

## HF SIDE ONE

HF My mother went down to Brysons and went down and asked them if there was any chance of me getting a job there in the work. They said that they would see what they could do and they would send me word. And it was only about a day or two after it, and Neil Simpson came up to my mother and he says "Is Hughie in". She says "He's in his bed", it was about eight o'clock in the morning. He says "Will you tell him he's out to start over in the work". She says "When can he start". He says "Any time, the day or the morn, whenever he likes". So I started, I was there just a day, and I started in the cooperage.

Q. That was in Pumpherston Refinery!

HF Pumpherston Refinery aye! So I started in the cooperage, and my gaffer then was Rab Brown, so Rab says "Come on, I've got a job for you painting barrels". I was only a wee smout at the time. Rab says, "Will you be able to reach the top of the barrels, with that paintbrush". So anyhow, I started there, painting the top of the barrels and all that.....

Q. And what was the idea of painting the barrels?

HF Well, all the barrels all had to be painted for the....to show up the stencilling, you had a stencil brush, and you used to stencil it all with the name and the.....and they then filled them and....and then you stencilled the other end with.....after you filled them... how many gallons were in them and one thing and another.

Q. And what was in the barrels that you were stencilling?

HF Well, there was....some of....fuel oil and burning oil and gas oil, and that's when they used to roll them out and put them into a wagon, and the men that were on the wagons. Jock Whigham, he was one of them, and Neil Carr, I think, was one of them too, they were in the wagon and you used to roll them up this wee.....sledge.

Q. Like a ramp?

HF And you used to put them on the top of the wagons and they used to have a dumper.....used to land them in the dumper, and they caught them and set them on their edge.....wagons, they all used to be in wagons..... away to different places, so I was there for about six months and then I was sent for by Mr. Rae, he sent for me, and asked me if I would like to go on the bags, down at the timebox. I used to go down to the Station and get the consignment notes and that.

Q. That's Uphall Station?

HF Uphall Station! Well, I used to go down twice, in the morning, and the afternoon.

Q. And what was in the bags?

HF Consignment notes, all the letters and that, all the dispatch, you know, that came out of the dispatch office..... they were all leather bags, they were all locked. I took them down to the goods office in Uphall Station and got them emptied there and.....

Q. Where were they being sent to?

HF Glasgow, that was the head office. We used to send them in the train after that.....

Q. And how often had you to do that? Twice a day, three times a day?

HF Twice a day! Morning and night! Maybe eight o'clock in the morning, half past eight, and then two o'clock in the afternoon, and you came back and went into the timebox, and hung up all the checks.

Q. This is where the workers clocked out.....

HF Clocked in and out! There was a big board up with all numbers and checks.

Q. With little hooks on them?

HF Aye (sentence inaudible). I would reckon there would be about six hundred and odd checks and that's not counting the staff. See the staff didn't check in and out and the timekeeper then was Jock Miller from East Calder. Jock was a hell of a nice bloke. Hearts daft, too, and of course he died sudden too! Great football player, too! And he wasn't strict. So anyhow, Jock used to say, "When are you going for the time". We used to use the book, we used to go the joiner's shop, engineer's shop, blacksmith's shop, plumbers, metalmakers and where the.....Paddy Carr's place, and got all their time, what they were doing, what jobs they were on, and we used to enter them all into the book. We used to take it back to the timebox and the timekeeper used to lift it all out.

Q. And how long were you on that job?

HF Eh, I was about two years, and then I went from there down to old Duncan McIntyre, down the refining, and old Duncan used to (inaudible) he used to come out, maybe eight o'clock in the morning, and get the shift lads on, then.....I used to go round all the men in the Refinery, all them that was labourers, to see if they were all out, and I used to mark them all in the time book, and mark them all out.

Q. But wouldn't they know by the timebox and the time office whether these men were out?

HF Aye, but we had to check it over again!

Q. Aye, you mean other people could have dropped their disc.....?

HF Aye, without their being there....which was done! If the head man was away, they were checking and then.....the likes of the men that were on the tanks and receivers and all that, they used to dip all the receivers and all the tanks, and we used to mark them on a card, and they used to leave it on the window, near the desk where I worked, and I used to take all the discs and mark them into a big ledger, and Mr. Grant came round and.....

Q. And who was Mr. Grant?

HF He was the head Chemist. And then, if he didn't come there was, well, there was Jack Crombie. Jack Crombie, he used to come in too and eh.... get the books and that.....

Q. And this.....the dipping of the tanks.... that gave them the amount of oil?

HF Oil.....

Q. ....of all these tanks that were in the tanks?

HF Well, you had your floating dips, you know, the floating dips. It was a ball with a string on it, and you pulled it down, and whenever it stopped at the line, they were all feet.

Q. This was recording what was in the tank?

HF Aye, well, when it stopped at three or four, it was fourteen or fifteen.. ....fifteen feet, that's how much was in the tank, and then.....

Q. And how long were you on that job?

HF About two years, two and a half years, and then I went from there to the filling station, that's where the..... that's where I went, the filling station, and then I went with old Joe Roberts.

Q. At the filling station, what did you do?

HF Filling the Scammels, and B.P. tanks. The Scammels held 2500 gallons, and the.....

Q. What type...of fuel was that?

HF That was eh.....naphtha and petrol and then it was all different kinds of eh.....then you would fill the rail tanks and all, well, I never filled the rail tanks, Tommy Buckle and.....he used to fill them, but eh.....it was all different kinds of.....petrol..... there was S.M.T. naphtha, that was for S.M.T., special stuff.

Q. For the buses.....?

HF And that was.....we used to draw it off the dips, the stock tanks like.

Q. These....these were storage tanks.....on top of the bings.....

HF Aye, you had your pipes running right from the stock tanks right down into the pumping station, all painted different colours, green was Esso, green naphtha, yellow was naphtha, and another colour was.....you knew by the colour, (inaudible).

Q. And when you filled these tankers, these road tankers, where was that going?

HF It was going to S.M.T. garages and.....Carstairs eh....Wishaw, Hull, Glasgow, Edinburgh.....all over. I always mind that morning that they filled the Scammel, 2500 gallons was in it. Yon boys from Broxburn was on the Scammel.....young Jimmy Smith and the driver was Mick Scott, and they left that morning, about six o'clock in the morning, and it happened at the Station Bridge, it went up in flames!

Q. In Uphall Station?

HF The laddie was burned to death. In fact we never seen him, he never

got out. Mick Scott, he got out, because the laddie was jammed between the Scammel and the dyke, the wall, the railway station bridge. Mick Scott got out, he was lucky. He opened his door and flung himself out!

Q. And you were on the filling station job at the time. Can you remember when that was?

HF Oh now....it was before the war! It must have been.....I would say about.....19.....

Q. 1937?

HF 1937! Not far away from it!

Q. And you were on that job....how long?

HF The filling station? I was only in the filling station about two years. Then I went on the labouring squad, with Jock Roberts, and then I was only with Jock for about six months,if it was six months, and old Duncan McIntyre came down and asked for ten men, and I was one of them he asked, .....and I was with Duncan for.....in fact I was in the Refinery till it shut down.

Q. And what type of jobs were you doing with Duncan McIntyre?

HF Well, I worked on the well, it was, when I said marking the time book and that....then I went from there on to the labouring. The labouring .....that's where you were doing all the dirty jobs, cleaning tar boxes and cleaning out stock tanks, and going into a stock tank with the old shoes or boots and old bags round about your legs and old trousers, and when you came out of the tanks, you were finished with them, you just flung them away, in among the rubbish.

Q. You weren't supplied with any special clothing? What about any.....?

HF The only thing we got was.....

Q. What about footwear?

HF No, that's what I say, we wore old shoes, or boots or put old bags round about your legs and I've seen us go round to the stock tanks with....and there was maybe about a couple of feet of stuff in there, or three feet of stuff in there. Sludge, pure sludge! And when you were finished you got away home early! No wonder you got home early! You were gassed! Gassed! I'm not kidding, you felt it in your mouth for days afterwards, and you never got that extra!

Q. And where did you get all the clothing that....if you were asked to do that very often?

HF Just all the old clothes that you had in the house! Or if you had any old clothes over in the bothy, when you were working, in your locker, you just put them on, you knew you had to use them again.....you never got that.....you never got a penny for them!

Q. How often were you asked to do that..... that type of job?

HF Well, maybe every.....well, whenever they thought there was a tank to be cleaned! They just emptied it! All the oil out of it, what they could run off, and then they took the doors off. They took the doors off one day, and you were in it the next day, and you got, and you got into your tank with a wee, about, och, it was just a wee manhole.

Q. What kind of.....what size of manhole.....?

HF About a foot and a half by two. I was a wee laddie then, I wouldn't get into it now. But, you've no idea what.....I'm not kidding, George, it was pure slavery!

Q. What kind of money were you earning then?

HF Oh, about thirty two bob a week.

Q. And what age were you about then?

HF Eh.....

Q. Nineteen, twenty?

HF About twenty four!

Q. Twenty four?

HF I wasn't married then, but I was married in 1927 in the Register Office, and eh.....see anybody who did that today.....in fact they wouldn't do it, they wouldn't do it! No way!

Q. See the tar boxes that you spoke of....what type of work was that?  
Cleaning out the tar boxes?

HF Oh, it was dirty! You had to lay out all the.....take up all the stuff, as much as you could, out with a pail, get a pail, drop a pail down, and there was a man inside this tar box and he had to fill the tar in, and we used to empty it into another box, and after we had cleaned the muck, all the worms and that, we filled it with a bag of sawdust, a couple of bags of sawdust, and emptied it into the bottom of the tar box, and clean it with it. It was stinking as well!

Q. And what actually was in the tar boxes, was there any kind of acid or anything like that?

HF It was all acid, it was soda acid! Soda.... that's what I'm saying, that was another thing, you wore clogs too and old bags round about your legs.

Q. These clogs, these were supplied to you, were they?

HF The clogs were.....aye!

Q. What were they made from?

HF Wood! Wood and leather.....wood!

Q. Wooden soles?

HF Wooden soles and leather tops.

Q. And.....

HF Women wore them.....

Q. These were like eh.....round edges of the wooden soles?

HF Aye, that's right. And the toes of them were tin....tin toes.

Q. And did they stand up to any acid or anything?

HF Oh aye! Oh aye.....oh aye!

Q. But you didn't have any special suits or.....

HF Eh?

Q. ....Boilersuits?

HF I've seen us going out there with our own clothing, overalls and everything getting burned useless with..... that's acid and soda....you never got a penny for that! I've seen me going to work there with a new pair of overalls, putting my overalls on.....the next day or whenever you washed them, they were riddled with holes, with the acid and soda! In fact there was a boy.....I mean he wasn't long started in the Refinery and you

know the man was.....didn't know what he was working among, and the boy he was working with, he never even told him about cleaning an acid box out, and there were bricks and that in below the worm, for to take the worm up.....

Q. Now this worm, that was the.....a coil.....was it a worm.....a leadworm?

HF A leadworm.....a lead pipe eye, with holes in it, it's a steam worm, what we cried a steamworm, and the steam blew out of them, and you had bricks and that in below them took them up off the floor, for to let the steam up.

Q. And what happened to this chap.....?

HF The boy went in this day.....it was Jimmy Buckle, old Jimmy Buckle, he was working with this boy, it was the baler he was working with, and the baler never even told him that when the laddie was.....as the man was lifting the bricks with his hands, little did he know it was acid. He was sent home, his hands were all burnt, burnt, he was off his work for more than a month!

Q. (Inaudible).

HF Aye, (inaudible). Pair.....I'm not kidding, they hardly gave you a pair of gloves, never mind anything else. You used to get old bags and you used to cut the bags up, out a hole, and put them on your hands, when we were into them, and lift them with the bags. This is true!

Q. And when you finished that job, where did you go, in the Refinery?

HF I went on to the still cleaning.

Q. And what was involved in that job?

HF Well, the still cleaning was a bad job, it was a job and finish, whenever you got in, you had so many stills to clean, well say maybe between five and eight. There was one, two, three..... there was about six still cleaners,...we cleaned about thirty stills a day. They were needing them after we cleaned them.

Q. Now what was involved in.....that was the coking stills?

HF The coking stills, aye! Well, the coking still, well, we went in and cleaned them out. Went round the side of them and chipped them with a bit chipping scraper, open them up to the sides, and then we got into them and you just thumped it down and broke it up.

Q. This was a long handled broad chisel?

HF About three and a half to four feet long.....with handles on the top and about that breadth, (actions indicating same)

Q. That's about four inches.....?

HF I would say about three inches.....

Q. Three inches?

HF Three inches.....and about that in length (actions indicating same) with a blade, then from there up there was a shaft.....handles. Same stuff!

Q. And you had to break this coke from the still bottoms?

HF Aye!

Q. And what happened to it then?

HF You used to fling it out, after you broke it up!

Q. You threw it out the open door?

HF The door that you were in! The still top was about six feet. Standing!

Q. About six feet high?

HF Six feet high! On the top of your still top, you had your top door, it was fixed to the top, to the still top, and your front doors were fixed to the still top. Right!

Q. And what diameter were these stills?

HF Well, about nine feet round. And your top door would be about..... two

Q. The bottom was dished?

HF Dished! A saucer bottom! A saucer bottom! And your top door would be about...two feet wide!

Q. Why were there two doors....could you....could two of them be opened at the same time?

HF Oh aye! Oh aye! Oh aye, your top door was off and your front door was off, all the time until the still was cleaned out, and after the still was cleaned out, they put the doors on and put the front door on, with fireclay .....screwed it up and went up on the top and they put the top door on with fireclay, put it on, screwed it on.

Q. This was bedded in fireclay? The door?

HF Bedded in fireclay, that was after it was sealed up, that was to stop it from leaking....the fireclay stopped it from leaking!

Q. And before you could go in and clean the stills out, what had to be done before that?

HF Well, before we went in, they were off.....then the still-headman coked them off....he steamed them, when he was dropping the resin, the shale resin into the dam, into the gundy dam, and after it was dropped, you shut that off, and then he put the steam on the still, maybe about four or five hours, and by that time, it was time to take the top door off, and the front door, but you always to take the front door off first.

Q. That's the bottom one!

HF The bottom door! You always had to take the bottom door off first!

Q. And why had they to put the steam in?

HF That was to keep it from going on fire. High pressure steam! If you didn't put the steam on, all your coke would go on fire! If you had your steam on, it kept it from going on fire!

Q. But there was no steam there when you went in to clean it out!

HF No, no, no, no. Your steam was shut off, maybe about six hours before you went into a still, by that time, it had cooled down a bit....it was still warm, but there were some of them pretty warm! And gassy! And when you broke it up, the gas came up, and all the protection that we had was a sweatrag round about your mouth, you used to damp it with water.... the sweatrag, you used to tie it round your mouth. Round your head, round the back of your head, over your nose....yellow gas on it and everything, and the.....

Q. You wouldn't say it was a very healthy job?

HF No. It wasn't really a healthy job, but if you looked after yourself, you know, with your sweatrag and that, you didn't swallow much of the gas, because it was all in your sweatrag! And then....of course..there was.....after you cleaned the coke out of the still, you used to go round it and try and get it all chipped off, you know, as clean as you could, for it was better on yourself if you kept a clean still. The next

time you went in, you had an opening, and all the gas was getting out, where if you had your chipping round about it, the coke was right in below your chipping and your gas wasn't getting out.

Q. So you had to clean off right to the..... the.....bottom of the still?

HF Right from the still bottom to the..... the...bottom of your still top and they had a join there too....you had your still bottom on the top of your.....bottom bit.....

Q. That was the furnace?

HF On the top of your saucer bottom. The still top was right on the top of your saucer bottom, and it was all bolted down with fireclay and all that.

Q. That was to seal it?

HF That was..... that was to seal it...and then you had to screw it up with keys. There were four men on the job, screwing them up, screwing the nuts, for to screw it down. So there was a lot of work attached to them, and then after that.....the bricklayers used to go up and build round about them with bricks.

Q. Was this firebricks?

HF No, just ordinary bricks?

Q. Ordinary bricks?

HF Aye! Ordinary bricks! All your furnaces were all firebricks. They were..

Q. And there were furnaces underneath.....?

HF Underneath the still bottom?

Q. The still bottom. And how.....?

HF And then your flame.....at the bottom of your still bottom. Your fire.... you know, where you put your jet! The flame, and.....

Q. This was tar going in.....?

HF Tar going in!

Q. And it was ignited.....?

HF Ignited, aye, and it burnt all the....time. Well, you regulated your tar, you hadn't too much of a flame, in the still bottom and then.... oftener than not, you got a still bottom that was maybe cracked. It was cracked! The leakage.....well, that.....of some leakage dropped into your fire, but it didn't do any harm unless the still bottom dropped out, which it often did! Well, if there was a crack in the still bottom, they put it up for repairs, and the men that went in, the men that went in and repaired them were Wull Finlay, big Wull Finlay, wee Johnny McCackle, from Uphall Station, old Jimmy Wilson, "Puss" Renwick, "Mini Puss".

Q. Were they tradesmen?

HF Not really! Big Wull was a boilermaker, I'm not sure if Wull was a boilermaker or not, but they were.....old Jimmy Wilson wasn't a tradesman, and neither was Johnny McCackle, nor "Puss", they were all handymen. Well, when they were up for repairs, they went in and they bored the holes in, where the crack was. They bored holes round about it, and they used to get a plate, you used to go up to the boilermakers shop and make a plate, for to put it on the still bottom. A patch, what we cried a patch...and they came down with the patch, fitted it on.....before they fitted it on they put in below the patch what they cried "Blomond Take", after it hardens it's like metal, that's the china clay, that's eh, china clay, and silicate soda all mixed. Just mixed it all together and silicate soda was just like glass, fibreglass. See, you could do that with you finger, and it used to stick to your finger, and it used to stick to your finger like glass and

we used to break it off. So they used to put that in, big Wull Finlay and them....the laddie he had rivets, well, they bored the holes for the rivets to go through, and then they put the plate on the top and this "Blomond Take" on the bottom, and put the patch on. The laddie used to flame the rivets in.

Q. He was heating the rivets?

HF Heating the rivets, aye! And "Puss" Renwick and them were inside, in below there, in below the bottom. They used to put the rivets in, and old Jimmy Wilson and.....worked with Wull Finlay, they were inside the still, that we had to go in and clean. They were inside it! With a hammer.....riveting the bottom of the stills.

Q. The rivets were hand rivets!

HF Hand rivets, aye! Aye, it was all hand rivets, aye!

Q. And did you have to do other stills.....other than the ones that you had cleaned out properly, or did you have to go to any.....?

HF Oh, any still, any stills at all! Aye!

Q. So you could go to anybody else's still that he had left not properly cleaned?

HF Well, mostly not, it would all depend, it all depends where I worked. Sometimes you went out and you had so many stills to clean, right, and maybe I'll say, five a day, and I'll tell you, you were working!

END OF TAPE

## HF SIDE TWO

HF It was contract work, George. It all depends on how the conditions of the still, you maybe got a bad still and you were in it maybe half an hour, or maybe an hour and a half, and maybe the man that was in another still, he maybe only took half an hour to clean his. Well, maybe one day you would only clean four, and he would clean five. But it didn't matter, it was all pooled, no matter how many you cleaned. Aye, it was all pooled! All contract!

Q. So all the still cleaners..... the money was pooled and divided?

HF All divided!

Q. So it didn't matter whether you got five cleaned or.....

HF Five or not! All pooled! We all worked together! If a man was in..... a bad one, you maybe went in and gave him a hand to finish it. That's how we worked, and I'll tell you it was hard work at times!

Q. What kind of money were you earning then?

HF Well, it was about eighteen to twenty pounds a week. And that was good money! Well, not good money, but better than the rest of them that were earning money in the work, for they were getting about twelve pounds a week or something like that, or fourteen pounds a week then, but.....

Q. And what year was this, can you remember?

HF It was after the war! About 48,49,50, when I was on it. That was not bad money then, but I'm not kidding, it was pure slavery! I'm not kidding really!

Q. And were there any hazards as far as the still cleaning.....? Was there anything.....did you contract anything?

HF With the job like?

Q. Yes, with the job?

HF Any diseases or anything or any....Well, I'll tell you, I got dermatitis off it, from the coke dust, I got allergic to the coke dust.

Q. And yet you were cleaning stills for how long?

HF Nine years!

Q. That was nine years, and did it take all that time before the dermatitis started affecting you?

HF Aye! Oh aye! Aye, I was on it, and I got an itch in my leg, and I was always scratching and scratching and I went to the Doctor, in fact it was the Works Doctor, he was the Works Doctor at the time, a Doctor Joe from Broxburn, he used to come up and examine the boys for Paraffin Cancer.

Q. Is that Joe Wood?

HF Aye, Doctor Joe Wood! He said "I'm afraid", he says, "It's dermatitis you've got my lad". So I got it on my arm, so I went into the Royal for five weeks and it cleared right enough!

Q. The Infirmary?

HF Aye, it healed up. So I went to him, I went to Doctor Joe, and they tried to say it wasn't off the job, them in the work, they tried to tell me it wasn't that.....I'm not entitled to compensation, so Doctor Joe .....I went down to see him and he said, "Aye, it's dermatitis, and you got that off your job!"

Q. So did you get compensation?

HF Oh aye!

Q. But it wouldn't be as much as you could earn cleaning stills?

HF Oh, no, no, no.....not near as much! About five or six pounds short of what I had been making!

Q. And when you came back to work, did you go back to cleaning stills?

HF Oh no, I just went on to spare! Any time that they needed one cleaned! When they were needing one cleaned, I went in and cleaned it!

Q. And there wasn't a regular still cleaner available?

HF No, they were all loused, you see! Maybe they were short of, maybe a still, well, it wasn't long off, it was kind of hot! Well, I had to go in and clean it for them! You never got anything extra for it! No way! The only thing you got, when you finished it, you got away home. Home and bathed.....clean.....

Q. And when you were cleaning stills as a job....what kind of hours did you work?

HF Well, I'd maybe start about 7 o'clock in the morning and maybe got home about eleven. It all depends on what like the stills were. Maybe you got away earlier some days, maybe you got home about ten or half past ten, other days you maybe didn't get home till about one o'clock in the afternoon. It all depended on the conditions of the still! You had to do your job and that was it! Job and finish!

Q. And when you were not still cleaning, what other jobs were you doing?

HF I told you I was on the.....

Q. You mentioned that you were on the gundy?

HF Aye, that's the shale resin. We used to wheel it away over the fields.

Q. Aye now, that gundy came from the still..... that came off the residue... you were already cleaning it....

HF That was the last thing after they had taken all the oil out of it, and the coke, and they put it into these dams.

Q. What sort of dams were they?

HF About that size of that carpet, about the same breadth, same length!

Q. About four feet by three feet. And what happened to it then, when it went in there?

HF Well, before you.....before you put it into the oven.....before you opened your gas pipe, your gundy pipe, your gundy pot, for to drop it in to these dams, you had to fill them with water first...the dam, you used to fill them out of your condenser, you had to get a pipe, a long pipe, with a bend on it, and you used to put it in, you just syphoned it out, you used to get it down your pipe, and put it into the condenser, dip it in and syphon it into the.....into the dam. You used to fill your dam up.

Q. And what height of wall were round this dam?

HF About a couple of feet.....deep!

Q. And you filled this with water?

HF Filled it with water!

Q. Before you put.....?

HF Before you dropped your gundy! And your shale resin! That was for to....

for to harden and for to keep the gas out.

Q. Now, when you put this gundy in, did that push the water out?

HF Yes, and then....that was for to keep the.....gassing, to keep the gas coming up and to help to cool the gundy. It hardened! And after it was off so long, that man that was on the gundy dams, he had a plug at the end of the dam, right at the bottom of the dam, and he drew that out and run the water off, for we used to go up to the joiners shop and we used to get the plugs made, up in the joiners shop, for to fit in the hole of the dam.

Q. And this water would just run into an open ditch?

HF Aye, just an air drain, running right down your....into a pond. And we used to break it up with a spade, break it up and put it into a barrow, and the time that there was no sale for it, they dumped it away over in the fields. There was tons and tons and tons of it, and at the finish up, they got a sale for it, and they brought all this stuff back off the fields. I led it all back into the gundy pot, melted it, barreled it, and it was away.

Q. ....Sold.

HF Then sold.

Q. And did you know what was going to be made.....?

HF It was made for plastic! That's what I got told and it was true, making plastic. Oftener than not, when we went over with the barrow, we ran into the gundy field and here it was hard! In the summertime it was soft. You could go in with the barrows, one boy lost a barrow in it, it sunk! It sunk in among the gundy! But you'll know anyway, all the stuff was all brought back out the field anyway and all sold.

Q. So the firm had a good market for that gundy?

HF Aye!

Q. Gundy that was being thrown away?

HF That's right!

Q. And you were presented with a gold watch...for services. It says for thirty one years service.

HF Aye, that's right!

Q. And, it was all workers...for Scottish Oils.....Now were you a member of any Union when you were working for Scottish Oils?

HF Aye. I was a member of the General Workers.

Q. The General Worker's Union. Who was your representative?

HF Well, there was Mr. McKelvie, was the first, and Joe Heaney took over after that.

Q. Was that especially for shaleworkers and oilworkers?

HF Shale miners and oilworkers, aye! I don't think that they did very much, I don't think that they did very much for the men anyway!

Q. Had you ever any cause to call them in, in any dispute or anything?

HF Not really! They didn't do much for us any time!

Q. So you felt that although you were a member of the Union, they weren't doing what maybe you expected them to do!

HF No way! They never did me any good! Never!

Q. Now, during your time with Scottish Oils, had you any favourite.... like hobbies or pastimes?

HF Well.....the only.....all we had really was football. Of course, darts, .....playing darts and that.....in the darts teams in Broxburn. I used to do a bit of travelling about with the darts teams. All over.

Q. And were they run by anything to do with the Scottish Oils?

HF No, no. Nothing to do with the Scottish Oils!

Q. Nothing to do with the Scottish Oils? What about your local Institute Hall? What happened.....?

HF Well aye! I used to play billiards there! That's when I was a laddie, about fifteen or sixteen years old. In fact I won the Boy's Championship twice up there! Twice! That's when old Jock Lunden was in the hall, he was the hallkeeper then.

Q. And when you played football, what was it, juvenile football?

HF Juvenile.....I played juvenile with Champfleurie United, and I played in the East of Scotland League with Dunbar Town, that's at Dunbar.

Q. Was this still juvenile?

HF No, no. That was.....senior football. With Dunbar Town, .....I played with Gala Fairydean, and Selkirk, Berwick Rangers, Duns, that was here, but I played down there for three years.

Q. That was quite a bit of travelling then?

HF Aye, it was about....from here to Dunbar.....oh, it's over sixty miles! We used to get picked up, a boy used to come away out to Broxburn with a taxi, or his car, and took us down to Dunbar, and any place we

were playing.

Q. And when was this? What year was this?

HF That was only.....in fact.....about 38, 37. 1937.

Q. Aye. And that League is not going now, is it?

HF Aye. Oh aye!

Q. Do they still have a .....

HF Aye, oh aye,.....Dunbar Town. Dunbar United's got a junior team, but they haven't got a senior team, but Gala Fairydean and Selkirk and Duns and them, they have a senior team yet! Still playing! Peebles Rovers! Berwick Rangers!

Q. Now, can you remember back when.....you started work what were the housing conditions like? It was a work's house you were in?

HF Aye, aye! Oh aye! Well we were in a room and kitchen, eleven of us, and I'm not kidding, the.....you were one.....one sleeping at the bottom of the bed and the other one sleeping at the top of the bed....there we? about four in a bed then!

Q. And how many beds were in the house?

HF Well, there was only the two set-in beds. There was a double bed for my mother and father and there was a double bed in the living room, and there was two beds.....one bed in the room. The rest of your beds was....an iron bed or.....you had no room for furniture.

Q. And eleven of you slept in that house?

HF Aye!

Q. That was quite a lot!

HF Aye, well, there were big families, all big families then, George, and... there was the Hill's and the Rodger's, they had ten of a family, they were in the same conditions! In the single ends, they had the single ends, as well, there were three or four used to live in single ends. Oh, you don't forget these days!

#### END OF TAPE

Transcript HF

Industrial Information I started in the cooperage at Pumpherson Refinery painting barrels.

Painting Barrels All the barrels had to be painted for to show up the stencilling, they then filled them and you then stencilled the other end, with how many gallons were in them and one thing and another. They contained fuel oil or burning oil or gas oil.

Wagons They were then rolled up this wee sledge on to the wagon. They were put on the top of the wagons with a dumper.

Dumper They landed in this dumper, which caught the drums and set them their edge on the wagons. I was there for about six months.

Bags I was sent for by Mr. Rae, who asked me if I would like to go on the bags, down at the time-box. The bags contained

consignment notes, all the letters concerning dispatch which were in leather bags and locked up. I took them to the goods office in Uphall Station where they were emptied. I used to do this twice a day, morning and night. Maybe eight o'clock in the morning and then two o'clock in the afternoon, you then went back into the timebox, and hung up all the checks.

#### Workers Clocks

The workers were clocked in and out. There were big boards up with all numbers and checks, I reckon there would be about six hundred and odd checks, that's not counting the staff, as they didn't check in or out. We had to check over and over again to see that they were all there. They counted likes of the men that were on the tanks and receivers, because they used dip all the receivers and tanks and mark them on a card and leave it on the window, near the desk where I worked. Then I took the discs and marked them into a big ledger. Then Mr. Grant the Head Chemist used to come and check the amount of oil.

#### Floating Dips

The oil was checked with a floating dip. This was a ball with a string on it, and you pulled it down, and when-

ever it stopped at the line that was how many feet was in the tank. I was in this job for two and a half years.

Filling Station

I went from there to the filling station, filling the Scammels and B.P. tanks.

Capacity of Tanks

The Scammels held 25000 gallons.

Types of Fuel

The tanks contained naphtha and petrol and then it was all different kinds.

Colour of Pipes

There was pipes running right from the stock tanks right down to the pumping station, which were painted all different colours. Green was Esso green naphtha, yellow was naphtha. I was in this job for about two years.

Labouring Squad

I then went on a labouring squad with Jock Roberts. I was only there for about six months, when old Duncan McIntyre came down and asked for ten men to go to the Refinery, where I started marking the time book.

Time Book

Labouring

I went from there on to labouring.

That was doing all the dirty jobs such as cleaning tar boxes and cleaning out stock tanks, and going into stock tanks with old shoes or boots and old bags round your legs and old trousers. When you came out the tanks your clothes were finished.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Special Clothing                  | <p>We were not supplied with any special clothing or shoes. We just had to wear all the old clothes you had in the house, or if you had any clothes over in the bothy. You never got a penny.</p>   |
| How Often Tanks Had To Be Cleaned | <p>We had to go and do this whenever they thought that the tanks needed to be cleaned.</p>  |
| Size of Manhole                   | <p>They took the doors off one day, and you were in the next day. It was a tight squeeze because the manhole was only a foot and a half by two. I was a wee laddie then, I wouldn't get into one now. It was pure slavery.</p>  |
| Dirty Job                         | <p>Oh it was a dirty job. You had to take up as much as you could with a pail. We had to drop a pail down, and there was a man inside the tar box and he had to fill the tar in, and we used to empty it into another box, and after we cleaned the much, all the worms and that we filled it with a bag of sawdust. Inside the tar boxes it was soda acid.</p> |
| Protective Clothing               | <p>You wore clogs which were supplied to you, they had wooden soles and leather tops, and toes were tin. I've seen me going to work with a new pair of overalls, and the next day when you washed them they were riddled with holes.</p>  |

I am not kidding they hardly gave you a pair of gloves never mind anything else. You used to get old bags and cut out a hole, and put them on your hands when we were into them.

Finished at Refinery

When I finished at the Refinery I went on to still cleaning.

Coking Stills

It was coking stills. We went in and cleaned them out. We went round the side and chipped them with a bit chipping scraper. The chisel was about three and a half to four feet long with handles on the top. You used to fling it out after you broke it up.

Diameter of Stills

The diameter of these stills was about nine feet round. The bottom was like a saucer, and the top door would be about two feet wide. They had two doors which could be opened at the same time when the still was cleaned out, and after cleaning the doors were put on again.

Precautions Taken  
Before Cleaning Stills

Before we went in, the still headman caked the, when he was dropping the shale resin into the gundy dam. After that was shut off then he put steam on the still for about four or five hours, and by that time the top door and the front door could be taken off, but the front door was always taken

off first.

Reason for Putting  
Steam in

The reason you put steam in was to keep it from going on fire. But you shut the steam off for maybe six hours before you went into a still, by that time it had cooled down a bit. When you broke it up the gas came up, and all the protection we had was a sweatrag around your mouth, you used to damp it with water. It wasn't really a healthy job, but if you looked after yourself, you didn't swallow much gas.

After Cleaning

After you had cleaned out the still you used to go round it and try and get it chipped off to get it as clean as you could.

The Furnace

The furnace was right on top of your saucer bottom, and it was all bottled down with fireclay to seal it.

Ignited

You regulated your tar and you didn't have much of a flame in the still bottom, and oftener than not you got a still bottom that was maybe cracked, and some of the leakage dropped into your fire, but it didn't do any harm unless the still bottom dropped out, which it oftendid.

Fixing A Cracked Still  
Bottom

If there was a crack in the still bottom they put it up for repairs. The boilermakers bored holes where the cracks were and they/ got a plate (or a patch, as we cried it), and before they fitted it on they put what they called

'Blomond Take', below the patch, which hardens like metal. The mixture consisted of silicate of soda and china clay. They put that in and bored holes for the rivets to go through, and then they put the plate on the top of the 'Blomond Take' and riveted it. The rivets were hand rivets.

Contract Work

This was all contract work. It all depended on the condition of the still, you maybe got a bad still, and it took longer to clean. It didn't matter because it was all pooled and divided.

Wages

We got eighteen to twenty pounds a week. That was better than the rest of them that were earning money in work. They were getting something like fourteen pounds a week then. That was in 1948, 1949 and 1950, just after the war.

Hours of Work

I would start work at 7 o'clock in the morning and maybe got home at about eleven, it all depended on what like the stills were. Maybe you got home earlier some days. You had to do your job and that was that.

Other Jobs  
(Dams)

I was on the gundy, that's shale resin. We used to wheel it away over the fields and they put it in these dams, which were about the size of that carpet about four feet by three feet. Before you opened your gas pipe for to drop it in these dams,

you had to fill them with water first. You had to get a long pipe with a bend in it and syphon it out.

Gundy

Before you dropped your gundy and your shale resin. That was for to harden and keep the gas out. This kept the gas coming up and to help to cool the gundy, it then hardened. There was a man in the bottom of the dam who had a plug which he drew and the water ran off into a ditch. We then used to break it up with a spade and put it into a barrow, and dumped it over in the fields. They brought it back off the fields, and put it back into the gundy pot, then they barreled it and sold it to make plastic. So the firm had a good market for gundy.

Diseases

I got dermatitis from the coal dust, because I was allergic to it. It started with a scratch on my leg and I went to the doctor. I was sent to the Royal Infirmary for five weeks where it cleared up.

Compensation

I got compensation from the Company for this. It was about five or six pounds short of what I had been making.

Union

I was a member of the General Workers' Union. Mr. McKelvie was first and Joe Heaney took over after that. I never thought they did me any good.

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Presentation             | I was presented with a gold watch after thirty one years service in the industry.   |
| Domestic Life<br>Housing | When I started work the house we stayed in was a room and a kitchen for eleven of us.   |
| Sleeping Arrangements    | I am not kidding, one slept at the bottom of the bed and the other slept at the top. There was about four in a bed then. There was a double bed for my mother and father and there was a double bed in the living room. The rest of the beds were iron ones. There was no room furniture.   |
| Single Ends              | Three or four of a family used to live in single ends in those days.  |
| Social Life<br>Football  | All we had in those days was football. I played juvenile with Champfleurie United, and I played in the East of Scotland League with Dunbar Town, that was a senior team. I also played with Gala Fairydean, and Selkirk, Berwick Rangers or Duns. I did quite a bit of travelling, from here to Dunbar, which was over sixty miles. We used to get picked up with a boy from Broxburn with a taxi or his car. That was in 1937 or 1938. |
| Billiards                | I used to play billiards when I was a laddie about fifteen or sixteen years old. In fact I  |

won the Boys Championship twice.

## PLACE INDEX

Berwick  
Broxburn  
Champfleurie  
Dunbar  
Duns  
East Calder  
Edinburgh  
Glasgow  
Hull  
Peebles  
Pumpherstoun  
Selkirk  
Uphall Station  
Wishaw

## CONTENTS

Baler-Side One, Page 8  
"Blomond Take"-Side One, Page 13  
Is BRYSONS-Side One, Page 1  
BUCKLE, Jimmy-Side One, Page 8  
" , Tommy-Side One, Page 4  
CARR, Neil-Side One, Page 1  
CARR, Paddy-Side One, Page 3  
Chipping Scraper-Side One, Page 9  
Clogs-Side One, Page 7  
Coke Dust-Side Two, Page 1  
Coking/Stills-Side One, Pages 9,10,11,12,13,14.  
Side Two, Pages 1,2,3.  
Consignment Notes-Side One, Page 2  
Cooperage-Side One, Page 1  
Dermatitis-Side Two, Pages 1,2.  
Disc-Side One, Page 3  
FINLAY, Wull-Side One, Page 13

Firebrick-Side One, Page 12  
Fireclay-Side One, Page 10  
Floating Dips-Side One, Page 4  
Football-Side Two, Page 6  
Gas-Side One, Page 11  
GENERAL WORKER'S  
UNION-Side Two, Page 5  
GRANT, Mr.-Side One, Page 3  
Gundy-Side One, Page 10  
Side Two, Pages 3, 4, 5.  
MILLER, Jock-Side One, Page 2  
McCACKLE, Johnny-Side One, Page 13  
McINTYRE, Duncan-Side One, Pages 3, 5.  
Naptha-Side One, Page 4  
Paraffin Cancer-Side Two, Page 2  
RAE, Mr.-Side One, Page 2  
Receivers-Side One, Page 3  
RENEWICK "Puss"-Side One, Page 13  
Rivets-Side One, Page 13  
ROBERTS, Joe-Side One, Pages 4, 5.  
SCAMMELS-Side One, Pages 4, 5.  
SCOTT, Mick - Side One, Page 5  
Shale Resin - Side One, Page 10  
Side Two, Page 4  
Sludge - Side One, Page 6  
SIMPSON, Neil - Side One, Page 1  
SMITH, Jimmy - Side One, Page 5  
Soda/Acid - Side One, Pages 7, 8.  
Stencils - Side One, Page 1  
Stock Tank - Side One, Pages 4, 6.  
Tar Boxes - Side One, Pages 5, 6, 7.  
Timebox - Side One, Page 2  
WHIGHAM, Jock - Side One, Page 1  
WILSON, Jimmy - Side One, Page 13  
WOOD, Dr. Joe - Side Two, Page 2  
Worm - Side One, Pages 7, 8.