

Mrs MD (MD) B 1903  
Sister – B (B) B 1905 BROXBURN  
Nephew (N)  
Sara Randall (SR) Interviewed 26.2.85

Description of housing from photographs in Broxburn

MD We had outside toilets

SR Were they with water or dry toilets?

MD Oh no water . . . and coal fires

B We had dry toilets when we were children. That's in my father and mother's time. They'd dry water closets then. But when we grew up, we had water in the toilet and the house. No bathroom. We went to the outside washhouse and had a bath.

SR When were you born?

MD 1903

SR And you?

B 1905

MD We're the last 2 of twelve, we are. The last two.

- SR And did all the other 10 survive through childhood.
- B Of the 12. No two died in infancy.
- MD Aye. They were bronchitis or something. We didnae know any of them.
- B When the strike started and the shale mine was nae right, the one brother, and my sister and her family went away to Australia. And another brother in law and sister and my brother went to Canada. And they lived there and finished there. They died there, abroad.
- SR But apart from them, did all your brothers work in the shale mines?
- MD Aye two brothers, no three of them, and another brother - when the shale thing finished - my other brother went away to Grangemouth, when the BP opened up there, and his family grew up there.
- Repeat of migration to Australia and Canada
- SR So by the time you were born, some of them had already left.
- MD Oh aye, they were out the house. When we were wee, the girl went to service - to work in a house. B went to service, but I was in a shop. I was in the store. I was the only one that was in the store.

SR So was it very crowded in your house when you were small kids.

B Well, when we were young there was 4 girls slept in one bed. Aggie and Sally and Meg and I. The four. And my father and mother in another bed. And my granny in the room. And my brothers in the other bed. We had 4 beds, big double beds, set into the wall. Then when they died we got an extra room put onto the house. The man through the wall from us - when he died we got our house knocked through so we had 2 bedrooms and a kitchen and a scullery with a toilet.

SR And was your father a shale miner?

MD Yes

SR All his life?

B No. No when he was young he was a farm worker. And my mother was a farm worker?

SR And were they from this area or did they come from somewhere else?

B My mother was born in Broxburn but my father was born in Stranraer. But, my father came to Broxburn to live. And that's how he met - they met on a farm.

SR And when you were children you weren't particularly hard up?

B Oh no. We were never hard up. Never.

MD We were never poor at all. My mother must have taken care of. We never starved.

SR And you always had plenty of clothes?

MD Aye we'd always plenty of clothes.

SR And did you have presents at Christmas and birthdays?

MD Aye.

B No much. But we'd apples and oranges and six pence and a hanky or a hymnbook.

MD But my father was a great Christian. He was 40 years a superintendent in the Sunday School. He didnae drink or anything and there always seemed to be plenty. Well he had drank och when he was young. But he was converted by one of the ministers. He turned a great Christian.

SR Did that mean he was very strict with you?

B On no. We could do what we liked. He never asked us to join the church. He left it to ourselves if we wanted it. We wernae to do anything.

SR Did he used to help your mother in the house at all?

MD No

B My father never did. My father would never help my mother in the house. Not till he retired. We were all out the house by that time. He used to wash the dishes and make his own bed. But my father and my brothers never did a hand's turn in the house.

MD No

B It was my brother in law if anything was needing done, my brother in law did it. He was the one did all the painting and papering and that. But my father was useless in the house. No he never did anything.

SR And when you were girls did you have to help your mother a lot?

B Oh yes, we had our set work.

MD Friday was the day that everything was done: black leading and polish and scrubbing the floor. Scrubbing out the steps.

SR What about washing?

MD Well we had a wash house outside and we were supposed to get one day in it a week. It was hard work. You double washed them and you boiled them and you washed them twice.

SR Did it have a fire underneath to heat it?

MD Yes

SR And did it have a tap going into it and a plug.

B No, we had to lift the water up to the boiler, from the boiler.

MD And we tramped the blankets when we were wee.

SR So you mother had to do all the lifting of the water?

MD Yes

SR So it was a tough life for a woman.

B My mother had a hard life. She started off married life with four brothers and a sister and four brothers. And the four brothers was married before she was and she was left with 4 brothers and a sister to bring up. My grandmother and grandfather died young. They died in their early forties. But she had a hard life. And then she had my Granny Lynch, my father's mother - she had her to look after after my grandfather was killed in the

pit up at the works. He got crushed between 2 wagons and he got his heart pierced. So he got killed. So she had a hard life, but a happy life.

MD She never grumbled. She was a good mother.

SR When did you leave school

MD Fourteen. We all left the same.

SR And none of you even thought of staying on and doing more

MD No, no

SR And what did you do once you left school

MD I went to the store and was in the grocery. And then to the bookshop. We got shifts y'ken, around about. And then of course B went to service. Hard work it was there too.

B For nothing

SR In the store as well?

MD In the store I think I started 8/6d a week.

SR How long did you work there?

MD Till I got married. Well I was paid off. It was a half time you ken. One of the pits, shut up. There were no enough work. But I came back again to it and then I got married when I was 21 and he was 22.

SR What sort of hours did you work?

MD It must have been up to 6.00. 8.00 to 6.00

SR So it was hard work?

MD Och it wasnae hard work. I got into the cash desk too. I was sitting writing in the slips in the store book.

SR Was this the cooperative?

MD The cooperative.

SR And did you continue to live and have with your parents until you got married?

MD Aye yes. I was at home all the time, but B was in Edinburgh, working. One day a week she got off I think.

SR And when you were living at home did you give all your wages to your parents.

- MD Oh yes I did. I think it was two shillings or 2/6 that I got back for pocket money.
- SR When you got married, did you go and live in a house of your own straight away?
- MD We'd a room first and then we got a house. We had to go to Grangemouth. The mine that he was in shut down too. That was the start of the troubles with the mines shutting. And we went to Grangemouth then. And then, he lost that job. Then he got working to be a lorry driver and he was with Turnbells from Falkirk. And he was a long distance driver after that. And then when the war started we came back home here. Because my father was dead and my mother was ill and it was to help look after my mother too. And he had long distance driving to London and all over the place. We had a house up in Lauriston and we finished up with the Lauriston House and came here to look after my mother. She was born in that house over there in Greendykes where all the new houses are built, and we flitted over here in 1966. A new house. So we've been here since. And he's (her husband) up in Drumshoreland hospital.
- SR Did you carry on working after you got married.
- MD No. Never thought about working. I didn't I never thought about it?
- SR Why was that? Because he had enough money to keep you both.

MD Well he finished work 2/18/0 he had in the mines.

SR And that was quite good was it, in those days?

MD At that time. It was. And then when we went to the lorries he got more and I think he finished with about 12 pound odd.

SR So what did you do all the time?

MD I don't know. I passed the time. I'd only 2 children, 2 girls. At that time I was looking after a nephew . . and then I looked after a niece.

. . . [list of people she looked after] I never thought about going working . . .

SR And how about you? You left school at 14 as well and went to service.

B I went to service when I was 15. The first year I was here. I took work to help people that had babies. I used to clean their house. We'd the old midwife used to live next door. That wasn't how I got the job though, it was another old midwife, she asked me to go. And I went to one woman and she had 5 of a family. She had twins at 14 months and then she had this baby. That was 3 babies in the house and I had to go and help look after the babies and clean the house. And then I went to my sister in law's when my nephew was born, and I went to a woman next door to her and worked with her, and I went to my cousin's wife when she had Stuart. Did that for the first year before I went to service. Then

I was 60 years in service.

SR So you didn't marry.

B I didnae want to marry.

SR And where did you work?

B In Edinburgh. Except in Broxburn. I was 18 years in a local house. They had a grocer's shop and I worked in the house.

SR And did you always live in the house?

B No I didnae live there, I lived on me own. I lived with Meg. That was after my father and mother died, we just kept on the house and we just lived together.

SR But when you were 15 and lived in Edinburgh.

B Oh I lived in, aye. I lived in, in service.

SR Was that hard work?

B Oh yes.

MD The first place she was in there was 4-5 servants.

B 5 maids. There was a cook and me, I was scullery maid,

and there was 2 housemaids and a table maid and a laundry maid and a nurse. All in the house, and there were two children in the house. It was in Charlotte Square.

SR How long did you work there?

B I was 2 ½ years there and then I left and went to Dundas Castle. That was a big house. I was kitchen maid there. I was only a year there and didnae like it. There was too many staff. Didnae like it at all. There was a butler and footmen and I didnae like it.

SR Did you get paid much being in service?

B I started on 20 pound a year. That was my wage.

SR And did you have to buy your own uniforms and so on?

B Oh we had to buy our own. We had to buy wrappers, what we called wrappers, and white aprons. I didnae have to wear a black apron and dress in the afternoon you see, I was a kitchen maid. I was always in the kitchen. Then I went to be cook with a doctor - in Edinburgh. I lived there all the time until mother took ill and I came home to look after them. My father and mother took ill at the same time. And I came to look after them, and after they died I was 18 years at Peggys.

SR Did most girls of your age go into service?

B Aye. All my sisters went to service.

MD Except me. I was a lady, I went to the shop.

SR Why was that? Did you not want to go into service or?

MD No. I'll tell you what it was at the beginning. I had a notion, I'd got prizes at school for sewing and my mother thought I could make a dressmaker. So we went and applied at the store you see, if I could get a job in the dressmaking office. But it didnae come off. I got a job in the Bakery department. No I was never asked to go into service.

B No - she was the lady!

MD They thought I was the lady.

SR Would you liked to have stayed on at school if you could have done

MD No. I never was clever.

SR Did many girls get the opportunity to stay on at school or were there some who just had to leave school because their families needed the money.

B I think there were some left at 14. There was some went to Higher Grade but there wasna very many. Only one or two I mind that went on to University. The Minister's

son and Alec Urquart went to University.

SR And most of the boys left school and went into the shale mines?

B Or got other jobs in the works.

MD And there was a candle works here too.

SR And was that just men who worked there or women too?

MD Men. And then there was a cooperage where they made barrels. My brother in law, before he went to Canada, he made barrels.

SR Was that part of the oil company as well.

MD I think so

SR Most of the work round here was to do with the oil Co .

MD Yes

Bit about strikes but not very informative. Mostly about MD's husband.

MD And then when the work was coming on he went to the rubber mill and made gas masks.

SR Where is the rubber mill?

MD In Edinburgh. Near the West End somewhere.

SR When the oil works were going, were they very smoky and dusty?

MD I don't know. Well the chimneys used to go right enough, but you never paid any attention to them.

B None of us ever took anything.

SR If you hung up your washing it didn't go black

B Oh no

SR Was it very smelly and dusty around here?

B Oh no. Don't think so. We were all healthy.  
(list of ages of siblings at death)

SR When you were children were there a lot of problems around then. Do you remember people with consumption.

B Oh aye, there were lots of diseases then. Diphtheria - I had diphtheria - and different fevers. There were a lot of fever - scarlet fever.

MD You were sent to the hospital then - Tippethill

SR When you had diphtheria, did you go away?

B No I was kept at home.

SR So you carried on sleeping in the bed with your three sisters.

B No. My father and mother. They put me in beside my father and mother.

SR They didn't fear that the others would take it from you.

B They were quite happy because they got off school.

MD We were outside playing and saying Oh I hope it is diphtheria 'cos we'll go off the school.

SR Did other children die of these diseases?

B Yes. My chum died of fever - 2 of them Aggie Brown. She died of fever and Mary Peace. She died. Oh there was a lot of kiddies died of fever

SR What about consumption - TB

B Aye well there was a few I think - had TB

MD We never took it. Well that was the only time anyone was ill.

Bit about diseased bones in hand and foot at age 3.

SR What happened when you were ill? Did the doctor come?  
Did you have to pay him?

MD Aye we had the doctor.

SR Did you have to pay each time?

B No, it came off my father's pay. They paid so much a week for the insurance for the doctor for illness. So we used to get bottles and pills and things. No very much though.

SR And it was the same when you went to the infirmary or the hospital - that was all paid for was it?

MD Aye that was free.

SR Did the house you lived in belong to Scottish Oils?

MD Aye.

SR Were they good landlords.

MD Oh aye, we never had anything to complain about.

SR Did most of the houses in Broxburn then belong to the oil company.

B Yes, this district. The others were all private built.  
Ours - there was 6 in a block and we were a but and ben.  
And through the wall from us was a but and ben and when  
this old man died we asked to get the extra room.

SR Did you have a garden at all?

B No - no garden

MD During the war they got a plot of land up at the back of  
the church. Second World War. And they made gardens  
then. That's the only time we grew them (vegetables)  
Second World War. We had shelters up the back between  
the two blocks of houses.

B We were in Mid Street and the other one nearest the park  
was West Street. In the space between they built a  
shelter and we'd got 1/2 dozen folk came in.

SR How old were you when you got water in the house and the  
water toilet?

B We had water in the house all the time we were there,  
because there was a sink at the window. And then we had  
the scullery and we had water in the house and the  
toilet then.

SR Which was when?

MD That was after we came back from Lauriston. I didnae ken.

(calculations)

SR So it was in the late 1920's

B Aye

SR And there were other houses which didn't have water at all in Broxburn when you were children?

MD We had a pipe at the door for water and they built us outside toilets just next to the work house.

B I believe when we were children there used to be the well outside. We used to carry the water, and we used to carry the water to the washhouse when we were young. Because mind, we had the pails of water in the lobby the last thing we had to do when we were kids - bring in two pails of water for my mother, for the men going to their work in the morning. So they'd have their fresh water for going to their work in the morning.

MD Aye, the well was at the door

B No. The water out the wash house. That was after they did away with the wells. The wells were when we were very young Meg. And then we just got water in the washhouse. We carried pails of water from the wash house.

MD And I said to Jimmy it's your turn - you should carry the water,

B He never did.

SR It was always the girls that did it?

B Aye

SR So the girls did a lot more work in the house than the boys

MB Aye

SR Didn't you think that was unfair at the time?

MD No, we were just brought up like that

B We just had to do it.

MD I mean, we had to clean the shoes for them.

SR For your brothers

MD Aye

B On a Saturday morning we used to have to oil their pit boots and polish them up ready for the Monday morning for the work. The men never did anything.

SR How about washing their clothes?

B Oh aye. It was hard work.

SR Were they greasy and oily?

MD Aye. Sometimes we got a 6d. I think from Hughie and Jimmy.

SR Did your father used to come back from work very tired and very dirty or was it not too bad.

MD Oh well he was dirty cos he had to wash himself. Later on of course they got, he got into the store bit of the thing. Giving out powder to take down the mine.

MD This is my other sisters' son. He lives next door. Of course we all flitted at the same time, the houses were getting knocked down.

SR When were the houses knocked down?

MD Twenty years ago.

N We left that house in 1966. He was still going 67-68.  
They were still up there but there was nobody in there.

SR Then they built all of this area in the late 60's.

N Yes . . . This was an old mine place too. Stewartfield.

MD Stewartfield - next door to the tips year.

N There used to be railway lines right along the top  
there.

SR How often were you able to have baths when you were  
kids?

B Every week we had to get bathed.

SR It was a tin bath was it?

MD No. Wooden. A tub. Used to bring a tub over

SR And you'd all get in one after the other?

B There was just the two of us actually. Sally was away to  
service by that time.

SR And your parents had a bath just once a week as well

B Yes. You see 4 girls were left and the boys were all away . . . They were much older. My oldest sister was 21 years older than me ... I said to my mother, "Why did you have a big family?" She said "Well I just thought you had to"

Bit about finding houses to live in.

SR In Broxburn when you were children was there a whole community of people who would all help each other out?

MD Yes we were awful friendly like. We knew every neighbour.

SR What sort of things would people do for each other?

B Anything at all - just help you know. The old wife that lived just 2 doors from us she was the midwife. She just was a midwife.

SR Was she qualified - trained?

B No and neither was Mr. Waters either. And it was through Ms. Waters that I got these jobs.

SR They just went to be with the women?

MD The doctors trusted them. They knew they were going to

be there.

SR Did the doctors go too or was it just the midwife.

MD No I think the doctor went too. Before I had my 2.  
Mrs. Crawford had to have a certificate.

B The first time my mother had Mrs. Crawford as a midwife  
was when she (MD) was born. Because it was my granny  
brought the rest of the bairns all home. It wasnae a  
midwife then, it was my granny that did it.

SR Did you hear much about women or babies dying in  
childbirth?

MD Seemed to be, aye. For a while, years after of course,  
they tried the abortions. Ken the women in the house,  
that's a lot of the women died. So did the bairn.

SR Who did the abortions? The women themselves?

B I don't know who did it.

MD I don't know they had somebody . . .

B My aunty died, one of my aunties.

SR Trying to give herself an abortion?

B Somebody else gives it to you. Somebody else. And there was another 3 women. All just, all about the same time. All died.

SR And were they having abortions because they were not married?

B No - they were married and they'd a family and they didn't want to have any more - so- they were stopping them.

SR But the doctors never did anything?

MD No.

SR And it was well known that women gave themselves abortions

B Aye, Then - they did it. I don't know what other places were like but here they did.

SR This was the midwives.

B No they hadn't the midwife at all. It was some other body that did it.

SR What did they have - medicines?

B I couldn't tell you. We were too young to know. My mother used to try and keep everything back from us.

Anything like that, but you know what kids are like.

MD We'd to find out things for ourselves. She never spoke about anything.

B No even when it came to our period times, she never told us anything about it at all.

SR That must have been quite a shock?

B It was a shock. Aye. She just told me, she said "you'll have that every month" And that was it ...

Family and communication and help then vs now - jobs and living

SR Did you have to work long hours in service?

B 6.00 in the morning till 10.00 at night. I was used to it and that was all. You see I was the kitchen maid so I had to get up and scrub the front door step 1st thing in the morning and give the cook her cup of tea in bed and get the breakfast prepared and then she got up and cooked it. And then of course the dinner was always at night you see, 8.00 at night for upstairs - so you had the dishes to wash after that and then the maids for their supper after than so I'd still to wash up after them so it was about 10.00 at night before I'd finished.

SR And you got one day off a week?

B Yes

SR And did you always come back to your family on that day?

B Oh aye, always come home.

Side 2

MD It was a poorer place

B I believe when there was a drink in the house they were poorer. We didn't know anything about it.

SR What about smoking? Did all the men smoke?

MD Oh aye.

SR Did your father smoke?

B A pipe. And my granny smoked a pipe. A clay pipe.

MD And she was sitting on the doorstep, and the minister came. Oh what a state she got into. She was trying to hide it. He says "Don't bother Mrs Lynch, he said, "It's all right".

B Did a lot of old women smoke pipes?

MD Yes

SR And people of your mother's generation?

B No

B My mother was 43 when I born - she reared the 10

SR When you were children most of your friends were from families of 8, 9, 10 children were they?

B Oh aye . . . There were 7 Docherty's, and the Simpsons there 16 or 18 of the Simpsons

MD She was having yun every divided we would say.

B She lost a lot, but there was about 10 of them grew up too. But she lost a lot.

SR When did you first get electricity in the house?

MD It was gas we had first. We'd lamps first and then we got gas and then we got electric light. Before we left we had electricity.

N 58. I think it was.

SR And that was about the same for most of the houses.

N They were not all done at the same time. You had to pay for it.

SR The oil companies didn't pay for it?

N On no. We didn't have electricity cos we didn't have electricity until we came up here in 1966. We still had gas up until 1966. No bath. Tin bath.

SR So you'd have a bath once a week.

MD When we were bigger we each took a tub into the wash house. Went in at the same night like and we both had a tub to ourselves.

B That's why we thought it was great coming across here and having a bath in the house.

SR It must have been jolly cold having a bath in the wash house in winter.

B I don't know. You had the fire on. We always had it on the washday. You ken when it was your washday and we kept a big fire on and boiled the water in the boiler.

SR Did each family have their washhouse?

B No, we shared it with 4 folk.

. . . wash days and sharing . . .

SR Were you sad when they knocked all those houses down?

B No. We were glad. Really glad to get out of them.  
There was more work in them.  
. . . size of houses . . .

SR In Broxburn when the mines closed down where did everyone go to work.

B They started off-with factories you see. They were all these wee factories and they started them . . . There was Hall's

MD There were a lot over the canal there.

B There was a Coates.

N Coates - Patons, the thread

B And a lot of them went away abroad.

N The thread mill was up there for years and years.  
Coates' shut it down. It's something else now.

B They started a lot of wee factories and then most of the men went to Grangemouth to work. They opened up the big oil works in Grangemouth and all the men got work down

there.

MD And a lot of men went abroad.

SR Have a lot of people moved into the area from outside?

B Oh yes

SR Recently, or all your lives?

B More recent than that. Because we don't know our neighbours at all hardly. People down the road they came from different places. Edinburgh, Bathgate, Uphall and Livingston. They came from all over.

SR And are these younger people or older people mainly?

B Older people

. . bit about neighbours and the houses in their area . .

Transcript	MD
Birth Place	I was born in Broxburn, at 6 Hoban Place.
Industrial Information	My two brothers worked in the shale mines.
Strike	When the strike started and the shale mines was nae right my one brother and brother- in-law and sister went to Canada.
Domestic Life	We had a room first and then we got a house in Grangemouth. When the mines were shut down. That was the start of the troubles.
Toilets	When we were children we had dry closets, but as we grew up we had water in the toilet and the house.
Sleeping Arrangements	When we were young four girls, slept in one bed. My father and mother slept in another bed. We had four big double beds set into the wall. My granny was in the same room as my mother and father. My brothers slept in another bed,

but when they died we got an extra room put on to the house. The man through the wall from us, when he died we got our house knocked through so we then had two bedrooms, and a kitchen, a scullery with a toilet.

Washing Clothes We had a wash house outside and we were supposed to get one day in it a week. It was hard work. We had to double wash the clothes, and we boiled them, and we washed them twice.

Polishing Friday was the day everything was done. Black leading and polishing and scrubbing the outside steps.

Hot Water. We had a boiler, but we had to lift the water up to the boiler and from the boiler.

Lighting We had gas at first. Then we got electricity, but we had to pay for it.

Doctor If we were ill the doctor came. It came off my fathers' pay. They paid so much for illness, so we used to get pills and

bottles and things. It was the same if we were sent to the Infirmary that was all paid for.

Diseases  
Diphtheria & Scarlet  
Fever

Oh aye, there was lots of diseases then. Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever. I had Diphtheria, and in those days we were kept at home. I slept beside my father and mother.

T.B.

There was a few people had T.B, but I never took it.

Pollution

When the oil works were going, we never used to pay any attention to the smoke and dust that was given off.

Religion

My father was a great Christian. He was forty years a superintendent in the Sunday School. But he was converted by one of the ministers. He turned a great Christian.

Clothes

We always had plenty of clothes.

Christmas  
Presents

We did not have many Christmas presents, we just had an apple and an orange and six pence and a hanky or a hymn book.

When the shale mines closed down

people moved away to other  
occupations.

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Canada 1

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Stranraer 21