

Date: 13 December 1984

Duddingston Terrace, Newton, Winchburgh

SP (b.1902)

Note: SP is the brother
of Mrs L (Tape B)

MP Mrs P (b.190?)

SR Sara Randall

SR Tell me, when were you born?

SP 19th December 1902.

SR Where?

MP Woodend

SP Just a field away from here. These 5 cottages that stands along the road
there. I was born in the middle one.

SR Did you live there all your life?

MP He was only born there.

SP It was my grandmother that lived there, but we used to often visit her -
from Bridgend.

SR You lived in Bridgend?

MP He was brought up in Bridgend.

SR Both of you?

SP No, no. As far as I know, my parents lived a short period at the Binns.

SR In the big house?

MP No, in a cottage that the Binns had.

SP And then, my father was a shale miner you see, and he had got a house in Bridgend and we were there. I think I would be about 26 or so in Bridgend.

SR And then you left when you got married?

MP No. He went and he lived in Queensferry after that. And then he lived for a wee while in Dalmeny, in a place that's down now, but during that time he'd left the shale mines. No, he didn't, he left the shale mines after we were married. He stayed there and then they came to the Newton.

SR And how about you, where are you from?

MP Oh, I come from Cambusnethan. I've been in West Lothian since I was about 21/2.

SR So where did you live when you were first in West Lothian.

MP Up at Craig Binny Lodge up near Dechmont. I was brought up there until I was 11 and then I came down and I lived in the farm cottage down at Duddingston. 2 years. And then I went to live at the next farm down - the Echland. I was married from there.

SR And was your father a shale miner too?

MP No he was on a farm. He was a farm griever.

SR When were you born?

MP 18th December 1907.

SR So can you tell me a little bit about your childhood in Bridgend. How many of you lived in the house?

SP Oh, I was the oldest of a family of 8.

SR And how many rooms was the house?

MP Two. A 2 apartment, a living room and a bedroom.

SP And a sort of scullery. That was the usual at the time. They were packed. There were usually 7 or 8 in a family and there were often as 12 in some of them. Oh aye.

MP I mean, it was common to have a very small house and a huge family in those days.

SR And did you have water and electricity in your house?

SP No. You carried your water in.

MP An outside well.

SP There were an outside well ...

MP For so many houses ...

SP You'd just get a pail and go for it. Aye

SR Did your mother do that or did the children do it?

MP Most of the children I suppose.

SP I usually did it. 'Cos I was the eldest, and I usually was the packhorse, you know, the oldest and there were always another one appearing.

SR Did you have a dry toilet or ..?

MP Dry toilet.

SP Aye. Coal houses in some lavatories. Things were all mixed together. There were no any sanitation.

MP I think there were a cart come round every other day or so.

SR And where did you go to school? Was there a school in Bridgend?

SP Yes. It's on the main Linlithgow Road - the Bridgend school. I was there when I was 4 and I can still remember the first day. It was a friend of my father's, a boy and girl of theirs, they took me to the school, and when we were let out at the interval or sometime, I was looking for this chap with a red jersey, but I never got him. And we got taught with a Miss Brodie.

SR How old were you when you left school?

SP 13. I got an exemption.

SR Why was that?

MP Because of poverty.

SP You could apply for an exemption and I got one when I was 13 and 1 month.

MP Because of only one wage, one small wage coming in, and so many people, there was no help you see, of any kind. It was common in those days to get an exemption from school.

SR Particularly the eldest child?

SP Well, I can remember, there were another chap. Harry Pinnikid, and we run home at dinner time for our piece from the school. And his exemption and my exemption had arrived from the Council in Linlithgow. And we went back to school, got our school bags and waved goodbye at dinner time.

MP Never went back.

SP And we went away to look for jobs. And we split company, and he went onto White Quarry and I got onto the canal banks and got back to Philpstoun Oil Works. That was shale oil. And, I applied for a job and was told to come back in the morning and I was just getting out the door when I got a roar to come back again. And I started right away, without even a half day. I started right away, tearing labels off old petrol cans, 'til they got clear labels on them. I can remember that well.

SR How much did you get paid, can you remember?

MP Was that when you'd 1/6d a day. Nine shillings a week.

SP About that, Eighteen pence a day. And I think you had about ninepence or so off for taxes or something.

SR And did you give it all to your mother?

SP Oh aye. You had no option in that. You handed it over. Later on, I was apprenticed to a plumber for a short period, but there were men taken away to war, that was in the first world war. That was wartime when I left the school and there were a lot of them never came back again either. And I was put on filling oil tanks, that were taken away to be refined in Broxburn, the oil. At that time there were a refinery at Broxburn. And I got coaxed to go down the mine to drive a pit horse. And I was in the shale mines up to, what I'll be almost 40 when I left the shale mines.

MP 39, when you left?

SR Which mine did you work in - Duddingston?

SP I was in a few mines.

MP White Quarries was it?

SP Aye

MP And then he went from there to an old mine that was re-opened. And he

went there about 1933 roughly. It was reopened - Faucheldean. But they're all closed now of course. Well he went to open up - only 5 of them went, they weren't mining, but getting it ready, you know. And pumping it.

SP Aye, that one was lying full of water right up to the mouth. We pumped it out and repaired the roof a bit and so on and got it going again and then a lot of other miners started in it after we had it going.

SR When you first started work, what sort of hours did you work?

SP Well you walked from Bridgend to Philpstoun. You walked that - about a mile and a half or so - and be there at six.

MP And when did you finish?

SP You had a brass check to take away. You had to be there or you got a roar. And you got away at five at night again.

SR So you worked 11 hours a day.

SP Ah well, you were off a hour in the middle of the day.

MP But you had what we would term an 11 hour day.

SR And how many days a week?

SP You were there six.

SR And you got Sunday off.

SP In that job, but later on, this job that I took filling the railway tanks

I had to be out on a Sunday because the receivers in the retorts couldn't hold 2 days output and they had to be emptied into a stock tank.

SR 7 days a week?

SP Aye, I was out, it'd be just about half a day, because I had only these tanks to get emptied into a big stock tank and leave them empty for the next day's oil you see, and I usually got home in a locomotive because there was a mine at Bridgend and he usually run up a lot of empty railway wagons and take down full railway wagons into Philpstoun again, you see, and he knew that I was going to Bridgend and I usually got away about twelve o'clock in the middle of the day.

SR What were the conditions like working in the oil works, was it very dusty and smokey?

SP Oh aye, everything was sulphate of ammonia or petrol or crude oil and smoke, in fact a mile or so from the Philpstoun works the wind was usually west, and when you came over you'd think you'd been smoking a Woodbine or something, the taste got into your mouth.

MP It was very bad, you see, because I passed the Oil works and they were really bad.

SR So it would have affected the people who lived near by?

MP Oh yes, the houses, and they were invariably turned to the east side of where the works were and the wind was mostly west

SP Generally, I would say the people were healthy and happy.

SR But there was still all this smoke in the air?

SP Well not exactly in the village you lived in but when you were in the works there was always smoke of some type, acid or sulphate of ammonia.

MP But sulphate of ammonia has a very, very bad smell.

SP Then of course we were away down the mine the whole day with my boss. You see, shale miners, they worked in pairs, there was one the miner and one the drawer, one dug the shale and the other filled it in the trucks and took it out to where it could be collected on a haulage. So you were either a drawer or a faceman. I did eventually become a faceman but the thing was my ambition was to get out of it.

SR Out of the mines?

SP Oh aye. It was hard work and you just got down that mine in the morning, well you walked a good distance down the mine until you got to where it was you worked and then you just took your jacket off and hung it on a nail on a tree and get hold of an empty hutch and away ye go. You usually found that you did twelve a day, that was the usual thing to do twelve hutches a day.

SR And that was when you were working with the pit ponies?

MP No, you'd finished with the ponies. Pit pony work was boy's work, this is when you'd got a bit older. His father died when he was sixteen and he went away, which was earlier than most people, to fill hutches and take them out.

SR I see, was filling hutches better paid then?

MP Oh you made your wages doing that.

SP Anything was slightly better than what you had been in the oil works, and you had a shorter day in the mines but nine or ten shillings a day was the usual pay.

SR Was your father killed in the shale mines?

SP No he was wiped away in a big epidemic of flu just at the close of the 1914 war. Nobody knew just what it was.

MP But the country was overrun at that time because

SP You used to come home and ask who's dead. today, oh it was a wipe out.

SR In your class all the children survived, it was just your father that died?

SP Aye, my father was the only one.

MP His father was the only casualty in it, the children were all alive.

SR So after that you had to keep the whole family?

SP Well just about. There was some political sort of thing a Sankey bonus and we were suddenly awarded about twice the pay we used to get.

MP It was a war time thing.

SP Aye a Sankey bonus, I was too young to understand even but instead of about ten shillings a day I was making about 22 to 24 shillings a day.

MP It was a good pay, but then they took that off just like that, it was taken right off again. But wages were never big because when we were married first we had £2-15-0d, that's what we had.

SR When did you get married?

MP 1934. We had two pounds and you worked 3 weeks and then the fourth week there was no work for you and you went on the dole and we got 26/- that week. You got 17/- and I got 9/- for a week.

SP We used to tour about the countryside on an old motorbike.

SR So you didn't mind too much having an idle week.

MP Oh no, it was not wise, only you see the thing was that we couldn't live on 26/- so what you'd saved on £2-15-0d the previous 3 weeks had to go to make up that week.

SP You can say that applied to the whole district, there was no-one making great big money. You were either a farm worker or a shale miner.

MP In this area that was all there was.

SR But as a farm worker's child were you better off?

MP No, no, no. My father worked and there were seven of us in the house and he would work for a pound a week. We'd no rent to pay though.

SR And did you get cheap food as well?

MP Oh no. You didn't get anything.

SP The estate workers on the Hopetoun Estate, this is Hopetoun we're on now, it was the usual great big families living cramped into some wee, wee lodge or something with about fourteen shillings a week with loads of firewood given them. I know when they shot off two or three fallow deer down there they used to get a lovely deer handed in.

MP Well we got nothing, we just had our rent, that was all. We got potatoes, I forgot about that but that was all, we got nothing else.

SR And how big was your house?

MP Well we were never too bad because we had two bedrooms and a living room and a kitchenette. We were never squashed up all together.

SR Did you have water?

MP Oh no. Nobody had water and we didn't have electric, we had nothing like that. You carried your water and you had a big barrel, what you called a rainwater barrel and it ran off your rhones, the rainwater and you did your washing and things like that with this water so that you always washed with rainwater so that you didn't have it to carry.

SR Yes, I see and what did you do with dirty water?

MP You just threw it out.

SR But what did you do in the village with dirty water, did you just throw it on the street?

MP There would be sivers would there?

SR Sivers?

MP Sivers are things that run into drains.

SP But you'd get lengths laid end to end into a gutter and then a drain at the end of it.

MP And you'd get sivers. A siver is a little metal block that sits in the top of it. That's a siver, I don't know any other name for it.

SP When I was about eight years old my father was a keen angler, trout fishing and I even stayed out all night with him on the Water of Leith and some of the local bums and an old physical that was too big for me and you set off with a big bag tied round and this is what you travelled in, way up there to Kirknewton. It was cold up there.

MP But in his case it never did him any harm because he's got good health.

SP That's one of the only things I made, was an wee trout fish.

SR But were there people in the village with T.B.?

MP No, and funnily enough I read recently where someone had been doing a survey on older miners to see about this silicosis of the lungs and they found very, very little of it. They found that on the whole they were quite healthy. Why they don't know, maybe just hard work that agreed with them.

SP There were some types of mining, the Cornwall tin mining that was terrible for silicosis.

SR But shale mining was not?

MP No, you'd get one or two.

SP You wouldn't get that because you were blundering about in powder smoke, there was not enough wind down the mine for it to blow, so it went away gradually, but men working below you, you got their smoke coming up.

SR Was it hot or cold in the mines?

SP Well you were always warm enough working but you could get the odd place where there was water possibly dripping out of the roof here and there. You might get wet. Or there were other places where there was not enough water because we were regularly using carbide - calcium or carbide lamps, they were American but they suddenly appeared in this country and they were very popular, they were better than the old - you used to have an old pot and a stem on it and some oil poured in and ye had just a flame a wick up the spout that lit it, you see, that was common in mining but the flame was only, a red - the acetylene was a nice white, a far better light. I have seen old tools in Chambers Street in Edinburgh discovered in old Ayrshire mine works. One of them was a wheel, it was a pin wheel about this diameter which drove a small one so that it would go past you see, and it was a shower of flint sparks 'til the man saw what he was doing and then laid it aside and worked in the dark. They did that in Ayrshire.

SR What were the conditions like down the mines?

SP Oh, I would say you wouldn't get men to do it now.

MP You see, you had no drinking water, there was no sanitation, there was no kind of food or anything like that. In those days there weren't even thermos flasks, you had an ordinary tin flask but it was stone cold, you just took a piece of bread with you and this flask of tea which was cold and that was all you had. You had nothing all day. There was no pit bath, there was nothing like that.

SP You wouldn't have given up the shale mining to go back into the oil works again. You see these great big red bings that you see about this district, burnt shale, well that was always Irish people that were sentenced for half a dozen retort men or tip men.

SR That was worse than the shale mines?

SP They were out all weathers up on these tips, there was a chain or steel rope that took the wagon loads of burnt shale up and then the chain run on to a high thing and the hutch went off the shale and the man got it there and he had some trek away along the bing somewhere. He had a roadie work for him and he took that out and the tip man had a great big lump of cotton waste in the front of his cap and he got the two trams and his head against it and up and there was a chain tied round the end of the rails so that the wheels went and you heaved it, emptied it and took it back. They were issued with oil skins and so' westers but it didn't matter what kind of night it was, it was 24 hours a day because these retorts couldn't stop.

SR I see, but you never did that job? Not even when you were a small child.

MP No, that was always done by Irish labourers.

SP You see the shale was put into great big high - well they were metal tubes round brickwork but a metal tube go through the great big thing sort of oval shape. Well shale was dropped in there and there were flames on the outside, roasted that shale but no air got in beside the shale so that it only steamed a heavy sort of steam came off it and it was taken away and condensed in condensers, but no oxygen could get near the shale because it would of went on fire, it was only roasted in a place where the oxygen couldn't get at it. Well this heavy steam was condensed and you were lucky to get about 17 or 18 gallons of crude oil a ton of shale. The Dr. Young that started away in the shale mines, a long time before our time of course, he was an English chemist and the filter lights that people had in the houses at the time, often with an animal horn worn away thin for a funnel, pool of lights you see, well he got the idea of that burner that you see on old paraffin lamps and when you put a glass funnel on it, there's a fast current of air that rushes up the funnel and the flame turns a bright beautiful white. Well, Dr Young invented this lamp but where was he getting paraffin for it? And he got samples of this stuff up near Bathgate, Whitburn and it was a sort of Cannel coal and they could get a 120 gallons a ton out of that and he started that but it became more and more expensive to work it. The coal only lasted about six years and then he started experimenting with West Lothian shale. Instead of 120 gallons he found that the finest samples of shale he could get in this district, one near Glendevon, one near Winchburgh there, was one of the finest shales that had been found. About 35 gallons a ton was possible and of course there was various oil works Philpstoun, Broxburn, Pumpherston and away further west Addiewell and these places. The shale fields is about seven miles long and then it's about from the Pentland Hills down to the Firth of Forth.

SR Was Bridgend - Did everyone who, lived in Bridgend work in either the mines or the retorts?

SP Aye.

SR It was very much a shale mining village?

MP It was a shale mining area.

SR There were low brick rows of houses, well the bottom, ones were Irish, the Irish tip men and the retort

SR Were the houses two storey houses?

MP Oh no,no they were all single storeys.

SP There were men getting out of beds to go away on the day shift for the night shift workers to come in again in the same beds.

SR In the same family?

SP No, they would be lodgers. You used to see the windowsill with a row of working mens boots along it to dry out on the windowsill outside.

SR That was the Irish men mainly?

SP Aye.

MP There was certain sorts of work - well this retort work up on top of the big bings, they always done - that was their job.

SR Was it Irish miners as well?

MP No, they didn't do the mining bit.

SP Very few, there were one or two RC fellas mining and the retorts were always Irishmen.

SR And did they just come here for a few years and go back again or did they stay?

SP Well, some of them, the usual young man, Irish chap that work on a farm, it's his duty to send some coppers back to the parents in Ireland, well they could send some money away and so on but they could tell some of them in Ireland that there were five or six jobs and over they came.

MP And they just lodged in some of these houses, they were keeping as many lodgers as they could, you see.

SR Did your parents ever take lodgers?

MP Oh no, there were far too many in the house already, there were ten in it.

SP There were some people that had a block of houses, four houses say, rented so that they could keep a place for lodgers. They were bad drinkers and shale miners were just as bad.

SR Did your father drink?

SP No, he didn't even smoke, would my father.

MP Strict teetotal, that's what helped them out quite a bit, 'cos the father

never smoked or drank.

SR Do you remember ever going hungry when you were a child, was there enough money to keep you going?

SP No I would say that truly we always had enough even though it was plain.

SR But once your father had died and you were living just off your wage, did your younger brothers and sisters suffer.

MP I don't think they did really.

SP No, I never minded being starving, I have to be true about that.

MP You see it was always plain food, long ago.

SP Everything was so cheap, there were always horses drawing lorries, one with vegetables another would have fish say, all sort of vans came round. It was worth a van man's time, there were 92 houses. Ye had a good supply of everything, oh yes.

MP Even we with a pound a week, we never went hungry.

SR How about clothes?

MP Oh we didn't get clothes, I used to feel a little bit that's when I began to realise that life wasn't very fair, how you saw – Christmas time would come and someone would get a lovely new coat or something and you knew that

SP I puzzled about that when I was a youngster at the school - how did we have to be jammed in this , occasionally you saw someone go passed in a car on the main road

MP That didna bother me

SP and other people out to the hounds, how is it that you were jammed in here, you couldn't possibly escape and so on.

MP And then you see, nowadays what you could get grants and what not if you were intelligent, you couldn't get grants to go to school and further your education but there was nothing like that, absolutely nothing.

SR Would you have liked to have stayed on at school at least until you were fourteen if you could have or were you keen to get out?

MP Oh, he wanted away from school.

SP An hour every morning you got an hour of the Acts of the Apostles, St Paul and what he did when he got out of the boat at Damascus. Oh God! You got to the point where you didn't even want to go for your piece. Oh, no, no.

MP Actually, had he got the chance he was very bright amongst the right people, but unfortunately

SP I think they had picked one of the least filthy bits of the testament, of the bible, you see, but you got an hour of it every morning.

MP But the headmaster kicked up a row about him being taken away from school, but then there was no money to keep him, there was no money!

SP I was one of the ones that really tried at my lessons, I was very fond of that except grammar, we come to parlace something, I knew good English when I heard it. This predicate and subjunctives and all this sort of utter rot, nobody bothers with that now.

SR I don't mind.

MP No, we went through all that.

SP That was the one thing I got woodwork that I liked and geometry, I liked that and geography, I was fond of geography, and of course we had big singing lessons, this old school master was musical, he had us divided off at the treble, tenor and bass. It was like a big gun in that school.

MP You see, they were big families and there were a lot of pupils at the schools long ago, nowadays they tend to have small families, but in those days they were all big families, and there were no buses for them or anything, we walked and the road used to be black with children coming home from school.

SR When did you leave school, when you were 14.

MP When I was fourteen.

SP I got away when I was thirteen and one month, my exemption was refused when I was thirteen and the next month there was another application went in and we were granted it this time.

MP But that's done away with now, but you did get it in those days, but it

was on hardship grounds they would take into account how much you had coming in and how many people had to be kept off it and what not.

SR And when you left school did you go and work?

MP Yes, I went to work in big houses and I did that until I was married.

SR As a housemaid or housekeeper?

MP A housemaid, never a housekeeper, no,no. Maybe a housemaid or a house table maid or something like that.

SR In this area?

MP In Edinburgh and I was in England for a while, but I did that all my life.

SR And did you send your wages back home or were you allowed to keep them?

MP No, they were so small, I needed them all, I needed them all because you had very, very little you had about £3-6-8d, you had your food of course, you had £3-6-8d a month, that's what you had but you had to buy your uniform off that, but you know how much you had left. You had nothing.

SP That was the people

MP It was just the sign of the times, the times we lived in.

SP . . .just used, there were plenty more, just used them all

SR When you were at home, while you were a child and you lived in this two roomed house and there were ten children and

MP Eight children

SR Eight children, how did you sleep? Was it children in one room and parents in another?

MP Had ye box beds?

SP There were Inset beds. . .

MP In the kitchen, in the livingroom

SP And curtains were put across them in the day but you drew the curtains and there's a bed in there, you'll get four packed in there and there's one you can draw out below and get someone on that one.

MP That's how they did it.

SR And did your parents have a room to themselves?

MP Oh no, they would be in the kitchen - well they weren't living rooms in those days they were kitchens, a kitchen and a bedroom, that was it. But there were two of these box beds, one and then a partition and then another one, you see, then the parents would be in one, so many children in the other and so the rest of the children would be through in the room and then there were trundle bed under the room bed and it would get pulled out.

SR And what would happen if someone was ill, would they get a bed to themselves?

- MP Oh no, you wouldn't possibly get a bed to yourself, it was unheard of, it was unheard of even to be ill.
- SP Occasionally something visited you, - measles, ringworm but you just got attacks of these things but you came through the lot and then you were immune to them after that. But at times, I can remember a terrible wipe out with diphtheria - diphtheria and things like that. ... I remember an old woman, she had a big family like us but they were all big young working men and Mrs Watson and this flu that killed my father, well he tried to do himself in too, but er, he tried to cut his throat actually my father . .
- SR While he was ill?
- SP He raved away through the night and that and he did himself in between the Saturday night and the Sunday morning, about two or three o'clock on the Sunday morning but he kept alive until the Monday, in Edinburgh, they took him away to Edinburgh, - but this old woman, Mrs Watson was lying with three sons and the father, four lying dead in the one house and two girls who were so ill, they didn't seem to know what was going on.
- SR That was the flu?
- SP It didn't hit our house bad, my father was the only one, he took this and he wasn't used to an illness, he had never had an illness in his life - a strong man, no a big man - I mean he could take me by the ear and up right above his head with one hand, he could do that with me. But how many a man what did you do that for Sandy? "Oh", he says, "I can't keep ye whining there doing nothing." He was always wanting back to his work. - He lived 'til the Monday afternoon.

SR And then you had -to keep the whole family on your wage?

SP Aye. Ye had to hand it in - get about a couple of shillings - or three or four shillings for your pocket and the rest went into the house -

SR But did your mother get any extra money?

SP Through time my other brother got a job and then the one below him -

SR And then it got better?

SP Well, they all got wee jobs, you know.

SR Did you live at home until you got married?

SP Yes. That was by the time we were in this village.

SR Oh, I see, you moved -

SP We got a far bigger house - well with five or six rooms in it in Queensferry. A friend of ours told us about it and we went down and applied for it and got it. So we flitted to Queensferry and er, that house is away now, it still had a big extension came in and took a bit, that was Clerk Place in Queensferry.

SR Did that house have electricity and water?

SP It had water and only the gas.

SR With gas lamps?

SP Gas lamps instead of electricity.

SR So it was a lot better than your Bridgend house.

SP Aye. I came very keen to play the violin, you see, and I'd been playing at dances, oh, every Friday night, it went on and on and on and I liked to do the best I could to learn about music. I played the cornet in a brass band in Winchburgh at one time, and the clarinet, I've played the saxophone and I'm very fond of the flute, especially after hearing that James Galway - he's a lovely player. I've tried to play a flute but er - I got one - I bought one in Queensferry Road - Macintosh or something, coming into the West End from Queensferry. Rae Mackintosh or something like that. But ye always needing to adjust it again with little screws, one part gets thinner than another or something but you got to get them, I'd like a really good flute, one that would keep going. I've got a tape there of James Galway.

SR Did you ever have lessons in your music or did you just teach yourself?

SP I just taught myself. I read music as fluently as I would a newspaper.

SR But no one taught you to read it?

SP No, just books. I remember one time, I'd taken shots of my father's fiddle when he wasn't in and he didn't like me to touch it and he couldn't play but he had tried - he had this old fiddle and he had tried to take lessons on it seemingly, when he was a boy - but when he was out I would

have a shot on it. Instead of putting it under my chin I used to sit it down here and do this. Since that time I've made nine violins -

SR Made them?

SP Made them. I have a wee workshop out there, a turn and lathe and a drilling machine and everything. I was always making things, I've made working steam engines and things like that. I remember this wee chap who used to come in collecting for an insurance, Willie Steel, he played, you know in the olden days before it was talking films in the pictures, just the silent films, he used to play the violin in the Victoria Hall in Linlithgow and a pianist with him, you know. I asked him one day if they were any book that would learn me - Oh, just come down to the wee shop and I'll get ye - I went and got that and in about a fortnight of that, I could read - I understood what I would do but slowly of course, but you gradually got on with that.

SR You did that while you were a boy?

SP Well, I kept on - I was always playing a dances, we had a wee dance band here and there and so on, I used to play a lot in the Roseberry Hall in Queensferry, and the Y.M.C.A. hall and in different schools Winchburgh, Linlithgow even. Almost every Friday night you were playing at a dance. I've even played in Hopetoun House, down there at the Servants Ball - anything. And farm, harvest homes, what they used to call , All the different farm folk got together in some big barn dance.

SR Did you used to have dances in Bridgend?

SP Well, now and again, there was sometimes a wedding take place in a little

corrugated Iron Sunday School, it's still in Bridgend. There was a old minister used to come up on the Wednesday night, my parents of course, ordered me to go to that Bible class, of course, I've seen me sitting with a bit of elastic out of a golf club, a golf ball and a wee bit o' hard paper and just waiting for the Minister to bang this bell thing, every eye shut, every head bowed and as soon as that happened - and someone running round this iron building with a hard brick. Rrrrrrrh! Keeping up the accompaniment outside, but we weren't really religious.

SR Were your parents religious? Did your parents go to church.

SP No, no. I've seen my father hiding in one of these beds with the curtains in front of them, sprang in there when this short, flat hat that Ministers wear - and he would spring in there and of course the Minister would come in and there was something keeping him and it was late getting home from his work tonight and there he was in that bed and my mother telling all the lies of the day that he wasn't home yet. If you had started to go the church other people would have made a fool of you and laughed at you, you see, we knew it was rubbish.

End of first side

SR When you left the shale mines, when you were 39, where did you go and work then?

SP went to Pumphferston again, I had been studying engineering even going through postal courses and that. In fact I have a diploma for mathematics, very good plus written - but I started in work with maintenance engineers in 'Pumphferston.

SR In the oil works?

SP In the oil works and then I went up there on my motorbike, and then I shifted to Granton where it used to be Flemings Inkworks. I went in there and learnt welding and that sort of thing. And then a man wanted me to come up to Reeds Corrugated cases at the Maybury crossroads, you know Reeds factory at the Maybury. I worked 18 years with them and I retired from there.

SR But you lived here all the time when you did all these different jobs?

MP Yes, but not in this house. It was a house up there, it was up a stair and it got that I wasn't able to do the stairs and on medical grounds I got down here.

SR But when did you come to Newton Itself?

MP You came in 1931 and I came in 1934

SR So you came when you were still living with your mother?

MP Yes, we took over the house when his mother moved. When his mother moved we got married.

SP We went to that house in Queensferry and there was a house standing by itself in Dalmeny and it was an old farmhouse or engine-house of some kind and it was all renovated, a big, strong building and it was standing by itself in a wood. We took a chance at that, but it was terribly mucky in the winter time but I really liked that place. And we flitted here to Newton.

SR And that house in Dalmeny, did that have water and electricity?

MP Oh no, you see no houses did at that time.

SR But once you came here, the house that you had here had water and electricity?

MP No, I put the electricity in after we'd been here a while.

SR You had gas lights did you?

MP When Sandy's mother lived here, lived up the stair there, they didn't even have a toilet but they got after the sanitary and the sanitary -

SR Was there still a dry toilet in the garden?

MP Yes.

SR Or a water toilet?

MP It was dry, In the garden. But his mother got after the sanitary inspector and we found out that the landlord - the previous tenant for about four years had been paying extra rent because he was going to do these improvements but never did them, see what I mean, and the sanitary inspector- sent word back that he had repeatedly urged them to have this done and this time he would see that it was done and so the next week someone came up to draw plans but there was very, very little room. You couldn't have a bathroom or anything, but they did put in a flush toilet. But it was paraffin lamps and a big old fashioned grate, well we put in a modern grate and put the electric in for ourselves.

SR You lived there with your mother until 1934 and then did she die?

MP No, she moved to another house, she went away back to Dalmeny.

SR With the rest of the children?

MP Well by that time, some of them were beginning to get married and what not. She went back to live in Dalmeny, her daughter got a house in Dalmeny and she got a house next door so that her daughter

SR Is that Mrs L?

MP No, the other daughter, she's dead now.

SR And then you moved into her house?

MP We took her house over.

SR Would you have got married before if you had had a house?

MP Yes, we were just waiting for a house and this turned up you see, and before it got about the district that the house was going to be empty, you speak for it, you see.

SR But were you waiting to get married for quite a long time before you actually did?

MP Mmmm.

SP When you think back to the old days, even as kids, there was always something you played at. In March with strong winds, it was flying kites and snowballs and sliding and skating in winter time. Fishing and all the different sports, anything, all the different sports that you did and running with what we

called a gird and cleek, a hoop, running with one of them.

SR Did you ever go and play on the bings and in the mines.

SP Oh aye, on the bings.

SR What did you do on the bings?

MP Everything.

SP you see, Bridgend was built for an old oilworks but it finished about 1910, Champfleurie and it was just old ruins and we played there a lot, we could get up on the roofs and so on. One half of that was old retorts, all just broken down, ruins and that, an awful lot of foxes lived in them, and I was a great student of foxes. These foxes got so used to me that they didn't run very far away. They would stand and look at you. I was very fond of going over and seeing the foxes.

MP Some of the houses in Newton, the ones across the road, there's a row of houses and the one at the bottom, these were built for the Duddingston shale mines but they were very superior houses.

SR They were built for the miners themselves?

MP No, you had to be a sort of tradesman, maybe a joiner or a fireman or someone like that, an ordinary miner as a rule didn't get them but they were superior houses. The Marquis of Linlithgow insisted that they must be stone faced, you know that they were to have a nice appearance and what not.

SR Were the houses in Bridgend damp at all?

SP No, I wouldn't say so, no.

SR They were just small, without facilities?

SP The rooms were big, but there were only two of them.

MP They were much bigger rooms.

SR It was bigger than this then.

MP Oh! This is very, very tiny.

SP The rooms were big and then you had a scullery where your mother had a wash-tub in it and everything.

MP But these houses, the rooms there enormous. When one of these houses goes vacant, they're all owner-occupied nowadays, there not miners in them now, well if one goes empty you can sell it in two or three days because the rooms are enormous.

SR At meal times, you must have had an awful lot of chairs if there were ten of you to sit down, or did you eat your meals in stages?

SP Ah well, the ordinary way when you were very young, was you were maybe fed first, either that or your parents had theirs and then you got your turn at the table, sort of style, it was very seldom that the whole lot eat at once.

SR What about things like washing and drying clothes?

MP Well, I could tell you about that. You had a tub and you heated water with something or other, maybe, if you were lucky, you had an old fireplace in your kitchenette, a big pot - you had a boiler, I suppose, aye a built in boiler, coalfired. Ye heated your water there and then you washed with a rubbing board in a big wooden tub like a barrel split in two, that was the washing facilities.

SR And did you wash inside or outside?

MP Inside, in your scullery, you washed in your scullery.

SP But you had open places with two or three clothes poles, sticking up maybe a drying green.

MP Where you could dry your clothes.

SP And then you had your well, that you filled your water at and you were lucky to be near the well or you had a long walk to it.

SR Were you near the well?

SP We happened to be near it, anyway but some of them had these wooden things you put around your neck and then there's two ropes with hooks on them and you walked with two pails.

SR Did you do that?

SP No.

SR Where did you keep your water, did you keep it in the scullery or outside?

SP Yes, just

MP You get a pail of water and then when it's empty someone goes to the well and gets another one.

SR Was it covered?

MP No.

SR Just open.

SP Oh no, quite rough.

MP It was just what it was like, long ago, and even as we think we're awfully grand now, people in another 50 years will wonder how we managed.

SR This is why I'm asking you these questions and you may think they are rather silly questions, it just that I can't imagine what it was like unless you tell me details, if you just say it was dreadful or it was poor, it doesn't help me.

SP You look back to some happy times when you were a kid, you know but ye couldn't afford to be off your work in the shale mining.

MP You see, you had no money coming in the moment you were off and there were no holidays.

SP A Saturday in a shale mine was a half day and you hardly ever worked in a shale mine on a Sunday unless some repair was needed or something.

MP Your only holiday was New Year's Day and we didn't get paid for it, did we?

SP No.

SR When did you first start getting paid holidays?

MP We got them eventually, but we didn't get them for a long time. The only day you got off was New Year's Day and it was unpaid. And people didn't really want to be off because they couldn't afford to be off, your pay was so small.

SP Old, old coal miners in Bo'ness could take New Years Day off but they came home utterly drunk and not fit to go out for a couple of days and the employers were losing and therefore they took the New Year's Day off them. And they never had one day a year after that.

MP And no holidays throughout the year, you got no holidays. If you took time off, it was very likely frowned upon, but there was no money.

SB So you never took time off, from when you started work when you were 13 through until you were

SP Aye, you sort of had to be on the job.

MP But then we got a weeks holiday with pay, which was something

SR When was that?

MP When did that start?

SR Was it when he was still in the shale?

MP Oh yes, he had it in the shale.

SP Up at Faucheldean that was the first time.

MP At Faucheldean, oh well that would be sometime between 1934 and 1939, in that area, I don't know just which year, but you were at Faucheldean that's when it was.

SP Yes, that's when it was.

SR So when you were working, when you first started, you were working six days a week, every day of the year. Did you get really tired or did you feel resentful or anything?

SP You'd be surprised, a lot of us trained as runners, we ran miles at night.

MP It seemed to keep them fit and if someone maybe started at that sort of work, maybe they weren't very strong when they started but they seemed to gain strength, they seemed to get strength to do it.

SP There used to be a game quoits - a great big iron ring with a big sort of cut for your hand going in, well these things were 8lbs some of them 10lbs in weight and they threw them 18 yards into a soft clay puddle with an iron pin in the middle. They used to stand and look like this - and away it went through there and they could usually hit that iron pin, at 21 yards sometimes.

MP You see that was one thing they liked about it, they maybe had an early start in the morning but they were finished - was it about half past two you were finished?

SR So you had the afternoon?

- MP You got a bit of the afternoon, you see, there were very few trades that had this little bit in the afternoon you see.
- SP My usual sport was cycle racing with your feet tied onto the pedals with leather belts, you could pull a pedal up the way while at the same time you were pushing one down the way - and through long grass. Well. . . .
- MP They were fairly energetic.
- SP Oh aye.
- SR What about the women, was life tough for the women?
- MP Well it would be because you would always be fighting against the shortage of money and then they had no conveniences in the house, everything would be very, very difficult. Someone who's never had that to do - great big grates to black lead and clean steels and cold water, every drop of water to be heated and paraffin lamps to be cleaned and all your coal to carry in and carry out. You see, someone in the modern day with electric power or gas power or that, and they've always been used to electric light, it was a different life altogether. A much harder life.
- SR Would you say it was tougher for the women or the men?
- MP Well I think the women may have had it tougher because they never got a let up, they could never go anywhere because they were no buses, there was very little transport in those days but they didn't have the money to go, even if they could have gone, they'd, no money.

SR Were there some women whose husbands didn't give them their wages?

MP Well, I suppose there would be. Drink you see, there was an awful lot of drink. They would just give their wife so much you see and the rest was for them.

SR Your father gave all his wage to your mother?

SP Oh aye.

SR Even with all the wage your mother found it difficult to cope?

MP Well it would be difficult because, well you take it - well you had about £3 what? Well about £3 - when you began to think of it there wasn't even a shilling a day.

SP I always just threw my packet on the table when I came in because she was the manager.

MP He's not interested in money, he can't be bothered with money and I had to be Chancellor of the Exchequer but there's always money for anything he wants.

SR Have you any children?

SP No. I had enough children when I was

MP Well, as he said he'd all that family to bring up, even when he was a schoolboy, except for the last two, he never got out with the other boys because you'd have to look after this child.

SP Pram races, we had great pram races. They were risky things, downhill and

everything.

SR Can you tell me a bit about the 1926 strike? Were you on strike?

SP We were never on strike, the shale miners but it was the coal strike that kept us from getting any coal in our power station - the shale was brought to a standstill for want of coal.

MP But they weren't on strike but they were stopped working

SP I can never remember a strike an out and out strike, no, no.

SR When the coal miners were on strike was there any hardship in the shale villages?

MP Oh there would be.

SP We used to have soup kitchens when it came to that, we got that.

SR And who provided the stuff for the soup kitchen?

SP An ordinary grocer that had got quite a lot of business.

MP Maybe a farmer would give them some potatoes.

SP Farmers anyway.

MP And maybe a grocer would give you something and a farmer maybe give you some turnips or something, some potatoes and maybe a butcher would give them some meat.

SP I can never remember a shale miners strike.

SR In 1926 there would be soup kitchens?

MP There would be, never in my day I never remember a soup kitchen but there was at one time soup kitchens in the Newton. And that would be, I should imagine about 1926. It would be, because they weren't on strike but they couldn't get working and what you got from the country in those days was very, very little indeed.

SP I remember three of us were leaving when the oil was stopped for want of coal, power stations, boilers everything couldn't go and three had set off to Fort William, there were a tunnel going through Ben Nevis and we got a job up there but when we saw the sort of conditions we were going to be working in, oh dear no.

MP It was worse, and then you see you'd had no home and it was just a sort of rough, wooden slat that you lay on and it was on a hill and maybe it was very, very high and you could see daylight underneath - and one blanket. It was very, very poor, they never stuck it out.

SP Well, we got the job right enough - it was wintertime and quite a lot of Glasgow chaps were going home and leaving, oh you got a job as soon as you arrived there.

MP Well, at that time, wages in the shale mines were about 9/6d a day, weren't they?

SP Oh, something like that.

MP Well, 9/6d, I think I've heard you say that they were 9/6d. That was before my day.

SP There wasn't even a locker you could put a suit of clothes in, the rags you were working in were the only clothes you could have They were ten a penny you could use them up.

SR But it wasn't that bad down here in the shale mines. What was the attitude of the management to the workers?

MP They didn't do much for you, lets put it like that.

SP The jobs were relegated to managers of certain sections, somebody was the manager for this section, someone else was the manager for some other section or that and they were supposed to put up a good a production as was possible from their section.

MP But they did you right and left. I mean you were supposed to be paid for what you put up, it was weighed. They weighed it when it went up, they put a pin on and they knew it was your pin, that that was yours but it was quite common if the management was going to have to make up a lot of people's - you must have a minimum wage - well sometimes they hadn't been able to make the wage because the conditions were so bad, well he had to get money to pay those men, well he would pinch 5ton off of you and 3-ton off of someone else, you see. That was done regularly.

SP You see, when you filled one of these trucks with shale you had a string with a loop on the end of it and some, anything tied on the end of this and you just put it through a ring and the pit-headman he knew whose it was and he hung it up and everyman -

- MP Well I mean if supposing you put a certain amount, a certain weight in your hutch, you didn't get that. These men who weighed them were known as the lightweight champions.
- SP I've seen me filling heavier ones and getting lighter weight at the pit-head for them. You see that it's no good and you begin to give them very, very light ones.
- MP Then they've got to give you money you see. You can play yourself, you see.
- SP You've got to be utterly unscrupulous to be a mine - and then you have a fireman, he's supposed to be looking for dangerous gases.
- MP He's supposed to be on his own - he's not supposed to be employed by the Company or anybody else, he is supposed to be impartial, but it never works.
- SP Well he can, by being friendly with men, or by pretending to be friendly with men, he can see them doing something that the manager wouldn't see, you see, and er that's the sort o' - , a fireman is only looking for dangerous gases and accounting for every man in his section.
- MP To see that everyone has come up that went down.
- SP But you wouldn't get men to do that now, you see joiners and builders and so on with a wee radio set going while they're doing whatever they are doing.
- MP When he left and went to engineering he was absolutely flabbergasted. There was another man started on the same day as him and he came from the mines as

well, he says "Do you know, if we brought in half a dozen miners here, we could sack everyone else". Because a half dozen miners would have done as much work as this huge crowd of men were doing.

SP Oh aye, they wanted to rest most of the day, but you had no time for that in shale mining.

SR What sort of hours did you work when you were down the mines?

SP Well, it was an eight hour - well, from bank to bank, that is to say your travelling time from the surface of the ground down to where you worked, was part of your eight hours. It was less than eight hours.

MP That was one thing they liked about it because they had a bit of the afternoon to themselves, you see.

SR But when you were working with the pit ponies, what was your shift then? Was that eight hours too?

SP Well you go to the stable, put your harness on the horse and take it away to the mine with you, you could say it would take you half an hour to get from the stable to where you were working.

SR But that counted as part of your shift?

SP Aye.

MP Was that an eight hour shift as well? Did you have the same shift as the miners?

SP Aye. You might be a wee bit because you had to look after your horses when you came up at night - get it off - you always dried their feet with sawdust. Stand there and grind fresh sawdust on their fetlocks, until they were dry. We always did that. And on a Saturday, that was a half day of course, we got a pail of warm water with some disinfectant in it and washed their feet.

SR Did you have your own horse that you looked after everyday?

SP Mmmm.

MP But there was a stableman that was responsible for anything wrong with them.

SR I see.

MP He would check everything.

SP The horse was well trained, it didn't go out without a bit in it's mouth or anything, it knew what it was to do.

SR They used to draw the hutches did they?

SP Aye, you see, White Quarry mine along there, it's hutches came up to the surface and were let down another mine and they travelled underground to Philpstoun, through below the ground. Well there were three stages of horses there - but your horse was your pet.

MP But they were very well looked after.

SR Better looked after than the miners'

MP Oh yes, they were well looked after.

SP You lifted their feet to see if the shoes were slack - if you got a horse along a concrete bed you'd hear a slack shoe.

MP And then anything wrong with it, you would tell the head stableman when you came in, he was responsible.

SP There was a blacksmith there in the morning before you went down, just in case you had two or three nails hunched up, anything wrong then he'd put new shoes - they were well looked after and they had that short shift to work and they were well fed and ye even took a bag of feed down the mine with you but they used to get a great big cap of bruised corn, that was corn that went through a roller, flattened it, and some chopped hay. Well the horses weren't interested in chopped hay and you used to put your hands in and get the hay out and let them get at the corn.

SR How long did you look after them for? How long were you in that job?

SP Up until I was sixteen just.

SR until your father died?

MP Yes, when his father died. We had to go away for more money

SP - and became a drawer.

SR Did you work with someone you knew, or did you work with a stranger when you were a drawer.

SP Well this man was my father's drawer.

SR Oh I see, your father had been a faceman?

SP Aye, he took over the tools and I went and drew.

SR It's like a family business in a way.

SP Sometimes in parties and there's a girl, a woman comes next door there and she's visited them when she was in America.

MP And he's 90 now, still alive and he always asks for him - but that was the sort of procedure, I mean 16 was young to go and draw, it was only the circumstances that they needed the money.

SR Down the mines was it wet? Were you ever working in water or was it always dry.

SP Very occasionally. There was an odd place where there was maybe a drip.

MP You didn't work in that.

SP No, I have been a pump attendant even, - I remember I was taken away to Edinburgh for a hernia operation in Chalmers hospital, I was only about 15 at that time. Well I looked after a that drew hutches up a steep hill down the mine and I looked after pumps.

MP There was always pumps going

SP But by the time I was 16 I was all passed that and on the drawing.

MP That was as far as - and then he was there for a long, long time and then he went on and took a - what they called a faceman - he was a faceman by that time and he was there and then he left. But then during the war, because I can remember, because we couldn't get a job, couldn't get anything, we got no money if you lived yourself you got nothing and you couldn't get a job because he was classed as a miner and if your classed as a miner nobody else could employ you, you see. So we just had to live

SR Why did you leave then?

MP Because he'd had enough of it, it just got so bad

SP Well you see, there's some places where there's double shift, another man in his draw takes over from you in the afternoon and he'll work the back shift and by the next week you'll be back shifting him. And I ken when a man who knew nothing about this and wasting and burning too much explosive and so on and using my tools and wouldn't go and get tools of his own and so on. I comes out on this Saturday morning and not a pound of shale in that place on Saturdays. By the time I bored holes and charged them and blew them I wouldn't have got more than possibly a couple of tons for the whole day, so I just had a look and decided I was going and I

MP And walked out.

SR Was this man from the area?

SP He was from Winchburgh.

MP He came from Dalmeny.

SP Dalmeny was it? Anyway I took the tools up out the mine and got them home here to the Newton and never went down a mine again and never been down a mine since

MP You see, when you left that was you, you got no money, the company wouldn't give you any - you -wouldn't get very much anyway but we got nothing and we couldn't get work, there was plenty work but nobody would employ you, because he was classed as a miner, you see, and you must do that work.

SP There were jobs hanging in the dole office and you looked at them but you wouldn't get them because you were a shale miner.

MP You see, during the war they were, like coal miners and munition workers and that, they were all needed you see. You couldn't leave a mine during the war, you could leave at other times.

SR Did you work at all after you got married?

MP Never, never.

SR You stopped as soon as you got married.

MP I never worked.

SP Things have been far better since.

- MP Of course after you left the mines and you went of course by that times everybody was getting a little bit better.
- SR Most of the houses were getting electricity and the housing
- MP They were all getting done up, you see even those houses which were miners houses were nice houses, really nice houses. Well they didn't have electric, when I came to Newton, they didn't have electric. I think they had a flush toilet, but there was no electric, I remember them getting electric. There was no electric in this village when I came and they gradually got it and then they got bathrooms built and they got hot water systems put in and they up-graded them. And the mine managers lived in those houses and they didn't have it either you see. You had to be a tradesman, a joiner or maybe an engineer, or electrician -
- SP I don't think you would find many shale miners now.
- MP In the Newton, there's nae any shale miners, they've all died off or they've moved away years ago -
- SP These bings you see about this region, they're just monuments to a class that have vanished, you wouldn't get mining here now.
- SR But coal mining now is just as bad as shale mining.
- SP Ah well, I never once been down a coal mine, I don't know much about it but quite a lot of the hard work is done by machinery.
- MP It's all cut by machinery now you see, but a shale mine - the place you

worked in could be high which it wasn't in a coal mine, you'd be lucky if you had two feet.

SP In the old days, coal mining went on with just brute strength and no machines of any kind, a miner would try to mine a seam of coal that's possibly a foot and a half or two foot thick, and he's in there lying on his side - and so - well there's a great big wheel with teeth and it just goes along and it takes it up and right out, you see and it goes on conveyer belts and goes away -

MP But they don't have the heavy handling and what not.

SP But I would say coal was more likely for accidents, I've seen a lot of bad accidents, oh aye, I've seen a man cut in half, one leaning over the hutches when the roof came down on the top of him and one side in the hutch and the other half lying on the ground, things like that.

MP These things were always covered up.

SP I was the last man who ever talked to a chap I used to work with and his electric lamp, they were gas at this place seemingly, just a wee hot wire on his back and he was done and I was just leaving him with another hutch he asked me if I would send him this spare electric lamp and I was just sitting down to take ma piece when this other chap was going in there and he would have taken the spare lamp with him and up went the whole place and blew us - I was lying with ma jacket over my head and I got hit with half a sleeper. Well that man

MP It must have been the gas.

SP He was trying to blow a hole into another hole where we were working, when

you're doing that - you see there's a tunnel coming that way and you're coming up here - got to join on with it. Well the last wee bit you've got to watch how you put your shot, if it was too long your shot would go there, you want to blow this bit clean away and make an opening, well his lamp was so bad, that I think when he got up the back to have a look from the other side, I think he would light a match. A nice man he was too.

MP And he left a big family.

SP I was just away from him for just a minute when that happened.

MP You were allowed matches down shale mines, you could take matches down but in a gassy place you wouldn't use them but probably, maybe he just didn't think, I don't know.

SP Well there we were within inches o' that big dangerous body of gas through that somewhere. But he went up that last tunnel here and in there to have a look at it and his lamp was utterly hopeless at that time, just a wee hot red wire, you couldn't see with it, so I suppose he lit a match never thinking.

SR In those sort of cases, did the company pay compensation to his family?

MP They tried to get out of it if they could. The normal thing here for a fellow that lived in this village here now he was killed in 1947, I can remember that, it was an awfully bad snowstorm in 1947 and I know he had three young children, and I know his compensation was £660 and Sandy's cousin, her husband was killed in the mine and she got nothing. You didn't get it automatically, you had to sue for it.

Blank piece of tape.

- SP I remember one man that lost an eye and he didn't get a halfpenny. He could still see quite alright with one eye. If you got a finger bust nowadays you could get damages for it.
- SR Was there any sort of social security money or parish money that you got, if your family was really poor and you just couldn't eat.
- MP You could but it was very, very little - parish relief you got.
- SR Did your family ever get that before you left school.
- SP Not that I know about.
- MP No he didn't get it but after his mother was left a widow, you got it after that but it was very little.
- SR A sort of widow's pension?
- MP A sort of widow's pension if you had children but if you worked, supposing the mother worked, it was very unlikely that she would but if she did she would get nothing but she got for the children.
- SR That's one of the things I wanted to ask you about, did women ever work, like in the 1st world war, did women ever work in the mines or in the oil works?
- MP No - did they work in the oil works?

SP During the first war there was some worked because they took away a lot of young chaps from the Philpstoun works to the army. There were two or three women started in the silver house, places like that.

MP But they were never down mines or places like that

SP There's a case, a modern case the now, that Hitachi company, Japanese – they are paying off everyone who's 35 and over, oh you're old at 35 now.

MP You're inclined to be slower, you've more sickness and your eyesight isn't so good but you go off at 35 and you get one thousand and something and you can nominate someone who's just left the school at 16 to take your place. But no-one's going to take much interest in their work if you're going to get thrown off at 35.

SP There were any amount of spare labour if you needed it, you were never stuck for workers.

SR What happened to old people? Did people go on working after 65, after 70?

MP Oh, I suppose you could work as long as you wanted.

SP I was asked if I wanted to work on at Reeds.

SR But I'm talking about the early part of the century when you were a child.

MP Now there was only an old age pension. I can remember when the old age pension was 5/- a week and then increased to 10/-, but I can't remember if a woman got 10/- a week or if she only got 5/-, I'm not clear on that. Now I'm talking about at the beginning of this war, 1939 I can remember

my father and mother, it was 5/- each they had. You got that at 65 and it went up to 10/-, and an employer if you got - I don't know if mine did - but a lot of employers did, pretend that you got 10/-, it must have been 10/- by that time, your employer took that 10/- off your wage.

SP Aye, that was done. That was done on farms. The man got the 10/- pension and the farmer started to pay him 10/- less. Oh that was done

MP Automatically they took that pension off him. You did as much work but they made out you weren't so fit.

SP And these were all highly respectable, titled people a lot of them. They knew - well even the bible tells you that it approves of slavery. Oh, it does.

MP You see you would lose your job and that would be all you had to keep you.

SR So did old people tend to live with their children rather than on their own.

MP Well there would be more of that in the old days because to begin with they had bigger families and possibly while the parents were still alive there would be some unmarried still in the house, so they would be contributing to the finances of the place. Or when a widow was left on her own or that maybe she would go and live with some of the family, you know.

SR Did your mother start to work after she was widowed?

MP No, she never worked, his mother had bad sight, she never worked. She only had one eye. She couldn't work anyway because when his father died she had a child of fourteen months and then Mrs L would be the next one. She was two years older, you know what I mean? There was two, probably three

still not at school. They couldn't go out to work. But nowadays you would get something but in those days you didn't. I don't remember what was supposed to keep you. But that was all you had, your old age pension.

SP You'd go and catch rabbits and things like that.

SR Did you do a lot of that, did you catch a lot of country food, some poaching?

SP Aye, it was considered fair game, going to get a rabbit. It's different now.

MP But his father frowned on anything like that.

SR Did he?

SP Oh aye. One day I was up this burn and it was looking well the water and it was a Sunday and I was down for my fishing rod, caught a couple of wee trouts and he kicked up blazes for fishing on a Sunday.

MP He never went to church or anything like that but he frowned on anything like that, you didn't do anything like that.

SP Oh no, you'd to be respectable. If I got a duck or something, he'd have nothing to do with it. Just took a bit when he got it.

SR Did you grow vegetables at all?

MP No, no we hadn't gardens.

SP No in Bridgend, we didn't have gardens. Well the farmers always had plenty, you'd just go along to a field and take some, we did that.

SR When he wasn't looking presumably?

MP Yes. Oh, I suppose there was a lot of that done. But there was no gardens or anything like that. You bought your potatoes from a farmer, very often he would bring a sack of potatoes and he would put a string round the middle, half way round it and you could either have a whole sack or a half sack, you didn't buy them by the stone.

SP When the potato digging started in the fields, the farmers took on all the youngsters in the place.

SR You did that and you went off school for a week or so?

SP Aye.

MP You got 9/- a week - 1/6d a day for that.

SR You did that too did you?

MP No never, never. I was too sane for that. I never tackled that.

SR So your family didn't need the money?

MP Well, oh we would need the money. We got our food but as I say that was all we got. We had nothing else.

SR Did you ever go to school barefoot?

MP Oh no.

SP I did that, in the summertime.

MP In fact that used to be my greatest ambition, I wanted to go with my bare-feet but my mother would never allow me. But it was more boots that you wore in those days rather than shoes. But you could only get one pair per year. You always got new clothes for going back after the summer holidays. You always got a new pair of boots then, or probably what you kept for Sunday you would wear then and you would get a new pair for Sunday. Oh, I did get new dresses and coats occasionally, not often but I got them.

SR Were clothes passed down?

MP No, there were only two girls of us and I was the eldest of the two.

SP Some women got an old sewing machine and they could cut down big things into smaller things.

MP And in the food line, we didn't go hungry but we never got anything in the fancy line, if you understand what I mean. For instance, you never got cake or biscuits, or at least we didn't. You didn't get things like that, your mother would make scones and pancakes and that sort of thing. In fact I would be about eleven years old before I had even tasted cake. It didn't do me any harm. I had never tasted ice-cream until I was about eight and I remember we were going to the pictures, my mother was there and my oldest brother and I can remember her saying to go and get so many sliders. Now a slider was part of this old fashioned grate that you had, you pulled it out and in, and I thought 'what does she want with a slider'. And then it was ice-cream and in those days

End of tape

INDEX

Subjects

accidents 28
childhood - play 17
 - work 2
bings 8,17
coal mining 27
compensation 28
domestic work 12
drawer 5,25
drink 10,21
electricity 16,27
entertainment 14-15,20
faceman 5,26
family size 2,11
farming 2,6
fireman 23
flu epidemic 5,13
food 10
illness 7,13
Irish 8-10
holidays 19-20
housing 2,6,18
lodgers 9
marriage 6,17
migration 1,16
oil 4
oil works 4,5,17
pensions 29-30
poaching 30
water 2,6
women's work 2,29
work 3,4
 - hours 4
 - conditions 4,7-8,26
 - non-shale 16,24
wages 3,6
war -second 26-7
washing 18

ponies 5,24-5
poverty 2,i9
religion 11,15
retort roan 8,10
sanitation 2,7,16
school 2
school leaving 2
shale mines 3,5,7-8,24,26-28
shoes 31
silicosis 7
sleeping arrangements 12-13
soup kitchens 22
strike 22
sulphate of ammonia 4-5
TB 7
Places

Bridgend 1,9,15
Broxburn 3
Cambusnethan 1
Dalmeny 1,16
Edinburgh 12
England 12
Fort William 22
Newton 1,17-18
Queensferry 1
Woodend 1
Oil works
Philpstoun 3
Pumpherstoun 16
Shale mines
Faucheldean
Whitequarries