

PLACE INDEX

Addiewell	Side One Pages 2, 3, 4, 11. Side Two Page 7
Bellsquarry	Side One Page 12
Breich	Side One Page 2
Broxburn	Side One Page 10
Burngrange	Side One Page 6
Mossend	Side One Page 11. Side Two Page 7
Oakbank	Side One Page 12
West Calder	Side One Page 1. Side Two Page 7

INDEX OF CONTENTS

Auld, Alan	Side Two Page 6
Blaes	Side One Page 10
Bowls	Side Two Page 7
Cuddy	Side One Pages 5,6
Easton, William	Side One Page 1
Forty Pit	Side One Pages 2,3,5,10. Side Two Page 2
Fraser	Side One Pages 4,7,11. Side Two Page 4
Heaney, Joe	Side One Page 9
Hermand	Side One Pages 7,11. Side Two Pages 2,3,4,5
Miners Rows	Side One Page 6
McArthur, Jock	Side Two Page 4
Ostler	Side One Page 1
Paraffin Young	Side Two Page 7
Peden, Jimmy	Side One Page 1
Roof	Side Two Page 4
Shuts	Side One Page 1
Twenty Six Mine	Side One Pages 4,5,6,7,8,12,13. Side Two Page 2
Scott, Wull	Side One Page 12
Scottish Oils	Side One Page 11
Shots	Side One Pages 11,12,13
Stein, John	Side One Page 10
Strum	Side One Page 12
Wardrop, Jock	Side One Page 9
Weighman	Side One Page 4
Whites	Side One Page 7
Woman's Rural	Side Two Page 8

JB SIDE ONE

1

JB Well, I left school at fourteen and went to West Calder Co-operative and I was looking for a job, and I got a job as ostler, that was attending to the horses.

Q. What year was that?

JB That was 1917, aye.....and I decided not to take it, because I was interested in going down a pit. So I went over to Breich Pit and saw the Manager there, and got a job!

Q. Who was the Manager?

JB William Easton!

Q. Can you remember the under-manager's name?

JB Jimmy Peden was the under-manager, and I started in the pit bottom. That was when the empties came off the cage, I shoved them up, about twenty feet or so, and coupled them all, as I was going on. That was ready for the horse coming out with the full rakes and it turned, and put the gabbie in the rake and away in with the.....

Q. Why did you go to the pits as opposed to the.....Co-operative? Was it more money?

JB Aye, well! There was two or three shillings extra! Better off! I think it was about twelve shillings in the ostler's job, and I think I had about eighteen going to the pits!

Q. Quite a difference! In these days!

JB Aye! And it wasn't enough that just.....

Q. And had you any family associated with the mines or pits?

JB Well, my father and my brothers.....four brothers and my father were all associated with the pits. Every one of them, aye!

Q. Do you think that influenced you a bit? Accepting the pits rather than the Co-operative?

JB No, no! In a way, it was just I was interested to see down a pit, to see what pit was like, that's what I was interested in!

- Q. And did any of them try to put you off going down a mine?
- JB Oh aye! My mother tried to put me off.....but I was down the pits for a long time!
- Q. So you started in Breich.....you started in Breich and your job was at the pit bottom?
- JB That's right!
- Q. And you've said what you did there.....then what did you do after that?
- JB Well, I was transferred, when I was about seventeen and a half, or say, to the pithead, to a job called the "shuts". Whether you want to know all about that, I don't know! That was the back of the cage and you pulled this lever and shoved the empty on and it put off the full hutch and then you drew the "shuts", this.....with your.....you know, it's like a big brake and pressed the button and.....you know, for the engine, to drop the cage again for to bring up the next full one.
- Q. So you signalled the engine when it was time to.....
- JB Aye, aye!
- Q. What did you do? How long were you in Breich?
- JB Wait the now! I think I was only fourteen.....about three and a half years.
- Q. So, you did that job that you were telling me about, up until you were.... three years anyway.....and you went from there to.....where to?
- JB Forty.....Number Forty!
- Q. That was Addiewell?
- JB That was Addiewell.....came under Addiewell Oil Works!
- Q. And what did you do there?
- JB A drawer.....to my father.....my father you know.....
- Q. Your father was a faceman? And what was your involvement there and what job did you do? You were drawing for your father.....?
- JB Aye, filling the shale that he was blowing.....blasting, and working some days with my socks and my trousers folded up over my knees, working

in the water! Aye!

Q. There was a lot of water in Forty.....?

JB Oh, aye, it was the wettest pit that Addiewell had.....Addiewell Oil works had! The wettest pit! It was too near the surface.....all the surface water.....it got in too easy, for to take it down to the workings!

Q. It wasn't a deep.....that was a mine of course?

JB A mine.....a mine aye!

Q. It wasn't a deep mine?

JB It wasn't a deep mine! In fact, there was the main road going down the side of it, and there were flaws in it, the road fell in! Aye! It was that near the surface...the workings! All the field at the side, there were holes in it, all over it, with falling..... that's what made it a bad pit to work in, you know!

Q. Was it a hard job?

JB Aye, it was hard work, I can tell you! It was dirty work....because, working with water, you were....och!

Q. Not very pleasant?

JB No.....!

Q. And how did you get on with your father then?

JB Oh, well, he paid me a wage, you know what I mean, but there was nothing to make then.....in these days! My father wouldn't have any more than... I would out of it, you know what I mean, and that was about £2.18/- I had for six days!

Q. So the First World War had finished....when you worked in Forty?

JB Aye, that's right, aye!

Q. Were any of your family in the First World War?

JB No, they were all miners, and miners were exempt from.....you know what I mean, they were exempt!

Q. They were in a reserved occupation! And how long were you at Forty in Addiewell?

JB Well, wait a minute, I think I started.....I would be about twenty one and a half years old, in Twenty Six, after that, because Forty closed.....it got closed down!

Q. Can you remember what year that was?

JB Oh, no, I couldn't tell you the (inaudible).

Q. So, you worked there as a drawer, and what was the work involved? Was there any difficulties that you had? Being a drawer?

JB In between.....

Q. Drawing from your father?

JB Well, when you're drawing from a stranger, they are wanting you to work harder.....oh, that was one obstacle that was about it.....

Q. So, there was a benefit, working for your father?

JB Well, the kind of working, that it was there, there wasn't any benefit in it! To me, when you had to take off your socks and roll up your trousers to work among water, it was pathetic! To tell you the truth, aye!

Q. So, do you ever regret going down the mine, or down the pit?

JB I don't think that I ever gave it a thought, at that time, you know! I thought.....this is your life!

Q. So, you went from Addiewell to where?

JB Addiewell?

Q. Aye, Number Forty!

JB Number Forty.....eh. Twenty Six, Number Twenty Six.....

Q. Had you been anywhere before you went to Twenty Six? You had mentioned the Fraser and the Hermand? Was that after that?

JB Aye, you see, you had put them down in the wrong rotation there, I think!

Q. Okay! You went to Twenty Six, after Forty! That was in the West Calder area?

JB No, Forty was....it's away down the backside there....you know!

Q. Addiewell?

JB No! It wasn't near Addiewell! I did not! (talking to wife) Didn't you

hear me talking about Westwood....eh, thingummy's Farm, away down there, well!

Q. So, you went to Twenty Six?

JB Forty's the one, that I was talking about the road falling in, and all the holes in the fields....too near the surface, and there was no roof....had a bad roof!

Q. Did you ever have any problems with timbering the roof?

JB Oh aye, there were problems all the time with your....you had to keep up with, we cried them legs....

Q. And you went to....?

JB I went from there to....wait a minute, till I get this one right....

Q. You were just going into Twenty Six, what did you do?

JB Twenty Six, and I went to the Fraser, that was the next one!

Q. After Twenty Six?

JB Aye!

Q. And what did you do in Twenty Six, when you left Forty! Were you a drawer again?

JB Oh yes, I was drawing, with just a different man, and that was all!

Q. What difference did you feel....found from Forty, going to Twenty Six, doing the same job as a drawer? Was it a longer road, or was it a harder job....?

JB Oh well, if you were drawing on a level, and it's progressing all the time, your road's getting....your draws getting longer all the time! I've seen us....with about six stoop lengths of a draw, you know what I mean! You had what they cried "cuddies". You were maybe up a cuddy and....I was up three cuddies, drawing three cuddies down....before I got down to the level road, and about a hundred yards after that, a level road to go out!

Q. Which mine was that. Twenty Six?

JB Twenty Six, aye!

Q. And did you find that was more difficult?

JB Oh, when you've got cuddies, it makes hard work, because you're

holding on to the other hatches, and going down, because there was maybe not enough weight on the cuddy, you know, for to balance it, and if there was too much weight on the cuddy side, when you put your empty one on, it flew up and you had to (inaudible) and get behind it! Oh aye, it had all it's problems, there you are! There were no nice bits about it, I can tell you!

Q. And how did you get on with other facemen? Leaving your father?

JB Oh, well, you just were paid your wage just the same....you know what I mean, but some of them weren't very great payers, all the same whether you knocked your belt out or not, or just stayed the same!

Q. What was the difference? Were they not paying you as much as your father did?

JB No, this is the way that the Companies had....the thingummy separating the men, with having a faceman and a drawer. They separated the workers, same as they are doing yet!

Q. Did you find that some of your facemen, were they contractors or....

JB Aye, they were contractors....well, not in Twenty Six, they weren't the same, it was faceman and drawer there, but in the likes of Burngrange, there were some of the contractors had three, four, five, six different squads working for them, and they were making the money, and they were making! Where the rest of us were just getting a wage!

Q. Did you come across any greedy facemen?

JB Oh dear, they were the greediest ones, and I never worked under them....at Burngrange, that was one I never was in, but I heard all about it, they were the men that was making the money, it wasn't the....it wasn't an equal....

Q.Wasn't an equal share?

JB Wasn't an equal share! And that's the way a Company always wants these things! Oh, you want to keep the workers split! And all the different wee things that they can put up!

Q. Do you think that this was Company Policy?

JB Company Policy! There you are! It was that!

Q. Did it make a difference?

JB It made a difference between you and the other man, aye!

Q. And you went from Twenty Six, where to....?

JB Twenty Six....now, was it Hermand or the Fraser now....no, it must have been Hermand, because Hermand shut down, and Twenty....Hermand, and it was quite a few years, I can't remember how many years but, we had quite a few years there, and I can't remember how many years, but it was shut down too, they couldn't hold the roof.

Q. Was it a bit bad?

JB Oh dear....it was....oh dear, they couldn't hold it even with the props, aye! There was just....there was about six feet of whites, what they cried whites, that was no use to them, coming down all the time, and it....this was the greatest pit it ever was in, for that, you know what I mean, the roof....

Q. What height was the roof roughly?

JB Well, I would say about eight feet of shale, there was maybe about another foot of shale in it, but this made your roughness eight feet, but it wasn't enough to hold what was under, these whites, they were all what we called loose whites, not just in a block, and when they came down, there was a roof above them, solid rock, and if....there's in that....the shale coming off....that's solid rock, you're in a perfect pit. So they would, aye, but that eh....six feet of dirt, that's what we cried it, but that's what spoiled that pit, and it was closed down!

Q. Can you remember what year....roughly, that would be?

JB No, I just couldn't give you that....I went from there to the Fraser, after that....

Q. That was a pit, this time?

JB A pit, aye! Hermand was the mine, Fraser was a pit!

Q. And were you still a drawer there?

JB No, I was a faceman! I was a faceman long before that!

Q. When did you become a faceman?

JB In Twenty Six!

Q. So, when you were in Twenty Six Mine, you became a faceman?

JB A faceman, aye!

Q. And what was any problem that you found being a faceman? As opposed to a drawer?

JB Well, I had a hell of a job, getting to be a faceman!

Q. Why was that?

JB They knew that I was outspoken! And I started....I was taking to do with the Union when I went into the pits, and there was me and two or three more, you know, we had a meeting, and the faceman and the drawers carry on, we decided to do away with it, and make it equal pay, so we had a wee job getting that thingummy, but the Company gave in at the finish! So, I always put that down to....there was about four of us....it was us that got equal payments in the pits!

Q. What they say....50-50! So, you were all for that, as a faceman?

JB Aye, I was all for that, as a faceman!

Q. And did the facemen that you worked with previously, did they favour the 50-50.

JB No! No! Not everyone favoured it....aye! Och, no, I got my books handed out of the window one Friday, and never had asked for them! I went round and asked the gaffer, "What's this!". He says, "Oh, I thought that you were leaving!" Now it was....you know this....it would have sickened you....there you are....what they tried to do with you!

Q. So, did you feel that you had an influence as far as the Company went? Getting this 50-50 established between the facemen and the drawers! Did you influence the Company's ideas about this? Did you....you and the other three?

- JB Aye, well, it was us that brought it about! It hadn't been....and we brought all the other trade unions secretaries over to a meeting and explained what we were doing, and it happened all over the shalefield after that!
- Q. Can you remember any of the names of the Union....officials? Have you heard of Jock Wardrop?
- JB I've heard of him! Aye, well, he was the Secretary of that Branch over there, and Pumpherston was....what do you call him....I can't remember all their names....
- Q. It wouldn't be Joe Heaney?
- JB Joe Heaney, that's who it was! Joe Heaney! And there was one, a Starlaw, used to come to the meetings, and....
- Q. Did the Management sit down and talk to these representatives of the Union and yourselves....and discuss these....
- JB No!
- Q. Or did you just discuss it....between yourselves?
- JB Aye!
- Q. And who approached the Managers or the Management about what your decisions had been?
- JB Who discussed what....?
- Q. Well, who approached....after you had made a decision....?
- JB Decision....aye!
- Q. Who approached the Management with what you had decided?
- JB The four of us that was in that....
- Q. So, you yourself went to the Management?
- JB Aye, we went to the Management!
- Q. And they accepted what....?
- JB Aye, that was John Stein, he was the General Manager, aye! We told him all these people that went were all facemen, do you know what I mean, and we told them on the Friday, we wanted our wages put into two pay packets,

you only got one pay packet, you see, and you paid the man....the drawer out of it....we wanted two pay packets and the drawer to be halved, and I mind of Jock Stein saying to me....the faceman, they gave the faceman....but wait to you hear this....the faceman got a half a crown a week extra....they got half a crown a day extra....for being facemen....now I said to Jock Stein, I said, "Well, we want that half a crown!" He turned round to me and says "Oh, no, that's not getting done!" "There's still going to be that half a crown for....!" So I says, "Who's paying it, are you going to pay this half a crown extra!" "No!", he says, "It comes off....!" He wanted to consent to having equal pay, but there was still to be half a crown extra for the faceman....he was still trying to keep it on these lines, aye, but he wasn't prepared to pay the half crown. This was for the faceman, being in charge of the place and what not! A lot of rougues man!

Q. Did you make any decision as to who would pay for powder and tools?

JB Exactly! That all came off the wages before you got the wages!

Q. Before it was 50-50?

JB Well, the powder did not come off it! Where....the tools were concerned, well, if there was anything needed, we just put it all together for what the price was!

Q. And when you were a faceman, did you come up against any problem....workings or the type of shale that you were working in? Having your experience you could determine what kind of shale that you were working in. Whether it was blaes....?

JB Well, you see, the worst pit that I worked was the best shale that the Company had, that was Number Forty, where all the water was....and that....was, they had a bigger yield out of that shale, you know, than ever there was out of the rest!

Q. And what field was that, that, you know, in Number Forty, was it the....Broxburn field, or somewhere else?

JB That pit's, just over the back side of us here! Aye, about half a mile, across the park, down Wardrop's Farm, up this tap side of it, in between....I'd say, it's only about a miles walk from where we stayed in Mossend, I think it was only about a miles walk!

Q. And which Company were you working for then?

JB Addiewell! Addiewell!

Q. Addiewell Oil Company?

JB Aye!! Oh aye! When Addiewell Oil Company....that Forty shut down, and Hermand

shut down, Fraser shut down, see, all these shut down before it was taken over by Scottish Oils!

Q. Scottish Oils?

JB Now, that's B.P. It has the lot!

Q. Were there any accidents happened when you were working in....?

JB Oh aye! I've seen lots of accidents!

Q. Can you remember any of them? Who was involved?

JB Ah well, Westwood....Westwood, when I was there! I don't want to give you that because....

Q. Not yet!

JB This man, Geordie Fern was his name....

Q. Where did he come from?

JB Mossend! He was just a young lad....married right enough....he was on the level below us driving this level, we were one above, driving it, and he came up to us, came walking up the end to us and we were standing talking, he was firing shots, and there were so many shots went off! I was standing talking to my father, you know, I was filling my hutch at the time, he was standing talking to us....and after that there were so many shots went off, and he started to walk down, you know, away down the....end, and he just got into the place, when another two shots went off and killed him! He was blown out the road, about twenty or thirty feet!

Q. And what would you say was the reason? Had he miscounted?

JB I think so! He either miscounted or they were late....you know what I mean, it just....his mind went off somewhere....aye!

Q. Was that the only fatality that you....?

JB It was the only fatality in Westwood that I knew anything about, but there was one in Twenty Six....a fatal one....the boy's head got....I saw it too....his head got cut clean off!

Q. Did you witness this, or were you there after it?

JB I saw it! I saw it, after the thing happened! Jimmy Robertson's drawer at Bellsquarry! It wasn't with a shot though! It was....after they've been fired, the drawer went away in to start to fill this hutch and there was a thing had came down and got him on the head....his head on the hutch end....cut his head....his head was lying over the other side of the thing!

Q. He was near enough be-headed?

JB Be-headed! Aye, he was be-headed! Aye!

Q. And this was from the roof?

JB Aye, well, I expect there would be....would maybe be about a couple of tons in it! You'll know what that can do! And it got his head on the side of the hutch, you know what I mean, and executed him!

Q. And you saw this man, just after it happened?

JB Just after it happened!

Q. And what were your feelings about that?

JB I guess....once you're in the pits for a long time, you are....I wasn't....you know what I mean, it looked gruesome, you know, you just get over these....aye! I saw another....old Wull Scott.

Q. Where did he come from?

JB Oakbank....Oakbank Cottages, he had left the shots, and wasn't able to get down the end in time, and put his strum....and one lump came down and carried him right down the....

Q. So, he hadn't given himself enough time....for the strum?

JB Aye!

Q. And which mine was that....or pit?

JB That was Twenty Six!

Q. Did you find that accidents were caused by misjudgment with facemen making errors in firing shots or sometimes it would just be an accident?

JB Well, we could have....all....made accidents, because you had to....the likes of working in pits, we had to make our own wage, you weren't on a set wage, you had to make what you made, what you got! I felt that was a lot of....you know what I mean, the Companies were kind of irresponsible that way!

Q. You felt that had a lot to do with taking risks?

JB Taking risks....aye! Oh aye!

Q. You were paid by tonnage?

JB I took them my own self sometimes! There you are!

Q. Could you say anything about that?

JB No! There was nothing happened!

Q. Oh! What risks did you take then....if nothing happened?

JB Oh, just lighting shots! Fourteen shots I've lighted at a time!

Q. And how many should you have lit?

JB You're only supposed to have lit three! But the Company let it go, because it knew it made things worse for that man to make a wage, because when you fire three shots you can't get in for reek, especially if you're up headings, you know! You can't see what you're doing! So, if you're allowed to fire fourteen, the air is just clearing it just the same, maybe a wee bit more time but it's making it easier for them to....aye, they played the game the Company's way, there you are!

Q. They actually knew what was going on?

JB Exactly!

Q. But they closed their eyes to it?

JB They closed their eyes to it! Aye!

END OF TAPE

JB SIDE TWO

Q. You were talking about things that you shouldn't do when you're working in the mines.

JB Oh well, that was one thing! It was supposed to be one man, one can of powder, but the majority of men were carrying two cans of powder, every morning, sometimes three!

Q. And the regulation was....only one!

JB Only one per man. It wasn't that you could take three, but one man, one can....of powder. So they were breaking their own rules and they were allowing that.

Q. And who had you to pass on your way down?

JB The fireman! With a rope on your two cans, you know what I mean, you had them slung over your shoulder, one on your back and one....

Q. And it was his job to stop you from doing that, but he didn't bother?

JB Well, I couldn't tell you! But he....no, I would say it was the Manager's job for to stop that, because he is the man....

Q. At the head?

JB They make the rules! It's them that makes the rules, no the firemen!

Q. But he must delegate that job to somebody else, that would be the fireman or the deputy!

JB Aye, because the fireman's job was passing you at your place if it is safe to go into! Not on powder, you know, not on cans of powder!

Q. Did he tell you when you passed him what the conditions were down the face that you were working?

JB Well, you just went forward, and say, Sam Bradford was our fireman, you would say "Right, Sammy!", and he would just say "Aye". That was all you got!

Q. Did he ever search for matches or anything like that?

JB Oh aye, they searched for matches! Yes! But they...very, very occasionally....But you see they had a rule in the pit, that you could smoke outside a certain distance of your place, where you were working! They had that rule! I believe that they never caught anybody, that I know of, you know, smoking on the face, because I would not smoke on the face! I always came out if I wanted a smoke! I came out to where that notice was, there was a notice up, I think, I'm not right sure, but I knew where it was, that you had to come out to! Just so far out from the face!

Q. The other pits and mines that you worked in, were where? You went from Forty to Twenty Six, and then you went to Westwood? Is that....?

JB Aye, I was only there about six months!

Q. And what were you doing there?

JB Oh, just the same kind of work, faceman....

Q. Faceman....?

JB I was working as a drawer with my father then, aye.

Q. At Westwood?

JB Aye, and Forty, these two pits I was working with my father.

Q. So he changed from Forty to Westwood as well?

JB Aye, he was transferred there you see, for....well, we didn't like Westwood!

Q. Why was that?

JB I'll tell you, we could have cried it the other side of the water. There were people prepared to work there for less on that side, than they were on this side. That's true!

Q. And which water are you talking about?

JB That burn! The City burn! It runs down....the what do you call it....the other side of the water....aye! We left there, we came....got back....oh, wait a minute....where did we got to....did I say....when we left Westwood.

Q. Westwood....you said you went to Hermand....?

JB Aye....well, I went to Hermand! I think that's when my father went on to the lighter work, you know, he went on to the lighter work up above, working for the Company.

Q. He went oncost?

JB Aye! Aye! Working up above! Not down below!

Q. Was there something wrong with his health?

JB No! He was just getting an old man at the time!

Q. So, it was age made him do that? Were you a faceman at Hermand?

JB Aye, I was a faceman at Hermand! That's when I became a faceman, I was in Hermand, aye!

Q. What was your job there? Firing shots and....was it a good face?

JB Oh, just boring, boring? Boring holes and firing shots, putting up wood! And keeping the roof up!

Q. Was that a good mine to work in?

JB No! That's the one I'm telling you about, if it hadn't had a good roof, it would have been, that's the one I was telling you, there was about six feet of this dirt coming down, you could start away a place, this is true! You could start away a place, starting a new place, and you'd bore so many holes, about five of them, and you could sit out the road listening, to see that it closed, do you know what I mean and you would say to yourself "Well, it's alright this time!" The wood has held, do you know what I mean. You had to crown it all, and thingummy it before you fired. And you would go back in and it was all lying on the ground.

Q. And you reckon above that was solid?

JB There was rock as solid as (inaudible) six feet up. If they did that roof for the shale to come off it, no dirt, you know, it would have been perfect!

Q. You wouldn't have needed any....?

JB You wouldn't have needed any a (inaudible). There you are!

Q. No wood!

JB But that's why it was shut down....I'd better, I don't know whether to put this in or

not. Everybody was filling dirt, instead of shale!

Q. That was to make up the weight! Well....

JB It made up the weight in a way, but that, you were firing there, and you were wasting powder and you had that powder to pay! Aye!

Q. Was there not a check at the weighman, when you went up there?

JB I got caught at it! Aye!

Q. Were you actually caught out on....?

JB Filling too much dirt....!

Q. Filling dirt?

JB I got three days suspension, but eh....

Q. Who was it that gave you that?

JB John McArthur was the Manager there!

Q. That was at Hermand?

JB Aye! Oh....me and him didn't get on!

Q. Did you do that quite often?

JB No! Not very often, but everybody was filling....that's the way it shut down, there was too much dirt in it, they weren't getting the value for their money, so they styled it!

Q. Did you find difficulty making a wage, when you were there, if it was that kind of mine?

JB Ah, well, some weeks, you had difficulty! Other weeks you could do practically... aye!

Q. And you went from Hermand to where? Was that the Fraser?

JB Hermand to the Fraser!

Q. And what kind of mine was that? Oh....there was a pit?

JB Pit! Well, that was the one we were talking about....the rock! That was the one!

Q. Oh, I thought that was Hermand!

JB No. No. You're kind of mixed up in that....a bit! The Fraser was the one with the rood like that! So, aye....Hermand wasn't too bad, it could hold....it was a bad rood in it, too! That's what was really wrong with it! It wasn't bad as long as you could hold the roof! Aye....we did not

bad in Hermand, aye!

Q. Did you ever work the three weeks on and one week off?

JB Oh aye, I don't know the length of time right enough, but we were on it! All the time that it was going!

Q. Can you remember why that came about?

JB Eh...

Q. Was it because there were miners from other pits that were closing, and they wanted to employ them?

JB Oh gee, you've got me there!

Q. You can't remember that?

JB I can't remember what the....was....

Q. Can you remember what you did on your one week off?

JB Aye, I went and reported on the dole....and one thing and another....a bit of gardening and that....

Q. Can you remember what you got when you went and signed on the dole? Money wise?

JB You should know that! (Talking to wife) (Wife talking) Two pound, nine shillings a week....aye!

Q. Two pounds and nine pence? That....

JB That was nine shillings....!

Q. Pence....oh, that was two pounds nine shillings! That's old money! And what did you feel about that? Did you quite like the one week off every month?

JB Well, it was a bit of a break, you know what I mean! But it reduced the money side of it.

Q. What did your wife feel about it?

JB How did you feel? (talking to wife). (Wife talking) Well, you just had to cut your cloth accordingly! Your three weeks, you got extra messages and the other week, you just cut down!

Q. So it was quite a cut?

JB (Wife talking) It was a cut!

Q. The income?

JB (wife talking) It certainly was a cut! Oh, you weren't getting an income without it, that's all that was wrong there! Even although you were working that week....you still weren't getting the income! There you are!

Q. Yes, and can you remember when you were at school or just left the school, and started in the shale industry, what your housing conditions were like? What kind of....where did you stay?

JB Oh, I stayed in Mossend....stone floors....not stone, but slab floors!

Q. Was that miners rows?

JB Miners rows aye!

Q. Did you have a water supply into the....?

JB No, you had no water supply! You had no scullery or that....and you had an outside well that you went and drew your water from.

Q. And the toilet was outside as well?

JB The toilets aye....we cried them "shunkies"! What a name they got!

Q. And were they dry?

JB Were they dry! (wife talking) You could smell them a mile off! / Oh, my God, the smell! If something happened through the night, and you had to rise out of your bed to go away round to the....you were standing sparking matches to see what was lying on the floor, and you were tramping in it! Oh....

Q. Not very hygienic?

JB You hardly think that people would live like that, there you are! That's how you were then!

Q. How often did they empty them?

JB Oh....I forget when they were emptied, and Alan Auld, what did they cry him again....he came down with this cart and he....was standing, we'd get in....he'd waders on and....

Q. He must have had no sense of smell then!

JB I don't know, but it was terrific!

Q. It was a horse and cart?

JB A horse and cart, aye!

Q. And it was a long time after that, that you got running water? And inside toilets?

JB Well, I was married at the time, when it started to come in, and when they started to put wooden floors into the houses, you know what I mean, you had to go into a house....they kept an empty one, till they did each house. Putting the floors in and boxed sculleries all in.

Q. Can you remember when that was?

JB Well, it's bound to be between....it would be about '21....'21 or '25, you know, when they did that, I mind about five years....I can't remember just right....

Q. And what about your community....had you an Institute Hall? Did you have a bowling green....?

JB Not a thing....no Institute....there's not one in the place yet! There you are! All the weer places outside West Calder had an Institute, or were getting them! All the oilfield had Institutes bar Mid Lothian, there you are!

Q. West Calder?

JB Aye, West Calder! (wife talking) There was only (inaudible) picture house! And it was an Institute!

Q. So, were you interested in football or....

JB Oh, aye, I played....

Q. Bowls....?

JBWith....Mossend, we had a football park down there you know, oh aye!

Q. Who was it that built that? Was it a Company football pitch?

JB It belonged to Addiewell Oil Works! John Young!

Q. Paraffin Young?

JB Aye, Paraffin Young.

Q. And had you....was there anything like the Woman's Rural or anything like that in these days?

JB I can't mind of these things, I think it was after that, that these started, that I heard of Rurals and things! I don't remember any, at that time, we're talking about!

Q. So, is there anything further that you would like to say on your past experience in the mines and pits?

JB Aye....there's only one thing that I would like to say, that I hope we don't go back to it again!

Q. Is that how you feel?

JB That's my finishing article!

Q. Alright!

END OF TAPE

TRANSCRIPT Mr JB

Industrial
Information

I left school when I was fourteen and went to West Calder Co-operative where I got a job as an ostler, that was attending to horses, but decided not to take it as I was interested in going down the pit. I started at the pit bottom, that was when the empties came off the cage. I shoved them up for about twenty feet or so and coupled them all, as I was going on. That was ready for the horse coming out with the gabble in the rake. I went to the pits because I was two or three shillings extra.

I was transferred, when I was about seventeen and a half to a pithead job called the 'shuta'. That was the back of the cage and you pulled this lever and shoved the empty on and put the full hutch on and then you drew the 'shuts', you know it was a big brake, and pressed the button for the engine to drop the cage again for to bring the next full one. I was in Breich for about three and a half years.

Addiewell

From there I went to Addiewell, it came under Addiewell Oil Works. I was a drawer to my father who was a faceman.

My job at
Addiewell

I filled the shale that he was blowing and blasting. I was working some days with my socks and my trousers folded up over my knees in water. It was the wettest pit Addiewell had. It was too near the surface.

Wages at
Addiewell

My father paid my wage, which was £2-18/- for six days.
When you were drawing for a stranger, they wanted you to work harder. From there

I went to Addiewell No. 40, where the road was falling in, and it was too near the surface, and there was no roof.

Timbering Problems

There was problems all the time with timbering the roof, you had to keep up with, we cried them legs. From there

No. 26 Cuddies

I went to twenty six as a drawer. if you were drawing on the level it progressed well, I've seen with about six lengths of draw,you called them 'cuddies', drawing three cuddies down before I got down to level road, and about a hundred yards after that, a level road to go out. When you got cuddies it makes hard work, because you were holding on to the other hutches going down because there was maybe not enough weight on the cuddies for to balance it, and if there was too much weight on the cuddie side when you put your empty one on, it flew up and you had to get behind it. There was no nice bits about it.

Wages

They did not pay me as much as when I was with my father. This is the way the Companies had the thingummy the men, with having a faceman and a drawer. They separated the workers, the same as they are doing yet.

Facemen

The facemen were contractors, they were the greediest ones I have ever worked with. The Company always wants these things! Oh you want to keep the workers split.

Fraser

I went from there to Fraser. I was there a few years, it also shut down, as

Bad Roof

they couldn't hold the roof. They couldn't even hold it with pit props. There was

about six feet of whites, that's what they called whites.

Roof Height

I would say there was about eight feet of shale in it, but it wasn't enough to hold what was under, these whites, they were what we called loose whites, not just in a block, when they came down, there was a roof above them of solid rock, you were in a perfect pit. So, but for the six feet of dirt, that's what spoiled that pit, and it was closed down.

Faceman

I was a faceman there as well. I went into the pits, and there was me and two or three more, you know we had a meeting, and the facemen and the drawer carry on, we decided to do away with it (equal pay), so we had a wee job getting that thingummy, but the Company gave in at the finish. It was us that got equal payments in the pits. Not everyone favoured it.

Equal Pay

Books

I got my books handed out the window one Friday, and I had never asked for them. I went round and asked the gaffer, 'What's this?' He said 'Oh, I thought you were leaving!' It would have sickened you.

Problems working
With Shale

The worst pit I worked in had the best shale, that was Number Forty where all the water was, but they had a bigger yield out of shale than there was out of all the rest. It was about half a mile across the park, down Wardrop's Farm. All these Companies shut down before Scottish Oils took over, which later became Scottish Oils.

Accidents

There were lots of accidents. A

Mossend
(Westwood)

man called Geordie Fern from Mossend, he was below us driving this level, and we were one above, driving it, and he came up the end to us, he was firing shots, and there were so many shots went off. I was filling my hutch at the time. There was so many shots went off and killed him. He was blown out the road, about twenty or thirty feet. He had miscounted or they were late.

Twenty Six
Accident

Jimmy Robertson drawer at Bells-quarry, after they had fired, the drawer went away to start and fill the hutch there was a thing that came down and got him on the head. His head was cut clean off and was lying at the other side of the hutch. It was gruesome.

Another accident was Will Scott from Oakbank, he had left the shots and wasn't able to get down the end in time, and put his strum, and one lump came down and carried him right down. He hadn't given himself enough time for the and put his strum. There could have been a few accidents caused by misjudgment with facemen making errors in firing shots in error. I felt a lot of accidents were caused by taking unnecessary risks. I have lit fourteen shots at one time, when I should only have lit three at a time, but the Company let it go, because they knew it made things worse for that man to make a wage, because when you fire three shots you can't get in for reek, especially if you're up headings. You can't see what you're doing! So if you're allowed to fire fourteen, the air is just clearing it just 'the same, maybe a wee bit more time but it is making it easier for them. The Company knew what was going on, but

they closed their eyes to it. The rules also stated that one man should only carry one can of powder, but the majority of men were carrying two cans and sometimes three cans of powder every morning. We had to pass the fireman, but he couldn't say anything because it was the managers' job. The fireman often used to search you for matches, but they had a rule in the pit, that you could smoke outside a certain distance of your place of work.

My Job As A
Faceman At
Hermand

My job there was just boring holes and firing shots and putting up wood to keep the roof up.

You would start a new place, and you'd bore so many holes, about five of them and you could sit out on the road listening to see that it closed, do you know what I mean, you would say to yourself, 'Well, it's alright this time.' The wood has held. You had to crown it all and thingummy it before you fired. And you would go back and it was all lying on the ground. You would not need any wood for the roof to be supported as it was six feet solid shale.

Hermand Closed

Hermand was closed because everybody was filling dirt instead of shale. That was to make up the weight. If the check-weightman caught you, the manager gave you three days suspension.

Short Working
Week

I can remember short time working all the time, because I can remember signing on the dole where I got two pounds nine shillings, but you just had to cut down.

Domestic Life

When I stayed at Mossend, the houses

Toilet

had stone floors that was in the miners rows. There was no scullery and you had an outside well where you drew the water from. There was an outside toilet, we called them 'shunkies', which were dry and you could smell them a mile off. Oh, my God, the smell. If something happened through the night, and you had to rise out your bed to go to the toilet you were standing sparking martet as to see what was lying on the floor that you were trampling on. It was not very hygienic. Alan Auld used to empty them, he came down with his cart.

Running Water

I was married at the time when that came in.

Wooden Floors

That also came in when I was married, they kept an empty one till they did each house, they also boxed in the sculleries at the same time.

Social Life

All there were was in West Calder, which had an Institute. West Calder also had a picture house.

Football

At Mossend we had a football park, which belonged to Addiewell Oil Works (Paraffin Young)

Woman's Rurals
(Wife Talking)

I cant remember anything like that. There is only one thing I would like to say, that I hope we don't have to go back to it again.