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Date of Interview: 1st February, 1985

DC = DC Born 1902 Address: West Calder.

SR = Sara Randall

SR Were you born in West Calder?

DC Yes, I was born in West Calder in October, 1902. So that makes me two years younger than the century.

SR And have you lived here all your life, or ....?

DC I've lived my life so far!

SR Yes, always in West Calder?

DC Yes.

SR And whereabouts were you born, in West Calder village?

DC Exactly 100 yards west from where we are now, at what was then known as Burngrange Cottages. It was last the row of our houses and it was actually used by Burngrange Farm - their workers.

SR So your father was a farm worker?

DC Well, he wasn't a farm worker, he was a carter in the oil works. There were 3 or 4 horses working in the oil works in the village at that time you see and he was one of them that delivered coal, delivered oil in the winter time - every night. He had a specially made dray for taking oil barrels each barrel was about 4½ cwt, I think it was about 30 gallons, and he would come in with about 5 barrels of oil every night for the co-operative and the grocers' shops, you see?

SR Yes, I see. And were you a large family?

DC Yes, I was the youngest of ten.

SR And how big was your house?

DC A 'but and ben', a room and a kitchen. Of course, by the time I came on the scene the oldest ones were out of the house. You see there's a long gap between marrying at 20 and thereabout you see?

SR Yes, so how many were left in the house when you were there?

DC About two.

SR Oh, so it wasn't too crowded.

DC I'd a brother older, and the other brother - he was on the farm working

working at.

SR And what were the conditions like at your house, did you have water?

DC None whatever. You had four walls and two windows and a door and a roof. I think the house would be maybe 3s. 6d. per week. Oh no, there was no inside water or anything.

SR And you had tap outside did you - or a well?

DC A well outside served the four houses, and there was an outside toilet at the end which served the four houses as well.

SR Was that a dry toilet?

DC That was a dry toilet, yes.

SR So who fetched the water - you or your mother?

DC Oh well that was everybody's task, whenever the water was needed. Very specially in the winter time you'd to make sure there was sufficient water in the house for starting the next day, for the well froze up. Oh aye, that was quite common, and it was a case of those who needed the water first had to thaw the well - that was the way.

SR How did you thaw it?

DC Hot water - you boiled a kettle of hot water you see and took the top off the well, or whatever you want to call it, the case that goes round about the pipe - you took the top off that and poured the boiling water over the lead pipe that come up from the metal thing that goes in the ground.

SR So it was tough?

DC Well, you say .... looking back it was tough, but in those days it was the done thing and you thought nothing about it. That was the method of life in those days and you just accepted it.

SR And was your father quite well paid - did you always have enough to eat and enough clothes?

DC By my time, yes, me being the youngest. There was never any want in the house. But I quite believe in the earlier days things would be very tight. Of course my mother was brought up in the country, she did all her own baking, knitting and sewing, gardening. These were the days of patched trousers and jackets and jerseys - it was all hand knitted jerseys that boys wore. I never knew what real want was all my life for the simple reason my father was never out of a job from the day

you see, he had constant employment and that was one thing about the shale oil industry. There was some other upheaval that caused unemployment and a strike and I mind once in Addiewell a bad fire. You know at that time the men that was nae needed were just thrown on the scrap heap, there was just no work for them - no work, no pay. That was all there was about it. But you know, everybody must have the same thoughts: in retrospect looking back, your childhood days and your early youth - these were the happiest days of the lot. It did nae matter what was the sort of social balance round about, but youth gave you that feeling of expectation and dreamin' - that's about it - and it was dreamin'!

SR And were you dreaming about getting away from West Calder?

DC Many a time, I thought I would have liked to. But I tell you, sometimes when you're the youngest of a large family you get tied down. I'd a sister in America and a brother in America and a nephew in Canada and you see they were always writing home, and that was my dream, but there was always that family tie, being the youngest. I lost the opportunity that way. On the other hand, I've no regrets. I have never missed a day's work in my life and the whole of my working life I was only ill once that I can remember: I had pneumonia, which in 1921 was serious. That was in the old days of the porridge poultice on your chest. I can always remember it was the right lung that was affected.

SR And you couldn't go into hospital?

DC Oh that was unthought of at that time. The nearest hospital was Edinburgh Infirmary, and it was a horse-drawn ambulance at that time which took about two and a half hours to travel from here to the Infirmary.

SR So you had to be really ill to be taken?

DC I remember the first case that was taken direct to Edinburgh and he was actually a cousin of my own. He lived in Stoneyburn and his doctor went to see what was wrong with him and it was appendix, which was very rare at this time - 1910. Well, it was a Saturday and they decided they were going to send him to Edinburgh Infirmary and the harrier that had the charge of the ambulance all his horses were away of Broxburn at a football match, and they'd to hire a horse to take the ambulance out to Stoneyburn and they brought the boy into West Calder, kept him in the carriage shed till the horses came back, and then away to Edinburgh.

SR Did he survive?

DC No he didn't he died. You see there was nae the same methods for operating, the same antiseptic. You see by the time he reached the

Infirmery the appendix was burst and it was a general septicemia in the whole body. Maybe I should tell you about that: my son suffered the same, and Dr. Thwaites was the doctor at the time and Dr. Thwaites and I was like that because I was deputy at the first aid post during the warring years. He was the medical officer you see. And my only son for three days we never got peace with bin - sleep nor nothin', and it was intermittently that the pains were coming and I said it was appendix. "No" he says "it cannae be for there's nae response tae, what he cried ( ) point". But I come home this night and the Missus, she says "you'd better go and see the doctor, there's something wronger than he thinks". Of course by the time (few words inaudible) and you actually thought you saw the pain on the boy decreasing; the appendix had burst.

SR Did he die?

DC No, he went to the Sick Children's Hospital. can't remember her name but she was a big tall ... she was a German doctor, a lady doctor, she was well known in the Sick Children's Hospital, but she always accused them after it about taking her from a Civic Party to do the operation! And that was 1941.

DC And your son was O.K. afterwards?

SR Yes, he's married a teacher along at the High School, he's two boys one's starting at the University this year, the others 14.

SR So when did you get married?

DC 1931.

SR And did you live at home with your parents until you got married?

DC Yes.

SR And was your wife from West Calder?

DC She was. She emigrated to Australia with her family in 1927 but the fix I was in as I say with my parents - they were both in their 80's by that-time, and she went out and as an immigrant she did her two years and came back. But we were fortunate, we managed to go out in 1964 and we spent 6 months with them in Australia, and some of them's been back and fore until now: her sister and I are the same age and are the only two that's left out of two families, with ten in each family. That's sad.

SR And when you got married, did you carry on living with your parents?

DC 'No, we got a house in Gold Place - that's the middle of West Calder, down .... it was at the bottom end, then in 1947 I got the Church ... the Hall house. The Parish Church bought the old school in Stuart Street and made a Church Hall and what was the janitor's house was made into a dwelling house you see, and I lived there until ten year ago when the council bought all that land and the property and they gave me the offer of this house you see?, expecting that they would demolish the whole of that property, but the money ran short and the property is still standing.

SR Is it? Is it still occupied?

DC No, the Church still kept it on, they couldn't do anything else - they were left with it on their hands and the scouts went in and the girl guides went in and took over the hall, and the band: they took over the house and made it into a practice room for the band people. But I'm very happy that we got the shift out here. The reason was that there were 11' high walls you see, built for the school and there was no heat - big windows twice as big as that.

SR And the first house that you went to in West Calder when you first got married, did that have water and electricity?

DC Yes everything, that property in Gold Place was all built between 1880 and the turn of the century. They were all what they called 'modern' houses at that time - you'd water but you'd no baths and there were a couple of toilets for all this building.

SR I see, and who did those houses belong to?

DC They were actually built by John Fairly and they were owned by what was known as Fairly's Trust. But all the detached houses going down Gold Place - Fairly built as well. You see he was an architect and speculator. They were all privately owned. Of course they've all changed hands half a dozen times lately, there's none of the originals now - they've all died out and been sold and resold. But they were all massive stone built houses, ken, the property will stand another 100 years, oh without any trouble!

SR And how many children did you have?

DC Just the one.

SR Just a son. And how about your working life - when did you start working?

DC I stopped working when I was 68 because you see I carried on where my father left off in the Oil Work.

SR As the carter?

DC Yes, and when the Work closed I got the offer of green keeper at Harburn Golf Course and I moved up there on the first day of 1957 and I spent the last, I think it was 12 years of my life up there.

SR And you went to Addiewell Works when you left school?

DC I started down at that farm just down the road there the Monday after I left the school, I left the school on the Friday and I started on the Monday.

SR Hmmm, and how old were you when you left school?

DC I was only ..... I wasnae 14 until the October and this was the end of June. It was the first World war years you see, and the farmer applied to the local school board to get me an exemption that I would nae need to go back - I should nae have left until the Christmas time you see being born in October. But farm workers were scarce at that time and it was the hay time, and he wanted someone to drive the horse and the machine to cut the hay. And my wage was 6/- a week.

SR And did you keep it or did you give it to your parents?

DC Oh, don't ask a question like that. Your parents were everything. I think of my first pay I got sixpence.

SR So how long did you work on the farm?

DC Well, till I was in my twenties. I actually left the farm work and went on to the cartin' after that. I'd nothin' to do with the farm. Still working' on what I'd been brought up with all my days, it's hard to leave .....

SR So you went on to carting in the Works? And was that because your father had retired?

DC He'd retired. At at that time you see we'd only two horses, one did what we called the pit work - that was the work between all the pits, and the other was in the Work doing all the work there was to do there and I just moved from the one to the other.

SR Yes. When your father retired did he get a pension from the works?

DC Yes, 5/- a week.

SR And that was enough to live on was it?  
"most

DC Well, they never wanted anything. You see those that had been born in the last century and lived into this century had that sense of frugality about them. They were always saving, there was nothing wasted, they'd something behind them always.

SR When you worked on the farm what sort of hours did you work?

DC Well you started at 7 o'clock in the morning, and we were very fortunate in this respect: we were all employed by Youngs Oil Co. You see Youngs bought most of the ground about West Calder so that they could have the mineral rights to the shale underneath it you see? And at Langside Farm, Polbeth Farm and Burngrange Farm - that's going right up, but they were all in the shale. We finished at 5 o'clock, it was half past five and it came to 5 o'clock.

SR And did you work on Saturdays?

DC Till 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

SR Mmmm, but you got Sundays off?

DC Sundays off .... well not really because you had to keep your Sunday to go cut and feed the horse and

SR And did you get benefits from working for Youngs Oil Co. in that you got medical services and ...?

DC No, you see you paid for your medical service. Youngs Oil Co. they brought Dr. Young to West Calder. How, married men put 2d. a week and that covered their family, single men paid 1d. you see, and between that and the private patients he had, he had quite a good practice. He could always afford to keep an assistant, of course, the assistant lived out in Addiewell and he covered Addiewell, Stoneyburn and Polbeth Terrace at the West on a bicycle! And if you fancy cycling from Addiewell out to Breich Terrace in a West wind and a snow storm maybe to a greetin' child at 2 o'clock in the mornin'! They'd a hard life.

SR I can imagine it. But they were much better off than the average person in West Calder - the oil worker or the average miner?

DC Who, the medical profession? Oh, there's no doubtin' that. I think the average assistant's wage, I'm speaking about 1920, was about £5 a week when men were working for £2. They'd twice as much as what a tradesman would have. I remember Dr. Young had an assistant over in Stoneyburn and he let it out that that was his wage: £5 a week.

SR When you left the farm and went up to the oil works, did you get an increase in pay or was it just the same.

DC No no, just the same, exactly the same.

SR And was it the same hours as well?

DC The same hours and everything.

SR What was it like round the Oil Works at that time, was it very dusty and smokey and oily?

DC Oh aye. An oil work cannae be nothing else but a dirty smelly place, that's about it. For when you think on it, Addiewell was in full process, there was 15 different chimney stacks belching smoke. Then when you think of the smoke that came from the retorts themselves. During the war years - the First World War years - the full three benches of the retorts were going and they were burning oh, I don't know, 500 ton of shale in each shift, and there was smoke and gas and ..... the community, I don't think, suffered from it and the only thing the likes of West Calder suffered was the dust blowing off the bing.

SR But the smoke didn't come over West Calder too much?

DC No it was diluted so much by that time.

SR But do you think it was bad over Addiewell village?

DC Well, sometimes. But you see, here, our wind is either southerly or westerly and it was blowing all the fumes away from us you see. I remember Dr. Young once saying it was the fumes of the Oil Works that kept the Addiewell bairns free from scarlet fever and diptheria and these things.

SR Really?

DC He did! But I don't know ... West Calder was many times scourged

with diptheria and Scarlet Fever, but I think in those early years thinking over it, the worst sight you could possibly see was a bairn about 5 or 4 year old standing outside with whooping cough, gasping - couldnae get a breath and there was nothing you could do for them to help them. It was a sad sight to see. I don't think you ever see that now.

SR I've never met anyone that's had whooping cough.

DC Have you no'? - I've seen them standing turning blue in the face - could nae get a breath, it was a sad sad sight.

SR And they would be outside, they wouldn't be being kept in bed?

DC Oh no, there was nae such a thing as segregation then, they went through a plague you see, they were all outside among the bairns. They went to the school, it was up to the headmaster to turn them away if he thought they were .... and that's where half the trouble started. Your epidemics, your fevers, your whooping coughs and one thing and another - it was all from the school, you see the close contact.

SR Mmm, and you remember a lot of that?

DC Yes, it was very common in those years.

SR And was there consumption as well?

DC Oh, there was a high rate of consumption but folk would nee speak about it. They were 'into a decline' was their words, but oh no, I've seen families wiped out with it. And you know, half o- the trouble or half of the cause of it was the living conditions.

SR In what sort of way?

DC Overcrowding in houses. You know, when you think of it, very specially among the Irish immigrants, the Irish incomers that came into Addiewell sometimes the beds were never cold. The man that came off the night shift was waiting on the man gettin' up to go out to the day shift to get into his bed, that was quite common among them. You see, they came over and they'd go to stay with their older relations you see, and you got four or five working men in the same house - the beds were never empty. That, in itself, was a lot to do with it. But when it got into families it could wipe them out. I can remember one in particular: it took the wife and all the family and yet the old man lived till he was 92 and he lived in conditions that maybe you would shudder at if you could see them nowadays. But he struggled on and ...

SR You mean conditions in terms of damp, bad housing and ...?

DC Damp, bad housing and tough ...

SR He had no one to look after him - to clean and cook?

DC That's right, and there were nae home helps and he'd nae relations nearby to gie' him any help.

SR So people didn't help other people much?

DC Oh yes, people lived closer to each other in these days then what they do now and I never heard that expressed better than frae a fellow along the road there, who's an old man like myself, he was born and bred at what we called 'The Happy Land' at West Calder - that was the property built by Youngs Oil Co., about 320 houses - they were all just streets and the doors were all just cheek and jowl. In the 1930's, they built Parkhead Crescent and they emptied all that was left in the Happy Land, and this fellow turned round tellin' me, he says: "All friendliness was lost when they moved us up into Parkhead." I says: "How do you make that out?". "Well" he says "we've all got our ain gates and our ain gardens and our ain doors, and when we stayed in the Happy Land, we stayed door by door and if there was anything wrong with your mother, the woman next door came in and saw that you got your face washed and awa' to school and she'd a bite ready for you at dinner time, and she'd your father's dinner on the side of the fire for him comin' hame. After they shifted us up there, we've all got our ain gates - we're all separated." Friendliness and the kind of closeness was broken by that.

SR Aha, and when you lived in Burngrange Cottages, even just the four cottages - were you very close?

DC Well, the four houses .... well, they were nae door by door because they would be two rooms and then you'd another house with two rooms, and the doors were always in the center you see. They were demolished in 1939.

SR And did your parents live there until then?

DC They did. And I was always thankful ... my mother lived till she was 86 and she died a year before the war started and I many a time said afterwards "well, I'm awfully happy she's away, her staying there alone and the commotion it would cause - oh no.". But on the whole, you know, West Calder was a very happy, peaceable village - a friendly village, for I'll tell you, practically all the work people, leaving out the people who were in the service, and ken, shops and things like that, all the people in the place were employed by Youngs Oil Co.. Now their wages were all much the same: there was 5/- difference between a tradesman and a labouring man, but they were all working and living under the same conditions and they were much more friendly.

Whereas now, you see, all the new houses that have been built in West Calder this last 10, 15 years say, they've all been bought by incomers and you find that this man's working here and the other man's working there - they're all on a different wage scale, there's all that jealousy but there never was before you see? People were all ... they were cement, that was all there was about it. But that had a lot to do with it because they were all living under the same sort of standards. But, all that's changed now. It's only a dormitory village now, for, 99% of the male population goes out of the district to the place of their employment.

SR Yes, have a lot of the people of your generation and slightly younger than you, did they move away when the industry closed down?

DC Oh, there were a big number moved away. The first break was the Scottish Oils themselves. You see, the Youngs Oil Co. and the other Oil companies: Pumpherston, Oakbank and Philpstoun, they formed in 1918 I think it was, the Scottish Oil industries. Well, this was the start of the importation of crude oil from Abbadan .... and the first place they built was down in Wales, what's the name of that place now? Well, there was a good number of men from Addiewell went down to this place in Wales. Then when they built Grangemouth, there was 30 people left at Addiewell.

SR They actually moved, they didn't just commute?

DC No no, you see, there was nae motor cars at that time, but they moved and Scottish Oils built houses for them. There was a house waitin' on them before they were shifted, but they were all men that were in specified jobs, the likes of men that was on boilers and electric producing plant, you see? They moved them from one place and had a house for them in another. It was a good move but there was nae work for everybody, you see, of course, the shale oil industry struggled on till 1956 after that. Grangemouth was built about 1922/3.

SR And did people carry on moving out during ....?

DC Yes, wherever they could get a job. And, of course, an awful lot of them had to leave the industry altogether. Well, when they closed the candle making factory and Addiewell Work, that meant about 80 men and of course there were no jobs. And, I tell you, they'd be men who'd had sheltered lives all their days working in the Candle House, and they were nae very prepared for the outside world, workin' with a pick and shovel.

SR Did people move from here to go and work in the coal mines?

DC Well you see, we had the coal mines beside us because Youngs Oil Co.

had a coal mine themselves up at West Mains. Then the United Colliers had a pit at Loganlea, at Stoneyburn and at Breich Terrace and there was a good number would cycle each way to these places you see.

SR And did they carry on having horses up at Addiewell until 1957?

DC Yes, 1956.

SR They didn't introduce any mechanised ..?

DC Yes, when they opened the new pit at Burngrange, they did away with the horse that was on the pit traffic and put on a truck, a 30 cwt. truck that ran back and forward between the pits.

SR And so what were you doing then?

DC Oh, I was still at Addiewell.

SR And so what did they use the horses for in the later years, because they didn't use it for delivery in the village did they?

DC Oh, we delivered coals in the village to the workers.

SR By horse?

DC Yes, up till then.

SR And when the Oil Works closed, did you have any problems finding another job?

DC No, I had a problem, but it was nae about a job. I'd three jobs in my hand at the one time and my problem was to make the choice!

SR What were the other two?

DC Well, the first one, the Station Master - I was much acquainted with him through Church work - he came up and he asked me if I wouldn't take a job as a porter down at the station. I was ever the age to get into the pension scheme, but he said he could get it moved that I'd get it-there. And the other one was a Mr. err .... he belonged to Harwood House - an estate up here, he wanted a gardener and handyman, but I could nae fancy myself as a porter at the station and I didnae like to go and serve at the big house, I knew the conditions, and I made the choice of the golf course and I think it was the happiest 12 years of my life.

SR Really?

DC Yes

SR Was it well paid - was it the same sort of pay that you were getting at Addiewell?

DC No, I really ... when I moved to the golf course I'd a pound more. £8.10s. was the wage that they were offering me and it was done below the counter that if I put in written application that the job was mine, before the thing was decided. But when I left, when I retired and I'm trying to mind what date that would be, but the highest wage I had with them was £17 and after you'd paid your insurance and your income tax and the other things that came off, the highest take home pay I ever would earn was about £15.

SR When you left the Oil Works were you given any sort of bonus or present for having served there for a long time?

DC No, because you see, they had a job for me down at Grangemouth and my objection was this: that I was wasting an hour of my life in the morning, and another hour at night travelling and I'd a job, a sideline that I'd had from years before, I was church officer at the West Kirk there and I was for 50 years, well, this hour's travel was going to knock that on its ear, but the golf course was the place for me.

SR So even though you'd served for so long, just because you chose to go they wouldn't give you any ...

DC Never a thing. I never even got the gold watch after I'd given them 42 years service, I never got the gold watch and I don't draw a ha'penny superannuation.

SR Were you in the Provident Fund?

DC I was in it, and of course they had to pay me that when I left, I think I got £400 when I left, but I'd paid half that. That was the idea, we kept so much of the wages and they'd keep the rest each week, that had been going on for years. I've been told that if I like to apply now that I would get onto their pension scheme. You see there have been so many old workers died- off there'll be sufficient money in the fund to carry on. But, you see, here's my way of looking at it: if I apply and get a pension from the Scottish Oils ...

Side 1 of tape ends here.

DC £37 something now, I'm living quite happily on it. You know, when you're burning 3 cwts. of coal a week at £4.80 a bag.

SR That's quite expensive!

DC But I have my food and my comfort, the rest can ....  
(Couple of sentences very muffled here - missed cut in transcription)  
it's hard to give up your privacy and liberty. I've never found the  
work - I do all my own cooking and everything myself - I've never found  
it too much. It's taken me longer to do it, I'll grant that, but I can  
always keep myself respectable and get about.

SR Yes, when your wife was alive, did she work?

DC Never worked a day in her life. I told her that the day she went out  
to work I stayed in. That was in the 40's - the war years. Most  
women were forced if they'd no family, but you see our boy was just  
8 years old at the time and she was exempt, so she never worked.

SR Why didn't you want her to work?

DC Well, to me - I married her that she- would live in the house: that was  
man's thought at that time, that he was the provider. To me that's  
50% of the cause of the upset in our country at the present time - two  
income families. They're only depriving some other person who's on  
the dole of getting a job. It's no' a nice thought to have, but,  
my son and his wife - they're both working too, but to me it's true.

SR But you wouldn't mind if you had, say, a family where the wife worked  
and the husband stayed at home, it's not just women working that you're  
against, it's the idea of two income families?

DC It's the two income families. It's depriving some other person of  
getting a job, there's no doubt about that.

SR But that wasn't the case in the 40's though because in the 40's there  
was far less unemployment wasn't there?

DC Ah but there was unemployment in the 40's, you see, and the war years  
that was the woman's effort - to help the war effort.

SR Mmmm. Did your mother work?

DC Never in her lifetime. She brought up a family of ten: Did she work?  
She worked all day, she struggled all her days, oh no, no. That was  
never thought of in those days. You see, this two income families:  
that's an importation from America, they've been at that, they've been  
struggling at that this last 100 years. That's how America has been  
built up.

SR Yes, but do you reckon when your mother was bringing up her family and your father was going out to work - who had the toughest life?

DC Well, that would be hard to say. My father went out to his work and left all his worries at home - my mother had to struggle with all the worries and bring up the family as well. I quite believe that the woman had the hardest struggle of the lot.

SR Yes, did your father always used to give her all his wages?

DC She got them unopened every Saturday.. It was Saturday in the earliest days then it gradually came that you was paid on the Friday night. You see, when it was a Saturday pay day, and Addiewell Work was nae closed till nearly 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the housewife had from 2 o'clock to ten (the shops were open to ten o'clock at night you see) and she was struggling there, or there were some of the family running getting in their where with all for the weekend, whereas when they changed the pay day to Friday, that gave the woman the whole of Saturday to buy in her provisions for the week. Oh no, there's been some wonderful and great changes. Just think of the comforts that's in life that we take for granted each day now - my father never saw. I often wonder what my father would think if was sitting and watching this and saw something happening in America, say that space ship going up, the likes of that - he would nae credit it! No, we've lived in the most wonderful time that's been known in the history of man and we've spoiled it with greed and selfishness. The trouble with our country at the present time is simply that those that have a job are fighting for more but they forget that the 3 ½ million have nae got a job at all. At least 50% of them has nae prospects of ever getting a job again.

SR Was there much unemployment here in the 1920's?

DC Yes, no' much, but there was unemployment, there's no doubt about it. But no' so much because, as I say, at its peak period Addiewell Work employed 1200 men, but it came down to about 350 in the 20's. You see they closed the Refinery, it was what they cried a "crude work" then, they just burnt the shale and extracted the crude oil. The crude oil went to Pumpherson for refining. But these pits, as I say, were still going, and when you think on it - at that time in the 20's West Calder Co-operative itself had 135 employees, at their 25th anniversary in 1925 they'd 32 motor vans parading the street, it was wonderful. Now the people of West Calder have even lost the property that belongs to them Scotmid has fiddled them out of everything.

SR But the families who were unemployed - how did they survive?

DC Well, what was it? - I think it was 17s. a week I think they got.

SR That was the dole?

DC Mmm, that was the dole.

SR And was that enough?

DC Oh, you were struggling at that. But I tell you at that time if it was young folk their parents were giving them a bit of help or their neighbours were giving them a bit of help. They'd 17s. and I don't know what allowance they got for children. As I tell you, I never had anything to do with it - I couldn't speak about it definitely.

SR Yes, but you could see poverty around?

DC Oh yes, there was no doubt about it.

SR Were you involved in the 1926 strike?

DC Yes, but I worked all the time.

SR Did Addiewell keep going all the way through?

DC No it did nae, but the horses were needed, they were doing jobs and one thing and another.

SR So, some Scottish Oils. employees were on strike and some weren't?

DC Oh yes, they were on strike. The lest strike of the Scottish Oil shale miners started on the 11th November 1925. I mind that well. That was t:he time they had a Public Inquiry and Craig Aitchieson, a lawyer in Glasgow, he was appointed to head the Inquiry, and of course, the .Scottish Oils could show plainly by their books that every shale pit was losing money instead of making money, it was actually being carried by the crude oil that was coming into the country from Abbadan into Grangemouth and oh, I cannae mind that Welsh place!

SR Yes, I've heard of it too, but I can't remember it. So how long were they out on strike?

DC They started the first working day of the New Year. They saw it was hopeless. You see what you were fighting against was a reduction in the wages. I forget what the reduction was, but they had to accept it and that was all.

SR And did you have a reduction in your wage at the same time?

DC Yes, at the same time.

SR Were you criticized for not going out on strike?

DC No, because you see, where there was horses, you were looked upon as safety men. At least 10 horses underground, or 12, there was 2 in another pit, well, you see, I had to mix all the feed for these horses and take it to the pits and one thing and another and you were just filling in your time doing odd jobs. Kind, at that time the streets in one of the villages, Mossend, it was just ash streets, ken, they were nae tarmacadam, and I spent the six weeks spreading ashes on the streets and ...

SR But were you a member of the union?

DC I never was a member of a union, no. My hands were never tied.

SR Did you ever go down a pit?

DC Many a time, putting a new horse down or bringing a horse up.

SR What was it like down there?

DC Oh if you were brought up to it .... you see, more especially in the shale it was high working, some of them were as high as this ceiling. It was hard work on the miners there was no doubt about it, but they'd room and they'd air, the bigger area you had the bigger air space you had you see. No' like West Mains the coal pit, where it was only about 5'0 roofs and there was nae the ventilation and with 20 odd horses down that pit at one time.

SR And did the horses suffer as much as the man?

DC No, on the whole, you know the pit ponies had a happy life for everybody was his friend. This laddie would be bringing an apple for his horse and he'd be going up the road to steal a turnip! Oh no, they were happy. In the 26 strike we'd 55 horses all down in the one field down at Gavieside.

SR So were you in charge of the ponies and the pit boys who looked after the ponies?

DC Oh no, I didn't have anything to do with the pits at all, just the ponies, when they come up to the surface, maybe there would be some that were lame or had had an accident and they would come up to the surface for a while. When you took a pony to the pit you usually went down with it and gave them a hand to get it down for very specially in the shale, with their deep decline, we'd a special

carriage you'd put them in to, but it was awfully difficult to get the horse in there at times.

SR So how did it work - the horses went down and they stayed down and came back in the evening or ...?

DC No, no, they stayed down until either they were ready to retire, or ...

SR You mean they never came out at all once they'd gone in?

DC No no. That was only one place. If you went down to Winchburgh to the White Quarries at Winchburgh, the horses came up every night. You see it wasn't such a steep incline, it was a more gradual slope in to the mine, you see, the horse could walk it. It was too steep to walk the likes of Polbeth, we'd 26 along there, it was too steep. Men could nae walk it.

SR And each horse had a young boy who looked after it when it was down and those two always worked together, the same horse with the same boy.

DC He was doing a certain section of the pit you see? He would be drawing the hutches away from the two miners who were working in different cavities or places as they cried them, and he was drawing their hutches up an incline like this to the main haulage way.

SR And when the horses were retired they were put in a field and given a good time were they?

DC Don't say that, they were sent for scrap to Belgium for horse flesh - that was what happened to all our retired horses. That was the done thing at that time. There was a dealer in Edinburgh who used to gather them up to 2 or 30 to one boat. They were clapped like (1 word ? ) in a barrel and over to Amsterdam, and slaughtered for ... well they said for dog meat, but half of it went for human consumption. Oh, it was a hard world at that time, and they thought nothing about it, that was the normal run of events that when the horse's working life was over - even the farmers sold their horses at that time - they usually went to Mason's up at, where was it?

SR Harthill?

DC It was nae Harthill, but he had a slaughterhouse there and it was just all horses that he slaughtered for dog meat and one thing and another. They said they could use everything, they even melted the hooves for glue, but the horse was shot in front of the shale worker and taken away from him, other walked them through. I think it was 10/- they got for a carcasse.

SR It must have been upsetting for you after you had looked after them.

DC It was a hard world, aye, it was a hard world at that time. Whether it needed to be or no', or whether it was just selfishness that made it that way ....

SR But it was only selfishness towards animals, people to people were much less hard than they are now?

DC Well, human beings will always be human beings, there will always be that trouble and jealousy no matter where you go. But I believe if you go back 50 or 60 years ago, there was more contentment in the world, at least in people's minds. But during this past 50 years, everybody has got so much involved in politics that that's where all the troubles and jealousies arise.

SR But do you think there was contentment and happiness in people's minds in the 1920's: people who were out of work, children who didn't have clothes to wear, people who were hungry and cold?

DC No that could nae be. Just like when you look at the pictures you see of Ethiopia, that was just a time in the history of a nation when work was scarce. You see it's not the first time that this has happened, it's a recurring process in every country. There's a sort of time of famine and there's a time of plenty. I mind when I was a boy, the hue and cry in the Edinburgh papers at that time was the number of unemployed that was in Edinburgh and there was no jobs for them, and the Edinburgh Corporation bought what was an estate along there at 'Bellsquarry' and they turned it into a market garden. They took all the top soil and dirt off it and they brought all the refuse from Edinburgh in wagons and emptied it maybe two or three feet thick and then put the soil and that back and tried to make a market garden, but it was nae a great success. It was just a project to try and create jobs, to make employment, and then of course the First World War came and of course unemployment was forgotten, there was a job for everybody then you see.

SR Did your brothers go off and fight?

DC Yes, I'd two in together at the same time, the youngest 'un never came back.

SR Were things very different here, in West Calder during the war? Were women working, was there more money and was it ..... or was it very much the same as it had been previously?

DC Very much the same. I quite believe that there was more money going around but people could nae buy anything. You see there were restriction but I quite believe that during the war years, there were some people with two wages who saved up to .£1000 or so pounds. But as I say you'd clothing coupons to get before you could buy clothes, you could nae spend anything, and your rations you were allowed did nae come to that figure.

SR Did a lot of young men from here go away in the First World War or was it because they were working in a productive industry like shale mining or oil works, were they permitted to stay?

DC Both ways: the oil industry was a protected industry, but on the other hand West Calder had a company of territorials belonging to the West Lothian Battalion you see, the Royal Scots, and there was 62 men left the first day the war started in 1914 and there's not one of them left now, the last one died last year.

SR How many of them came back again after the war?

DC Oh, a good number, but years take their toll: that last one was in his 90's, but the second war was different altogether because conscription had been passed and the men had beer. away and done their training and it was just a case of them being recalled to their regiments. I can picture yet, these territorials as we called them, going away to the drill hall - it was a cycle company - they all went on bicycles. And they cycled from West Calder through to North Berwick to take up their encampment there. I can picture it yet, I was just a laddie of 14 at the time and the old women and young women with their shawls round their shoulders standing up the side street, some greetin' some laughing and you know i-c was ..... it's surprising whet you see and hear in your life.

SR Were there a lot of people who came in to work in the industry from Ireland and from other places?

DC Oh, in the early days.

SR By 'early days', you mean you remember then but in the 1910's/1920's?

DC Oh no, there were very few come in then, but when the Oil Work was started in the 1860's up to the end of the century, they were coming in every year.

SR Mmmm, and did they stay or did they just come and work for a few years?

DC Oh no, they're descendants of the town council and one thing and another now. You see, here's a thing that's troubling me. Now, from the start of the industrial age, 1750 - 1800, there were thousands of Irish immigrants coming to this country for work. They settled, married, they brought up lilies and their families have had families, they're either Scotsmen or they're Englishmen now, but you'll find that they're on the Town Council, they're M.P.'s, they're this and they're that. Now if the same thing happens with the black population that's come into our country in the last 30 years, in another 30 years time we're going to be ruled by a black government if things go that way. It makes you think. And yet, it's all one word and ...

SR But were the Irish discriminated against the same way that the black population is now?

DC At the start of the war I've heard. They got the dirtiest jobs that was going and you very seldom heard of an Irish man getting started as a tradesman, to learn a trade. But, of course, all that has changed nowadays.

SR But by the 1920's, were the dirty jobs in the Oil Works still being done by the Irish?

DC Oh no, they were nae more incomers coming in to the Work in the 1920's, everybody was just glad to get a job, it did nae matter what it was, they were just happy to do it.

SR I see. Were your parents from West Calder originally?

DC No. My father was born in the Forth - Lanarkshire, and my mother was born in Torphichen down below Bathgate.

SR And how did they meet?

DC Well, my mother was in farm service - farm worker, and at that time, if they did nae land at a good place they were moving every six months, and I think she would come into this district. And my grandfather he came in to Addiewell work when it started.

SR Your father's father?

DC Yes, my father was actually reared in Addiewell.

SR Oh I see, he was just born in Forth and then came up.

DC Aye.

SR I see, so his first job was on the Addiewell Farm and ...

- DC Aye. I sometimes think life is too short to give you an overall picture of what it's all about.
- SR Well you've given me a very clear picture because I've got a very clear picture of how things were interrelating: the work and the people and ...
- DC It's sad to see the world getting into the state that it's getting. And the bit that ruffles me is that it's man created -it's man's own ingenuity that has caused the unemployed. You see, all your new technology thousands are getting thrown out of work every day. On the other hand, it was man's ingenuity that created employment, such as James Young's ingenuity that created, the oil industry and high employment and then further ingenuity cut it out.
- DC That's right. The point is this: there is going to be a bigger division than ever in the world population, it was always spoken about the 'haves' and the 'have nots', but there are going to be more 'haves' now than 'have nots' for some of the working population are earning as big incomes as people that we think of as 'haves'. When you think of Arthur Scargill with what is it £47,000 a year? You wonder - but we've seen some big changes .... and happy changes.
- SR What have been the good changes? .... since you were a boy.
- DC Well, I would say lifestyle. Lifestyle is different now altogether. There are home comforts for one thing, the type of houses we are living in. There are very few houses now that have no central heating of some sort in them - that in itself.
- SR Do you remember your childhood as being very cold?
- DC Well the type of houses built, if they're built properly, there's no dampness and one thing and another. Then there's entertainment, there's travel. If you've money you can travel anywhere in the world. A working man never had the chance. I've been three times in America and Canada, I've been in Australia for 6 months in my lifetime. I think that was the greatest experience I had - sailing to Australia first class on the Canberra and she was just a new ship at the time, I never saw luxury like that in my life'.
- SR When you were younger, when you first started working, did you get any holidays?
- DC No! The only holidays in Addiewell Work was unpaid holidays and they got the last Friday and Saturday in July - that was always a big day in West Calder. The last Friday was the West Calder sports and they were a big thing in that day, and two days - New Year's Day and the

day after it. Christmas was never given, a thought at that time.

SR When did you first travel away from West Calder - for anything, for a day or for a week?

DC After I married. We'd our holidays, do ye ken? You always ... more especially when we started. Now that was after the Second World War that we got the week's holiday granted. Before that you could take as many holidays as you liked but they'd no' pay you.

SR And people just couldn't afford to take them?

DC They couldn't afford to take them. Oh no .... but it's a clean world now - hygienically I mean. If you take the system we have for rubbish disposal - everything in these plastic bags and away with neither dust nor nothing. When you think on it, when the buckets were all put on the sidewalk there and the cart came along and the dust was down at the bottom of the street before he left here - all that's done away with now. It should make a big difference.

SR But rubbish was collected was it?

DC Oh yes, all the time. There had to be a method of disposal.

SR So who did it? In the 1920's the Council was in charge of that kind of thing was it?

DC Yes, and in the early 20's it was the old Parish Council, you see? What was it they called it? .... County Council, they became responsible for it.

SR And you just put out your rubbish in the bin and they came and emptied it?

DC You just dumped your bin and they came and emptied it. If you did nae put it out you did nae get it away, that was all there was about it. Whereas now, they came around the back there and take away your bag: that in itself should make a big change in the whole environment, do ye ken, as regards dust, disease, everything.

SR Were the dry toilets emptied as well,? ... how did they work .... were they just a pit?

DC No, the last place that had the dry toilets was that Young's property - the Happyland as I speak of, and they had buckets in them and they had

to be emptied.

SR That must have been a horrible job.

DC It was, but then you see, that was life. I can mind when the wife went to Australia in 1927, telling me of the big change at this place that she went to. Now this was the heart of the fruit growing industry in the Goldburn Valley - there were all dry closets in every house for they'd nae the (1 word ? ) and these orchardmen used to come in twice a week with big long trucks - lorries - and they just drew the pan out below this door and shoved in another one, and off to the truck with them and away out to their orchard, and they were just emptied at the roots of their fruit trees. But that was their way of life, in fact their main sewer was nae put into that village until 1964 - the year I was there, I remember seeing them at it. It was just a case of all that sewage was all run to a central point in the town then it was pumped from there four mile out into the country, again onto the land.

SR Anyway, I can't think of anything more. I've really enjoyed talking, thank you.

#### Transcript

#### Mr DC

#### Industrial Information

I was born in West Calder in 1902. I started in farm work.

#### Carting

I actually left farm work and went on to carting after my father retired. At that time we had only two horses, one did what we called pit work, that was work between all the pits, and the other was doing all the work there was to do there.

#### Working Hours

We started at 7 o'clock in the morning, and we were very fortunate in this respect, we were

#### Young's Oil Company

all employed by Young's Oil Company. You see Young's bought all the ground around West Calder so that they could have all the mineral rights to the shale underneath it.

#### Oil Works

An oil works cannae be nothing

else but a dirty smelly place,  
For when you think of it,  
Addiewell was full of processes  
there was about 15 different  
chimney stacks belching smoke.  
Then when you think of the smoke  
that came from the retorts  
themselves.

#### Pit Ponies

I didn't have anything to do  
with the pits at all. When  
they came to the surface, maybe  
there would be some that would  
be lame or had an accident and  
they would come up to the  
surface for a while.

When you took a pony to the  
pit you usually went down with  
it and gave them a hand to get  
it down especially in the shale  
mines, with three deep incline  
We had a special carriage we  
put them into, but it was awfully  
difficult to get the horses  
in there at times. They  
stayed there until they were  
ready to retire. But at Winch-  
burgh the horses came up every  
night. It wasn't such a steep  
incline, it was a more gradual  
slope into the mine and the  
horses could walk it. The  
ponies would draw the hutch  
away from the two miners who  
were working in the different  
cavaties or places as they  
cried them, and he was drawing  
their hutches up an incline  
to the main haulage way.

#### Retirement of Horses

They were sent to Belgium  
and slaughtered. That was the  
done thing at the time. There  
was a dealer in Edinburgh who  
used to gather them up at  
200 to 300 to one boat.

Burngrange When they opened the new pit a Burngrange, they did away with the horses that was on the pit traffic and put on a truck, a 30cwt. truck that ran back and forward between the pits. But I stayed at Addiewell.

retorts at Addiewell The retorts at Addiewell used to burn 300 tons of shale each shift.

Oil Industry A lot of People of my generation moved away. The first break was the Scottish Oils themselves. The Youngs Oils Co. and the other oil company Pumpherston, Oakbank and Philpston were formed in 1918. This was the Scottish Oil industry. Well this was the start of importation of crude oil from Abbadan, and the first place they built was down in Wales, well, that is where a good number of men from Addiewell went to. Then they built Grangemouth. That left about thirty people at Addiewell.

Unemployment There was unemployment, there was no doubt about it, because at it's peak Addiewell works employed 1200 men, but it went down to 350 in the 20s. You see they closed the refinery, it was what they called a "crude works", they just burnt shale and extracted crude oil. The crude oil went to Pumpherston for refining.

Strike The last strike of the Scottish Oil shale miners started on the

11th. November, 1925. I can mind that well. That was the time they had a Public Enquiry and Craig Auchieson, a lawyer in Glasgow was appointed to head the enquiry and of course, the Scottish Oils could show plainly by their books that every shale pit was losing money instead of making money. It was actually being carried by the crude oil that was coming into the country from Abbadan, into Grangemouth. We had a wage reduction during the strike.

#### End of Strike

They started working again on the first working day of the New year. They saw it as hopeless. You see they were fighting against a reduction in wages. I forget what the reduction was, but they had to accept it.

#### Accidents

There was no accidents while I was in the shale mines.

#### Domestic Life Housing

The housing conditions were basic. We had four walls and two windows and a door, when I stayed with my mother and father.

#### Toilet

We had a dry toilet in those days.

#### Water

It was everybody's task, when ever water was needed, especially in the Winter time you had to make sure you had sufficient water in the house for the next day, for the well froze up, and it was a case of those who needed the water first had to thaw it.

#### Later Housing

The first house I went into in West Calder, was built by

John Fairly, and they were owned by what was known as Fairly's trust.

Electricity and Water

These houses had electricity and water.

Conditions

There was overcrowding in the houses, especially the Irish incomers that came into Addiewell. The man that came off night shift was waiting for the man getting up to go out to the day shift to get into his bed.

Marriage

My wife emigrated to Australia with her family in 1927 but the fix I was in with my parents, they were both in their eighties. She went out as an immigrant, and she did her two years and came back.

Health

Pneumonia

I never missed a days work in my life. I was only ill once that I can remember. I had pneumonia, which in 1921 was serious. That was in the old days of the porridge poultice on your chest. I can always remember it was my right lung that was affected. I couldn't go to hospital, as that was unthought of at that time, as the nearest hospital was the Edinburgh Infirmary, and it was a horse drawn ambulance and it took two and a half hours to reach the Infirmary.

Social Life  
Sport

The only sport I had was the West Calder sports day on the last Friday and Saturday in July.

Neighbours

People lived closer in those days than what they do now. I've never heard that expression

better than frae a fellow along  
the road there, who's an old  
man like myself, he was born  
and bred in the "Happy Land",  
at West Calder.

Non Shale

When the shale mines closed  
down most of the people moved  
away to seek other employment  
outside the shale industry.