

GB SIDE ONE

GB I was born in Old town Broxburn and eh! I went to the Catholic School when I was five years old.

Q. There was a Catholic School and a Protestant School was there?

GB Oh aye there were two and after I left school I got a job as a milkman on the Cooperative van. I was taxed of course and I went to with a horse. And well the war came, the 1914 war, and I was taken off that and I was put down the mine. Worst time ever I can tell you, that was like the end of the world and this young fellow, Hughie Peden was the.'same. How do you like it Hughie? oh! he says its rotten. Oh! come on well join the army We went to Cockburn street in Edinburgh to join the army. We couldnae join the army, I must only have been about five feet, no much bigger ye ken. Get down those steps, he said or ill take the skin of your arse, and so he would have too. Well I says Hughie they cannae say we didn't volunteer. They would not have taken us anyway.

Q. How old were you?

GB Fifteen well coming up for sixteen, but you see ;they did not take shale miners. They sent them all home.

Q. To work in the mines?

GB To work in the mines. Because we were the first place ever

America got oil from, was Addiewell. The first gallon of oil that went to America came from about four miles from here, 'from the oil works at Addiewell. That was the first gallon of oil that went to America

Now your sitting the now on about one hundred million gallons of water, the old working. Well I went down the mine, that was all right but eh! my two brothers and eh! oh! I says I had to resign myself to just eh! and I got on I was a drawer in the mine. The first mine is through the arches, when you come through from Edinburgh, well see the arches there. You have a girder at the top the woods are built close that thick in the square, well that was a mine.

Q. What was it called?

GB Newliston mine and eh! the pit head was on that side of the road and you walked down this side of the road. It was a dook! as we call them, I'm talking the way miners spoke. The dook was below and eh they went on fire. There were Two young laddies and they just got their hands burnt and a wee bit of their face and that was the first assignment that the corporations rescue brigade ever had to attend to. And there was one other body it was never taken out. There were two lying in the blacksmiths shop, their bodies were black inhaling this white damp we called it, but that's no the scientific name, and eh! they'd the awfulest job keeping the captain back till they got them dragged out. It was suicide. See they hadn't the equipment then that they have now. The oxygen didn't last thon very

long mind. The canaries in their cages, you see that's what you went by. When the canary dropped of the spar it would mean assume the miner or brigade worker had travelled far enough into the area but the wee sparrow didn't die they brought it up and covered it all and put it in a box and gave it a wee bit of milk, and it was on the spar whistling away. Well they sealed the mine off, well I said that's my mining life finished. And I didn't like pits even when you were in a mine you could walk down.

Q. The mines had a sloping shaft then and the pits went straight down?

GB Aye, you were in a cage and this big Tarn Young as they called him, he was a new start on the cages, and you felt your stomach....., when you went down. And you say to yourself now anything happen here how am I going to get up. You see that's what I felt about, but I got used to it and it didn't bother me after a while. I worked there for a while with my brother, there was two brothers and we all done well. This was one of the/chief villages in the whole of Britain at one time you know.

Q. When you were a child when you were young, or when?

GB When I was young, when I was about eight years old I used to take three golden sovereigns, three and a half golden sovereigns up to a man called Jimmy Craig that used to work with my dad, and I got a sixpence from his mother for taking it up. Now three pounds six three pounds ten I'm talking when

I was about eight years old, and you know how long that is, I'm eighty two now. And do you know what money was worth? Well my father he couldn't read and he couldn't write, he was an old Irishman. He came from Ireland and he couldn't read nor write but he had, I'll guarantee he had in that lap of his about twenty pound. In fact he saved up. When he died he was a young man. He saved up and he died when he was fifty-two. That was his two brothers and I just left in the house, and at that time I was going to stay on at school. But one shilling and sixpence it was for a book. You had to buy all your own books and for poetry I was to learn "Lady of Shallot and Abdul Ben Adam". I got all the books for one shilling and sixpence, and the old crater was loaded and he wouldnae give you a tanner or a penny. So however I worked at the mines Baileston pit shut down.

Q. When was that?

GB It wasn't for the want of shale, they had a wee rule of their own so we mined up the junction that joined now what the hell name of that now where it left the mine the expense in the early years of keeping the Uphall Oil Works that's what made it shut down. However it opened again, I left that and I went to a mine just over the back of that tip there, the Dunnet mine and it was you'd be sitting on a bit of it the now, cause it came under here. The back of that tip it runs right across right through the main road and there were a bit of it there, but it never produced any shale or anything, it was only a kind of yard for the mine, and this is where the drawer filled his hutch.

He drew it away to the pit head but he never came back with an empty hutch, he came back with a lump of coal for the boiler. This laws pit and it was right opposite a wee farm there, it's away now it's all the industrial estate. So the Dunnet shut down in 1921, well it didn't shut down it had to the miners strike..... you couldnae get down. So I said we'll get away. So we went away for about six months. Well I started training I was a bit of a runner and because we were staying, at that time, mind you my mother had spent a good lot of her two thousand on my older brothers family, he had seven of a family, well all that was coming in to the house was my fifteen shillings on the dole. However I won the country half mile, and I won about three hundred and fifty pounds.

Q. For running?

GB For running Aye!, one hundred pound for my prize money and two hundred and fifty pounds betting money, so it was a godsend in the house. I got a job then in the Roman Camp.

Q. Was that at Philpstoun?

GB No, no, no, that was the last mine I was on, that last mine and eh, when it finished there were some of them sent to Thirty Five Pit. Well I was on that and some were sent to Number Six Mine and that was just the back the Bone Mill, up there (Roman Camp) and I was sent to that.

It was a horrible mine and eh, it shut down. And I was the only faceman that was sent to Thirty Five Pit and I went two year of it, it was the 4th May 1962. I went in to the shale industry in 1917 and I worked no where else until the 4th May 1962. And I got well I was a in fact, and I got nine hundred pounds and that was a hundred pound from the and then later on I got a lump sum of about five hundred pounds from the B.P. and a monthly pension between the two of them of fifty seven, well it's up now to sixty pound a month. It's handy for paying and that was the end of the shale industry.

Q. When you worked in the shale mine what were the working conditions like?

GB Down below?

Q. Yes.

GB Well you see

Q. When you worked down the mine what sort of hours did you work?

GB Oh well from seven o'clock till two.

Q. Right from the beginning?

GB Aye right oh well when we went first it was eight hours You started at seven o'clock and you didn't come off till three but then when

the unions voted for seven hours that was that of course. You had two shifts. Backshift and oh what a horrible shift the backshift seeing they lovely sunny afternoons and you were away to your work down the mines and it was hellish, it was terrible.

Q. Did you work on Saturdays?

GB well oh aye we worked six days a week, until if your backshift Saturday you didnae work it

Q. The other miners didn't have baths?

GB They didn't have what darling?

Q. The other pits and mines didn't have baths?

GB it was the camps but the miners used them and they supplied you with soap and we used to come up. The miners were not dirty, shale miners werenaе dirty

Q. Was your father a miner?

GB My father what dear?

Q. Did your father work down the mines?

GB Oh aye, some bloody father

Q. So you didn't think he was a good father?

GB As far as my mother was concerned but he wisnae a dad you could sit down and have a wee blether with, no we were only there and that was all.

Q. Did he help your mother in the house or did she have to do everything?

GB Oh she had to do everything. He couldnae even tie his tie. I says come on I'll tie your tie for you, your mother will do it I says any wain could do that. He couldnae.

Q. How big was the house you lived in with all of you there?

GB A room and kitchen and a scullery. That was the average house in those days. There was no bathroom and no bedrooms.

Q. So where did you all sleep?

GB Well my mother and father, they slept in the big bed. Well there was a wee bed below it and my young brother and sister they were only bairns, they slept in that. And Tommy and I slept
Put out your bed

END OF SIDE ONE

GB SIDE TWO

but we were a happy family, a decent family, well brought up.

Q. Your father always had work?

GB You what darling?

Q. Your father was never unemployed?

GB No, no, no, no, never.

Q. Did your father drink?

GB He did at one time. A drunken old bugger, at one time
took the pledge and he never took a drop from then on.

My mother said 'I had more bother with him when he went tee-
total than I had when he was drinking' because she said every
penny was a prisoner and he watched it like a hawk

to be continued next week we used to kill ourselves laughing, us laddies

Q Tell me about the 1921 strike and the 1926 strike.

GB Well the 1921 strike was an easy strike but the 1926 strike,
it was heavy rioting here, rioting there. We used to go into Edinburgh
walk into Edinburgh see the riot crowds stuck into the police and old

Churchill was the man that was the Prime Minister pushed us back down the hole and a shilling a week was enough to keep a working mans weans. It was old Thomas that broke the strike Manager of the Railways' Union it was him that broke the strike and the miners had to go back with their tail between their legs. It wisnae for money, it was for conditions.

Q. And in the 1921 strike did you get your money or not?

GB No the 26 strike was a general strike, everything. The only ones working were they black legs. They were driving trams

Q And during the strike was there a lot of poverty and a lot of problems?

GB Oh aye, there were a lot of poverty here. I was going to tell you all these buildings that the miners built McKenzie fortune got the lot course they couldnae keep up the payments

Q. During the strike?

GB Aye and they made this a ghost town

Q. And did people run soup kitchens?

GB Yes and that was the hall, the wee community hall used for old age pensioners our dinner was always taken out of the garden and

we always had our bacon hanging on the back of the scullery door,
I often wondered they were nae and yet there never seemed to
turn blue or go rotten or anything like that. We always killed a couple of pigs

Q. Did your wife come from Broxburn?

GB Aye, she stayed where the Regal picture house, it's a Bingo hall now.
She lived in there? Road, they called it, that's where she lived.

Q. And how many children did you have?

GB We had three. We have a daughter that lives down there. She's
a school teacher. And I've a son, he lives in the?
He was 23 years in the Stock Exchange and he got a better job.
He got a job nearer home, up in the Livingston Development
Corporation. And he's had five promotions. Oh he's doing
well up there and my other wee daughter, she took a?
she'd have been a teacher an all and she last six weeks with the school
she was on the checkout for 11 years with the Co-operative. She married
clerk of works with the Development Corporation

Q. Did all your brothers go down the shale mines as well?

GB Yes. There was three. Tommy, Derek, and John, were all in
the shale mine. John worked with me for a long while.

Q. He was the faceman and you were the Drawer?

GB I was the faceman and he was ;the drawer. I was the boss.

In fact in the White Quarry I had 6 men working for me.

I was a bit of a contractor, I contracted out. We all practically got the same wage. I was never one to shim a drawer, for whenever

I was drawing in front of all the men to and I put the stuff out and didnae get what I was meant to get, so I just got the pay line

Q. Was there good relationships between men working down the mines?

GB Oh aye some men were mad. They just paid their drawer the basic

wage, now they were going home with twice the wage that their drawer was going home with. And this caused a lot of animosity

too. It was greed, just pure greed, that was all. What I mean is you paid a man for what he was worth, and all I took off the men

was 2 bob a day extra, because I bought all the shovels. I bought

all the walnut bits and they cost 24 bob each, but coal miners they used to get them for nothing

Q. What was your relationship with the company?

GB Well as far as I was the gaffer, I was liked with every gaffer

She victimised me I was going strangle him and eh, my

faceman went off. I was the only drawer at that time and eh, he

said there's nobody that can take you said I, I dinnae need anybody to take me, I can work myself. This went on for weeks, there were nae jobs I'll see about this, I'll away other and see the manager. Soon as I got about 20 yards he shouted me back, it was the manager who gave me the job

Q. Did the company try and Look after you, did they provide good conditions and were their houses good?

GB Well they left that to the deputy and eh, if your air was bad all you had to do was send for the fire-man, we called them firemen but there real names were deputies. They went down first thing in the morning for anybody You couldnae go down unless they had been down, see the coal miners and their deputies, they were on strike and they'll no go down and they cannae go down that coal pit and if there's no enough air in it you just tell the deputy. I was 52 ½ years working and I never drew a penny insurance in my life.

END OF TAPE