

JF

TAPE ONE SIDE ONE

Q. Right then, what mine was it you worked in?

JT I worked in Newliston mine, that's down mine to Kirkland mine, that's over near Fauchledean. And then I went to Fauchledean mine, and then I transferred from Fauchledean to Whitequarries. I finished up in Whitequarries whenever the mines closed down in 1962. That was whenever the whole mines closed down. So during my time and that, I really enjoyed the job and that, I really enjoyed the job you know, because, I mean to say, there was really nothing else and I was quite happy in my work, and everything else, although there was sort of dangers and everything else, but still, that was all in a day's work. And we just worked hand in hand with one another, more like a brotherly lot, you know. You just helped one another, if there was somebody there in difficulties you went and helped them, or if you were in difficulties they come and helped you. And I think it was...they were quite a good body of men, and everything else, so I mean to say I started in the Roman Camps in 1925, and I was working on the pit head at that time, and then the 1925/6 strike come on, so therefore I was made idle, like, and 1926 I got a job in Newliston mine through the mine manager Mr. Clarke. My mother used to wash there, and however I got sent out to Newliston mine to drive a pony. So I drove a pony for a wee while and then I got on to what they would call a chain runner and then I went across.....

Q. What was a chain runner?

JT Chain running is taking the empty - the full hutches from the drawers ken from the benches, and sending them to the hill and putting on the empties and then I used to - I went from there to the drawing, I was filling the hutches and drawing them from the faceman, the faceman howked the stuff. So of course that was quite all right but I wasn't just strong enough for the job at the time so I went back to the chain running which was quite good, you know, I was very nimble at that time and everything and I worked away there for so many years, I couldn't tell you for how long. And then I got transferred to Fauchledean, to Kirkland, and from Kirkland to Fauchledean, and then to Whitequarries.

Q. And were you on the same thing there, were you?

JT I was just doing mostly the mining, you know, I was faceman and I was drawer, and then in 1954 I - I think it was 1954, I had an accident in Whitequarries, I had a fractured spine, six fractured ribs, a broken leg, a broken arm and 32 stitches! And I lay in Bangour for three months, and whenever I came back again I was...I had started work again in the mine in six month's time. That was only doing - just labouring about, I could have sat about and done nothing, they were quite well pleased to see me back again.

Q. What was the accident?

JT The accident was the side fell in, you see, the side fell in and it pushed me over and the chap that was drawing off me, he pulled me to the side and he set me up...you have no idea where the men came from when they

knew I was hurt. They came from the other side of the mine and everything to help, and I wasn't buried in any way, you know, it was just that I got the hit and I happened to be..there happened to be an opening on the bottom side which I was thrown down, you see, I was pushed down there. So that's what I had, I had a fractured spine, six fractured ribs, a broken leg, a broken arm and 32 stitches. And then when I started in the mines again I was hanging screencloth, you know, for putting air into the different sections, well, that was quite all right and as I was getting stronger and everything I was doing other jobs as well you know, at the foot of a cousy brae I was coupling off hutches and putting on hutches and everything and the chap that was driving the engine, the wee engine you know, and that was all right. So the gaffer came down one day and he said to me, "Here, J" he said, "If I thought you could have done that," he said, "I would have gave you that job". Said, I, "That's all right." That was a Mr. Benson, Alex Benson from West Calder. So I told him, I said, "Alex, if I'm improving" I said, "I don't want to be just a labourer all the time" I said, "I want to get back to my usual if I can". So However I did eventually - I didn't take up the face job, the face man's job, I went on to the oncost.

Q. What was the oncost?

JT That was repairing, putting up timbers and that, you see, in different places. Sometimes you maybe had to lay a set of rails for a man, or plates or something like that, you know, for their braes and so on. Well these things were all under what they called oncost worker you see, and then you had your drawer and then you had your faceman, and that, you

see. The faceman, he produces the stuff, he bores the holes, stems the shots, fires the shots, and then the drawer and them fill them, then they draw them out to the main haulage and as the chain runner, you see, the chain runner comes down with the empties, puts the empties into the top road you see, then he takes the chain and puts it on and sends away the full ones, sends them to the top and then that's the procedure that we had to go through. And I really enjoyed it, in fact, whenever I did get back on to the job that - as oncost worker and that, I did try the face, you know, but it was all mostly on my left side and I couldn't support the electric machine on my left hand. Whenever it beat my left hand it just took me right over. So however I had to attend Leopold Place, that's where the industrial injuries - I had to attend them every six months for a medical report. So the first time I went in I was 50% disability, that was, the doctors made me out 50% disability, so I carried on, so that was me on disability money plus I was getting - made me up to my wages. So then I had to go in every six months as I said. So the following six months, was taken down from 50% to 30% disability. Then on the next time I went in, the same doctors that examined me the first time examined me the third time so they kept me at 30%, they still kept me going at 30% and said that I was improving slowly. So however I went in the following six months and they made me out 20%. So the next time I went in, that was my last appearance in Leopold Place, and they made me out 5% disability for life, but "able to follow his own employment.", you see. So I really never went back to the face again, because I hadn't the full strength on my left arm anyway, and still now, I feel quite well and everything, I made a great recovery in the hospital, in Bangour, and everything, and I didn't get a pension for that. I've been 36 year in the mines and I don't

even get a pension for 36 years. I got this watch for 33 years' service, that was the time they were giving out watches, it is inscribed on the back you see, there, 33 years' service that I had, and then I was another three years after that, you see, so I was 36 years in the shale mines altogether, without a break. And I don't get a pension of any kind from the Scottish Oils. I've wrote to Mr. Jeffrey in Grangemouth, and Mr. Jeffrey, he quoted a new scheme. In 1972 firms had to have a pension scheme over and above the government scheme you see, so however I was claiming on time served and I wrote and told him where I had worked and everything else and he wrote back and he said, "After due consideration to your application we find it does not meet with the requirements of this new scheme." He was quoting this new scheme, 1972, this pension scheme. I wasn't worrying about the new scheme, I was claiming on time served. 36 years' service in one firm is surely worth a remuneration of some kind, you see, so I don't even get a penny so therefore I've nothing to thank them for.

Q. What about the other men that you worked with, do they get pensions from the firm?

JT Some men do, and then you see when it was coming near the time for the mines closing down some men got the chance of going to Grangemouth. Now I never got the chance of going to Grangemouth you see, so however a chap had told me about this Mr. Crabb from Bo'ness who looks after the pension schemes. So I wrote to Mr. Crabb and I had Mr. Crabb here and I told him all the details and everything and he said, " Man," he said, "If you had been in Grangemouth you'd have been buying your own house by now." you know, because they were coming out with ten thousand, fifteen

thousand and twenty thousand pounds, this is what they were getting from Grangemouth. And some of them never even saw a mine, if you see what I mean, but however they had been working in the Scottish Oils, you know, the refineries and everything just the same. It was all a combine you know, one part couldn't do without the other if you see what I mean. And this is what happened. So however Mr. Crabb said, "Well" he said, "You know, son, I couldn't help my father,". "Well" I said, "It's a bad job , if you can't help your father, I don't think you'll can help me." And then however I heard that there was some people getting some money from B.P. in London so I said, "Well, I'll have a try." So I wrote to B.P. in London and I asked them if there was any chance of a remuneration for 36 years' service. They wrote me back the letters - I've got letters and everything to verify what I'm saying - and they just - as much as to say that they had to draw the line somewhere as it were, you know, so therefore I never got a penny from them at any time. That is my - and I enjoyed the job and everything , and the job is just the very same as being up above here, whenever you get used to it, you know, I mean, it's just like walking along the street you know, and.....

Q. When you were injured and off work, did you get compensation off them?

JT That was partial compensation. Yes, I was getting partial - industrial injury you see, yes, I was getting that, and I was still getting my wages whenever I started you see, and was still on the partial compensation. But whenever it come that I was 5% disability for life that was me finished with the compensation and everything. But up until then I really enjoyed the mines, and I quite believe that if they had been opened now I would

still have been in them. Because that was all the work that I ever knew.

Q. The oncost work, how did that pay compared to the men working at the face?

JT Oh, much, much lower.

Q. Much lower, was it?

JT Oh yes,, you see, when you were on the face, when you were working at the face and you were a drawer and everything you were making your wages, you see, where on the oncost, you see, it's a set wage you see, you've a set wage and you get no more unless you maybe get overtime or anything like that, that's about the only thing, but when you're on the face and that you can make your own wages. The more you fill the more you got, you see, you get so much per ton, for the shale that you produce.

Q. Can you remember how much you were getting paid?

JT Oh well, I couldn't just say. I mean to say, I was averaging maybe - well, I was never a greedy man or anything like that, but I think it was just a steady - round about £15, something like that, you know.

Q. And you'd have the rent for the house to come off?

JT Well, that would be - we were in a company house at the time, over at Greendykes Road.

Q. How much was that costing you?

JT That was only 4/6d a week, and then it went to 7/6d, then we got the house over here 26 - no, 28 years ago. And we've been over here ever since. So I retired in - I got a job in - I retired in 1975, from the brewery. I finished up in the brewery, Jeffrey's brewery, and that is the deficiency.

Q. You've got - that arm is about an inch shorter now.

JT Aye, my left arm.

Q. Your left arm, sorry.

JT That's right. Well, you see, my own doctor says to me, "Your arm is not shorter" he said, "It's only bent." But you see, the whole thing is, I can reach further with that one than I can with that one, you see, but however, I made quite a great recovery as regard to the injuries that I had.

Q. Did you have much trouble getting another job when the mines shut?

JT No, I never had any bother getting a job. I just went into the brewery. I was ten days idle. When we were told that the mines were closing we had to report to the dole office and the chap said to me, "What kind of job would you like?" I said, "Oh, I wouldn't mind a job in the B.M.C." So he said, "What qualifications have you got for the B.M.C?" I said, "Just the same as the rest of them that's in it." I said, "None. I've no qualifications for it, I've only been a miner." So he said to me,

"Failing the B.M.C. are you fit for hard work?" I said, "Listen, pal, you don't get your money for lying on your back down the mine. You've got to work for it." I said, "so don't talk to me about hard work. I'll tell you another thing," I said, " don't bother looking for a job for me, I'll get one myself." So I went into Jeffrey's in Edinburgh, and I got started in ten days. That's all I was idle, from I started in - I started work in 1925 and I finished up in 1962, and that was the only other job that I had, was the shale mines and the brewery. I've got all the medical records and everything too, it's just really - they don't seem to consider you now. And as I said if they were coming out of Grangemouth they were coming out with £20,000 and £10,000 and everything else. And as Mr. Crabb said, "If you were in Grangemouth, you d have been buying your own house." And as I say, it took us all our time to pay the rent of the house that we were in, never mind anything else. But otherwise the mines were quite all right if you looked after yourself.

Q. You worked in three or four different ones. Was there much difference between the different mines?

JT No, no. It was just the same procedure, you know, you had to produce the stuff and you'd to fill it in hutches and send it to the top and every-thing then it went through the retorts and so on.

Q. But were some of them lower seams?

JT Oh, there were some lower, and some higher, and about six feet was the lowest. About six feet was the lowest, you could go up as high as ten feet and

that, but I mean to say 8 feet was quite a regular - 8 feet was a regular height. Just a nice height for working, you know what I mean? You could reach up and you could put your timbers up and everything else with a wee bit of safety, but you had to work with a wee bit of safety, you couldn't just hash-bash and everything, because I mean to say, there's nothing surer there's always something would go wrong and you can't take risks when you are working down the mines. You had to work with safety all the time. That was the only thing that happened to me. It was what we would call a "lip", a skin. It was a big skin right down the side of this face, and we were working here, filling the hutches, and I was to the inside, and the drawer, he came out and I said, " Just stand back the now." And the next thing was, here, it just slid off like that.

It was the back end that got me, it was just the tail end of it, you know, and it put me down what we call this end, put me down this end, and the drawer lifted me up and laid me beside a sleeper and that, and miners came from all over the place - there were two or three miners from the far side of the mine came over, and they put me on the hutches and they took me up to the top of the mine and the next thing was I was landed in Bangour. So I was up in Bangour for three months and as the woman will tell you, she never missed a day for visiting or anything.

Q. How did it actually - why did it fall, was it just....

JT See, the pressure - the pressure's on it , you see, we were - you see, you drive in on the solid and then when you're coming back you are what they call stooping, you're stooping it. Well, you see, the stuff is dropping

at the back and you're filling in as you hit - what you're taking out, you're filling in with this other stuff that comes down, you see, and we were filling the shale and everything and leaving the dirt and so on, and then of course that's what makes the subsidence's in the ground up above, you know, when you hear them talking about a fall in or something like that, you know. Well, this is what it is, it's the subsidence going down. The whole area around here is all shale, right round, from Corstorphine - from Corstorphine to Bathgate you could get shale anywhere, right up to West Calder. Most of this area here is all sitting on water. Most of the mines are all flooded now.

Q. Were you ever working in water?

JT Oh, I did work quite a little while in water, with high waders.

Q. How deep was it?

JT Oh, it was only about two or three feet. It was just to make a lodgement, to make a lodgement for more water, you see, to make a lodgement for more water to feed the pump and then the pump pumped it up to the top. But this was to take the water from these other roads and that, you see, and it all came in to this lodgement and then the main pump pumped it all up.

Q. So that on the roads and on the face nobody was working in water really?

JT Oh no, we never worked - never really worked in water. But otherwise

it was quite a good - of course, it was the only thing that was in the area at the time. So therefore what could you do, you just had to follow on. I was quite happy with the job that I had, and everything else. But some get worse accidents than that, you know. Other chaps, they got killed and there wasn't a mark on them. I lay in Bangour for three months, and they came up and they were speaking to me and they told me about this chap that had got killed, and one chap said to me, "You know, J" he said, "if you and him had been coming up together, I would have said that you would have went first. You know, the mess that I was in. According to him there wasn't a mark on him. He was stone dead. It was just the pressure - he took the pressure off this tree, and the tree just come and hit him.

Q. What mine were you in when you had the accident?

JT Whitequarries.

Q. Whitequarries.

JT Aye, that's right, Whitequarries. That was my experience. I had been up for an x ray for the American miners, you know, I had been up in Bangour.

END OF SIDE ONE

JT TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO.

JT ....they stuck by one another and everything and they all got on quite

well, they helped one another as I said, before, and that was just how we done it. So if that's any help to you son.....

Q. What kind of piece did you take with you?

JT Oh well, three or four slices of bread, and a flask of tea, well the tea was cold sometimes. You took a vacuum flask with you, other times it was just a tin flask but you had your piece times and everything you were sitting talking about football, and talking about politics, oh, it was quite good, I really enjoyed it, they were.....

Q. Was there much politics involved, what about trade unions?

JT Oh well, I mean to say, there was a union, but we never bothered. I was never a great union man, or anything else. I only went into it because - I was a miner and everything. I just went into the union and that was all. I wasn't really a great "commie" or a labour man or anything like that, you know what I mean, I wasn't just an active member or anything you know. I paid my dues, and I took what was coming, if they got a rise I took my rise, along with them and everything and that was that. But otherwise, I can't see that I could say much more about them, you know.

Q. Outside the mines, what was there to do in Broxburn at Night? There would be the institute?

JT Oh well, there was the institute, that was where the town hall was, well,

it was billiard tables, and dominoes, and so on, and then there was football and things like that. But I was a good enough sport, following, but I never took up a great loving of sports or anything like that.

Q. Did all the different towns have football teams, all the wee villages...

JT Oh well, most of the, Holygate Violet, and Niddrie Celtic, and Winchburgh Albion, and Broxburn Athletic, you know, the young Athletic and that, and then you see, in older times, there was the Broxburn United that played down in the sports park and then there was Broxburn Athletic that played up in the Albyn Park, this park has all been re-done since that time and everything. And it was just - Well, Stewartfield itself, Stewartfield had a football team, just the very same, and we played in a football field just at the back of the houses there, and everything, and we really enjoyed ourselves, and we had to make our own enjoyment then, there was nothing laid on for us the same as there is now. No, I mean there was no bingo and one armed bandits or discos or anything like that, you had to make your own enjoyment, and it was far better. There wasn't as much vandalism then as there is now either. Definitely not. I don't know what has come over the young ones nowadays really, because you can't really speak to them even, if they are in a crowd you are feared to speak to them now, because they would just turn on you. I think the people are different, - although I mean to say, you've got to go by the times.

Q. Was there much gambling went on among the men?

JT Oh yes, there was always gambling schools and everything, oh yes. There were gambling schools - that used to be a tip there, ken, the bing, it used to be a bing, it's all landscaped now. But round the back of the tip there, on a Saturday or a Sunday or anything they'd pitch and toss and things like that and other ones round the back there, they were playing cards and everything. Just the usual things, you know what I mean? Wherever there were miners and that, there was always gambling and dogs racing and everything like that. We never had any dog racing. Well, there were some of them interested in dog racing, and they would maybe go to Armadale or any of these groups, as they called them, Linlithgow ken, any of these places, they would go from here - or maybe Powderhall, they would go there, but it never interested me. I never was a gambler, never was a gambler. But I really enjoyed the company of the miners, and everything, and I thought they were just about one of the best crowds of people you could.....

Q. Another thing. Scottish Oils were supposed to be quite strict with the folks that worked in their houses. If your behaviour got out of line you could get into trouble with the company? Was that before you started?

JT I don't think so, son, I think the Scottish Oils was very reasonable with them because I mean to say - of course you see, when you were working your rent was kept off your wages, you know what I mean, so you didn't need to worry about your rent or anything like that, but then you see, whenever the mines closed down, you see, they had to get a rent collector, and that was whenever the troubles started. They weren't paying

their rent and they were getting into arrears and everything else. But they were never anything like putting a person out in the street or anything like that. Oh no. The Scottish Oils were really a good enough firm to work with and their engineers and everything could get a job anywhere because they were always well trained. And I can say that for a fact because I know some of the engineers that worked there and everything. And they could go anywhere as regards to their engineering training. Joiners or anything, they were all well trained.

END OF TAPE

Transcript	JT
Industrial Information	I started in Roman Camps in 1925, where I was working at the pithead.
1925-26 Strike	When the 1925-26 strike came on I was made idle.
Newliston Mine Pony-driver	I was then sent out to Newliston Mine to drive the ponies, which I did for a while.
Chain Running	I then went on to the chain running, which was pushing in

the empty hutches, and taking out the full hutches from the drawers, and sending them to the hill and them putting the empties on.

#### Drawing

I went from there to the drawing where I was filling the hutches and drawing them from the faceman . The faceman hawked the stuff and I had to fill the hutches, but I found out that I wasn't strong enough for the job at that time so I went back to chain running.

#### Chain Running

I was very nimble at that time and the chain running job just suited me. I worked away at this for many years, but I couldn't say for exactly how long.

#### Fauchledean & Kirband Mines

I then got transferred to Fauchledean to Kirband and from Kirband to Fauchledean.

#### Whitequarries Mine

I was then transferred to Whitequarries, where I was

a drawer and a faceman. I was there until 1954 when I had an accident.

Accident

I fractured my spine, and I had six fractured ribs, a broken leg, a broken arm and thirty-two stitches. I lay in Bangour Hospital for three months.

Cause of the Accident

A side fell in underground and pushed me over and the chap that was drawing off me pulled me to the side. I wasn't buried in in any way, I just got hit, and there happened to be an opening on the bottom side which I was thrown down. I started work in the mine after six months time again, just labouring about, but I could have just sat about doing nothing.

Hanging Screen-cloths

I then started in the mine again where I was hanging screen cloths, this was for to put

the air into different sections  
of the mine.

Cousy Brae

By the time I was getting stronger,  
so I was able to do other jobs as well.  
At the cousy brae I uncoupled  
the hutches and put the empty  
hutches on.

Underground Engine

The gaffer came down one day  
and said that if he had known  
I could have driven the engine  
I could have had the job.

Oncast

I then went on to the oncost.  
That was repairing and putting  
up timbers. Sometimes I had to  
lay a set of rails or plates or  
something like that. All these  
things made up the oncost work.  
Then there was the drawer and  
the faceman. The faceman  
produced the stuff as well as  
bored the holes, stems the shots  
and then fires the shots.

The Drawers

The drawers then fill the hutches  
and draw then out to the main

haulage and as the chain runner came down with the empties to put them at the top of the road.

Face

I did try the face but with my left side being so weak after the accident I couldn't support an electric boring machine.

Working at  
Different Mines

It was the same procedure in all the mines I worked in, and you had to fill it in the hutches and sent it up to the surface for the retorts.

Height of Shale Seams

There were some shale seams high and some were low. About six feet was the lowest, and there were some as high as ten feet. I would say about eight feet was a regular height. At this height you could reach up to put the timbers in with a wee bit of safety. You could just hash-bash everything, because there's nothing surer that was when something would go wrong.

Conditions

I did work quite a lot in water but it was only two or three feet high. I had to make a lodgement for the water to feed the pumps to take it out to the surface.

Leopold Place

After my accident I had to attend Leopold Place, that's where the industrial injuries were assessed. I had to attend every six months for a medical report. For the first time I was on fifty per cent disability. When I was assessed as fifty per cent disabled my wages were made up. I was taken down to thirty per cent, and the last time I was examined I was taken down to five per cent disability, but I never could go back to the face again, so I had to retire from the mines.

Wages

I was making a steady fifteen pounds, but the more hitches that you filled the more pay you got.

Retirement	When I retired early from the mines I got a gold watch for the thirty three years service in the shale mines.
Pension	I don't get a pension of any kind from Scottish Oils. I've wrote to Mr. Jeffery in Grangemouth, and he quoted a new scheme over and above the government scheme. So I didn't even get a penny so therefore I had nothing to thank them for.
Compensation	When I had the accident I was getting partial compensation and partial industrial injury.
Unions	There was a Union, but we never bothered because I was never a great union man. I only went into a union because I was a miner. I wasn't really a great 'commie' or a labour man or anything like that, but I just wasn't an active member or anything like that. I just

paid my union dues and I took what was coming. If they got a rise I took my rise along with them and everything and that was that.

#### Domestic Life

I stayed in a company house at Greendykes Road, Broxburn.

#### Housing

##### Rent

The rent for the house started of at 4/6d a week then it went up to 7/6d. We then got a house over here, that was twenty eight years ago.

#### Leisure activities-Pieces

We used to take three or four slices of bread and a flask of tea, and the tea was cold some-times. We took a vacuum flask with you, other times it was just a tin flask, and we just used to talk about football and politics.

#### Institute Hall

There was an institute hall in Broxburn. It had billiard tables and dominoes and so on. There was football and things like that.

Football Teams

All the different towns had their own football teams, and they used to play against each other at Albyn Park. this park has all been re-done since that time. Stewartfield football team used to play in a football field just at the back of the houses.

Bingo and Disco's

There was no bingo and one armed bandit in those days. You had to make your own enjoyment and it was far better.

Gambling

There was always gambling schools up at the tip or the bing. That has all been landscaped now.

Pitch & Toss

On a Saturday and Sunday they would play pitch and toss.

Dog Racing

Some of the miners used to be keen on dog racing, and they would maybe go to Armadale or Powderhall to take part. I finished up in Jeffrey's Brewery after I had to leave the mines after my accident.

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