

JM SIDE ONE

JM Well, as I said I started in the Twenty-Six Mine, as a boy of fourteen years of age, and I earned, I think it was, three and fourpence a shift, and I got a penny extra for looking after the ponies. That's correct, because I hadn't a pound a week, you know.....

SB Yes!

JM Wages!

SB So, you worked then.....what.....a forty eight hour week?

JM Actually.....when I started first it was a seven hour day.....

SB Ah.....so that's when it had been brought down?

JM You see.....and I wasn't long started, maybe three months or maybe six months, and then you went on to an eight hour day.

SB Oh, I see, yes!

JM And.....I think in that period, we had to work till three o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. Eventually as time went on, I think that they took two hours off the Saturday and you got finished at one o'clock! I think that was the hours at that time!

SB So, that would have been what, after the twenties, nineteen.....

JM It would be after the '26, it must have been! Aye, because I started in about 1926 actually!

SB It must have been after the General Strike?

JM That's right, it was after the General Strike! And then.....as I said, I worked there till I was.....I think it would be about maybe nineteen or twenty years of age, and I couldn't get a job at the face, becauseaye, this was the reason, I had a hernia, which meant that I had to go through an operation and it meant looking for light work! And I did get light work, but very light pay I can tell you! And, when I went to get a job at the face, they wouldn't give me a job at the face, so I packed up! I tried to get a job in Westwood, but there was no work in Westwood, so eventually I landed in the coal pits.

SB Now, Baads Mine belonged to the Scottish Oils?

JM To the Scottish Oils, that's right! They needed men for that period that was.....it was queer because, they were working quotas, and each pit had to produce a quota of coal, and they were back with their quota, so they engaged more men to bring their quota up! And that's how I got started! I was there for a bit, and I worked at as I said before, when they were building that power station at Addiewell, the new power station. I was there for a bit, and then I landed in Burngrange.

SB In Burngrange?

JM As a drawer!

SB As a drawer? Yes? Now, did you work with any of your family?

JM Pardon?

SB Did you work with your family?

JM No! No! No!

SB Can you remember who your faceman was?

JM When I started?

SB Yes?

JM The first shift that I worked in Burngrange, it was a chap.....an old chap, Robert Tervitt was the faceman, and that was only for maybe a couple of shifts, and eventually I went to their contractors, and went on to this sort of tonnage. As I say, prior to going on to the tonnage business, I worked with the Ellises, they had a sort of contract going, brothers they were, and then I wasn't long there until I got on to this tonnage, eleven pence a ton, and that.....my brother-in-law was working in that.

SB Peter Ritchie?

JM Peter Ritchie.....no, Alec Ritchie, and Reids..... two brother Reidsand I can't mind of the other faceman that was (inaudible) but anyway as I say, I eventually went on and I got a job at the face....

SB As a drawer, what was your pin?

JM Oh.....I had a number..... twelve.....

SB Number twelve?

JM I think it was, aye!

SB Yes!

JM And then as I say, I was a fireman for a bit, maybe about a year.... over a year, and then I went back, and I got a job at the face, and I was at the face until the pit shut in 1956.

SB Now, were you asked to become a fireman or did you choose that?

JM Well, they knew.....you had a certificate, you see! And they asked

me to take a job as a fireman!

SB Yes, really acquiring that certificate was purely voluntary, it was purely your decision?

JM At that period? I mean, I paid for everything myself, going to night-school and that.....whatever it was and.....in fact, I used to cycle to Bathgate, to the classes!

SB Now, you went to Burngrange, can you remember the tonnage rate?

JM Well, as I say, it was eleven pence a ton! We earned about three pounds, maybe three pounds fifty a week! (inaudible), you know. Aye! That would be about the wages at that time!

SB And what was the minimum..... the minimum wage, can you remember.... below ground? Can you remember that?

JM Somewhere about nine shillings, I think!

SB Nine shillings a shift?

JM Aye!

SB And were you ever on, what they called, the make-up?

JM Aye.....well, not very often, no! No! There used to be fellows on it, and sometimes, you didn't get made up, it all depended! If the Manager or them, the people in authority, if they thought for a moment that the conditions were there, they decided the conditions were there for you to make wages, you didn't get made up! Which was as simple as that!

SB So you just had to work a bit harder or.....

JM Oh, well..... there were a few fellas going around with very, very little

pay! On a Friday!

SB Now, what shifts did you work?

JM We worked dayshift and nightshift, until the war started, and then we went on to backshift and dayshift.

SB No nightshift?

JM No nightshift!

SB Now, you with your wages.....did the tonnage rate of coal.....fluctuate a bit, did it go up, did it go down?

JM Oh well.....not really! Not in the time that we were at Burngrangewe did get.....I think that we got an increase on tonnage, a slight increase, but it didn't vary all that much! In fact.....I don't know, but I should have some pay lines somewhere, around somewhere, they were in the hut the last time I looked!

SB I see, yes!

JM And I don't know if I could put my hands on them, but if ever I do, I could maybe let you have them!

SB That would be good!

JM (Wife talking) Are they not in this case?/No!

SB Now, the deduction from your wage.....can you remember that?

JM Yes, well.....we had the normal deductions.....your stamp, you know, and you paid for the Doctor, paid for the ambulance.....

SB Can you remember how much?

JM A penny a week for the ambulance, and a penny a week for..... twopence a week for the Doctor was it, and we used to pay a penny a week for the band and.....various.....

SB And what about the Institute?

JM We didn't have an Institute!

SB Oh, you were at West Calder?

JM That's right, and we didn't have an Institute!

SB That was the only community that didn't have one! Was West Calder!

JM That's right! And we paid for all our own explosives!

SB Yes, and can you remember again the price?

JM Oh, no, but I'll tell you what we did pay for, was the drilling bits, and they were about thirty five shillings or thirty six shillings each! But I can't mind what the explosives.....

SB Now, where did you get your explosives from?

JM From the magazine, there was a magazine at the pit!

SB Yes!

JM And you went across and collected your explosives from the magazine! And at that time.....before the disaster it was.....just black powder, and the strum, I don't know if you understand what I'm talking about!

SB Yes, I understand! I understand it!

JM And.....after the disaster they brought in permitted explosives, with detonators!

SB Would that be for gelignite?

JM Well.....it was.....

SB A mixture.....

JM Aye, there were different types.....

SB And that was a detonator that you fixed with pliers?

JM Well, actually the detonators that we used at that time were on a...
they were fixed to the strum!

SB Oh, I see, so you just cut a length that you required?

JM That's right, but I've worked with that type of detonator too, as a
shot-firer and that too! Clamping the detonators on to the strum!

SB Yes. The detonator on to the..... Now, your tool or graith as it
is called, you know, your set of tool, what did that entail?

JM Well, when we were drawers, all that it entailed was a shovel arid a
pick, and a mash.....and a saw.

SB Which was supplied by?

JM And a saw, and we bought them ourselves!

SB You bought them yourselves!

JM Oh aye! If you were at the face, well, you had a bit more, you had....
well not a great deal really because.....at that period we were on
electric drills and they supplied..... the Company supplied the drills

and the boring machines. All that we bought were the bits for putting on the end! But I can recall when we had to buy our own drilling machines and..... you know!

SB Can you remember how much? That the machines were?

JM Oh.....was it about two fifty or something!

SB Two fifty? Now, that's the old ratchet!

JM Aye, the old ratchet machine, aye! And I can mind when I worked in....

SB In?

JM And I can mind when I worked in Baads with this chap.....him and I split wages, and I was drawing and he was at the face, and we went home this Friday and we had left our graith at the side of the road, and when we came back out on the Monday, there was a cave in, and all our graith was lost! So we had to renew it! And I'm sure that was what it was that I paid for that machine, was about two fifty! And then drills, we had to buy the drills forbye, and I can't think how much they cost, and picks and shovels.....

SB Picks and mash.....

JM And shovels.....

SB And everything, so it must have been a low week, that week?

JM Aye, it was!

SB It would be! Now, what about clothing?

JM Oh well, it was just.....when I started in the pit, you wore moleskins

and just an old jacket and flannel shirts, blue flannel shirts!

SB And did you wear the pewit?

JM Aye! And a blue pewit, aye!

SB And what about your headgear?

JM Och, well, just and ordinary.....well, what we cried a cadie!

SB A cadie, aye!

JM A soft cadie thing, you know, with a.....

SB Hook and everything.....

JM Aye, you know, for your lamp!

SB And what kind of a lamp?

JM Well, we worked with carbide lamps!

SB A carbide lamp, aye!

JM And eventually they introduced the safety lamps, you know, these electric
..... battery..... aye, aye!

SB Battery, yes! And in fact those were introduced after the disaster weren't they?

JM Yes, but we worked with them in this mine down here too! In certain
areas! If they thought that it was gassy they used to stipulate that
you had to use one of these lamps!

SB Why I'm saying that is, you know, when I read the report on the accident,
in fact, it was the 10th May 1947, when the actual law came out, you

know, there was an inquiry into the disaster, and it said that from now on, you know, no open light was to be used! You know, it was a hell of a thing that fifteen men had got to be killed, before they actually said.....no more! And what about boots?

JM Boots.....well, it was tackety boots! What they termed the miners pit boots!

SB And can you remember the price?

JM Aye! I can mind the cheapest ones ever I got! I got them in the Co-operative and they were pigskin.....ten and six, and they were..... there was a bonus going in the Co-operative that week, six pence in the pound bonus, so I got them for ten shillings!

SB Ten shillings?

JM And then my dividend off that! And then they began to rise in price after that, because I was pretty young at that time!

SB Now, we are coming on to supervision.....no, sanitation within the mine?

JM There was no such thing as sanitation!

SB So, what did you use, an old end, or what?

JM Aye, a level, an old bit level and ends!

SB And what about the pithead, did you have sanitation there?

JM Oh, there would be a degree of sanitation, I suppose, but I never worked on the pithead, so I don't know! There was.....aye there was a certain degree of sanitation there!

SB No baths?

JM No! Oh no! There were no baths!

SB Now, there were baths at Addiewell?

JM Addiewell, yes!

SB Did you ever use those?

JM Aye, I've seen us.....this was the old baths, not the last ones....
the baths there and we used to walk out there on a Saturday morning
maybe and have a bath!

SB Otherwise you bathed at home in the front of the fire?

JM Aye, you washed in the house, aye! Washed in the house, aye!

SB Now, supervision within the mine.....what.....was it strict?

JM Oh yes, it was fairly strict, aye!

SB What did you have.....well, as fireman, you would go round would you?

JM Yes, that's right!

SB And what did your job involve?

JM As a fireman?

SB Yes?

JM You had to examine the places.....I used to leave here, and I used
to go up about four o'clock in the morning, and go to the pit and go
round the section and examine all the section and test for gas and so
forth! And then you came and you passed the men in, to their respective

places! And then advised them if there was anything to be done, you know, to make it safe for safety wise!

SB Now.....I never spoke.....what was your wage, as a fireman?

JM I reckon that it must have been about three pounds, three pounds twelve or something like that!

SB Per week?

JM Aye!

SB Now, what about the checkweighman, can you remember who he was?

JM Aye! Yes, it was a Mr. Kinsman! Joe Kinsman was the checkweighman at Burngrange, and we used to pay for the.....checkweighman got paid I think it was a shilling a week!

SB A shilling per week?

JM For each man in the pit!

SB That was a shilling per week paid by each faceman?

JM No, everybody had to contribute to the checkweighman!

SB Everybody?

JM Other than the oncost workers! You know, the oncost workers!

SB So, that would be the facemen, the drawers, the benchers.....

JM No, just the facemen and drawers!

SB The facemen and drawers?

JM And that went into a fund, and you paid the checkweighman his wage!

SB I see, and what happened if the mine, say, wasn't all that busy and you had few men, I mean.....

JM Well, we couldn't afford to have checkweighman then!

SB So, what happened then? About the.....because I mean the checkweighman was really your man wasn't he?

JM That's right, yes!

SB On your side! So what happened then?

JM Well, you just had to rely on the pitheadman!

SB Now, we're coming on to.....the accidents! What in your mind.....now, as a miner and also as a faceman, what in your mind, was the main cause of accidents in the mines?

JM Oh, a certain amount of carelessness! And a degree of ignorance, because they didn't realise the risks they were taking, you know.

SB Now, you mean, by risks, for example not propping up a roof properly!

JM That's right, not taking time! And doing.....you know, doing a thorough job of it!

SB And what about walking into shots?

JM Oh aye, that happened too! People..... it's hard to say, but we used to light about twelve or thirteen shots.....

SB Now, I'm coming on to that, because strictly speaking.....you weren't allowed.

JM You were only supposed to light four.....

SB Four.....at the maximum! Yes!

JM Yes, but that was impossible! Because you could never have.....produced the material.....

SB Yes.....production!

JM And they knew that too, the Management knew that.....perfectly well they knew it! But they just used to turn a blind eye, if it was suiting them!

SB Now, this is coming on to an interesting question! As a miner.....as a faceman, as you say, you had up to twelve shots, now, if you had come upon, as a fireman, now you're in your other boots, as a fireman, you were coming up on the miner, who is just about twelve shots, what would you have done?

JM Well, you used to.....

SB I'm putting you in an awkward position, am I?

JM Not really, because everybody knew what was happening! And what you used to do, you used to.....tell him to put the strums in which is wrong too, of course, check that they are all alright, and then you gave him a ticking off, you could report him.....but I.....

SB Seeing that you done it yourself!

JM Aye, so you didn't report him! Some would, some firemen would, of course, but it didn't solve any problems because, everybody knew that.....in fact, it was just as safe a method as any, provided you gave yourself time to do it! You know! And the person doing it was capable! That was the difference! But.....the thing was, the chances were taken everywhere! It had.....if you were working strictly to the law.....

SB (inaudible) ...would never have moved.

JM Pits wouldn't go, and that applies even to the coal pits, at the present time! I mean, it's practically impossible, to adhere strictly to the Coal Mines Act to keep the pit going!

SB That's the Coal Mines in 1911? And it was changed in 1933, wasn't it?

JM That's right, yes!

SB Right, yes! Now, when you used the old ratchet machine, would you say that there was less dust than with the electrical one?

JM Oh, yes, definitely less dust, because you weren't boring so many holes!

SB Yes, and I think the ratchet machine cut more?

JM Well, no, not really, that didn't need to.....it was just a question of you only had the same amount of holes to bore with your electric machine it would have been alright! You know, but that didn't apply to it, because that's why they introduced the electric machines, was to bore more holes! You see!

SB Oh.....more production?

JM More production! That was the reason behind it! But had they just adhered to just maybe just five holes as the case may have been with the ratchet machine, there wouldn't have been any more dust! And what did happen was with the electric drilling, you got more fumes, more smoke! From the explosives! Because you were using far more explosives!

SB But, don't you think, then, in that case, don't you think that the Company were really taking chances, because it was bad enough with the old ratchet machine, using twelve at a time, surely with the electric machine, you could get even

more than what were regulation, so why were they really taking a chance?

JM Not really, because I mean it was all part of.....I'll tell you one thing, that I will say, about shale pits in general, but about Burngrange in particular was.....it was well ventilated!

SB Yes!

JM It was good ventilation!

SB Now, the ventilation was done by Sirocco Fan?

JM Aye, a big fan, aye! Where.....I don't know if you could have worked under these conditions in some of the pits that I've been in! They weren't as well ventilated!

SB In your mind, of all the pits that you worked in, which was the best?

JM I liked Burngrange the best!

SB And which was the worst?

JM You mean as a.....

SB Working conditions.....and everything?

JM Oh I think.....at Breich Pit!

SB Breich Pit was the worst!

JM That was the coal pit out at the Breich there! That was the worst... I'm not.....for conditions..... I mean, working conditions, but I think the.....then I was in Whitrigg after that, and it was a slave pit, and that's not so many years.....

SB Which one was that?

JM It should be.....it's closed now of course, down at Whittrigg! Because the Management.....oh.....treated the men like dogs!

SB What about Westwood, you worked in Westwood?

JM No.....I never was in Westwood!

SB You never worked in Westwood?

JM No, I never got a job in Westwood!

SB You never got a job in Westwood? That's fine! Now, we're coming on really to the big accident at Burngrange, now what in your mind do you think happened in there, I mean, I know the report says that one of the drawers went in, you know, with an open light.....was it Reid that went in with an open light! And in fact, he should not have had something like that!

JM No, there was nothing to prevent him from going in with an open light! It was quite customary..... the only thing that may have.....should have happened maybe was that the faceman should have went in prior to him, and examined the place, but that didn't always apply either! I mean.....what is it.....'familiarity breeds contempt', and nothing ever happens over years and years and nobody ever gets hurt so you just I carry on and..... then they're taking chances and they're not aware that they're taking chances!

SB According to the report, the faceman..... I'm trying to think, was it Todd?

JM Todd, aye! That's him!

SB He went first and realised that some of the roof had fallen in during his break. He had gone out for break about this time!

JM Yes! They had fired shots you see, he usually fired his shots.....and

then you would go on your break till the smoke clears.....

SB Yes, I see.....

JM You understand, you're on your.....

SB I understand.....I know what you're talking about!

JM And that clears, and that allows you to go back in, with the atmosphere more or less clear..... it depends really on the type of shots that you fired.....you would never allow the drawer to go in first.....say you were firing top shots, you would go in and dress the roof down before you allowed the drawer to go in! Had it been bottom shots well, fair enough, you can't.....well, very little chance of anything happening....

SB Now, you say that they had fired shots.....

JM Oh..... I don't know how many they had..... I don't know!

SB But, had shots been fired, can you remember?

JM Oh, I think that there would have been shots fired, I'm sure there would be!

SB No, the reason I'm saying is that the report said that no shots had been fired this afternoon!

JM Oh! That might well have been too, I don't know! I'll need to read the report over again! But I just.....it might be! That they didn't fire at that time, you see, sometimes we did! If we could avoid firing in the middle of shift.....we really used to keep all our shots till the end of the shift.....

SB Oh, I see, yes!

JM So, that we weren't going into reek, you know, the smoke!

SB No, this is what.....because there seems to be a bit of controversy about the report!

JM But I would need to read it over and see! But what actually happened really was that he ignited gas with his lamp.....

SB And that in fact was what killed McGarty?

JM That's right!

SB Because he fell into a stoop, did he not?

JM Pardon.

SB He fell into a stoop, did he not?

JM Who.....he got.....no, he just..... the ignition of the explosion, you know that killed him, it maybe would have landed him up against the stoop or the wall.

SB The wall.....?

JM The stoop.....or the wall, whatever you call it.....

SB Yes.....because he died of a fractured skull?

JM That's right! That's right!

SB Now, there were two boys, one of the boys was Sam Pake!

JM Pake!

SB Pake, was it, yes! Now, he asked for some hutches to be drawn up, and he saw the smoke coming up, did he not..... there was something about...

JM He maybe belled to get.....I can't mind now! As I say it was.....

what happened after that, the gas was ignited, you see, it travelled into another section, and set fire to shales, in the process! And it cut off.....more or less short circuited.....you see, the air had to go up this way and then down and into this dook and through this other section, whereas, what really happened was.....the force of air and smoke and fire short circuited the air thing.....cut the air off that side entirely.....

SB Oh, I see, yes!

JM Now, there might well be that, as you say, that lad maybe belled to get the rake drawn up, but in fact the motorman would be away becausehe would never be able to stand or work in the conditions thatyou know.....

SB Yes.....aye, here it is, Sam Pake and David Muir were the two boys involved in there, aye, here it is, it says here, it says "When Pake and Muir left Todd, telling him that they were going to tell the boys, Todd coupled a full hutch at the bench.....at the bench, and proceeded to signal for the empty rake or train to be lowered.....and he noticed a lot of smoke coming down. He signalled rake to stop at No. 13 level, got into it, put out his light and signalled for it to be hauled up again. As he approached the top of the dook, he noticed the dust and smoke were thicker. He noticed more dust as he approached the dook-head and told the lad employed at the dook-head and the haulage engine attendant and they all went out to get some fresh air. That's the report..... The other time was about..... "After a little while, Todd and the engineman attempted to go back in to get their clothes, and they were unable, that was about 8.20 pm, twenty minutes after the original explosion!" That's an extract from the report!

JM Is it?

SB Yes! There was a bit of controversy over the report, because the report infact seems to blame Reid, because he went in apparently with

an open lamp!

JM Aye!

SB But then he had been called by Todd, as I say, that's according to the report.

JM Aye.....you see, I don't suppose that you'll get everything factual...

SB No!

JM I don't think so! In fact, they were maybe telling the story as they thought happened.....what happened, because I'm quite sure there would be quite a bit of turmoil and excitement.....I mean, I went up through that section maybe about half an hour after that, and there were tubs lying on their side and all this sort of thing you know! And..... what actually.....I couldn't tell you about it, because I wasn't there, but I was led to believe that it was John McArthur that had lit the gas!

SB Now, a thing what amazes me is, there was no one in authority at the time!

JM The fireman wouldn't be in the section at that period, you see, fireman does his rounds, he passes the workmen in, in the morning, or the afternoon as the case may be, then he does his rounds, goes right round the whole section, sees how the work's getting on, and then he goes back up, and he would maybe be having his snack, or his snap as they talk about, and then he does another visit before finishing time, which means that there was only one person in authority at that time, and that was the faceman, the man that's in charge of the face.

SB But as I say, the report says that.....was it the Manager or the under-manager not the under-manager, somebody.....one of the big men, in fact, was on his way home or something, and there was in fact no... it gives you the names.....if I can find it.....George Crombie... was on his way home!

JM He was a deputy! He was a deputy!

SB And the shift oversman, David Brown was on the surface for his meal in consultation with Mr. J.B. McArthur.....

JM Aye, he was on the surface, aye!

SB So.....the report implies that in fact there was nobody there, to do the.....

JM You mean an official like.....well, that was quite customary, I mean...

SB It was customary?

JM Oh aye! That was quite.....there was nobody would ever complain about that, because.....whoever the official might well be, he couldn't be in every place at one time, could he?

SB No, that's true enough!

JM You know what I mean, you could be in the pit, he could be in the pit, but he could have been away in another section!

SB But how many firemen, then, would be employed in the mine?

JM Now..... there would be at least three, I think, because there would be three sections, there was always a fireman for each section, there may have been four!

SB And how big roughly, I know it alters from mine to mine, I realise that, how.....what is the biggest section that you've ever covered?

JM Where men are engaged.....where men are working..... it's difficult to estimate the distance.....but it was apportioned so that you were travelling round the section, and back to say, near enough, the pit bottom! Then say, there was section maybe..... to the north of that,

there was somebody going round that one, but then every section...
the size of it, depends on the amount of men that were employed in
a section, you see, it could be fairly well scattered! And maybe not
so many men in it!

SB I see!

JM It's difficult to explain.....

SB You see, this is the one aspect of the mine that I'm not very sure of!

JM You see.....for instance, I was a fireman in that Breich Pit and I had the
whole pit at times, in charge of the whole pit, because there was no men in it!

SB Oh, I see!

JM You were only there for the safety aspect! You know, looking after
pumps and all that sort of thing! So it wasn't a question..... it
wasn't a question about area, it was a question mostly about the amount
of men that was.....

SB Where a lot of men are at work?

JM Or production, you see!

SB Yes! Have you ever worked the opencast?

JM No! I never worked on them!

SB No!

JM I can't give you any information about that!

SB And you said that you worked in the Oilworks?

JM Aye, that Oilwork!

SB At Addiewell?

JM Yes! But not for very long!

SB No.....but.....

JM I worked there.....as I say, I couldn't get a job in the pit at that time, and I got a job there, six and ten-pence a shift it was, and we had one week idle and three weeks working!

SB Oh, that was in 1932?

JM It was after that a bit! Mind.....it could well be!

SB Yes, 1932 it started!

JM I think that it was a wee bit later than that, but it doesn't matter!
That's what.....I had three weeks work and one week idle, and I was mostly engaged in.....they were building new boilers and a big power station, out there at that time, but it wasn't my cup of tea, I didn't like it!
Because.....and then I got sent up the tip to work up the tip for a day or two!

SB And you didn't like that either!

JM No!

SB No?

JM No, I would rather have been down the pits!

SB Now, were there many Irish workers employed in the mines?

JM No, not very many, no! No, not really! That would be before that time, when they brought the Irish people across, I think!

SB Yes!

JM What we did have was

SB Bevin Boys?

JM Well, volunteers say.....volunteers from the pits, and then D.P.'s, we got the Displaced Persons, they came after the disaster. Displaced persons.....they were Displaced Persons! And we had voluntary workerswho had volunteered for the pits rather than the Forces, prior to that, there were some of them in the pit when the disaster occurred!

SB Were they accepted by the rest of the miners?

JM Provided that they accepted the Trade Union agreement! Oh aye! Because they were.....you see, the story or the history of that was.....when they brought the Irish workers across here at one period, they used them to break conditions, you know, reduce wages! For, maybe the Trade Unions weren't very strong at that period! But, when those people came, we made sure work that they had to adhere to the Trade Union agreement! And they all turned out to be quite good fellows and quite good workers!

SB I have no doubt that they were, yes!

Now, what was the Second World.....I always have difficulty with this, the Second World War effect on the shale miners?

JM Well, you see that was before my time actually, isn't it!

SB The Second World War?

JM Oh, you mean the Second World War?

SB Yes! I know that you look young!

JM Aye, you're quite right! You're quite right! Well, as I say, it had this effect that they needed all the oil that they could get at that period, but after the war was finished, the country more or less came back to.....

SB Back to normal, yes?

JM Aye, well, they could bring in a boat.....a tanker with more oil than we could produce in a year! So, therefore it was uneconomic!

SB Well, really the thirties.....well twenty six, really, was the beginning of the end, for the shale industry, wasn't it?

JM Aye, that's right! Well, I think that prior to that, because if you take the history, at one time Broxburn was a big oil place, and they had that candleworks and oilworks and what have you! But then was reduced to practically nothing! That was before the Second World War!

SB It was in 1920.....no, in '25 or '24, when they won the Admiralty contract?

JM Aye, oh that! Aye, aye! That's right, that's right! That's quite right, and we got a priority.....was there not adjustments made in the price of petrol and that you know!

SB Yes! What was it, 8p a pint was it?

JM That's right, they got an advantage.....preferment.....preferment tax or something like that! Preferential tax, that was what it was! And before the closure, they tried to get a penny increase on that, before most of the closures, but the Government at that period wouldn't hear tell of it!

SB No, that was Baldwin?

JM No, this was in the latter stages, he was into.....Bevin was.....
not Bevin.....Shinwell!

SB Shinwell was the (inaudible) at the time!

JM That may have been the Coalition Government! We interfered with...

SB Oh, yes, I was talking about 1925! Yes, that's fine!

JM That was.....I think it was Coalition.....for I remember that we
had a deputation to them for a penny on the.....penny on the
preferential tax! And they turned it down!

SB You seem to have.....you seem to have, yes.....because was it Chadwick
was the President of the Board of Trade at the time.....

JM What was that name?

SB Was it Chadwick? Chadwick rings a bell! Because there was, in fact,
three representations made, and Mr.....is it Mr. Reid, the first one
.....and he said, you know, he couldn't really do anything because
the connection was that Scottish Oils selling agency.....the miners
said, you know, that it was a whole with B.P., which was part of Scottish
Oils, but then the Government said no, it isn't! Scottish Oils selling
agency is on their own, so therefore they cannot be subsidised by
Scottish Oils, which in turn was subsidised by the Government and that's
how they came round to.....

JM Aye, that was just a big swizz wasn't it?

SB It was, it really was! I mean, I think that the shale mining industry
was really.....talk about selling down the mines, they really were!
Then we are coming on to the Unions, now! And that was Walter Nellies!

JM Aye, Nellies was the General Secretary!

SB The General Secretary?

JM And then when he finished, it was James McKelvie, from Broxburn!

SB Yes!

JM And then it was Joe Heaney!

SB Joe Heaney.....well, in fact Mrs. Hamilton, that's his daughter!

JM That's right!

SB Yes! Now, can you remember the Union fees at that time?

JM No! You mean the subscription?

SB Yes!

JM I think that it was sixpence a week!

SB Now, was this collected off your pay.....or.....?

JM Oh no.....not for many, many years, they used to have collectors that went round the doors! Collected the Union! We, eventually, got it kept off the wages at Burngrange! And, it evolved through time that it was collected off the wages throughout the industry!

SB That's when it became a closed shop?

JM That's right!

SB Now what was.....this is probably before your time now.....because it says you started.....in 1925, early 1926, you know, when the miners

went on strike and everything, that was actually more or less the end of the Unions wasn't it.....for a little while!

JM Aye.....for a bit.....oh aye, at that time they destroyed the Unions....

SB They destroyed.....a lot miners said they sold us down the drain!
They were really bitter about it!

JM Aye!

SB So, how long would it be before they were actually.....

JM Oh.....it was into the Thirties anyway! Before they started building the Unions.....

SB And what was the Company's attitude towards the Union?

JM Oh.....! They used to put your name down in red ink!

SB Oh, I see.....

JM They used to ask you into the office and tell you to pack it up, have nothing to do with the Union, they used to put your name down in red ink! Just to scare you off!

SB And were you ever threatened with the sack? Or.....

JM Aye well..... they didn't do it directly!

SB No, they had ways and means!

JM Yes!

SB So, what about politics in the Union, say for example.....I mean, I don't know if you know Harry Ferguson?

JM I know Harry Ferguson!

SB Aye, he was a strong Communist!

JM I know him! Do you know Harry Ferguson?

SB (Inaudible) Yes, I know Harry Ferguson!

JM I haven't seen him in years!

SB Yes, he's doing quite well, I was in fact.....

JM He's.....he has that furniture business

SB The Broxburn Bargain Centre!

JM No, I haven't seen Harry in years, I used to meet him occasionally!

SB I had to laugh because he's the only Communist who I know, drives a Mercedes! And I had to laugh, because, I said "Oh dear, this Capitalist, Communist (inaudible)..."

JM Oh no, we belong to the Communist Party?

SB And what were you accepted like? Were you frowned upon by the Company?

JM Well, they didn't care much for you! But.....I don't know, I could do my work, and they couldn't complain about anything that I did! And I got on well with the men in the pit!

SB Harry mentioned an incident when one of the Managers went down with the under-manager and apparently the under-manager said, he said "Harry", he said, "How's things in Russia today!"

JM Oh aye, they used to jibe you a bit, you know! But, it wasn't too bad!

SB Say, you had had the chance of promotion, do you think that would have stopped you?

JM No, what they did, was, was try to promote me, so that I would have nothing to do with that!

SB Oh, I see!

JM Aye, I remember one of the Managers, he came to me and he said, "Look, I can give you a job up in Burngrange.....up in Baads as an oversman or a fireman or something. It was supposed to be a step up!

SB To sweeten you?

JM And I said, look.....I can't mind what I was earning, I was earning more than what they were getting up there at that time, and I said to him, "Right, then Jimmy, I'll take it if you put my wages up to so and so", and that scared him off! That was finish of it!

SB They left you where you were!

JM They tried to get me out of the pit!

SB Now what about religion and freemasonry, was that strong?

JM Oh aye, freemasonry maybe! I don't know so much about religion! No, I don't think that religion (inaudible), never does at work, it was always after.....away from work that anybody bothers about it!

SB Yes, that was right enough!

JM I mean, you could work with people in the pit, and religion wouldn't crop up. It was only when you went home at night, and you went to the Catholic church, and I went to the Protestant church. If you go to church, that is!

SB Which doesn't make sense, does it? We're all the same when you think about it!

JM Now, freemasonry had a good say in the Scottish Oils, at one period, I'm not saying all the time, I'm sure!

SB Would you say that it was more on the Management rank, rather than the mining side?

JM Aye.....I don't know..... top Management and that, but I think that some of the lower Management!

SB The Under-Managers and that!

JM Aye!

SB We're coming onto retirement, well, not so much retirement, but compensation in case of injury! What happened then, can you remember how much you got?

JM Thirty shillings a week! If you qualified! But I got taken out of that pit down there on a stretcher, and taken home in an ambulance! And I got no compensation!

SB So, how was compensation decided?

JM It was.....you qualified if it was a direct injury in the pit, you qualified for compensation! And as I say, I think that that was the maximum that you would get, about thirty shillings a week! But then, there was degree injury, and they could reduce it! Oh aye, it was

hard, because they used to send you in front of these referees and all this!

SB Now, can you tell me more about this so called tribunal?

JM It wasn't a tribunal! It was a compensation Doctor!

SB It sounds more like a kangaroo court!

JM Aye, you went up in front of this compensation Doctor! McKendrick was his name! I never was in front of him, but I've heard tell of loads of people that were! And the actions that he carried out to destroy their case, and he was the man that determined whether you got compensation or not!

SB And was he a Company Doctor?

JM Oh, aye, well, he was a compensation Doctor! Compensation Doctor... I suppose that he would be separate from the employers in the sense that the Company would need to insure themselves through this..... see, and they wouldn't pay compensation if they could avoid it!

SB Now, where was that Doctor based?

JM In Edinburgh!

SB Edinburgh? Was it.....at the.....

JM I remember being sent to one in Glasgow!

SB Yes, that's the reason why I'm asking, because.....

JM Aye, I went in front of this fellow in Glasgow! I had a knee injury at the time! And I remember going in front of this chap.....and he was a bit of a lad too, you know! They were on the employers side anyway, you know, if you got compensation you were very.....

END OF TAPE

JM SIDE TWO

JM From Mossend, and it was a two apartment with a scullery, that was you in luxury because you had an outside toilet and water!

SB Can you remember the rent that you paid?

JM No.....but I think that it was less than five shillings a week! Aye it would be!

SB And that would be taken off your wage?

JM It was kept off your wages if you worked in the pits! And you were the householder.....but I wasn't the householder, I lived with my mother at that period!

SB Oh, I see! Who.....your father would be the householder?

JM No.....well, he was dead by that time then!

SB That's fine! Now can you remember the heating.....you will remember the price.....you know.....can you give me details about the house! The heating the lighting.....

JM Well, it was a coal fire! Eventually we got electric light, instead of paraffin lamp!

SB Did you buy the paraffin?

JM Yes! We bought it at the Co-operative!

SB At the West Calder Co-op?

JM Aye! Yes!

SB Yes! Now.....we're coming back, what about sanitation in the houses?

JM Well, we had a toilet in Mossend! And in Frank Street, and eventually everybody had sanitation in East Street and Mid Street, but at one period there was no such thing as sanitation in any of these streets!

SB Now, we're coming on to.....as you say, you had no Institute, not in West Calder anyhow, so what did you do for entertainment?

JM Well..... the picture house.....two, eventually, two picture houses!

SB Can you remember the price? To get in?

JM In to the pictures.....I can mind when we used to get in for a penny..... twopence..... that was the one, the People's Palace on the Cleugh Brae.....

SB Oh yes.....

JM Where the bank is now! We used to get in for a penny or twopence! Eventually, it went up, and it was sixpence, a shilling, aye! It would be about the dearest ever we paid for the pictures in West Calder! Then we had a billiard room.....two billiard rooms in West Calder!

SB Now.....who owned.....?

JM Boyle! Mr. Boyle!

SB So, it was privately owned?

JM It was privately owned, aye! And then there was the dance hall! But that's all demolished now right enough! That was more or less how we spent our time!

SB Now what about men.....men's hobbies.....what did you do?

JM Oh.....maybe played football.....mostly everybody played football... nothing in particular!

SB Quoits?

JM Oh aye, we used to.....quoits.....oh aye, we were a great quaiting house, our family were all quaiters! Oh yes!

SB Now, you're forgetting your favourite one, bowling!

JM Aye, well, aye.....in my lifetime, when I was young, we weren't allowed to bowl!

SB Oh, weren't you, why was that?

JM No, it was all those business.....so called business people in West Calder, that owned the bowling green, and they wouldn't even let us look over the fence! You see! Because we were only common five eighths! So, it's only in recent years that we've had the opportunity to bowl! For instance, they opened that bowling green over there, that was a local authority bowling green! It was open to anybody!

SB And then, what about pigeons?

JM Oh aye, pigeons were a great hobby in the mining villages, but I never kept them myself, because I couldn't afford to you see! They were quite expensive! But my pal, one of my pals, he used to keep them!

SB Whippets?

JM And whippets, I can remember when whippets were.....

SB Now, can you remember.....was the greyhound..... the Worker? It's supposed to have been.....

JM The Daily Worker!

SB Was that the.....

JM That was one of the best greyhounds in this area! And I knew the chap that kept it! In fact, I was very, very friendly with him! And I went and seen it running, but I never gambled, I never bet on it! But he was an awful card, that fellow!

SB Yes, that seems to be the one to come to mind to everybody, the Workeror the Daily Worker!

JM And then there was another one.....Wee Ann! That was another one!

SB Wee Ann was another one, yes!

JM Aye, that was a great greyhound!

SB Now, can you remember the starting price..... that would be for betting?

JM Oh.....I've no idea, no! I've never interested myself in gambling! But they used to tell me when it was trying and that you know, and I've seen me going with them, but I never gambled! No! And if they won, they had a good blitz in the pub! You know, to celebrate!

SB Now, you say that they would go down to the pub! Where would they go and drink?

JM In the pub!

SB So, that was much later.....after Crichton, after they were (inaudible)/

JM Well, West Calder, there was always plenty of pubs in West Calder!

Oh, aye! The Central Inn used to be the place that we went to! I used to work in it back and forward!

SB So, West Calder seems to almost have been out!

JM Of course, it was a community on its own you know! I don't know why, but it must have developed through the years! But, you see, it was a split community too, because there were coal miners too, in it! Coal miners and shale miners! You see, so that might have had something to do with not getting an Institute!

SB Of course, that was Scottish Oils way of keeping the coal miners out!

JM Aye, you see, I don't know! There must be an answer to it, but!

SB I can't find the answer, because West Calder was the only community...

JM The only one of the.....that's right! Addiewell had their Institute, Tarbrax.....

SB Bellsquarry even had a private one!

JM Had they?

SB Yes, Bellsquarry's Institute was in fact private!

JM Aye, that's right, aye!

SB Because the Oakbank Company in fact, paid.....paid for the entry fee for the miners.....

JM Did they?

SB Yes.....who attended! I remember, because I had the Bellsquarry Minute Book and in fact they had to write to Oakbank Company, three or four times to be able to get their money back, for the people, and

in fact one time, he says if they didn't pay, they wouldn't let the miners in.....so! The next meeting says, Oakbank subsidy duly paid! You know, it's really.....

JM Well, that's the only reason that I can think of.....and yet those miners in Baads, they must have paid that welfare.....contribution off their wages, it got kept.....and yet they never had a welfare!

SB It seems strange that, although Baads Mine, the same as Woolfords Mine, you know, further up, was owned by Scottish Oils, although they were coal mines they seem to have been segregated from the shale miners, why is that?

JM I don't know.....it's difficult to answer that! You see, what happened with Baads, was in the '26 strike, it was mainly West Calder miners that worked in it at that period, before the strike. After the strike they were locked out! You know that?

SB Yes!

JM And they brought in miners from Tarbrax, Woolford to work in Baads!

SB Yes, because Tarbrax had been shut after the 1925! That was more than thirty per cent closed down!

JM That's right, they shut.....they had a shale pit going up there too at one time, Southfield, and they had sunk it.....and they closed that and brought some of the shale miners down here to work.

SB Yes in fact, up there, Tarbrax was shut, Woolfords was shut. South Cobbinshaw Nos. 1 and 2 were shut, and Broxburn Dunnet seam was shut! There were about eight.....eight or nine, altogether, shut!

JM I don't know what that.....that must have had some effect on the split between the coal miners.....

SB So, they were probably looked upon as outsiders! They weren't wanted Usurpers I would call it.....they had more or less taken somebody else's job!

JM That's right, they were what we call blacklegs!

SB Yes, blacklegs, that's right! That's the best word!

JM (Inaudible) you see!

SB And were they ever accepted in time?

JM Oh eventually, yes! There's very very few people you ever hear talking about that nowadays! But at one period, it was a big slight, so it was!

SB Now, what happened when the mines.....the coal mines, when nationalisation of the coal mines.....when the N.C.B. took over Baads Mine, or did Scottish Oils.....still run Baads Mine? What happened then?

JM Aye, the N.C.B. eventually took it over! But no, Scottish Oils used their coal!

SB So, what happened to the personnel there in the mines?

JM Oh, they more or less just kept the same personnel there! And Managers and so forth, you know!

SB Now, that's fine! Now, we're coming back on to the entertainment side of it, what about pitch and toss?

JM Aye, that was a common pastime!

SB A favourite.....

JM Aye that and pontoon cards.....but that pitch and toss business that

used to be a Sunday.....a whole Sunday, they used to play that, just up by the bings there!

SB Now, there's a place somewhere, they used to be under a bridge! Yes, that was one of the favourite places they liked to play!

JM Aye, pitch and toss!

SB Have you played it yourself?

JM No! I never played it, I've never gambled in my life! I never had any money to gamble!

SB Who was it that was telling.....maybe it was Harry Ferguson that... was telling me, in fact, one day, he and a pal went, and they won seventeen pounds at pitch and toss, so there must have been a few men went home without a wage that day!

JM I'll tell you what I've seen them do! Play cards in the pit! They got their wages.....you used to get your wages on the backshift when they were going down the pit, and they used to maybe at piece time, after we had our piece, get the cards out and start playing pontoon!

SB In the mines?

JM In the pit! I've seen some of them lost their wages!

SB Yes, Harry was saying, he said that the pair of them put the seventeen pounds on the Worker! And he said, they lost it!

JM Did they?

SB They lost the lot! Seventeen pounds, just like that! It was a lot of money then, yes! A great, great deal of money!

JM But I know a fellow, he went in.....there used to be two dog tracks in Edinburgh, and he went in, and he won a hundred pounds in the first one, this is going back a number of years.....and he went from that dog track down to Powderhall, and he hadn't as much as pay the tram fare up to the Station!

SB Now, what about holidays, how did you do for that?

JM Well, we didn't get any holidays! We used to take two weeks idle time, and we used to go away camping! And that was unusual, that wasn't common, I mean there were very, very few miners in those days had a holiday! There was only one day off in the year!

SB Yes!

JM Sports day! The Saturday after.....the last Saturday in July!

SB Now, who organised that?

JM The Sports?

SB Yes, the Galaday and the Sports?

JM Oh, it wasn't a Galaday, it was professional sports! And they had a committee in West Calder, and (talking to wife) I think that your father used to be on the committee at one time, he was Secretary, and they used to run the professional Sports in West Calder, the last Friday in July!

SB The last Friday in July? Is that when the notice would go up in the mine, "This mine will be shut....."?

JM Yes, they were only shut one day and that was the only day, on the Saturday..... That was the holidays!

SB Now, do you know Jock Crombie?

JM Aye!

SB Jock Crombie.....yes, in fact I was talking to him the other day, which brings me to mind when you were talking about camping! Because he went camping!

JM Well, they went camping too, that's right, because we bought a tent off of them!

SB That's right, yes!

JM That's right, they used to go away camping..... the Boyds, Geordie Boyd and Andy Boyd and Jock Crombie and.....

SB He said about a group of twelve.....a dozen of them used to go camping!

JM Aye, they used to have two tents! They boys! We bought one off them!

SB In fact, I think that he told me that he bought his tent in Leith?

JM Leith, aye!

SB He went down and bought his tent there! Now, what about friendly societies, insurance.....

JM Well, we used to have the Works Society and the Deposit Society, the Sick and Deposit Society!

SB And can you remember how much you paid in?

JM You paid twopence a week into the Sick and Deposit Society, and that was to pay for your sickness benefit! But we used to put.....that's how we used to have our holiday money, we used to put I think it was two and twopence that we paid every week, and at the end of the year, you got all your two shillings back!

SB All back, yes! Is that another form of what they called the Yearly Society?

JM Aye, Yearly.....the Yearly! There was the Yearly and the Sick and Deposit!

SB And what about the.....

JM Then there was the Works Society, we paid threepence a week into that for sickness benefit, and if you were off work, you got either five or seven shillings a week!

SB And what about the Reckobite and the Shepherds Society?

JM Mostly everybody was attached to some of these.....Forresters.....or some of them! To get your insurance card stamped! I don't know how that would apply, but you had to belong to a Friendly Society to get your insurance card stamped at that time! At that's why an awful lot of people joined the Reckobites! Joined these Friendly Societies!

SB Fine, that's fine, I think that that's about it! Oh, no! what about any old miners superstitions, do you know of any?

JM No!

SB Have you ever heard the story about the moon..... the moonlight?

JM No!

SB When you did nightshift? It's supposed to be and apparently it works, I mean, you know, I mean, not from experience, from old miners, apparently if it is a full moon and you're on nightshift and if you listen about midnight, apparently the mines, you know, the pegs will start shaking and rumbling away or something like that!

JM Well, I've never experienced that! I've never heard tell of it either,

but maybe that was before my time! What I have heard about, was the rumble of trains!

SB Yes?

JMGoing across pits at some particular part! You know, you could hear that!

SB Yes, there would be less noise or I don't know.....what!

JM It was quieter at that time, you see! And you could hear the trains crossing, you know, certain parts of the pit, that you were working in!

SB And what about miners songs? Old miners songs?

JM Well.....

SB Clean miners songs! I don't like the look of his smile, the smile on his face there for a minute!

JM They were mostly all clean I think! I'll tell you what we used to have in the section where I started first, we used to have a sort of.....
Tam Boyd, he used to lead the procession coming down out the section with a.....powder can and he used to drum on the powder can, and the boys were whistling, all the road out of the section there!

SB Oh yes!

JM (Wife talking) But they were a musical family!/Aye!/Wife talking/The Boyds I'm talking about! They were all a musical family/Aye!

SB What about that song, 'Don't go down the Mine tonight. Dad!'

JM Oh, I've heard of it! I think that I've got the words of it somewhere in the house somewhere, but I never heard it sung very much! I think that when we were at a do one night, there was a girl that sang it!

And that was how I got the words! Do you mind of that? (Talking to wife) And I used to have quite close connections with the coal mine boys too!

SB Yes, and that's more of a coal miners song, is it? Now, I'm coming more on to you really (talking to wife) than yourself! The women's section of things! What about the shops, can you remember the prices of the bread and all that sort of thing?

JM (Wife now talking) Well, I should be able to remember, because I worked in a bread shop, when I started to work at first! That's about fifty years ago! And bread was fourpence ha'penny a loaf!

SB Yes!

JM And milk was twopence a pint! Teabread were a ha'penny each! And cakes were a penny! You used to get twopence worth of sweeties and never even weighed them, they would just put them in the bag and ate them! A cake of chocolate was twopence, that you're paying about twenty something for now! Twopence!

SB What about tea and things like that, things that you would have nowadays in the house?

JM That would be about ninepence a quarter, I think, and that was the best tea then! But when I was.....that was just before I left the school, we used to go down and get a penny packet of tea! And a good big packet you got for a penny. That was on a Friday, before they got.....the wages came in! A penny packet of tea, and a quarter of corned beef! Twopence for a quarter of corned beef! And a penny packet of tea, for a threepenny bit!

SB Times have changed!

JM That was nearly every Friday that we did that!/Of course, somethings were scarce then!/When we were waiting on the wages coming in, my dad

coming back from the pit with his wages and that was it! We had our break at twelve o'clock when we came out of the school!

SB Now, your dad was a shale miner?

JM No, he was a coal miner/Wife Talking/.....Limestone/No, they worked in the shale too!/Wife talking/Limestone too...../But he worked at the shale a wee while and then he went back to the limestone!/Wife Talking/He died at sixty eight, and he had that pneumonicosis or something.

SB Oh yes!

JM They wouldn't prove it, because they wouldn't give him a pension! Oh, he had an awful sort of dust and.....limestone/Oh, the limestone was bad!

SB The limestone is bad, yes!

JM (Wife talking) I had a brother...../They never worked with masks or anything you know!/I had a brother died when he was sixty and I think that would maybe...../Och, aye, you're right there/Wife talking/He had lung cancer.

SB Lung cancer, yes! That could be another thing, you know, that could be the cause of it! This is the thing that there was a great difference between the shale mine.....

JM Oh, aye, I'll say that!

SB It was very clean!

JM Aye, well it never done much harm to my lungs anyway, I'm not saying that everybody is the same! It didn't harm me very much! (Wife talking) You see, you drank the beer to keep them free, you always said! My dad wasn't a beer drinker, and we used to say if he would drink beer, it would wash the dust out of his lungs! That's what he always said, and

I don't know whether it was the case or not!

SB I think that it was as good as any! I think that you've been found out!
You can't use that excuse any more!

JM I've no excuse at all now!

SB You just go!

JM No, I'm never in a pub, now!

SB It's not much fun being in pubs nowadays! Is it!

JM Well.....I can't afford to! (Wife talking) It's too expensive!/You know,
at one day, you could go into a pub and there would be a couple of your
pals standing and you could say, "Right, I'm buying you drinks!" You
can't do that now! It used to be great, because we used to go about
Bonelli's Club, and there were three or four of us, and it was only a
tanner a pint! You never missed anything out! (wife talking) Now, you
can't get even two pints for a pound .!/You can't get two pints for your pound!

SB No, you can't even do that, no! Now, how often would you go as a miner,
how often would you go down the pub?

JM Oh I used to go down on a Friday.....(Wife talking) You used to go on
a Friday night...../I used to go on a Friday night or Saturday night/
Wife talking.....it was always a Saturday night! But I worked in that
pub, if you mind! (Wife talking) He's had a variety of jobs, that man,
after the pits shut down, because he felt that he couldn't do anything
else but the pits! And how many jobs were you in? He was in the rubber
works, he was in a pub, he was in the B.M.C., he was in a toy factory!

SB Did you ever try British Leyland?

JM He was in there...../Aye, I was in there/Wife talking.....they kicked

him out!/Aye, I had a great job in there...../Wife talking/Aye, suggestions officer/Aye, I had a marvellous job till they found out my politics!
And they told me that I would need to seek around for another job!
There wasn't enough work around!

SB Oh I see, in other words, if you had been a Tory, you would have been alright!

JM Oh, I would have been made!

SB You would still have been there!

JM (Wife talking)If he hadn't been a Communist, he probably would have been in Parliament today! They all used to say if Jim would just turn his coat, change his politics, he could be places! Because he was in the Co-operative, he had to do with everything nearly! Union branch, ... no Secretary, and that Trades Council, you had to do with that! He's still President of the Old Age Pensioners, and he's been that for years! He was President of the Bowling Green! He had to do with too many things at one time!

SB Now, that leads me to a question.....what made you turn.....well, it sounds (inaudible) turn Communist, why did you become a Communist, why not just a Socialist, why not a Liberal? I'm not going to say what about the Conservative?

JM Why not, because there's not a great deal of difference is there? For instance, when you look how many of your Labour Party Boys there, have joined the Alliance! Well, to me the Alliance is just more or less a degree of Toryism!

SB Yes!

JM You see, it's not enough to just understand the society that we live in, we have got to try and change it, for the better, for everybody!
As far as I can see, the Labour Party, in all my lifetime, they'll never change it, because.....there would have to be radical changes in their

leadership, their policy and everything else, because what happens they get into power, and then they sell their souls for a handful of silver, for a peerage, or something, well have a look around them, there's Harold Wilson, Ramsay MacDonald was started it right back through history, have a look for them!

SB I think.....I think that the choicest one of all, I think, is Vic Feather! How long ago is it, I'll never forget that man, when he came on television "I will never accept a peerage, never!"

JM And there's...../Wife talking/and there's Gormley...../Aye, Gormley!

SB Aye, Gormley, he was another one!

JM They're too numerous to mention! (Wife talking) Then they stick them on "This is your life!"

SB Oh yes!

JM But eh.....

SB "What have you done.....nothing, I crawled all my life!"

JM When you see people in the Labour Party, don't misunderstand me, I understand that there are some really good people, but there's something seriously wrong with the Labour Party when these people can get in to such top positions, and then sell them down the drain! They sell the workers.....and I'm sure that they've done that all my life!

SB Yes, what as a young man.....because I can see that it has been a lifelong policy.....what as a young man, made you choose.....what made you want to change society so much?

JM I'll tell you why, for one reason, as I told you, that I got carried out of that pit down there on stretchers, and I got no compensation!

And had I been left on my own, I was very.....I wasn't very old at that time, about seventeen or something, and had it been left to me, I would have tore that Manager to ribbons, but I was advised just to be cautious, and I was cautious and I approached this Manager, and I can always remember his words to me, I had to ask for a light job, mind you, I didn't like but I....."Aye", he said, "I'll give you a light job, but remember", he said, "a light pay", and so it was, you know what I mean!

SB Yes!

JM And I don't know, these words stuck in my mind, because I thought, my God, what a way to treat anybody! And I think that that sort of....

SB Turned you against the system?

JM Aye!

SB That sort of thing!

JM Because to me, if a person is injured, or anything wrong with them, they should get a bit of encouragement, instead of the other thing! Do you not think so?

SB Well, I think so, especially if you have been injured while working for a Company!

JM And they never paid me compensation!

SB No, I think that you got a rotten deal there, I mean, I do agree with you! I mean, it's a bit.....

JM Och, I'm not complaining, I've had a, good life! (Wife talking) Never got very far.....that's what he always used to say, that he never had any ambitions to get anywhere, he just wanted to help the working class!

SB Well, as long as you're happy where you are, why try to go somewhere

else, where you are going to be unhappy! You know.....when you can't
.....when you can't get everything.....everything really, you know!
Now.....we're coming over on to the diet and food! What kind of a
meal would.....would a miner have?

JM (Wife talking) Well.....Jim always got a three course dinner every
day, there was always home made soup, potatoes, meat and a pudding!
Every day!

SB Every day!

JM Because he was always hungry! A hardy worker! He had breakfast, he
had porridge or a boiled egg when he went out in the morning, and some-
times I was up at half past four making it! When he was in the fire
.....I was up and he never went to the pit once, and me in my bed!
I always got up and made his breakfast, made up his piece fresh that
morning...../Aye, you had to carry your own piece in those days!/Wife
talking/The dinner was all ready to go on the table when he came in,
about three o'clock or half past three it was and then we maybe only
had a light tea and always had a supper! He had to be fed, because
my mother always said, well, you'll remember that we always got well
fed, not that we did have an awful lot to.....I mean we got stovies
and sausage and onions and things that filled you up, home made soup
.....but there was nothing fancy, the dishes were very, very plain
but it was good!

SB Now, did you find.....you obviously ate well!

JM (Wife talking) Oh aye, yes, we did!

SB So, what.....how much.....what percentage of the wage would you say
was spent on food?

JM Well, we didn't pay much for rent!/(Wife talking) We'd only five
shillings a week for rent, for quite a number.....for thirteen years,

because it stayed at that, didn't it.....when you think about it, it never went up! Well, I would say about thirty shillings or something... two pounds.....Aye, well, my wage was two pounds ten/Aye.....and you used to save off it/(Wife talking)/I didn't save very much! You couldn't save very much! Jim smoked and he liked his can of beer!

SB Yes! Can you remember the prices?

JM (Wife talking) A pint of beer...../Cigarettes?/(Wife talking)..... A shilling a packet or about eleven pence ha'penny or something/Eleven pence ha'penny!

SB What kind of cigarettes were those?

JM (Wife talking) Capstan!/Capstan!

SB The strong ones!

JM (Wife talking) And then you went on to the tipped ones later on but the Capstan it was, it was eleven pence ha'penny for them!

SB So how did you do for children's clothing for example, for the moleskins and the boots.....?

JM Oh we just had to get them!

SB You just got them! Shirts.....?

JM (Wife talking) Well in the Co-operative you could have a club you see, what they called a Mutuality Club, and you could pay them up, and that's what we had to do, we had to take maybe a twenty pound..... it wouldn't be...../A pound!/(Wife talking) A pound it would be!/A pound club/
(Wife talking) A shilling a week or two shillings a week.....two pounds, you got things for two pounds, and that was how you had to do it!

- SB And can you remember the price of moleskins, and things like that, or children's clothing?
- JM (Wife talking) I can't remember the price.....well, children's..... you see, we had no family.....you see we only had one wee boy, and he died when he was eight months old, and I just can't.....I couldn't go to remember the price of.....
- SB And what about clothes for yourself? Can you remember that?
- JM (Wife talking) Well.....you used to get a dress for about ten shillingsand then you had.....you always waited till maybe the Co-op had a dividend sale on, and tried to get things that way, you see! Because they did have good bargains, they used to have shilling a bundle.... they used to have what they called "a shilling a bundle"a five pence bundle and you maybe got a gents cap in it and some other wee things!
- SB Oh what an excellent idea!
- JM Aye, shilling a bundle they were! And everybody used to say, you worked for your shilling bundle/Oh aye, the Co-operative was a good thing in those days/Wife talking. It was.....it was a good thing really/Of course the people...../(Wife talking) It was about the.....really the only shop in the place that...../.....used to live by their booktheir book, you've heard of that.....
- SB The Store books, yes!
- JM (Wife talking) They could deal on their book, you see, if you had so many shares, say that you had five pounds of shares, well they would let you trade for five pounds.....and you could, get five pounds maybe, credit, and then you could maybe pay two pounds off it, and they you would maybe get some more credit, and then you would maybe pay two pounds the next week, and by the time that it came the dividend you would be owing them quite a lot, not that I ever was, because I didn't

have to do it that way, but because I worked in the Co-op and I knew what happened you see! And by the time it came the dividend I would be owe them quite a bit, but then the dividend paid for that, they either got their dividend taken off their book or they drew their dividend, but sometimes they wouldn't let them draw it, you see, it had to go for their debt, but they always said, oh, you never owe the Co-op, which you weren't because you always had your two or three pounds worth of shares, and your dividend to cover it and I can remember when it was four and six in the pound dividend and that was quite good!

SB That was good?

JM (Wife talking) That was good, aye!

SB That was high, yes!

JM Four and six and a tanner bonus! (Wife talking) I've had quite a few dividends out of the same Co-operative because we purchased everything there, with me working in it, and when I was..... there was four of us in the family, and we had a hard, hard time, my dad had thirty shillings a week to keep six of us, when I was at school, and we had a hard, hard time, and it was always the Co-operative that we dealt with! That's how.....and then I got a job in the Co-operative when I left the school, and that's how I know all the (inaudible), I can remember the prices, say twopence for a pint of milk, four pence ha' penny for a loaf, now it's forty.....about ten shillings/A half loaf/ (Wife talking) Well.....a loaf, they don't talk about half loaves... you see it was half loaves in these days! It wasn't sliced, it was two and they were joined together, you broke them in half and that was a half loaf! One loaf was two, the plain ones, and you broke it through the middle, that was a half loaf, but they don't talk about half loaves now! It was just.....

SB You see how things change!

JM (Wife talking) Biscuits were threepence a packet!

SB Plain biscuits?

JM (Wife talking) Tea biscuits! These big packets were threepence, and you used to get these big butter biscuits for a ha'penny each, and gingerbread, like wee individual gingerbreads, they were a ha'penny each, snowballs a ha'penny each, doughnuts a ha'penny each.

SB But yet again, when we compare our wages, I would imagine that even in those days, a ha'penny to you was a lot of money.

JM (Wife talking) That's right...../Yes...../(Wife talking) That's right

SB I mean, if you had six children, each one with a ha'penny cake, it would be a lot of money, what would it be? Threepence!

JM I can mind when I went messages, when I used to live up in Gavieside, that was a row of houses down there, you never got anything for going messages, you get a jeely can!/(Wife talking) Or a jam piece!/If you went the messages, you got a jeely piece/(Wife talking) I used to go to the butchers for sixpence worth of boiling beef for the soup and then I went to the fruit shop for a penny worth of carrot, turnip and leeks, and that was ninepence for your soup!

SB That was a good soup!

JM (Wife talking) That was good soup! And we all got a bit of the beef and.....and the marrowbone was.....made a good pot of stock, and everybody got a wee bit beef and a bit carrot and turnip with their potatoes!

SB You shared it out?

JM (Wife talking) Aye!

SB Amazing, isn't it?

JM (Wife talking) And you got half a pound of sausages to make a big pot of stovies and a penny worth of onions! (Gap in tape)... I think that the older people, older than us even, they're more satisfied with life, than younger people are!

SB Yes, I would agree!

JM (Wife talking) For all that the prices have gone up and I know my own mother, she used to say "How much is that?" and I would tell her, say forty pence, "Oh, that's eight shillings!" She never.....she always took it back to the old money...../She always converted it!

SB Yes, she always converted it back!

JM But I think the people just got so used to it, that the older people they never complain, it's the younger people that I think that moan about money isn't it?

SB Yes, it is, yes!

JM (Wife talking) The price of things! The older people just accept it!

SB Why do you think that is?

JM I don't know! I don't know why it is, I've often wondered!/In general they are better off, than what they were when they were young/(Wife talking) Older people.....they are!/Because they've got a steady income now, haven't they, they've got a pension!

SB Their pension, yes!

JM However small it may be, it's steady!

SB It's there all the time!

JM Whereas at one time, just take miners, when (inaudible)..... it wasn't guaranteed they'd have a steady income, because if you lost a shift, that was a shift, you didn't get anything for it.....(Wife talking)
You lost money...../It was dead loss, and you could lose a week's work, with...../(Wife talking) With somebody dying..... if there was a death in the family, well, he had maybe to lose a week's work, and that was wages...../That was away, I mean...../(Wife talking) No money..... nothing!/The same with maybe.....a cold, a heavy cold, you had maybe a couple of days off your work, that was lost, wasn't it/(Wife talking)
Sometimes the miners struggled on to their work, where they wouldn't normally have been getting their wages for it!

SB Then again, in a case of illness, for instance a heavy cold or anything, or probably a longer illness, what did you do with your rent, did they keep the rent still off the compensation or did they wait to deduct till you went back?

JM Oh, no, no, they used to wait till you went back! And then they started taking so much a week!

SB So, you would pay maybe about a week and a half?

JM Aye, this is how they worked! Aye!

SB So, as long as you were away, that must have been quite a hard struggle?
To get through!

JM Aye...../(Wife talking) Aye, five shillings was a lot for rent in those days, because I know it was.....It wasn't five shillings, and even when Jim was in the coal, you used to get a ton of coal for thirty shillings, and I've seen me saying I wonder if we could do without till next week, you know, because the wages weren't awfy big either! And then of course, the rents were always getting bigger by that time!

The wages were.....I can't remember the wages...../The coal was not that bad, I know this much, we were finished in the coal pits, we were working constant nightshift and I had twenty three pounds ten a week, and I got a chance of a job with the Customs and Excise, at fourteen pounds eight shillings, and I mind of sitting on the Sunday night and I said "Och, I'm (inaudible)....." My wife persuaded me, and I got that job, and I never looked back! It was the best job I ever had in my life!

SB Yes! Despite the pay being lower?

JM Aye, but the pay just seemed to go up and up and up! (Wife talking) And he was easier worked/I couldn't have had it easier!/(Wife talking) Nothing to do. Certainly if he had stayed in the pits, he would have come out with maybe two or three thousand and a good...../Pension/ (Wife talking) But he might not have lived to come out of it!

SB Well, he may not have enjoyed it!

JM It was a dangerous job! It was/Oh aye, it was, it was!/(Wife talking) I was working, I was fortunate enough to be working, and I had a good enough wage and well, what's the difference in the wage if it's going to be easier for you?

SB Exactly! Were there many women working then?

JM (Wife talking) Well, I was about the first woman.....I was one of the first to start back in the Co-operative, but women didn't work, I took a job as a waitress in the Co-operative, what year was that? Just for somewhere to go, because I never was a person to go out much, and it was somewhere to go at nights, just, and then I started to work in Hallidays, Jim was made redundant in Burngrange and they were applying for a woman in Hallidays, the butchers, I don't know if you know it, in West Calder?

SB No!

JM (Wife talking) And I went up to see about the job and I got the job, and I was there for about eight years, that was 19.....55, it must have been, because my dad...../1956!/(Wife talking) And my father died.....and my aunt took a stroke and I was looking after her and looking after my mother, and it was too much for me and I finished up, and I went into Edinburgh and got a job in Nu-clear, and it was soldering and it was awfy sore on my eyes, and meantime I went into the Co-op and applied for a job, and I mean it was just about then about 1955, that women did start...../Aye, that's right/(Wife talking)coming..... that was when married women got back started in with them.....the Co-operative, and then I was there till I retired four years ago! So, that was why Jim was able to take the less wages!

SB Now, what was the attitude of the other women, because I mean you were the only one working really? How did they look on it?

JM Well, there were single women, you see! And there were married women, well, it was just that one started and then another one, and then they just seemed to start them after that!

SB It started snowballing?

JM Yes!

SB Now, coming on to fear of accidents, you know with your father being in the mines, and your husband in the mines, what was your.....your view? Were you frightened of accidents, did you.....?

JM (Wife talking) Do you mean for my husband?

SB For your husband? Yes!

JM (Wife talking) For my husband, aye!

SB And did you find that it was worse before or after Burngrange?

JM (Wife talking) I wouldn't say that it was worse after Burngrange, because it was just one of these things that with mines.....I had an uncle killed in the limestone and.....I wouldn't say that it was worse, it was worse.....I felt it worse when he was nightshift!

SB Yes!

JM (Wife talking) But well, during the day I didn't bother so much, you just always felt that, oh, he was fine and healthy and that if anything happened, he would manage to.....I just always thought that he would be alright.....but it was a...../You never thought nothing, you never...../(Wife talking) They never thought anything about it, but I mean I know that it was a dangerous job/(inaudible)/(Wife talking) In fact...

SB And you as a miner.....? (Inaudible).

JM (Wife talking).....he showed me the height that he had worked in the coal, the lime was.....Burngrange wasn't so bad, the shale wasn't so bad!/The shale wasn't bad!

SB The shale wasn't bad!

JM (Wife talking) I knew that it was higher! And they had a wee bit more chance, but in the coal, it was always a dread because they used to be lying on their stomach and shovel the coal! And then I knew by the state of his clothes he came home in that he was working in bad conditions! Sometimes I had to wash his trousers for the next day, they were so wet and torn, they were all tied up with wire!

SB Now, as a coal miner, there was an old superstition that you mustn't wash your back!

JM Aye, at one time, that was right! You see, I reckoned that was.... that must have been said to them because they had no baths, they hadn't

facilities to wash their backs, you know, because I used to know a couple of chaps, when I was maybe just left the school, just started in the coal pits, and we used to go down the dooking hole at the time, and this was summertime like, and their back was black, ken, just stained black with the coal dust, and this is what they said, that it was unlucky to wash their backs! But they hadn't the facilities to wash their backs! Once the baths came out, everybody washed their backs!

SB That's it, yes!

JM (Wife talking) Well, I always washed his back every day!/Oh aye!/(Wife talking) From when we got married!.....

SB And it didn't drain your strength?

JM (Wife talking) No...../No.....! (Wife talking) Well, he's seventy past in December, and he had to go and get a medical for driving and he passed everything okay!

SB Oh, well, there you are then!

JM (Wife talking) He got a clean bill of health and then the next month he took the flu.....
(Long silent gap on tape)

SB Now one apparent issue which..... Now, you were on duty that night, at Burngrange?

JM Yes!

SB Now.....how long was it.....when you heard of the accident, and what went through your mind at the time?

JM (Wife talking) Well, actually I was out visiting friends, and we heard the siren.....but at that time I didn't know it was for fire! And I

don't know.....maybe about ten minutes or fifteen minutes after that, my father came in, and he said to Jim's pal. Jock, he said "That's Burngrange on fire!" That was his words! And of course, I got into an awful panic! And he said, "Now, it's alright, you just sit still!" "And I'll go and see!" Now, I think that he said, before he went out, he said "Give Jenny a brandy" and I think that sort of numbed me for a wee while, and then the next thing, my brother and his wife appeared and they went.....

END OF TAPE

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|------------------------|---|
| Transcript | JM |
| Industrial Information | I started in Twenty-six Mine, as a boy of fourteen years of age. |
| Wages | I think I got three or four pence a shift, and I got an extra penny for looking after the ponies. I didn't have a pound a week. |
| Hours | When I started it was a seven hour day, and after three to six months I went on to an eight hour day. |
| Hernia | When I was about nineteen or twenty years of age, and I couldn't get a job at the face because I had a hernia, which meant I had to go through an operation and that meant looking for light work afterwards. |
| Westwood | I tried to get a job in Westwood, but there was nothing going. |

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| Baads Mine | <p>I eventually landed in Baads Coal Mine, which belonged to the Scottish Oils.</p> <p>They needed men for that period, because they had working quotas. Each pit had to produce a quota of coal, and they were away back with their quota, so that was why they started more men.</p> |
| Addiewell Power Station | <p>They then started to build Addiewell power station, and I moved over there for a bit.</p> |
| Drawer at Burngrange | <p>I then landed a job at Burngrange as a drawer. Robert Travitt was the faceman, but I was only there for a couple of shifts.</p> |
| Contractors | <p>From there I went to their contractors and I was on this contract with the Ellises, they were brothers who had a sort contract going. Alex Ritchie and the Reids were the faceman.</p> |
| Wages | <p>Working with the contractors I got eleven pence a ton.</p> |
| Drawer | <p>I eventually got a job at the face as a drawer, where I worked until the pit shut in 1956.</p> |
| Pin Number | <p>When I was a drawer my pin number was number twelve.</p> |
| Fireman | <p>When I was in the pit they to take on a job as a fireman .</p> |
| Certificate | <p>Being asked to take on the job</p> |

as a fireman I decided to take my certificate which was purely ' voluntary. I paid for everything myself, going to night school. I used to cycle to Bathgate for the fireman's classes.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Wages at Burngrange | At Burngrange the tonnage rate was eleven pence a ton. We earned about three pounds fifty a week. The minimum wage was nine shillings. There used to be some fellows on the minimum wage who got what they called make up pay, but it all depended on the people in authority. If they thought for a moment that the conditions warranted make up pay you would get it, otherwise we were told to work a bit harder. |
| Deductions | We had the normal deductions. A penny a week for the ambulance. twopence a week for the Doctor. A penny a week for the band at the Institute. |
| Drill Bits | The drill bits cost about thirty-six shillings each. |
| Explosives | You went across to collect your explosives from the magazine before the disaster it was black powder and a strum. After the disaster they brought in permitted explosives with detonators, the detonators we used at that time were fixed to the strum. You just cut the length that you required and clamped it on to the strum with your tool or graith as it |

was called.

Tools

As a drawer we worked with a pick and shovel, a saw and a mash. The time we were on electric drills, the Company supplied them. All we bought were the bits for putting at the end.

Old Ratchet Drills

I worked with the old ratchet drills in Baads Coal Mine. They cost about two fifty, and then we had to buy the drills bit forby.

Clothing

When I started in the pit we wore moleskins and just an old jacket and a blue flannel shirt and a pewit.

Underground Lamps

The first lamp I had in the mine was a carbide lamp, then they introduced the safety lamps after the Burngrange Disaster. Also if it was in a gassy area that we were working, they used to stipulate that we used one of these lamps.

Boots

We wore tackety boots, what they termed the miners pit boots. I can mind the cheapest ones I ever got from the Co-operative and they were pit-skins. They cost me ten and six, but there was a bonus, so I got them for ten shillings.

Fireman's Duties

I used to go round and examine the places, and I used to go up at four in the morning and go round and test for gas. Then you passed the men into their respective places, and then

advised them if there was anything to be done to make it safe.

Fireman's Wages

I reckon as a fireman I was paid three pounds twelve or something like that.

Checkweighman

The checkweighman got paid one shilling a week by each man in the mine which went into a fund and this is how the checkweighman was paid.

Production

We had the same amount of holes to bore with your racket machine, but when they introduced electric drills you had to drill more holes because they wanted more production.

Fumes

With the introduction of the electric drills there was more fumes and smoke, because we were using far more explosives.

Ventilation

One thing about the shale pits in general, but about Burngrange, in particular it was well ventilated with a Sirocco fan.

Accident at Burngrange

There was a big accident at Burngrange, which was caused by gas. The faceman should have went in first and examined the place before allowing anybody else in. But 'familiarity breeds contempt' and nothing ever happens over years and years and nobody ever gets hurt, so you just carry on and then they've taking chances they are not aware of.

According to the report, after he had fired his shots, he was supposed to go out for a

break until the smoke clears. This allows you to go back in with the atmosphere more or less clear. It really depends on the type of shots that you fired. You never allowed the drawer to go in first, because the faceman had to dress the roof down first. Had it been bottom shots, there was little chance of anything happening. The report said if we could avoid firing shots in the middle of the shift. It stated that we should only fire at the end of the shift. What actually happened was the gas in his lamp ignited and the ignition of the explosion that killed him threw him against the stoop. He had asked for some hutches to be drawn up and he saw the smoke coming which then ignited. It then travelled into another section and set fire to the shales in the process. It had to go up this way and then down into this dook and through this other section, whereas what really happened was the force of air, smoke and fire short circuited and cut the air off to that side entirely. There was a bit of controversy over the report, because in fact it seems to blame Reid, because he apparently went in with an open lamp. They were telling the story as they thought happened, because I am quite sure there would have

been a bit of turmoil and excitement.

I went up through that section maybe half an hour after that and there were tubs lying on their side and all this sort of thing. The fireman wouldn't be in the section at that period, because the fireman did his rounds, then he passed the workman in the morning or the afternoons as the case may be, then he did his rounds right round the whole section to see how works getting on. He was the man in authority at that time, and the faceman was in charge of the face.

Idle

After this happened at Burngrange I couldn't get a job in another pit at that time. I had three weeks work and one week idle, and I was mostly engaged in building new boilers and a big power station out there at that time.

Tip

I then got sent to the tip for a day or two but I didn't like that either, because I would rather have been down the pit.

Second World War

This happened during the second World War, and it had the effect that they needed all the oil that they could get at that period, but after the war. After that period it wasn't economical to extract oil from shale, because they could bring it in a boat with more oil than we could produce in a year from shale. I think that prior to that,

because of the history of Broxburn, which was a big oil producing place, and they had the candleworks and oil-works. But then it was reduced to practically nothing. That was before the Second World War.

Price of Retort

Petrol at that time cost eight pence a pint. They got the advantage of preferential tax. Before the closure, they tried to get a penny increase on that before most of the closures, but the Government at that time wouldn't hear tell of it.

I remember we had a deputation to the Government to increase the preferential tax by one penny but they declined.

Unions

Union fees was sixpence a week, and for many years they used to have collectors that went round the doors to collect the fees. We eventually got it taken off our wages at Burngrange. It was into the thirties before they started building the Unions. The Company used to put your name down in red ink, just to scare you off.

Strikes

In 1925 early 1926 when the miners went on strike and everything, that was more or less the end of the Unions.

Baths

There were baths at Addiewell, this was the old baths. We used to walk out there on a Saturday morning and have a

bath, otherwise we bathed at home in front of the fire.

Domestic Life
Housing

At Mossend we had a two apartment with a scullery, which was luxury.

Rent

The rent for the house was less than five shillings a week, and it was kept off your wages if you worked the pit. My mother was the householder at that time because my father was dead.

Lighting

At first we had paraffin which we bought from the Co-operative in West Calder. We eventually got electric lighting.

Heating

We had a coal fire for heating.

Sanitation

We had a toilet in Mossend. In Frank Street we also had sanitation, but at one period there was no such thing as sanitation in any of these streets.

Social Life
Picture House

There was a picture house at first, then eventually there were two, so we had a choice, and I can mind we used to get in for a penny to the Peoples' Palace on Cleugh Brae. Eventually it went up to sixpence and a shilling. That would be about the dearest we ever paid for the pictures in West Calder.

Billiard Rooms

We had two billiard rooms in West Calder, which were owned by Mr. Boyle.

Dance Hall

There were dances held in the dance hall, where we had some good times. That has all been demolished now right enough.

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| Football | Mostly everybody played football in those days. |
| Quoits | We were a great quaiting household, all our family played quoits. |
| Bowling | In my young days I didn't play bowls due to my age, they wouldn't even let us look over the fence. We were called common five eights. It was only in recent years that we've had the opportunity to bowl. For instance, they opened that bowling green over there, which was a local authority bowling green which was open to anybody. |
| Pigeons | I never kept pigeons myself because they were too expensive and I couldn't afford them, but it was a great hobby in the mining villages. |
| Greyhounds | There were a lot of greyhounds in this area, and I knew a chap who kept them. I never bet on them myself, and I've never been interested in gambling. The guys who did bet had a good blitz at the pit if they won, to celebrate. |
| Pubs | There was always plenty to do, because of the number of pubs in West Calder. The Central Inn used to be the place we went to. |
| Institute | The Bellsquarry was privately owned. I remember I had the Bellsquarry Minute Book and in fact had to write to Oakbank Company three or four times to be able to get their |

money back. One time he says if they didn't pay they wouldn't let the Miners in. The next meeting said that the subsidy had been duly paid.

Pontoon

They also used to play pontoon but I didn't play because I never gambled in my life, because I never had the money to 'take part. They used to even play cards in the pit. I've seen some of them losing all their wages.

Gala Day & Sports Day

It was professional sports day. They had a committee in West Calder.

Holidays

We didn't get any holidays, but we used to take two weeks idle time and go away camping. There were a few miners in those days had a holiday. There was only one day we really had off a year.

Works Society

We used to pay twopence a week into the Sick and Deposit Society and that was to pay for the sickness benefit. I think it was twopence a week we paid and at the end of the year we got all our two shillings back.

Closure of Mines

When they started to import oil from the Persian Gulf, the shale mines started to close down because it no longer paid to extract oil from shale any longer.