

PG SIDE ONE

- A. Well, I left the school in 1924, on a Thursday, and started in Thirty Five Pit on the Monday morning, working at the face with my father, filling the tubs, so that the other chap who worked there, his name was Jimmy Garvie.....he took them away, but as time went on.....
- Q. Were you fourteen then?
- A. Fourteen! We found out that I could take the hutches from the face out to the top of the brae, as quick as Jimmy! So he did the filling, as he was quicker than what I could fill them. So I did that, till one day the gaffer came up, he asked me.....
- Q. Who was the gaffer? Can you remember his name?
- A. Well, in fact, it wasn't the gaffer, it was the oversman. And he asked me what I was doing. And I said that I was running the hutches from the face out, and running this brae. He told me that nobody had to run the brae till they were sixteen! So I went back in and told my father, but he said "Put your jacket on, you're no good here, you're better at home!" I was at home for just a fortnight! It was the gentleman that sacked me that came up and said "Can you run the brae, at the back of the bottom", that's what we called the section. I said "Yes!" He said, "Will you start on Monday morning, at the top of the brae?" So you talk about about turns.....I started on the Monday morning at the top of this brae, running the hutches down and bringing the empty ones up. I done that for.....
- Q. So you were actually doing a drawer's job?
- A. Yes! Instead of the drawer doing it, I was doing it! So I did that for four months, and packed it up and went back to work with my father so they couldn't say that I couldn't run the brae. So I was back to square one again! I worked with him until I was twenty three and I took ill. Then

I started on the oncost. I worked on the oncost, doing all sorts,....of jobs, then I took out my deputy's certificate, and I was spare deputy, pumper, and all these kind of jobs, pretty well all of it!

Q. Now, your father, he was a faceman?

A. Yes!

Q. Now, did he actually pay you or were you paid by the Company?

A. No! When I worked with my father filling hutches and running them, you were paid by your father, the faceman. You see, the road was that long, that it was always three men that were working instead of two. There was a faceman and one filler and one running the hutches back and forward from the face out to the brae head. And this went on because they could make more money that way, than just one.....two of them. Three was a better proposition then than what two were! So, this is how it went on!

Q. Can you remember what your wages were at that time?

A. Well.....I couldn't remember what it was.....the wages were, but I can remember the wages that I got when I was working on the top of the brae, was 3/9d a shift. And you had to be there in the morning and you didn't get away to three o'clock, I think it was three o'clock that you loused then! If you done any overtime, you just got a single shift!

Q. Plain time?

A. Plain time! Then.....for your holidays, what was supposed to be your holidays, you always got a Fair Friday and Saturday. For all they were idle days, there was no pay going! You got two days at New Year time. No pay going! They were just idle days, but they were counted as holidays! You always got the Glasgow Fair Friday and Saturday. That was your holidays in the summertime. And they talk about the good old days!

Q. And what about Summer, you got no.....you got the Glasgow Fair, that was the holidays?

A. Only two days!

Q. Only two days?

A. The Friday and the Saturday that was your.....

Q. Without pay?

A. Without pay! That was your holidays! If you wanted a Summer holiday.....

Q. And if you worked.....could you have worked? Or was the pit closed?

A. No! It was closed these two days!

A. That was Number Thirty Five because, if I remember right, Broxburn Gala-day was on the Friday, and Niddry Gala-day and Winchburgh Gala-day were on the Saturday, and that was the two days! Well, I stayed at Threemiletown, and we used to have a trip away on the Saturday, every year, that was our holiday! A trip!

Q. How did you go! How did you travel?

A. It was char.....buses, you know, the old buses, open charabancs and you thought that you were great, sitting in it! Now, it was the hood, and we used to sit on the top of the hood at the back, and we had the back seat, that's where we all made for, that's where all the young ones made for, and you sat on top, instead of sitting on the seat, you sat on the top of the hood! Great times!

Q. Was this a hood that would come over? If it was raining?

A. Yes, if it was raining, they pulled it over, just like these old cars.

Q. A convertible?

A. A convertible! It was just the same in these days! Charabancs we called them! We had great times! Well, the pug used to run from Thirty Five to Linlithgow, and that was to take the shale down there, but I'm getting off the mining days! (Clock chiming in background)

Q. That's alright! Just you carry on.....once the clock's stopped, but it's alright talking through it! There you are!

A. Well, I was started as spare deputy and a shottfirer, in a section we called the wee dook. You all wore safety lamps in that section! This was a gassy section, and you had to be on your toes all the time! Because one time, you would get it, another time you wouldn't get it! It was just like that! It was clear one minute, and the next it would be there! You had always to look, and be on your toes! All the men in that section were all trained in the safety lamp procedures, and the air had to be led right up to the face!

Q. Did you have a fireman go in before you started your shift, to clear the...?

A. Yes, the fireman always started at four o'clock.....at half past four in the morning..... the fireman started! He went round the sections, and saw that they were all clear of gas, and then he came to the surface, and signed the books....all about....made his report, then he passed the men, and if there was gas in a man's place, he was told to stand to the side, till they all got down to see.....to clear it out!

Q. So, the fireman had to go back again, and give you clearance before you started your job?

A. Yes, either that, or you couldn't maybe get into it! Usually they got the air up and got it cleared!

Q. What kind of lamps did you use at that time?

A. Well, at.....

Q. Was it carbide or electric?

A. When I started it was yon old.....

Q. Tallow lamps.....?

A. Tallow lamps, they were comical things, because if you were going down, there were things that we called screens, well, it was cloth hanging, and that was for air barriers, we would start putting the air.....and they would catch on to this, and you would be away on without your lamp and it would be hanging on the screen! It was.....then the gas lamps came in, they were a great boon at the time, when they came in, but Thirty Five Pit was made a safety lamp....and you all wore electric lamps.

Q. Did you feel that this was because it was dangerous?

A. Well, it was gassy.....

Q. As far as gas was concerned.....?

A. Well, most of the sections were gassy sections! You could get gas, but I'm not saying they were dangerous, do you know what I mean! Certainly there were one or two people burnt! I think there was two or three died with burns, you know, got burnt in the mine!

Q. Were you in the mines.....when that happened?

A. Yes, I was in the pit when that happened!

Q. Can you remember their names?

A. Oh yes! There was.....Peter Finnigan, he died! Now, it's not a nice thing to say, but Peter was killed! The fireman had been in, this is just what

I was telling you about, how it came and went! The fireman was in first thing in the morning, fired a round of shots, and went on his way. Well, as I told you, this was in the Hillend section, and these men were learnt to use the safety lamp, to test for gas. So, it was just about piece-time, nine o'clock or that, when we heard that Peter had been burnt! There had been an explosion....and that Peter had been burnt! Well, it just lets you see, how it came and went, it was clear when the first shots were fired, yet when he came in to fire his shots, he was burnt! He died with them! But these are things that happened!

Q. Was this a bit of misjudgment.....or did they.....

A. I can't say, son!

Q. ....Or would you say that it was just unlucky?

A. He was maybe just unlucky, because the fireman was.....the fireman got suspended. It did....the fireman got...but...till the enquiry comes in, they were always suspended!

Q. Was this automatically!

A. Automatically! But at that time, we were working three weeks, and one week idle. That was just to let everybody.....

Q. Can you remember what year that was?

A. Oh....I think it would be about 1935 or that....when he died!

Q. When that accident happened?

A. No, I couldn't tell you that, lad! I can't remember that, because.....

Q. Can you remember the result of the enquiry?

- A. Well, the fireman was cleared! You see, that's what I mean, the fireman was no....cleared, but I can't remember the verdict....but the fireman was cleared, and he wasn't responsible for the gas being there, because through him firing these shots in the morning, and it was clear then, and him going on his rounds! So, we don't know what happened! It was just one of these mysteries that.... things do happen!
- Q. He was the only one that was in the accident? There was nobody else involved?
- A. No, there was nobody else involved! You see!
- Q. And did he die instantly, or....did he die in hospital?
- A. You are just going back a bit! You know, I can't just remember it! If he was severely burnt or what he was!
- Q. That's alright! What about the other accident...you were saying?
- A. Well, he was burnt too! But that's just away back, when I was a boy, when that happened!
- Q. And that was a similar situation?
- A. A similar situation! It was just something similar, no....
- Q. Can you remember his name?
- A. No.....Paris was his second name, but I didn't.....
- Q. Paris?
- A. I can't mind his first name!
- Q. That's alright! When you dad was working at the face, and paying yourself, was he paying other men along with you?

A. Yes, he was paying chap called Jimmy Garvie! Now, that same Jimmy Garvie was killed in Thirty Five...an accident when he was working at the face, a big stone came away and he was killed!

Q. Was this from the roof?

A. Well, son, I couldn't tell you, it must have been from the roof, you know what I mean! It could have come from the roof, I don't know where it came from, but Jimmy, poor soul, was killed.....in Thirty Five Pit. But, I think, the proudest day, in my mind, down in the mines, I was spare deputy at the time, and as I told you, Peter Finnigan was burnt in that accident! The other deputy was suspended, so they were all wondering who was going on the job, and I was the only spare man, and Harry Hogg was the foreman, and he just turned round and said to us....in front of him....and said "Who do you think I will put in that job?" "There's a man who's working as a spare fireman, and I'm giving him responsibility, the same as (inaudible).

Q. At that time, did you know, it would be yourself?

A. Beg your pardon?

Q. Did you know it was going to be yourself?

A. No, it just came out of the blue! He never told us, we just got told on the Monday morning, when we were standing, and they were wondering what was going on, and he just says "That spare deputy, I'm going to give him responsibility". So, I mean, when you get a man that....like that looking at you, you thought it was great at the time!

Q. So, you felt very important?

A. You didn't feel important, lad, you just felt that he's got faith in you, well, you have to pay that faith back again! You had to!

Q. So can you say a little about what change was, from what you were doing,

to becoming a deputy?

A. Well, there wasn't much change!

Q. What involved you in that deputy's job?

A. Well, when you were a deputy, you started at four o'clock in the morning, and you went round all the sections, and you had to test every place, for gas, make sure to test the sides, on the road. Make sure that everything was alright! Then you came back, and you came to the surface, you passed the men, and you had to see that they had no cigarettes on them! You had to see that they had no cigarettes on them!

Q. Do you actually search them, or did you just take their word for it?

A. You just had to take their word for it, but you could let them go forward to the cage, that's if it was a pit, and when you....you couldn't say nothing but you could take them, let them get to the cage, and if you were thinking they had cigarettes, you could bring them back from there, because they had shown you that they were going to go down the pit with them, and you got them searched then!

Q. And they couldn't refuse to be searched?

A. No! They couldn't because they knew that they were just doing other people .....taking other people's life in their hands!

Q. And did you ever find men that did have cigarettes or matches?

A. Well, I can tell you an instance, son, and I did feel very rotten...it wasn't....it was how the thing happened! We had a deputy and he had been sitting in a man's place smoking, and the man says to him "There's somebody coming!" "No!", he says. "There's somebody coming!" And he heard it, and he nicked it out, and the under-manager came in and he says "You could cut the air with a knife in there!" That's what he said! So he was going out

and he was going up the brae, he says to another man, "Have you got a fireman's certificate?" "No", he says, "By the look of things, I'm going to be looking for a deputy!" Now, the deputy was with him! And if you had heard the under-manager saying that, you would have taken to yourself! You know! So, we had a young fellow, he was training to be a Manager, John (inaudible), his name was, he came from Philpstoun, so I was away in to the section working, when Jimmy Rooney came in, and he says to me "Peter, you've to go back to the pit bottom. Harry Hogg and John Burns want to see you!" I said "What's wrong?". He says, "They've caught a deputy smoking!" "I'm not going to mention the deputy's name, you know what I mean, I'll not mention his name right enough, but", he says, "they've caught a deputy smoking!" "Well", I says.....

Q. And where was he smoking about, down the mine?

A. I'll just tell you that when I come on to it, so when I went out, there was Harry Hogg and John Burns, they said "We want you to go up, there's a deputy on the hill there, we got him with cigarettes on him!" Now, this man, every morning....he was a deputy...he drew twenty cigarettes out of his pocket, in front of all of us, and the under-manager and this other chap, he took one out and he smoked it, and stuck it back in his pocket. Now, they let him go down the mine constant, but they let him go down this morning, and they stopped him and said, "We're searching you for cigarettes!" He had nineteen cigarettes on him! Now, they just sent him. Now, they just sent him up the pit, and when I came out, he says, "We want you to go up and get the back of the bottom's deputy lamp!" I went up and I went to the lamp station and I says, "I'm up for that fireman's lamp". Tarn White was the name of the lampman, he says, "It's not here, he's got it with him, he's sitting over in the office there!" I said, "That'll do!" So, I went over to the office, and he was sitting with the man that was the fore-head..... you know, the fore-head gaffer. I said, "I'm up for your lamp, son, and you are a silly b..... you should have had more sense than that, you know what like it is!" "Oh", he says, "I never thought that they would do this to me!" I said, "Well, they've got no option....you gave them the option!" He says, "I know!" I says, "You are a silly b..... I don't like doing this, I said, "You've put me in a hot position coming up here and

taking the lamp from you!" So I had to take his lamp, for he was sacked!  
See, that was.....

Q. So, he lost his job?

A. He lost his job! They couldn't do anything else, son! They couldn't!

Q. Well, if that was the regulations, that.....

A. Well, you know what I mean, it was a bonny man to go and search you for cigarettes, when he was going down with nineteen in his pocket himself,

Q. That's right!

A. He would have sacked you! If he had caught you down the mine with cigarettes!

Q. Who had the authority to sack that time.....the deputy?

A. Well.....the deputy could only send him up the pit, he could only send.....  
.....and then it was up to the Manager! The Manager was Peter Wilson!  
That's when I started in the pit! With Peter Wilson!

Q. And the under-manager was?

A. Jimmy Reddie!.....John Reddie! That's what you called him! And he had a son, Jimmy Reddie.....and he was the leader of the Rescue Brigade.

Q. Had you to go on any courses or anything that the Company would arrange?

A. To be a deputy?

Q. To be a deputy!

A. Yes, you went every five years to renew your deputy's certificate, and you had to go every three years, to renew your ambulance certificate! You had to keep them up to standard!

- Q. And did you do any practices in between renewing your certificates?
- A. Well, your practices was on your work, wasn't it! You were practicing on your work! That's where you got your practice! But, as things went, that's where we were all the time, you just practiced going round about if you met it, it was you who had to deal with it!
- Q. Would you say, that it was quite common for miners or workers down the mine to smoke on the job?
- A. Well, see at the back of the section, that we called the back of the bottom, it was, what you would call, they used the open lamps, carbide lamps. Well at one time it was legal enough to smoke there, but in the latter end, they were....they got the safety lamps just like the rest of the pit, and it was illegal to smoke there, just the same as any other....as the rest of the pit! So that was.....the whole pit was...safety...so it was illegal to smoke anywhere! There wasn't even places that you could come out to and smoke! It was supposed to be a no-smoking pit, but then again.....
- Q. Did you know of any dodges that the miners would get up to, to pass, getting cigarettes, for instance....
- A. They carried them down in their piece-boxes, and all the likes of these places! It was just like everything else! They would get them through, but it was stupid! When you think on it!
- Q. Well, you wouldn't have had any problem because you've never been a smoker!
- A. No, well, that's what I'm saying, I have never smoked! It was alright as I'm speaking, and saying that it was stupid, but it must have been a terrible temptation for a man that did smoke, to think that he was going to be without cigarettes from seven o'clock to two o'clock or that in the day! Terrible! So, you couldn't blame them could you! But they were stupid for themselves!

Q. Did you ever become a faceman yourself?

A. No!

Q. So, you carried on as a drawer?

A. Aye, but I took an illness when I was twenty three, and I was told to get out of the mines! But there was nothing for you! So you had to go back in the mines! So, I just worked on the oncost! Done oncost work!

Q. What were you doing there?

A. Well.....you repaired....and you done repair work!

Q. To the hutches?

A. No! To the roof!

Q. To the roof?

A. And you led in screen cloths! That's the cloth that you led in for the air going into the mines!

Q. To direct the air where you wanted it to go?

A. You directed the air in one way, and it came out the other ways! See, that's what I'm saying, to get the gas out of the faces! And you led.....with a thing that you called a cuddy.....you've maybe heard me talking about cuddies..... it was a dead hutch.....a dead tub, I'd better say! A dead tub, it was pulled, and you had a rope in front of it, and it went away up the top and round a wheel and when you were coming down the incline, you pulled it up! Then it pulled you away up top, and it worked like that! That's what you called a cuddy! Well, you led these up the working, you done all the jobs like that!

Q. And what age were you then, when you went on the oncost?

A. Twenty three!

Q. Did you stay on that.....?

A. Till I went for my deputy's certificate! And I was spare deputy, but I was pumper, and I used to go on the pumps, and I used to go out, and start on the backshift.....

Q. And where were the pumps situated?

A. Away back in the mines! At a place they called "Baldy's Bench". That was away...oh, I would say, about more than a half a mile to a mile, away from the pit bottom!

Q. Can you remember what kind of pump that you were operating?

A. Well.....

Q. How was it driven?

A. Well, they were electrical! I think that they were Weir Pumps! Five hundred gallons, there were three five hundred gallons, then you had one down the dook, down the wee dook, I think that it was a two hundred and fifty! You pumped from there up to.....the place where the water was held, for the big pumps.....to pump it out of the pit bottom. Now, it was terrible in the winter time, in the pit, because, I've seen two feet, three feet on the main haulage, and your pumps going night and day...night and day, trying to hold your own with the water! Then the men were working with this, main haulage, were working with waders, on the benches!

Q. Like fisherman's waders?

A. Fisherman's waders! Fisherman's waders! Up, all in ones, up to there!

Q. These conditions weren't very nice!

A. You see, the haulage ran from hillend section out to the pit bottom, and it came down an incline, into this place we called "Baldy's Bench", and it just passed through Baldy's Bench, it was for two hundred feet, that was flat, then you took the rise again, and you could see what had happened all the water was coming down into this, this is the....low lie.....

END OF TAPE

PG SIDE TWO

A. I remember once, we had a heavy swell of water on at the time, by telling you this, I'm not making myself big headed, but they put a third pump in, and they told us that you could run two pumps at once, on the top, with the one that was down the dook. You hadn't to run the three top pumps! So through time, the water was heavy, and I found out that when I put the pump off down the dook, I could start my other pump on the top, and I could take the water down two feet in the hour, so that was leaving them that was coming on, but through me being spare man at the time, there was only one of the right deputies was, listening to me, the rest all tried "Oh, we know ourselves, we know ourselves!" You know, they know more than you! So this day, it was a Sunday, I came out to the pit bottom, and Jimmy Webster was the man that brought me out on the man haulage...we had a man haulage, and he brought me out to the pit bottom. We were standing waiting on the two pumpers coming down. Tarn Grant and Davy Kerr, so I says to Webster, "I've left three pumps running down there". "I'll tell this man, let them run, and by the time that he gets in, the water will be just nice for him!" I knew how much water was left, and you knew how long it could run, so he comes down and I says "Davy, I've left....." "It's alright, Peter, I'll find out, when I go down!" I said, "Oh, very good then!" I looked at old Webster, when we were in the cage, and I says, "What did I tell you!" I says, "Those boys won't listen to me!" "They know better than what I do!" So, no more was said about it! I came out on the Monday afternoon, and goes forward to get my lamp, and the lampman says "You've to get no lamp today!" I said "What's wrong". He said, "There was hell to pay here yesterday!" That man went down there, and started up the other pump, and he flung all the electricity out from here right to Winchburgh Works, Now, that was heavy water, and that was all the pumps in Thirty Five stopped! The pumps at Glendevon stopped, and it had knocked out all the power in Winchburgh Works. So I had to go to the office, and see...to the office, and see the under-manager! He looks at me and says, "This is a braw state of affairs, that you done!" I said, "What did I do?" "You had three pumps running!" and I says, "Listen Harry, you were there just the same as me, when the electrician told us that we could run three pumps, but not four pumps!" "Aye!" I said, "Well.....if your deputies weren't so big headed and would listen to what we are telling them, there wouldn't have been four pumps going in!"

I said, "I'm having no more!" I said, "We'll get Jimmy Webster in here, when he comes!" Jimmy was on the backshift with me on the pumps! So we got Jimmy in and I said "Jimmy, tell this man..what happened here yesterday!" He said, "Peter and I were speaking before Kerr and Grant came down, and he was telling me that he had left three pumps running, because he could find that it takes the water down!" "And he would tell Davy to stop one before he started the wee dook one up!" He just says, "Davy, I've.....", and he was just told "That's alright!" "I'll see what it's like when I go.. down!" He says, "He didn't tell me that!" "By!", he says, "I'll lit him, I'll lay into him!" "When he comes out!" It just lets you see, that if you were an understudy, what you had to come up against! It was going to land on me, if I hadn't had a witness, that I'd said it! These are the things that you came up against! Aye! It was comical at the time!

- Q. Didn't he realise what the consequences would be with starting this other pump up?
- A. No! He made the excuse that he didn't know!
- Q. But you did know!
- A. Yes! Because I was one....I was told at the time, I was there at the installing of it, you see, Harry Hogg was there too, and I knew that we were told, that you could run three, but when I stopped one, I could only start the other one, which was a common sense! And it was always taking the water down!
- Q. So, did you feel that the electric system was overloaded, when you started four pumps?
- A. Well, we were told it would be overloaded! You see, it would have been overloaded with four pumps, and that's what he had done! Just overloaded it, and it just flung right back!

Q. It's surprising the effect that that had!

A. Yes!

Q. Wasn't there any fuses or anything that would blow before it did all that cut out in other parts of the area?

A. It seemed to, but that's what happened that day, lad! Right back to Winchburgh Works, it flung everything out to Winchburgh Works!

Q. And would they know where this had started! Would they know what had caused it?

A. Oh aye, they would find out where.... they could trace it back right enough! He just overloaded it! Another time, going down the mine, I was going on the backshift, and I always carried a key. But it was for the cuddies, with a thing that you called the "gland". A "gland" on the rope like that, and I always had a key, for tightening the bolts that held the "glands" So I landed in this day, and Harry Hogg was waiting to get the man haulage back out. He said "They tell me that you carry a key about for the glands for the cuddies". He said, "Let me see it!" So I gave him the key, and he said, "That's not what I'm looking for!" I said, "What are you looking for?" He said, "I've got a good idea who's done it!" But we can't prove it!" He said, "But do you know, all the earthing copper has been taken off the switches in the pumphouse!" I said, "What!" "All the earthing copper has been taken off the switches in the pumphouse!" "Who the hang would do a thing like that!" He said "I've got a good idea!" But we just can't pin it on him!"

Q. But your key wasn't the one that they were looking for!

A. But see, mine was just for the glands, it was too big! No! That earthing was an eighth by an inch and a half copper. It would be about that length. (actions indicating same), four feet or five feet from the switch, down to the ground. And that was all taken off! So you know the lengths some of them would go to, to make a shilling! These are things that went on!

Q. They would sell it for scrap?

A. Sell it for scrap!

Q. But they wouldn't realise the danger that it would cause!

A. Well, when they would go to that length, they weren't worried, you see! Well, it went on from there, and we got our notices, I'm just.....I'm....finished now! We just got our notices, that we were getting made redundant, so I was put in charge of a squad, that were pulling out girders, and wood, and all that, you know, cleaning out the pit! And that's how things went till a pal came and asked me if I wanted another job! But that's what I was doing at the finish up, was taking....pulling the girders out.....

Q. Can you remember what year that was?

A. I think that would be about 1958. I think it would be about 1958;

Q. So, that was the end of Thirty Five! Now, you had mentioned that you were on three weeks on and one week off?

A. Yes!

Q. Now, on your one week off, did you have any hobbies, or pastimes..... that you took up? Was there anything in the Village in particular?

A. Oh, it was a great Village, because I remember away back, it was just the back end, like this one! But at that time, they had the "stocks" in the fields, and they then took the corn in and that, and then the hay, there was always the first crop and second crop. So I remember, we went up to the farmer at Waterston, and asked him about a piece of ground for a football field. He said "I'll tell you what.....what I'll do for you....."  
"If you take my second crop of hay in", he says, "I'll give you a bit field in there, just for nothing, for life, to you!" So, you talk about having fun! My father was one of the men that....who knew about farming, because he

had been on the farms, and there were a few more of them that had been, on farms, and it was a great time, taking his hay in for him! We took his hay in...! We took his hay in, and that's what we got for it, a football field And that's where we spent our time! Now, in that village, we built a double tennis court. They used to come from school there and play at tennis, and one night we were walking home and there were three old gentlemen with us, Alex Cairns, Andrew Irvine, and Archie's father, my Uncle Peter. He said, "I think we'll.....", old Alex Cairns says, "I think we'll walk into Mr. Robinsons and see if we can get a bit ground from him, to make a tennis court!" We thought that he was kidding, but here the three of them walked in and they got a piece of ground from him..... to build a tennis court. So, we started getting the fences up, Mr. Crichton was good enough to give us old rails, old.....and we put them in the ground, built a fence round about, we came to the old work there, we dug all the bricks, and got them out on the.....and we got a loan of an old steam tractor, and trailer, and we loaded that, and we took it along, and emptied it, I think it was about a good two loads, and schoolteachers and everything, all got yoked in and got barrows, and we all (inaudible) them and broke them up, and that was the founds, and .....I had his name on my tongue there.... there was a young surveyor, and he surveyed it all for us.

Q. And was he from the Company?

A. He was from the Scottish Oils but.....

Q. So they encouraged you to do this?

A. Oh aye, they encouraged us! But we did it our own selves and we built it, and mind, we got an old carriage, and....an old railway carriage, and put it on bricks and that was the hut!

Q. That was the pavillion?

A. The pavillion! They put toilets and everything in, they were built though, the toilets were built on the sides, two toilets!

Q. Were they dry toilets?

A. No! All lavatory....oh no, sir!

Q. So, you were hooked up.....flush toilets?

A. Well, flush toilets.....we got a cesspool built which we ran into the burn! Five shillings was your entry fee, and they came from all over the county, to play at Burnside Tennis Court! A double court! You'll see, it's along there now! After the war, we tried to get money from the George V Fund, .. they were giving money, and we couldn't get money from them, couldn't get money from the Council! Nobody would help us, to get back on our feet again! You know, everybody was taken up with the war, and it just went down! The next thing that happened was that the Council were dumping their chips on it! They took it over, but I don't know who gave them permission! They just took it over, and they're still dumping chips on it yet!

Q. And who does the ground belong to now?

A. I don't know, but the farmer gave it to us, two of us, for a pound a year, but he gave us the pound back! Oh aye, it was a great village to live in!

Q. Was there an Institute in the Village?

A. No, nothing! You had to make your own fun! That's how we made it!

Q. There wasn't a hall.....?

A. No! No hall or nothing! No! You just made your own, and that's how we did it! Came to the school after playing tennis, and that was just the forerunner of it!

Q. Were you called up during the war or.....?

- A. No, I was in the pits at the time! Aye.....Dad's Army! Oh aye..... it was great.....
- Q. Did the miners.....did the General Strike affect you in 1920?
- A. Yes! We were on strike then, and I'll always remember, that's what I was going to say about Nellies, he got a march up, and it started in Broxburn, and we joined it there, and I can mind walking to Grangemouth, with the bike.....you know, pushing the bike to Grangemouth, and when we went down there, the gates were locked and there was as many policemen...standing outside the gates! And Nellies just went up and, we would have been as well staying at home, for all the good that the march done!
- Q. Nellies was the Union man?
- A. He was the Union man! He just told us! What could you do, you were up against a stone dyke!
- Q. Were you a member of the Union?
- A. Oh yes, all the time! Och, it was a poor Union, very poor! It was just a Company Union, that's all that it was, a Company Union!
- Q. Did you have any grievances that you took to them?
- A. Many.....don't ask that! I remember once, that I was working, and I was put in a job, and the man had ten pence a day more than me, so I stuck out for the ten pence. They wouldn't give me it, and....they wouldn't give me it! So this day, I went out and I says, "Am I going to get that ten pence for the job?" "No!" "Well!", I says, "I'm not going down!" The war was on at the time, but I said "I'm not going down!" So I went along, I went back to see the Manager, and he was an old coal miner....coal Manager, so I walked in and I said, "I want to see you, I've a grievance!" He said, "So have I, you are the man that's on strike!" I said, "I don't think that I'm on strike!" I said, "I've a good grievance!" So he said, "Alright, you start work, I'll hear your grievance and I'll tell you when you come back

tomorrow!" So two days after it, he came to me when I was working, and I says, "Have you and I not got something to talk about?" "Oh aye", he said, "I'll tell you, I'm going my holidays tomorrow, I'll hear you when I come back!" Says I, "Very good then!" So away he went! So after the holidays, I got a hold of him, and I said, "Here, you and I have something to speak about!" I said, "I'm wanting it settled!" So he listened to me, right enough! "Okay, I'll see about it!" So I got my pay on the Friday, nothing there, and so the next Friday, I was out on the backshift, and my father was in the canteen, at that time you were getting your pieces, it was the time of the war, my father was in the canteen, and he says "He's over there, you better go over and see him!" Here, I missed him, and it was a good job, that I missed him, because it was in! I maybe would have made a mess of myself, if I'd said things, that I didn't need to say, if I hadn't seen it! It was in! I had got it!

Q. You got what you wanted!

A. That's right! But I just....I was speaking with my father, he got a job in the canteen. It was just Thirty Five again. The pit was rotten with black damp, and he was off his work, and at that time, after you were off for so long, you were taken into Shandwick Place, that's where.... they took you in and put you in front of a Board. So he went in, in front of the Board, and he got a letter from them saying that his tubes were done, with black damp! But his heart and lungs were good, but the tubes were done with black damp! So his Doctor got the letter, and he went down to see his Doctor, and the Doctor gave him....it, so he took the letter to his work! It was Peter Wilson again! Oh, he was an awful man! Jock Sneddon was the gaffer and he says...and he showed them it, and they read it, "It couldn't happen in Thirty Five Pit, there's no black damp in Thirty Five Pit!" Now, as sure as I'm sitting here, any Thirty Five Pit miner will tell you, you could sit down, and in lots of sections, you would hardly be finished with your piece, till you were nodding off to sleep! It was..... Yet, this is what they did, they gave him a job in the canteen! Just to pacify him! I called him a fool, that's what I called him, because he had a good right for a good pension off them! But, oh no, he took the canteen job, and that was his way!

Q. Can you remember much about your housing when you started as a boy? Where did you stay? Did you stay in worker's rows, oilworker's rows, miner's rows?

A. Yes, Redhouse Cottages! Now, you're going to laugh here, son! Well, I can go away back to the schooldays. I stayed in No.2. Redhouse Cottages, otherwise known as the Red Row. There were dry lavatories, a sheugh, do you know what a sheugh is?.....the outside, and timmed all your water down this! Monday morning was washday, and you got your bricks and you built a fire, set you fire, and all your mothers had a big black pot, with hot water, and you set this fire going. You just put the pot on the fire, to boil for the washing! Now, that's where they done the washing, in a big black tub outside! But then eventually, they built wash houses up the top of the garden. Then there was place up the top of the fence, called the midden, that's where you emptied all your ashes and that, and twice a week, there was cart came round with one of these tanks, and he emptied the lavatories, dry lavatories! Then we eventually got flush lavatories and everything! Then they built kitchenettes, inside bathrooms, modernised! I think away back in the olden days, there used to be four bed recesses, two in the living room, and two behind the room. That was four beds that you had, but they were recesses in the walls! Do you know what I mean!

Q. Is there anything more that you can.....?

A. No, there's nothing more that I could say, lad!

Q. Alright! Thank you!

END OF TAPE

Transcript

PG

Industrial  
Information

I left school in 1924, on Thursday, and started in Thirty Five Pit on Monday morning, working at the face with my father filling the tubs .

Hutches

At fourteen years old we found out I could take the hutches from the face to the top of the brae, as quick as Jimmy, so he did the filling as he was quicker than me. One day the oversman came to see what I was doing, and when I told him he said I couldn't do this job until I was sixteen, so I went home. I was just home a fortnight, when the gentleman that sacked me came up and said 'Can you run the brae, at the back of the bottom?' So I started back on the Monday morning at the top of this brae, running the hutches down and bringing the empty ones up.

Drawers Job	Instead of a drawer doing this job I was the one doing it. I did this for four months, and packed it in.
Working With My Father Again	I went back to work with my father so they couldn't say that I couldn't run the brae. I worked with him until I was twenty three.
Oncast	I worked on the oncast doing all sorts of jobs.
Deputy's Certificate	I then took my deputy's certificate, and I was the spare deputy and a shot-firer, in a section we called the 'wee dook'. All the men in this section were all trained in the safety lamp procedures.
Gas	The fireman always started at four o'clock. He went round the sections and saw that they were all clear of gas, and then he came to the surface and signed his report, then he passed the men, and if there was gas in a amins

place, he was told to stand to the side until they got it cleared out. Most of the sections were gassy.

#### Underground Lamp

When I started it was yon old tallow lamps, they were comical things, because if you were going down there were things that we called screens, which was a cloth hanging that was for air barriers. This is where we would start putting the air, and they would catch on to this, and you would be away without your lamp and it would be hanging on the screen.

#### Gas Lamps

It was then gas lamps came in and' they were a great boon at the time. Thirty Five Pit was made a safety lamp mine, and we all wore electric lamps.

#### Deputies Duties

When I was a deputy, I started at four o'clock in the morning I went round all the sections and tested every place for gas including the sides on the road to make sure every-

thing was alright. Then I came 'back to the surface to pass the men, and also see that they had no cigarettes on the,. They couldn't refuse to be searched because it was a danger to the other men if they refused.

Renew Your Deputies Certificate & Ambulance Certificate

You had to renew your deputy's certificate every five years, and you had to go every three years to renew your ambulance certificate to keep them up to standard. Your practices were at your work. But as things went, that's where we were all the time, you just practiced going round about, and if you met it, it was you who had to deal with it.

Oncast Duties

I took an illness when I was twenty three, and I was told to get out of the mines, but there was nothing for me, so I just worked on the oncast. This job was repairing the roof and directing the air. You directed the air in the one way and it came out the other ways. You led with a

thing called a cuddy, which was a dead tub which was pulled and you had a rope in front of it and it went away up the top and round a wheel when you were coming down an incline, you pulled it up. Then it pulled you away up top.

#### Pumps

I used to go on the pumps at a place called 'Baldy's' Bench'. That was then half a mile to mile from the pit bottom. They were electrical Weir Pumps. They pumped five hundred gallons. There were three of these pumps, and then you had one down the wee dook, I think it was two hundred and fifty you pumped up to where the water was held.

#### Conditions

It was terrible in the winter time in the pit, because I've seen two or three feet of water on the main haulage, with the pumps going day and night trying to hold your won with the water. The main

haulage ran from Hillend  
section out to the pit bottom  
and it came down an incline  
called 'Baldy's' Bench' for two  
hundred feet that was flat  
then it rose again and all  
the water came down into this.  
I can remember we had a heavy  
swell of water at the time,  
and they put a third pump in,  
and we were told that we  
could run two pumps at once  
with the one down the dook.  
So this day, it was a Sunday,  
I came out to the pit bottom,  
where I had left three pumps  
running. When I went out on  
the Monday, the man that was  
on shift at the weekend had  
started the other pump, and he  
flung all the electricity out  
from here right to Winchburgh  
Works. It just lets you see  
if you were an understudy what  
you had to come up against.

Earthing

Another time going down the  
mine I was on backshift, and I  
always carried a key, which  
was for the cuddies, with a

thing you called the 'gland'.  
I always had a key for tightening  
the bolts that held the  
'glands' for the cuddies. All  
the copper wire for earthing  
had been taken off the switches  
in the pumphouse. It would  
be four or five feet from the  
switch down to the ground that  
was taken, which they would  
sell for scrap.

Clothing

With such a lot of water we  
had to wear fishermans' Waders.

Pay

When I worked with my father  
I was paid by my father. I  
can remember the wages I got  
when I was working on the top  
of the brae, was 3/9d a shift.  
If you did overtime you just  
got a single shift.

Hours

You had to be there in the  
morning and you didn't get  
away until three o'clock.

Holidays

You got a fair Friday and  
Saturday, you also got two  
days at New Year, they were  
just idle days, but they

counted as holidays.

## Accidents

There were one or two people burnt. I think there was two or three died with burns.

Peter Finnigan was killed.

The fireman was in first thing in the morning and fired a round of shots, and went on his way. This was in the Hillend section, and these men were taught to use a safety lamp to test for gas.

It was about piece-time that we learnt that Peter had been burnt, there had been an explosion. It just lets you see how it came and went, it was clear when the first shots were fired, yet when he came to fire his shots he was burnt. He died with them.

There was another accident when I was working with my dad at the face. A stone came away from the roof and killed Jimmy Garvie at Thirty Five pit.

## Inquiry to Gas Accident

The inquiry into the gasing accident cleared the fireman.

He wasn't responsible for the gas being there, because through him firing these shots in the morning, and it was clear when he went on his rounds. It was just one of these mysteries.

#### Strikes

We were all on a general strike in 1920. I always remember it started in Broxburn, and we joined it there, and I can mind walking to Grangemouth pushing my bike. When we got there the gates were locked and there were policemen standing at the gates. Me. Nellies, the Union man, went up and said we would be staying at home.

#### Unions

I was a member of the Union all the time. It was a Company Union, and it was very poor.

#### Grievances

I remember once I was put in a job and another man had ten pence more than me a day, so I stuck out for the ten pence but they would not give me it. So this day I said 'I'm going to get the ten pence for the job, or I am not going down'.

I went back to see the manager,  
but he said I had to go back  
to work before he would hear  
my grievance. Two days later  
he came to see me, and he  
said he was going on holiday,  
and I'll hear you when I come  
back. So when he came back  
from holidays he saw me. So  
when I got my pay on Friday I  
got the extra ten pence.

Domestic Life

As a boy, I stayed in No. 2

Lavatories

Redhouse Cottages, otherwise  
know as the Red Row. There  
were dry lavatories.

Washday

Monday morning was washday, and  
you got your bricks and built  
a fire, and all our mothers had  
a big black pot with hot water  
to boil for washing in a big  
black tub outside. But eventually  
they built wash houses  
up the top of the garden.,

Midden

There was a place up the top of  
the fence called the midden,  
that's where you emptied all  
your ashes.

Modern Houses

They eventually modernised the

houses, and built kitchenettes,  
inside bathrooms.

Social Life

Buses

In those days we travelled in  
the open charabancs and you  
thought that you were great  
sitting there. We used to  
sit on top of the hood at the  
back. If it was raining, they  
just pulled the hood over,  
just like these old convertible  
cars.

Village Football Field

It was a great village away  
back. At that time they had  
the 'stocks' in the fields,  
and they then took the corn in  
and then the hay. There was  
always the first and second  
crop, so I went up to the  
farmer at Waterston and asked  
him about a piece of ground  
for a football field. He  
said if I took his second crop  
of hay in, he would give me a  
bit of ground. That is how  
we got our football field.

Tennis

In the village we built a double  
tennis court. They used to come  
from school and play tennis.

Broxburn Gala Day            Broxburn Gala day was on the  
 Friday and Niddry Gala day and  
 Winchburgh Gala day were on  
 Saturday. We used to have a  
 trip to them.

Finished Up                    I finished up in 1958 when they  
 began pulling the girders out.  
 That was the end of No. 35 Pit.

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