

AG

SIDE ONE

AG Well, I'm AG, and I'm seventy five years old, and I went to Oakbank Oil Works when I was fifteen and a half, and my job was sanding the lids on the top of the retorts. Now, the lids on the retorts were put on after the shale was.....after the retort was charged with shale, you put the lid on, and there was thick dirty yellow smoke came out, and I sanded the lids round about the edge to stop the smoke coming out, because the smoke was the actual stuff that they wanted, the extraction out of the shale, and they were going to lose a lot, so I sanded them, after they were filled right up to the top.....

GC When you say that you sanded them, was that to seal them off?

AG To seal it off to stop the stuff from getting out.....

GC And how did you go about sanding them?

AG Well, I had pails of sand, and I put the sand round about, when the lid went on, it just went on a steel face, the lid was..... the handle was in the middle, I put it on and I put the sand round about it and it stopped it from, the stuff coming out!

GC What size were these lids?

AG Oh, the lids weren't.....they weren't awfy much bigger than an ordinary bin lid would have been, an ashpan lid..... they weren't heavy! Now, forbye, sanding the lids, old Peter Coyne.....there was a scaffold so far down the retorts, and there was a steel pipe with a sharp neck come out and went down on to a bigger pipe that took the oil away to where it was going to get refined, but it choked when the vapour was going out the neck, and hit the cold air, it choked, and Peter had pokers and clots and what not all down beside him on the scaffoldingthe scaffolding was.....I would say maybe..... less than a quarter from the top.....the height..... less than a quarter from

the top down, the scaffolding was on the outside where this bend was, and he had to clear it because it solidified, a sort of form of walk... wax.....and when he clawed it out, it was a wee thing with a bolt, a wee thing that swung round like that, and there was a hole in it, and a bolt there and he screwed it, and he opened it you see, and after he.....he collected the stuff into a pail, and then he shut it, and just a wee wind up so it couldn't (inaudible) up, and when the pail was full, I had a rope over the top of the safety railing, with a hook on it, and I pulled the pail up, and the retort that wasn't charged, I lifted the lid, and I poured all the stuff back in again, there was nothing lost, put the lid down again, lowered the pail back down to Peter and he done all the retorts and everything. I'm sure there was one, two, three blocks of retorts, I'm sure there was three, and what I'm.....was going to say was, see the shale itself, it came from Westwood, it came into the breaker, and I think that if I mind right, a ram came up between the rails and it got on the axle of the thingummy, and..... there was tail end doors that opened, and the shale couped down into the breaker, and the big breaker with the teeth on it, smashed it all up so that it would be easier burnt, and that shale was put on wee bogeys, and it went up out of the breaker, up a wee wooden ramp, up to the top, turned.....there was a wee turntable.....on to a wee turntable, and you kicked the snutch out that kept the turntable.... turned the hutch round about and put it in that way, and there was another wee turntable and you could get that way to the retorts, and you could go that way to the retorts, whatever ones that you were filling, a wee round turntable with steel balls, and you used to pour diesel oil in them for to keep them running free and as I say when the stuff was burnt, there were boys down at the bottom and they pulled a thingummy and the stuff came out into the hutch, you know, the burnt shale, and you pulled a handle at the bottom of the retort into the thingummy, steaming red hot, and they shoved it out to the end of the thingummy and they clicked on..... there was a rope up the tip..... an endless rope up the tip, and you pulled it down and it was a clamp that drew round it like that, and it went up to the top, and there were boys up at the top shifting them from the end of the rails up at the top to the face and tipped them up.....oh, a dirty job! Of course,

it doesn't matter what way the wind was blowing when that shale was tipped up, it blew right back into them and they came back down off their shift, black men, ken, they were coupling it up over the thingummy and they put the hutches back on.....you know..... the empty hutches back on, it was the full ones coming up and the empty ones going back down.

GC So that was the spent shale that was going over the bing?

AG It was the spent shale going on the bings, aye!

GC Can you mind who the Manager was when you started at Oakbank?

AG I told you again, I think, I said Sandy Thompson of the Birches..... I forget.....Sandy Thompson of the Birches.....but, actually talking, I don't know how long I had been on that, I would be maybe about a couple of years on that job, and the gaffer came to me and says "There's a chance of another job going on, Adam, if you want it!" I says, "Where is it about?" He says, "The sulphate house!" "Oh aye", he says. "What kind of job is that then, what is it doing?" "Well", he says, "The sulphate is put up into a hopper, and you are at the bottom", he says, "with a bag, and you put the bag in below the thingummy and pull the thingummy in, about a hundredweight, pull the bag off when you thought that it was about a hundredweight, and took it over the scales and put it on the scales, weigh it, and if it's too heavy, take some off with a scoop, and some..... till you get the right weight, and then sew it up with a big thingummy.....steel needle, with string... you know, and burl it round about, and you were left with two lugs (ears).....wee.....and tie a knot on the end of the string like... you know! Two knots.....and.....wee Jimmy Crosswe on that job along with me, I think that Jimmy was.....if I mind right I think that Jimmy was taking the bags off me, when I sewed them, and he had a two wheel barrow, and he harrowed them across and stowed them on a thingummy ready for dispatching, you know. Aye!

GC Have you any idea where the sulphate of ammonia went?

AG Oh.....it went all over! I think that it was even exported! Sulphate of ammonia! Because.....it was great stuff, sulphate of ammonia! All the folk in Oakbank had good leeks and onions and carrots and everything, and it was all free, you know! You would just fill up a bag in your pocket.....aye, they were the days, boy!

GC That would be hessian bags that you were sewing up?

AG Hessian bags! Hessian bags, aye! I mean.....

GC Aye, and you said that there was one hundredweight in each bag?

AG A hundredweight, that's right! A hundredweight in each bag! I don't know how long that I would be in there, maybe another eighteen months or two years.....and if I mind right, I think that the Managers were changed, because what I'm going to say is, I'm sure that it was Spittal the Manager, that came to me.....he used to.....used to visit the departments every morning and in the afternoon too.....no.....on his rounds, here's.....here he's coming, here he's coming!

GC You would point to your caps, and say that this was the Manager coming?

AG Aye! Oh aye, you knew when they done that, if he was too near you, and....."Oh, how's it going Adam?" I said "Going fine!" "You wouldn't like a shift would you?" I said, "Oh, it all depends on what it is!" "Well, he says. We're needing a hammersman," he said, "In the blacksmith's shop", and I said, "Oh aye!" "What kind of pay is that?" "Oh, it's a rise in wages!" "Oh, well then, if it's a rise in wages, then I'll be taking it!" I said, "Who's the blacksmith?" There were three blacksmiths you see.....anyway.....

GC Can you remember any of their names?

AG He says, "Old Bill Thompson!" and I said, "Oh, I know old Bill fine!" I said, "Me and old Bill would get on grand!" You see.....because there was Bob Henderson, too, he was a first.....a first class black-

smith, Bob Henderson, and I'm trying to mind the third one now.....
oh, I don't know, he was connected to the Edwardsons, I can't get his name. Harry would have known, it won't matter anyway! And.....me and old Bill, a lot of our work was..... there was an iron railing right round about it.....it's still there, you know, yet! Oakbank Bowling Club.....and there were bits getting kind of rusty and kind of flat and kind of.....you know, marked with the wind, you know and.....the gaffer there was.....Finlay would be the engineering gaffer, he stayed in the Bowling Alley and.....Finlay would say....."Bill, I've got a good job for you and Adam, what's that, take your tools and go down to.....take your tools and go down to Oakbank Bowling Club, and sort all the bits that are rusted and worn with the wind and what not, you know! Of course, we went down and cut off the bits and put on wee extensions with the holes all.....bored in them and that, you know, anything like that, and you know, that fence is still up there yet! Anyway, I was.....when Bob Henderson was needing the steam hammer.. there was a steam hammer and I had a right kind of.....you could get it going just like that, you know and.....

GC And these were quite big hammers?

AG Oh.....square.....square heavy.....steam..... the piston.....the ram like..... the piston would be about that thick!

GC About six inches?

AG Oh aye and more! Anyway, Henderson nodded his head, you know, and I can't mind who it was.....oh. Sandy Greig, of Kirknewton, oh..... Sandy's dead, well if Sandy wasn't there. Bob used to shout to me "Right Adam, the steam hammer....." And he was gaffer you see, you could... he kept turning his head, it was all done by the nod of the head, I watched his head, I wasn't interested in what he was doing, that was his job.....I had this handle going up and down, funny!

GC Was there quite an art in this.....operating the lever?

AG Aye! Actually talking, a pioneer matchbox.....I could.....even if it was full I could fill it up to the top before it came out altogether and put it in below the steam hammer, lift the steam hammer and you could set it that it stayed up, and put the matchbox underneath and put the bit up, seven eighths to the outside, and just let it down, and I could shut the matchbox and never touch it.....never break it! This was.....you had to be good to do it!

GC Was that one of your.....kind of party pieces?

AG Oh aye.....aye, aye! They used to call me (inaudible) you should see Greenhorn with this, this steam hammer! And some of them wanted me to put a watch.....I said, "No, don't do that!" I wouldn't take a chance.....with a watch, but.....I don't know.....

GC And what other jobs were you asked to do in the Oilworks?

AG I'm trying to mind where Sandy Greig went to.....Sandy Greig left, and he.....shifted his job to somewhere, and Anderson must have went to Spittall and he must have said he wanted Greenhorn, that's what Anderson would say, he was always on the steam hammer with me anyway, if Sandy was not there, so, I got shifted to old Bill Henderson and Henderson was a first class craftsman, he was a Hallelujah.....but... anyway that's..... that won't matter.....it was a wee low building the blacksmith's shop, and see when you were coking up, what you cried coking up in the morning, I mean, you actually can't weld with raw churls of coal, you've got to coke up the coal, before you can start welding, or even actually heating certain metals, you've got to coke, so the blacksmith couldn't start his work, until the hammersman done the coking on the fire, and this was a wee low roofed thing, and this is what made me leave Oakbank, the Oilworks, I lifted my books, and I don't know whether.....you've seen coal gas or not, it's yellow like the stuff that I was talking about on the top of the retorts, well, that used to come out of these things, and belishes (Bellows)..... a wooden handle, belishes for the fire, came out and there was a wee cone thing came out of the back, it was water cooled and there was a

water tank at the back of the fire, full of water.....and it.....the wee thing, it was like a cone, it was bigger at the back, that's what the thingummy was, and it came to a wee hole, so that you could get air, when you pumped that, and to keep it from burning what like the metal did on the fire, the water tank at the back..... the cone was "boss", the water went round in about the two sides of the cone, if you know what I mean, it couldn't get out (inaudible), and I mean, the water fed itself in as it was getting used by the heat, otherwise, the cone for the air, would have.....would have went to the welding heat as well and.....good gracious, what am I talking about, I used to take a piece to work with me in a piece-box, a school piecebox, and an old syrup can with a wire in it, for your tea, if you drank, like! With the water in the tap, and put it on a fire in a cleek, on the smiddy fire, and boiled it up, you know. And I used to bring my piece back, I couldn't eat it with the coke gas.....

GC Was there not proper chimneys or ventilation?

AG There was nothing, bar the doors! You see, the blacksmiths and that, if it was a good enough day, they were outside, but you had to wait until the coal was a certain state of burned up thingummy, you could kind of break it up and that, and get a wee ladle, there was always a tub of water, this tub of water at each blacksmiths fire, for him dipping in, because if it was going to bend, he cooled the bit off, that he didn't want bent! And he ran over a thingummy and left a bit that was going to bend red, he bent it over! And we used to get a ladle of water out of the thingummy, and scatter it like that so that it didn't fall into a lump, but it spread! And it.....the heat put the coal into a coke, coke cinders, for welding or heating metal, it had to be done, and I asked for a shift, and Spittall told me that there was no shift! "Well" I said, "Jimmy", I says, "You and my father are great pals but", I said, "it makes no difference!" I said "I'm off!" He said, "But you can't!" He said, "You can't pack up", he says, "What is your father going to say" I said, "My father can say what he likes, I'm not going to kill myself, smoking.....breathing coal gases, and that's what we're

doing, Jimmy, and you know as well as me!" "I'm leaving and that's all that's all that's about it!" "As from tonight, I'm leaving!" "I'll come up on pay day, and get my books and my lying time!" "Aye", he said, "I think that wee Wullie will have something to say about that!" "Wee Wullie can say what he likes, I'm not worried, I'm finished!" "I've just stood it long enough, and I'm not going to stand it any longer!" And I left! My father said nothing! He asked me what I was going to do, and I said, that he would be better just to leave that to me. Dad, I'll not be idle long.....and if I mind right, I think that I went to a public works contractor.....

GC It doesn't matter! Was that you finished with the Scottish Oils? Altogether?

AG Absolutely finished! Point blank! No nonsense! Finished! I wasn't going to ruin my stomach for nobody, I wasn't caring, money didn't matter to me!

GC And how long do you think, that you worked with the Scottish Oils? How many years would that be?

AG That is what I'm trying to.....this is what I'm trying to think myself? This is what I'm trying to think myself, because.....I've got an awfulI've got an awful kind of feeling..... that I went to the building of the dam at Morton, but again as I say, my memory is not a hundred per cent! I started..... the dam was there.....it was always there, and..... they built a big extension on to it, on the bottom side! Just up at Corston Farm there! There's that first dam and there's another dam up on the hill there, on the left hand side, you know, that was the old dam! This one was the new dam, but oh, it was years and years old, and they were putting a big extension on to it! Jackson, Magdalene Jackson of Edinburgh, that was the firm! I went to them! And I was driving dumpers! That's.....you've seen them, the steel dumpers on the front, and you're at the back driving it you know! And the digger fills it.....and you go away to the tip, and then you come to the... just before you come to the edge of the tip, they kicked a thing just like a clutch or a footbrake, and put that up, and the hutch went up,

and when you kicked that thing, you also kicked the footbrake beside it, and stopped.....and the bucket went up! And all the dirt went over the banking and I was only two or three months on that, and went on to the diggers, and I was a good two or three years on the diggers, after that like! Different firms, Arnott and McLeod of Edinburgh, andwith W. & J.R. Watson, Iona Street, of Edinburgh, and we took out all the founds of the Bangour Hospital, you know Bangour Hospital as it is now, not the Mental Hospital..... the one up the top, I took out all the founds, with William Arnott and McLeod, every found that's in that hospital up there.....Tommy Harvey's dead.....Kirknewton, Tommy took out the drains with McLeod and all, and I took out all the founds, and I was shifted from Bangour..... this would be in 19.. early in 1939.....March, April, 1939. There were big air raid shelters in Brighton Park in Portobello, that was before the September 1939 War.

GC And what job did your father do with the.....at.....with the Works?

AG My.....actually my father worked with a sub-contractor, that was working in Oakbank, building it! Building Oakbank! Either building Oakbank or building something to do with the Oilworks. He was a man that came from the West and.....some place, a steel pit.....came from the West and my father worked with him and it must have been after the job was finished, that my father got a job in the Oilworks! So.....what I'm laughing at is.....they used to cry him.....which was true..... they used to cry him "Tarry Wull", "Tarry Wull!" Now, I don't think that you would know Oakbank, but right away at the very top of Oakbank right next to the Works, there were three rows of houses ran that way, and there were stables, for the work horse. The work horse emptied all the buckets, emptied the buckets in Oakbank, and he also brought your coal up. If you ordered a ton or two tons of coal, the horse brought it and just couped it on the street, and you had to carry it in to the coalhouse. But how he got his name of "Tarry Wull".....see, the bairns that were in those three rows of houses, they used to torment him.... there was a sleeper fence and a gate into the Works, there, but the main gate was up.....up the Corston Road, but the bairns used to shout "Tarry

Wull", "Tarry Wull" and he would.....use to kid on, that he would run after them, and they would bolt like hell, down to their house, down to their father and mother! Actually, what he done was..... there were two ponds, in that bit.....you've been up you must have been up..... where Shearers was and turned left, do you see that bit that's there now, the trees are all growing in it now, in that bit were two ponds, water ponds! And the oil.....and scum and what not, floated on the top! Which it always does of course, oil and water.....! But he had ladles, and he ladled it off, and he put it over on the side, into a.. I don't know whether it was a bucket or skip or what it was.....but it wouldn't be skips..... there weren't any in those days! He used to skim it off the top, and this is how he got.....because there was what we cried "tarry" holes, instead of.....putting into drains..... they would have got done..... they would have got done by the Health boys, if they had let it down the drain! So it was put into this thingummy first, and this stuff was skimmed off and then the water went into the drain after that, after there was nothing in it! So that's what my father was "Tarry Wull".

GC And was that tar then taken away to some dump?

AG No, I think that it was just.....as far as I can mind.....I think it was just what I can mind.....oh, no, I think.....wait the now, I think that it congregated for maybe two or three months.....and then, I don't know whether it was men or what it was, but they put it in wagons, Oakbank Oilwork wagons, wooden wagons and I think that they came down the back of.....where the Hall is now, and the Bowling Club, there was a railway line down there! And it was tipped over the thingummy! It was tipped over the tip! You're actually talking.....when Mid Calder pit was going.....the wee engine at Oakbank, it used to come right down the back of the Hall, and the thingummy, right down..... the bottom side of Oakbank Football field, and it came right down there, and actually if you walked down that drive to Mid Calder, on your left hand side, you'll see a shale bing like that, a shale.....no.....oh, that was the railway that went down to Mid Calder Pit, that.....and the old Doctor's house, in Mid Calder, that drive before you cross the bridge

at Mid Calder, that Doctor's house is built on the shaft, the mine shaft, of Mid Calder pit! And on the top of it, they filled it in, and that house..... the vet was in it at one time, but I don't know who's in it now, but that house is built right on top of the shaft!

GC Was it Doctor McCutcheon that would be in it first, was it?

AG No, no, no!

GC Was that before his time, long.....

AG Oh, long, long before his time, long before him! Because I can mind of an old.....I'm sure that it was an old, old Doctor that I can mind of, I'm sure that it was Young.....I don't know.....not the young... but the other.....he was young.....

GC He was younger?

AG Oh, aye, he was an old, old man! He was an old, old man that used to come round the doors, with his wee leather bag, a wee round leather bag with a handle on it! I'm sure it was Young! Aye!

GC And at Oakbank, can you remember much about that.....your housing, what.....facilities that you had?

AG Oh.....the facilities were actually nil! Nil! For to start with, the women, you had a toilet, to start with, the women had a boiler, out on this porch, and it was coal fire that was underneath it..... a coal fire what was underneath the thingummy, it was a steel.....it was a steel tank that was underneath, with bricks built round it and there was a wee catch door, that you kindled the fire, and shoveled the coal into it, to boil it, to boil the water, for the washing and everything! No bath! When I was a laddie, I used to walk across the football field to my father coming from Mid Calder Pit, and the tide mark of the water that he was working in, in Mid Calder Pit was there!

I would say, about three inches below his kneecap! The tidal mark, and that was coming home from his work! He had bowyanks on there! And the water was up to the bowyanks! His trousers.....soaking! Boots and everything! I used to go down and I would think to myself that he had put an extra slice of bread in his piecebox, a tin box with two halves, because we used to run home, Peter my brother, to see who would get this slice of bread! A pit piece we cried it, a pit piece was put in extra, it went down the pit, and he brought it back again! For whatever one of us was there! Maybe he forgot, maybe Peter forgot, or I forgot, I wasn't there, but you got the pit piece, in all possibility it would be cheese! In all possibility! And it was tin flasks that they had with a cork, a tin flask, and there was a sock, there was a sock on the tin flask, for to keep the tea hot! So, you'll know that it wouldn't be very hot! An old sock!

GC You mentioned that the Japanese came across with some shale over, to find out how it was processed?

AG Aye, I can mind of that fine, and I should have a bit in the house here somewhere! I'll need to look for it, unless it's been flung out, somebody saying that.....what's this stone in the drawer, I don't know, but I'm going to have a rake anyway!

GC But this piece came from Japan, did it?

AG Pardon?

GC Did this come from Japan?

AG Oh it came across on a ship, and it was loaded on to wagons, and it come with the railway to Mid Calder Station and shunted into Oakbank! There was.....a.....I don't know how many hundred ton or maybe a thousand tons, if it came to it, because the experiment with the Japanese stuff, it was to show them, and to prove to them what was the contents that was in that! In their shale! The oil content, I mean, after that,

I mean you got, sulphate of ammonia and wax and all the rest of the stuff you know!

GC And was it good shale that they brought over?

AG Well.....what I was going to say about this bit that I have in the house somewhere, that I could take an ordinary match, put the shale...

END OF TAPE

AG SIDE TWO

GC You said that you could take an ordinary match.....?

AG You could put the shale in between my forefinger and my thumb, and the match.....put the flame up to the corner of the Japanese shale, and before the match burned my fingers, the bit of shale was blazing! Andit proved that it must have been a high oil content in the Japanese shale because I tried it with the Scottish shale and there was no way! You would need a candle!

GC And were there Japanese workers over here?

AG Yes, the Japanese workers..... they stayed in the hotels, and as far as I mind, I'd say in East Calder, the Grapes and in Mid Calder..... the Torphichen Arms.....but I think myself that some of the kind of leading lights of the Japanese would be in private digs, and these Japanese fellows, when they went back home.....whether it would be for leave or something, they brought back to Oakbank, some of the women in Oakbank, and some of the women in Mid Calder too I would suppose, linen and different stuff as a present, for being so good to them! And all the bairns in, I would say, Mid Calder and East Calder, and Oakbank and

all over, used to wave to them, and they all waved to us back! The bus picked them up at Mid Calder and East Calder and took them up to the Oilworks, and then it would take them down at night! We were waving at night as well, we thought that it was a great thing! The Japanese!

GC So, you were just a laddie then?

AG Aye, I'm sure of that, I wouldn't have been waving if I wasn't a laddie, I don't think so anyway! It's not that, I mean the Japanese are as good as me! I've no religious bias or anything like that! Or nationality, colour bars or nothing, I mean, that everybody's Gods creation as far as I'm concerned, we're breathing the same fresh air!

GC And would there be a full bus load? Of Japanese?

AG Aye, oh aye! There was a bus load! You see, there would be the chemists and actual workers too that would go back there and do what they were doing at Oakbank, they would have to be able to go back, they also were men that would have to understand the technicalities of the process, the retorts and the.....you had the.....forbye when the stuff came to where old Peter was working on the pipes and that, you know, it went to what they cried the stills, and the stills they had a great big... oh, I don't know.....but I would awful like to think that it would be at least three inches thick, cast iron, the still bottom and they were built on brick, they would have a lip, they were built on brick, and seating and there was a furnace of a fire, underneath, and they must have put that stuff in to a very, very high degree! To extract what they wanted out of that crude..... the crude oil that came out of the retorts, it went into the stills, and that was one of the first jobs I think that was in the Scottish Oils trade, just when it came to my mind the now! Because, boys like wee Tam McCourt and different..... especially wee boys, before the still was actually cooled off, they had to go in there, and chip the coke off the cast steel.....you know, the thingummy still, if they had left it, they would never have got it off! It had to be.....it had to be flat thingummies with a handle on it,

GC Like a big pinch.....bar!

AG Aye, but a flat thingummy!

GC A spade! A spade thing at the bottom?

AG A wee spade thing, you know! About four or five inches!

GC And this would be thrown out of the door?

AG They shovelled it! They shovelled it, and it was dear to buy! That was sold, and that was a by-product, see even a fire, I doubt that if you could start a fire with coke itself, I think that you would need to get a bit of a coal fire going, and then put the coke on the top! And.....oh, it glowed, it didn't blaze, it glowed! And it was sold! It was dear! The coke! The stills, that's where they actually made the stuff, you know!

GC And the coke itself would be fairly light?

AG It was light! It was porous! It was all sort of wee holes, you know! There was a face on it, where it was stuck on the still bottom, there was a face, a clean face like a brick, but the outside was next to where it was getting heated where the oil was, it was all porous, with wee sort of holes!

GC So, it was something like an Aero chocolate?

AG Aye, something.....aye, that's what it was like! But it was pretty hard too, to break! But see, these men, they lost an awful lot of sweat, they couldn't wait until it was cold, you see! They didn't go in when it was red hot, forget about that, I mean, the front, the front thingummy was taken off, I think that it was screws, thumb screws, they took them all off and flung the thingummies back, they swivelled back, the screw. They swivelled back! And you took the still front door off, and let

the thingummy in! I presume that the top of the still, it would be chimneyed you know, for to take the fumes away! I mean, I passed the stills hundreds of times and that, and I knew roughly what the stills were for, but I never had anything to do with them, I never had anything to do with them!

GC And would you know if the Japanese had to mine for their shale or was it opencast at that time?

AG Well, I mean.....

GC You wouldn't know!

AG We wouldn't know that, son! We wouldn't know that! I doubt if it would be opencast, unless it was something that they had found, an outcrop, and had wondered about it, and sent samples, and you know.....some of the British technicians maybe took it from there, and I doubt if it would be opencast because, when you come to think about the time, you hadn't the machines for opencast! You had men with picks and shovels then! But, I've an awful feeling that it would be mining! What they found first of all, I mean, it could have been an outcrop, you get that with the coal, you get it from everything but it must have been something that they knew about, through boring, I mean, the things that they've got nowadays are out of this world!I see them doing it now, and they must have private firms, coal for opencast up the Breich Road. A lot of these.....Todds, Todds the haulage contractor, the other side of West Calder. They've been in both sides of the road, boring, but we never heard that.

GC But that's interesting, that the Japanese were also trying to find a method of extracting the oil from the shale.

AG Aye, this was definitely.....I don't know whether they maybe went to some of the other places or not, you know, where they done a tour of some of these places, such as.....although, mind you, before Oakbank

closed down, I'm sure that Oakbank was the last.....what do you cry it.....fully.....it done the full process, Oakbank burned the shale and extracted everything itself! Some places only extracted the stuff out of the shale and sent it to refineries. Refineries was the name that I was trying to get! You get oilworks and you get refineries, but Oakbank was one of them, it put out the finished products.

GC And why do you think Oakbank eventually closed?

AG Oh well, as far as I'm led to believe, whether it's true or not, you can't believe Directors, I mean, if things aren't suiting them they just shut them down! But I would think that it would be transport charges, from Westwood Pit, with their oils, that was termed to be one of the main things!

GC Were you ever connected with a Union when you worked with the Scottish Oils?

AG. Aye, I think that it was.....I think that I was in the Oilworkers and Shale Miners Union, if I mind right! And I wouldn't be right sure, but it could have been old Michael O'Hagan, he was the kind of leading light of it. I can always mind of Michael O'Hagan saying to the miners and the Oilworkers as well, if you ever see a hole in the wall, get into it! And Michael O'Hagan went into a pub in Linlithgow, "The Hole in the Wa", and that pub is there yet!

GC And why would he be saying if you ever see a hole in the wall.....?

AG It would be a term of something that he would be trying to illustrate about the Union and the Companies, I would think. If you ever see a hole in the wall, get out! It could mean that if you weren't pleased with the Oilworks, look for another job! It was simple as that! But Michael did it! He did it! A thing that he said years before that, he went into it! Last week there, I was standing down there (inaudible) I take the bus into Edinburgh, you know, I've got a bus pass, and I

buy one of these three pound monthly tickets, not the thirty pound yearly ones! I go into Edinburgh, and take the train from Edinburgh to Linlithgow and I walk round about Linlithgow Loch. It's better than sitting in the house! And I was standing across the street, waiting on a bus going from Linlithgow to Bathgate, and I looked straight across the road, and there was the pub! The Hole in the Wall! And the men spoke about that often! They said Mick done the right thing! The Hole in the Wall! That is true, sir! No doubt about that!

GC And what did you do as a pastime in Oakbank? Had you any hobbies? Did you play any sports?

AG Well, I'll tell you about the hobby that I had! And I had it for a when of years! That was cycling! Cycling! I used to finish on a Saturday, I didn't work every Saturday, but the Saturdays that I was working, I used to finish at twelve o'clock, come down to the house, get all washed and dressed, get my dinner, and jump on the bike, five hours after it.....I was in Balloch, Loch Lomond!

GC That's a few miles away!

AG In the summertime.....in five hours, that was full camping gear, a tent, blankets, primus stove, everything that you needed, plus provisions, because if you got them from your mother for nothing, you didn't need to buy them when you got there! Sort of style! That's true! I used to, in the summertime every weekend.....Loch Lomond! Aye, I did that, sir!

GC Did you have an Institute in Oakbank?

AG They had an Institute, aye, and a bowling club! But.....I never was one, much, if I mind right, the youths, the young fellows.....I don't know, I suppose Sanny Thompson would do it too, get prizes for the bowling! Because Spittall did it! And I mind once.....going into the Youths thing, only once I think, I was never a great bowler at any time! But I got into the final of the competition for Spittall's watches! But I got beat! I got beat, so, that must have sickened me! I never

went back to the bowling! No! Oakbank was a cheery place though! There's no doubt about that! I mean, you had old Tam Gillespie from West Calder with this chip cart, you know, on the Saturday night! I'll tell you what we had too, we had old Angelo from Uphall Station with his ice cream barrow! And it was a barrow with two handles and two iron wheels like that there would be on a cart, wee'er wheels, and he came from Uphall Station to Oakbank, he done all the wee villages!

GC Were you ever asked to give him a help pushing his barrow?

AG No.....I don't think so! He was a wee man, but he must have been hardy.....enough! Because he would need to.....he would need to push it up to Pumpherston Brae, but then again it would be very near empty! By the time that he had sold all his ice cream! Aye, I can mind of him! Old Angelo, aye!

GC Did they have any dances or anything organised by the Scottish Oils?

AG Not by the Scottish Oils, but there would be dancing and what not, but again as I say, I wasn't a dancer, in fact, let's put it this way, I wasn't a great mixer, if it comes to that, even yet! After I retired I went one or two.....for a couple of years to the old age pensioners in East Calder, but och, I just took it to be that it was a kind of old wives meeting you know, with a cup of tea, but no, it didn't seem to appeal to me! You know what I mean, there was nothing wrong with it! You got some lovely teas! Bus runs, in the summer time, and all the rest of it, but funny enough, I pay my membership every year but I never go! I never go, aye!

GC So, you must enjoy your garden?

AG I enjoy my garden, when it's garden time, aye! Aye, I do that, son! I like a bonny garden! I got the third prize, oh, what about four years ago! The third prize, and they give you quite a good do in the Council headquarters in Bathgate. Aye, a good do, aye! But I'm not

joining it again, because I haven't got.....you see, it's actually it's alright, people going to that presentation with a car, but if you've not got a car, I mean, you've got to leave it before it's finished and get the last bus! So, there's no point in it! I can't.....

END OF TAPE

Transcript	AG
Industrial Information	I went to Oakbank when I was fifteen and a half. My job was sanding the lids on the top of the retorts. The lids were put on after the retorts were charged with shale, and there was thick dirty smoke came out. I had to sand the lids round the edge to stop the smoke coming out, otherwise they would lose a lot, so I sanded them after they filled them right up to the top.
Sanding The Lids	I had pails of sand, and I put the sand round about, it just went on a steel face. The handle was in the middle, and I put the sand round about it, and it stopped stuff coming out.
Size of The Lids	They weren't awfy much bigger than an ordinary bin lid.
Scaffold And Vapour From Retorts	There was a scaffold so far down the retorts, and there was a steel pipe with a sharp neck that came out and went into a bigger pipe and that took the oil away to where it was going to get refined, but it choked when the vapour was going out

the neck, and hit the cold air,
and we had to use pokers and
clots. The scaffold was on the
outside where the bend was, and
we had to clear it because it
solidified with a sort of walk
wax, and when it was clawed out
with a wee thing with a bolt.
The wee thing swung round, and
there was a hole in it and the
stuff was collected in the pail.
Then it was shut. I had a rope
over the top of the safety railing
with a hook on it that I
pulled the pail up with. I
lifted the lid and poured the
stuff back in again, there was
nothing lost, then I put the lid
down 'again and lowered the pail
back down again. There was three
blocks of retorts.

Shale

The shale came from Westwood,
and it came into the breaker,
and if I mind right, a ram came
up between the rails and it got
the axle of the thingummy. There
was tail end doors that opened,
and the shale couped down into
the breaker, and the big breaker
with the teeth on it smashed
it up so that it would be easier
burnt. Then the shale was put
on to wee bogeys, and it went up
a wee wooden ramp out of the
breaker on to a wee turntable,
and you kicked the snutch out
that kept the turntable, turned
the hutch round about and put it
in that way. There was another
wee turntable and you could get

that way to the retorts. Whatever ones you were filling, a wee turntable with steel balls which you had to pour diesel oil into for to keep them running free. As I said when the stuff burnt, there were boys down at the bottom and they pulled a lever and the stuff came out into the hutch.

Spent Shale

You pulled a handle at the bottom of the retort into the thingummy, and they shoved the steaming red hot spent shale out to the end of the thingummy. There was an endless rope up at the tip which you pulled it down. It was then drawn round with a clamp, and it went up to the top, and the boys at the top shifted them from the end of the rails, then they were tipped. It was a dirty job, and it didn't matter what way the wind was blowing when the shale was tipped, but it blew right back onto them and they came back off their shift and they were black men, because they were coupling it up over the thingummy and they put the empty hutches back on. It was the full ones coming up and the empty ones going back down. The spent shale then went over to the bings.

Sulphate House

I then got the chance of another job in the sulphate house.

My Other Jobs In The

I was also shifted to the Black-

Oilworks smiths shop, where I was involved in coking up in the morning, before you could start welding, or even heating certain metals. The coking on the fire was done in a wee roofed thing, and this is what made me leave Oakbank. i just lifted my books.

Pieces I used to take a piece to work with me in a piecebox, a school piecebox. I also had an old syrup can with a wire on it for my tea. With the water in the tap you boiled it on the smiddy fire.

Unions I was connected with the Oilworkers and Shale Miners Union, if I mind right. Old Michael O'Hagan was a kind of leading light of it. I can always mind of Michael O'Hagan saying to the miners and the Oilworkers as well, 'If you ever see a hole in the wall, get into it.'

Domestic Life Housing When we lived in Oakbank, right next to the works, there were three rows of houses.

Facilities Baths The facilities at Oakbank were actually nil. There were no baths in the houses in Oakbank. The woman had a boiler out on this porch, which had a coal fire underneath it, then shovelled the coal into it and boil the water for washing and everything.

Leisure Life Cycling I had cycling as a sport. I used to finish on a Saturday

at twelve o'clock, come down to the house and get washed and dressed, get my dinner and jump on the bike and cycle to Balloch, Loch Lomond.

Camping

In the summertime I used to go camping at Loch Lomond. I had the full camping gear, which included a tent, blankets, primus stove and everything I needed. I got my provisions from my mother for nothing, that saved me buying them when I got there.

Institute Hall & Bowling Club

We had an Institute Hall in Oakbank, and a bowling club. I was never a great bowler at anytime, but I got into the final of the competition for Spittal's watches, but I got beat and that sickened me so I never went back to the bowling .

Ship Cart

We had old Tarn Gillespie from West Calder with his chip cart on a Saturday night.

Ice Cream

We had old Angelo from Uphall Station who came to Oakbank and all the wee villages with his barrow selling ice cream. He would have to push it up to the Pumpherston Brae, but then again it would be near empty, by that time he had sold all the ice creams.

Dances

Scottish Oils did not organise any dances, but I wasn't a dancer. Let's put it this way I wasn't a great mixer.

- Gardening I did enjoy my garden, when it was gardening time. I liked a bonny garden, and I got the third prize four years ago. With this third prize there was quite a good do in Bathgate. I am not entering it again, because I haven't got a car, and you have to leave before the do is finished to get the last bus.
- Retirement After I retired I went for a couple of years to the old age pensioners club in East Calder, but it was just like an old wives meeting with a cup of tea. It didn't seem to appeal to me. I still pay my membership every year, but I never go.

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