died and let Thomas succeed.

WRM The first of the Yorkes to be associated with the Dales was in fact a knight. Since then there havn't been titles had there within the family, did you say?

EY There hadn't been...?

WRM Titles, within the family?

EY No, the last... but of course they were MPs for Richmond for many years. They had another property over there.

WRM But it is often the case that a 'Mr' in the context of a family like the Yorkes, or the people at Levens Hall, that a 'Mr' has more significance than a knighthood often hasn't it?

EY Yes.

WRM I've noticed this up in Cumbria where they were not very generous at handing out knighthoods, but the fact is that Mr Baggott has got more weight in that case than a knighthood itself.

EY Exactly. We do know that Sir Richard was knighted somewhere when he died in 1498 so he must have been probably knighted some years before, and we know that he was knighted at Neville's feast, but the other Sir Johns... one was

under-treasurer of the Mint and he was knighted, and then there were one or two others, but they never had any other title. I think they've always been country people without ambition.

WRM How did the Yorke family become established at Halton West?

EY Well, the second son, Thomas, his mother was a Lister from Gisburn, and she was an only child whose parents died when she was born. And she was brought up by her grandmother who curiously enough married an ancestor of mine called Sir John Assheton, and they brought this child up at Gisburn. And she was married at Kirkby Malham Church, to Thomas, and when she had children she had Thomas and John (or John and Thomas). Now I've got her will and in her will she leaves her eldest son ten pounds for his undutiful behaviour, and her son-in-law ten pounds, and left everything to her second son who bought this place.

WRM Oh, I see.

EY So this was run as the second son's place, and his son built the house.

WRM In which year did the Yorkes become established here?

EY In 1730 they bought the estate, and I've got an Act of Parliament that he had or caused to be made to be allowed to lay out the Place, build the roads and build farms, and then he died and his son John came to live here about 1770.

WRM What sort of condition would the countryside around here be in when they

established the house?

EY It was practically wild.

WRM It would be, wouldn't it?

EY Yes, but he developed it.

WRM I mean, we're conditioned to seeing walls and fences now but this is quite a modern thing, isn't it?

EY We have two old farmhouses: one in the village, the Old Hall, and a very old one up at High Scale; and a fairly old one at Nappa Flats. Of course, all the others have been replaced by new ones.

WRM What were the circumstances under which the large Nidderdale estate had to be sold in the 1920s, was it to pay death duties?

EY Yes, entirely. Yes, Grandfather was ninety-two and he had five daughters and two sons, and of course nobody realised who lived on the estate that you lived near the edge and at the end of the war he left large sums of money to all his children, and he thought he'd left my husband the estate. But of course there was no money left to pay for death duties and they sold the whole place, which was obviously a mistake as it would have been much wiser if they'd sold part of it. But that's now getting on for sixty years ago.

WRM Do you remember your husband's grandfather?

EY No, I never saw him. But he of course was only nineteen and he remembers him quite well.

WRM And he lived at Bewerley Hall?

EY Yes. They call him 'the last squire.'

WRM So really he could actually get on a horse at Bewerley and ride to the very top of the dale, in fact onto the moors beyond, and never leave his own property?

EY Oh yes, and when he was eighty-two he would walk up to Ramsgill. He was a very, very hearty old gentleman. We've got his picture in the billiard room: very hearty. And his first wife died here, having had eight children, and they then moved to Bewerley from here because he was the second son and had a second wife with whom he had a full wedding.

WRM Incredible, isn't it?

EY And of course I have heard a great deal of them from my husband's cousins, because the daughters stayed at Bewerley and I recently had a very good description of how they lived there.

[Interruption in tape]

[Reading] 'The General Court Books for the Manor of Appletreewick, Ramsgill and Bewerley, 1716 to 1751.' 'The Court Books for the Manor of Appletreewick, Ramsgill and Bewerley, 1760 to 1836.' 'The Court Book for the Manor of Appletreewick, 1620 to 1676.' 'The Jury's Presentiments at an

approved Manorial Court. Various dates...' *[Rustling of paper]*

WRM Yes.

EY Then, 'The Court Rolls for the Manor of Appletreewick, 1768 to 1849.'

WRM Where was the Manorial Court held actually at Appletreewick?

EY I think it's called... I know where it is. It's at the top on the left hand side. I think it's called 'The Old Hall', not High Hall. High Hall is another place at Appletreewick.

WRM Yes.

EY I think it's 'The Old Hall'. I've been shown it.

WRM What was the form these Courts took?

EY Every kind of dispute which we still have to deal with between people: if there was a gap in a fence and a bull gets through, whose fence was it? And then you were fined. And all the details of how much they were fined for misbehaving, a penny or sixpence or something like that, every sort of detail. And any kind of infringement of rights for grazing sheep; and you mustn't allow horses from such a date to such a date; and you must only allow so many sheep on each gate; and on no account must you allow bulls or packs or anything to run on certain months of the year - that sort of thing.

WRM Does it mention the various officials who were connected with the Court?

EY Oh yes, I can show you the things for every sort of detail. And then of course the boundaries were very interesting. ‘A copy of the boundaries’: this caused a great deal of trouble, and ‘a perambulation of the boundaries’ when they were supposed to take little boys with them and beat them, I don’t know if they really did, to show them where the boundaries were.

WRM Last year we walked the bounds of Giggleswick Parish.

EY Oh, yes?

WRM The Vicar asked me to organise it.

EY Did he?

WRM And first of all I got to acquaint myself with it and clear it all with the farmers.

EY You didn’t beat anybody!?

WRM But we’re actually to walk the bounds of Rathmell and Wigglesworth this year.

EY Really?

WRM That’s going to be a rather longer jaunt, I think.

EY Well, to walk the bounds of this property is jolly hard work.

WRM Is it?

EY Oh, my goodness, yes.

WRM What I normally do is to go round and have a chat with all the landowners and farmers first, so that we don't actually do any damage en route, you know? We're quite prepared to swerve a little where necessary to avoid climbing over walls. *[Laughs]*

EY I don't think anybody minds people walking; alas so many people spoil it for the others by the stupid things they do. They break things down and they let their dogs chase sheep and that sort of thing.

WRM What was the point about the little boys? Is that referred to in the documents?

EY Is what?

WRM Taking the little boys along and beating them? That is actually referred to, is it?

EY Well, they always said so. I suppose little boys at all times are the ones who are most likely to transgress, so the idea was that if they were given a good whacking they'd tell their children perhaps not to go over there. But of course that's a sort of story: one doesn't know if it really happened. *[Rustle of papers]* There is a tremendous lot about boundary ridings, you see, 'The boundary of Nidderdale ridden by Major Norton on behalf of his grandchild Thomas, 1663'.

WRM What was the point of doing that?

EY Well, Major Norton's daughter married the then John Yorke, and John was one of the local MPs. And he died when he was quite young

leaving a minor, and so this Thomas's grandfather I suppose was keeping up his rights.

WRM Oh, I see, yes.

EY And then there was a great deal of argument about the difference of the boundary between the Forests of Bardon, you see, and Knaresborough, and between Appletreewick Common and Hartlington. 'This is on behalf of Mary Yorke' ... well, the then Mary Yorke was the daughter of Major Norton and he came from St Nicholas, Richmond and that was how he brought the Richmond property into the family. *[Papers rustling]*

WRM Oh, I see, yes.

EY They said they had a 'go' with the Duke of Devonshire's agent at one time.

WRM That was in 1813.

EY Yes, they've been arguing about it ever since. I think they still do. *[Pause]* A journal of Thomas Edward when he walked round his farm, I've got that, every detail. He lived here as the second son.

WRM So it's a journal of Thomas Edward Yorke, recording work done on his farm...

EY That's Grandfather.

WRM Oh, yes.

EY And he lived here and Ramsgill, at the Home Farm, whilst his brother lived at

Bewerley.

WRM Oh, I see.

EY And then when the brother died, he went there.

WRM That's from 1868 onwards on the Halton Estate.

EY Yes, he went to Bewerley in 1893. And then Sir Thomas White was one of the people with whom he had tremendous arguments about the lead mines at Bewerley. [*Papers rustling*] Of course, it's so interesting when you read all these papers because all the names are the same; so we've got the list of all the people who were granted long leases for 5,000 years in 1603 and that sort of thing.

WRM Good heavens...

EY That was to pay the Star Chamber fines. We've got all those, a list of them. Then of course there are a lot of family things which are chiefly of interest. We've got a lot of letters. [*Pause*] Here's one, you see: 'Pardon for John Yorke, Under Treasurer of the Mint'; that doesn't mean anything, because apparently they all had pardons, but it didn't really mean that he had really been coining or anything like that.

WRM 'For all transgressions concerning the coinage...', so that was in 1552 in the reign of Edward VI.

EY Yes. 'For all offences committed before the 1st October'... [*Laughs*] But I

understand from those who know...

WRM Oh, and Appletreewick Fair, yes...

EY And then the Appletreewick Fair: he got this grant to hold a fair at Appletreewick, and they ended up having a tremendous row because Yorke's men beat up somebody else's men at Appletreewick Fair.

WRM So this is the 11th April 1691, and it's a letter from Robert Dormer of Lincoln's Inn to Thomas Yorke, Richmond, about whether the men of Lancaster are exempt from paying tolls at Appletreewick Fair. And then what is this? This is a quotation from the document, is it? What are 'toole' men?

EY I don't know, I should have enquired. It's difficult to remember. Some of these terms, like 'feoffment', I keep a glossary of them. And 'relief' and things like that, one has to remember to look them all up. [*Papers rustling*] This is all about the Nidderdale Churches and the schools... this is what I gave them a lecture on at Beverley. I said that as I wasn't born a member of the family I think that I've got a right to tell you that the Yorkes did a lot of good up here, and I think it's a good thing nowadays when everybody thinks that landlords are nothing but rapacious people that our family did their best for the local inhabitants. [*Pause*] And here is the will of Thomas Lister of Arnolds Biggin. It was his brother John came into the family with his daughter Catherine. It's the one I was telling you of.

WRM Yes.

EY And we've got all their marriage settlements too: it's very interesting. Of course, there was always a tremendous lot of litigation. The old families were always having lawsuits about something or other. Is this being recorded?

WRM Yes, it's only again just notes. Did they in fact... they would employ a local lawyer, would they, or solicitor to do the work for them, or did they do it in their own estate office? Did they have a man with legal accomplishments working on the estate?

EY Well, they had of course the agent, Mr Boord, who was there for forty years at Beverley, but then they had various solicitors. They had Dipp Luptons in Leeds and another one... Grandfather's were in Harrogate, I forget the name now, even though I know it very well. And then in Settle there was Mr Hartley, they mention don't they in Settle, William Hartley?

WRM Oh, yes.

EY Then he turned into a Bank, and it wasn't a great success. He was the one who collected... I'll tell you one person who I think... You know of [unclear 00:34:16]?

WRM Yes.

EY Well, I have always had a suspicion that he's got hold of some of our papers, because I know that he went to Settle and they let him scabble through things which they shouldn't have done.

WRM That's quite interesting: 'During a tour of the Lake District..'

EY Which one?

WRM This one here.

EY Oh yes, this is also very interesting. This is a journal of John Yorke's journey to St. Petersburg. He went to... that one's husband, and he didn't get married until he was late on in his thirties and he went as an attaché to somebody called St. John Borleseay Warren.

WRM B-O-R-L-E-S-E-Y?

EY Yes, and he went there from September 1802 to 1803 and it's most interesting: I've got that typed. It's a very good copy. And it's a very good journal describing how he was presented at Court to the Tsar and Tsarina, and he describes what it was like at the house in St. Petersburg. It was very interesting.

WRM That was John Yorke; he actually lived at Bewerley, did he?

EY Yes.

WRM He was the son?

EY He was born here, but when he married he went to live at Bewerley. She was rather a beautiful lady.

WRM Was he in fact the head of the estate at that time?

EY Yes, he was the oldest son. He died about 1857. *[Papers rustling]* They've got all sorts of things. 'A journal of an expedition to Mount Sinai' by Thomas Edward...

WRM In 1862, yes.

EY And it says, 'Diary of Thomas Edward, not very detailed.' I noticed when I was reading it one day that in 1863 his first wife died to whom he was devoted, and the entry for the day was 'My dear wife died' and nothing else. But then Victorians were very reserved.

WRM Oh they were, yes.

EY And this is a lovely letter from Mary Yorke to her mother written about...

WRM That's Lady Yorke at Richmond, yes, in 1760?

EY That's right, yes, so I've got that. It's a lovely letter: 'Honoured Madam, I beg you to receive the first truth of my pen. I would have gone to ye dancing class today had it been fair weather.'

WRM Yes. How does Richmond come into the family possession?

EY Through this lady.

WRM Yes, that is Mary Yorke?

EY The Nortons lived at St Nicholas, Richmond, and this Mary was the daughter, and perhaps the heiress. And she brought Richmond into the property and she bought the Bewerley property: which is quite separate from

Stonebeck Up and Stonebeck Down and Ramsgill and Appletreewick. She bought the Bewerley property in only about 1700 something or other.

WRM So that was quite a key period in the development of the family, when one of the Yorkes married Mary Norton, was it, of Richmond?

EY Yes, they were a very well known family, the Nortons; and they were related to the Wansfords and a great many other families. And I think they were also related to the Ingilbys and a great many other families, of course mostly originally Catholic.

WRM So she actually brought the Richmond property into the family and also purchased the Bewerley property, which in due course completed this large estate.

EY That's right, then Bewerley was then joined to all the other properties.

WRM I see, yes.

EY *[Papers rustle]* Then there are all these letters. Some of them are interesting because they're about losing the Borough of Richmond. It was shared between two families, and the arrangement was that they were not to buy anymore [unclear 00:38:44] houses without agreement, and of course they did. *[Papers rustle]* Look what I've got here. I've got the passport for John Yorke to go to Sweden. I'm not quite sure... yes, Conyers Darcy was the man who did them down. And very interesting letters from John and Anne going riding down to London and being nearly caught by a highwayman, and Lord

Holderness, he also was in the question of Richmond borough, and then letters from Sir John Glynn, her father, about his marriage.

WRM Oh, yes?

EY *[Paper rustle]* But these are mostly family things.

WRM Studying the family, do you find that certain characteristics are to be found in virtually every generation? I mean, are there certain Yorke characteristics, or is that being put a little simply?

EY *[Laughs]* Have you heard about [unclear 00:40:03]?

WRM No. *[Pause]* Let's change this over.

[End of Side A - 00:40:14]