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- A. Well, in all the time we were miners, I was in the shale mines, except two, and that was when they went to Fife, and then we went to the coal in Fife.....
- Q. So, your father was a miner?
- A. Aye! And my older brother, we were all miners in fact! Except the two youngest ones and the.....my father got shot.....
- Q. Was this an accident?
- A. Aye! He didn't get out of the road quick enough! And my brother he flung himself on top of him to save him, and his piecebox and flask were like that, you know, flattened, and he had a big hole here, and hole in here.....
- Q. The back of the neck.....?
- A. The back of the neck and the back.....and there were two of them came over, Johnston Hare and Hughie Logan, I mind of them coming over with cloths, ken, wet cloths, they could hardly hold them in their hands, slapping them on, ken,
- Q. Can you remember which pit this was in?
- A. Breich Pit! That was Breich, aye! It was after I.....
- Q. What age were you then?
- A. Oh, I couldn't tell you, I wasn't in the pit then!
- Q. No, but what age were you.....do you remember it?
- A. Oh aye, I remember it!
- Q. So, you were just a boy, were you?
- A. I'd be about maybe twenty two!
- Q. Oh, you were as old as that?
- A. Oh well, maybe not that.....it was then I was in Seafield anyway! No, I couldn't have been as old as that.....no!
- Q. Well, you started in Breich Pit when you were seventeen?

- A. Well, I would be about that, seventeen.....anyway.....well!
- Q. And did the accident to your father.....was that before you started work?
- A. Before I.....before I started in the Pit, and I mind when I came to Breich, I started winching a girl that came from West Calder, and I was only eighteen! So, there you are!
- Q. So, that would be about 1924?
- A. 1924! Aye!
- Q. And what happened to your father? Did he get any compensation?
- A. Aye! But he didn't get much compensation! No.....very, very little! Very little! So then.....I went.....I went away to Fife from 1923it must have been 1923 we went.....no 1922.....no 1924 we went to Fife, and I came back in 1939 you see! And I started sinking the Fraser Pit!
- Q. Is that where you started work? But you were down the mines before that.....?
- A. Aye, oh aye!
- Q.You were down the pits before that! Aye, well, you were staying in Seafield, and you left the school, what age were you?
- A. Thirteen!
- Q. And where did you go and work before you went into the.....?
- A. Well, I was at Cousland Farm for a wee while, for about a month, ken, well, less than a month, and this boy and I, the farmer told us to go and single turnips, you ken, but he didn't give us a hoe, we had to do it with our hand, and I said to Patsy Campbell "Come on, I'm packing it in, you can do what you like!" "I'm not doing that!" So then I started down in Renton and Fishers in Bathgate and I got kind of burnt down there! We used to put our flask in this big dry room, and the cork just on it, and no more, and I went over one day, and the cork

just flew up in my face, with the hot tea, you know! So that finished me down there, no.....I got started again, and then got wet, and I took double pneumonia and that finished me down there! Well, I started with Tam Forsyth, that's another farmer over the road, Seafield, and I was there for about a month or two months, and then I started down the pit, on a Saturday morning.

Q. And how did you get that job down the pit?

A. My father! Through my father, you see!

Q. Can you mind who the Manager was then?

A. Pony driving.....aye.....big Wull Easton! And eh.....Jimmy Brown was the under-manager, Jimmy Brown's son married my sister, in fact! He was the blacksmith! But big Wull Easton was the Manager then!

Q. That would be about when.....1925?

A. No, I was away from here before that! Well, I'm maybe not getting the ages right.....getting the dates right.....but, we went to Seafieldwe went to Breich, I think that was 19.....we went to Breich to Fife, and I'm sure it was 1924!

Q. So, you must have been a wee bit older than seventeen when you started?

A. Maybe..... aye!

Q. Fine! So.....you started down Breich Pit, that was the first time that you started with the Scottish Oils?

A. The first pit that I was in.....aye!

Q. And what was your job there?

A. Pony driving! Pony driving!

Q. And can you say anything about that job?

A. Well, it was quite a good job, there was plenty of ponies, and there was.....they looked after them and ken, then they took the ponies away and put haulages on you know.....

Q. And had you to groom the ponies, and had you to feed them?

- A. Aye.....no, there was an ostler there for that! We just kind of groomed and brushed them down, ken, but there were some nice ones and there were some bad ones, wee ones, wee small things and great Clydesdale's, ken, there were plenty of ponies then.....
- Q. But you can't remember how many you had to start with?
- A. Well, I had.....I had only two ponies, that I know.....Victor and Douglas.....and Victor was the half stallion, he wasn't right cut, and he went mad, you know!
- Q. Did you get a hard time from him?
- A. Aye.....you had to drive him with the long reins, ken, but the rest, you let them go themselves, ken.....
- Q. So.....he had to be led wherever he was going? Did you find that the other one that you had was alright?
- A. Oh, Douglas was alright, you could leave him standing, and go away, and he would be there when you came back! He wouldn't move! And then there was one big.....big Watty, we had him and we had to see he counted the couplings, ken, maybe ten hutches on, that was nine couplings, nine jacks, and if there were nine on, he wouldn't take it away! Take a hutch off, and he walked away!
- Q. Is that right?
- A. Aye! We used to say that he counted them! It was true..... they were wise, they were wise enough, the whole lot of them!
- Q. That's amazing! And what did you feel, did you think that he could really count the couplings.....?
- A. Well, I thought that myself really! Because whenever you took a hutch off, it went away no bother! And there was another one, what was it's name? Oh, I forget it now.....but you had to start it on a Sunday night, starting with three hutches, that's all it would take, and then you could put on four.....then five, then right up to ten, it flew.....it flew

round that road, talk about horses going on a racecourse.....you've never seen this.....Baldy, we cried him..... that's it, Baldy! But he was some.....he started with about three hutches, and we piled them up every time too, till he got ten, and it quietened him down.

Q. And why did this happen? Was it only on a Saturday night?

A. Sunday night.....after being lying off you see! But every other night after that and he was alright! Sunday night, he was lying off maybe from Friday to Sunday night, you see, fair desperate to get.....

Q. Really frisky.....?

A. Oh, he wasn't half, he wasn't half! And he was a light horse, too, you know, a light horse.

Q. He must have been quite powerful.....strong?

A. Oh aye, they were all powerful, they were all powerful!

Q. And how long did you do that job in Breich?

A. Oh well, it.....I wasn't on it that very long, and then I started drawing with my father!

Q. Still in Breich?

A. Still in Breich!

Q. And how did you get on in that job?

A. Oh alright! Filling hutches for my father and working with him!

Q. Were you making a good wage? Can you remember what you were.....?

A. Well, about that time it was about three pounds fifteen my father was making! That would be about all!

Q. And what were you making? Can you mind?

A. I couldn't tell you! But there were three of us.....in the pit at that time, and my mother was lucky if she got twelve pounds off the three of us! In a big family like that!

Q. And did your father.....he mustn't have done what they called half stuff.....fifty-fifty!

- A. No! No!
- Q. He would just pay you? How many drawers did he have?
- A. He only had the one! Me!
- Q. You?
- A. Aye!
- Q. And he only paid you.....?
- A. And there was a brother on the other shift.....my brother was on the other shift, you see! You see!
- Q. With another.....faceman?
- A. I never got any pay, I just got pocket money! I just got pocket money!
- Q. And can you remember how much you got for pocket money?
- A. Well, when I was working in Bathgate, I was making eighteen bob a week! Walking four miles every day! Eight miles every day! I got a shilling on the Friday and went over to the billiard rooms, half an hour at billiards, you know, and it was only three ha'pence for half an hour, and we played at billiards until that shilling was finished and that was us quite happy!
- Q. So, that was you skint for the rest of the week?
- A. Well, I used to break sticks for my mother, and the pictures came every Tuesday and my million dollar missus, she used to slip threepence to me for to go to the pictures! Oh, it was good, it was better than now! I'll tell you that! I mean, there used to be about a dozen of us, walked from Seafield to Blackburn and back again every night of the week, you know!
- Q. And this is what you did to pass the time?
- A. To pass the time, aye! But we played football a lot, you know!
- Q. Did Seafield have a football team?
- A. Aye! But we just played at the back of the house! Aye, they had a football team.....not at that time, but they had one later on!
- Q. So, you weren't a serious football player?

A. No, no, no, no! Well, I played a couple of trial games over in Fife, right enough, and I was picked for the Fife select twice over in Fife, and I was.....we were playing at Dunikire.....who were we playing.... Kinglassie or something like that! Aye, that's right and we won! And Rosen was standing outside the box waiting for me to come out, but King-lassie wouldn't let me out of the box, wouldn't let me out of the box!

Q. That was the stripping box?

A. That was it! That was it finished! I won two or three badges at the football right enough! Dunfermline District League twice! Och, it was a good time then!

Q. And when you were drawing to your father, or any time that you were down the mine or the pit, was there any accidents that you can remember, happened to yourself or anybody else that you knew?

A. Well, that's the only one that happened that I know of.....up in the.....up in Breich.....my father, but there would be more than that...but I can't mind of them, but in the Fraser, there was a boy killed as well, Hughie Wilson, he got shot as well, but he got killed! And....I got burned in the Fraser!

Q. Did you?

A. That was when I joined the bowling in 1941 or '42! I got burned with gas!

Q. Was that an explosion?

A. I was lighting the shots, you see, and the fireman had left a quarter of an hour ago, in front of me, and I was lighting the shots a quarter of an hour after it, and a wee pocket of gas, had collected up in a corner, and of course we were lighting them when we shouldn't have been, you know with this bit strum. Oh, I was right round there and from there up to there!

Q. All round your face and arms?

A. Aye!

Q. You were burnt? Now, would you say that was your own fault? Were you a faceman then?

A. I was a faceman!

Q. And were you doing something that you shouldn't have been?

A. Well, I was lighting the shots, and I should have been using the caps, you see, and the pliers. But you would never have got them done, you know, you were only supposed to light two at a time, but you see what I mean, you'd better cut that off! But.....

Q. And how many were you lighting?

A. About six! Och, I seen a boy lighting ten! After that, up in Hermand!

Q. And probably nothing happened to him?

A. Nothing happened! He just got them all! He cut the strum long, you see! I had the same.....but it was just the pocket of gas, you see! That's what done it! I'll tell you! I came down out of that heading quick enough! My neighbour was on the level, he was lighting other shots, you know, he was on the level and I was up the heading! But..... they took me to the Doctor, and it was Twaites, it was Doctor Twaites, and he says, "Oh, I can't do nothing!" "We'll just need to send you to hospital!"

Q. And what hospital did you go to?

A. To the Infirmary!

Q. The Royal?

A. The Royal! I was covered with gentian violet! You maybe heard of it during the war! That's what I was covered with! I was like a darkie, the wife didn't know me when she came in! And.....when it started healing, they had to cut this off with a pair of scissors, you know! But the nurse says to me, away and have a bath like, but don't wet your arms! I looked at her and I said to myself, how the hell am I going

to do that! Oh aye, but when I came out, I was bandaged from there to there! My face was alright, but.....

Q. From your hand to your elbow? And did you get any compensation?

A. Oh aye! Thirty nine bob a week!

Q. Thirty nine!

A. And John McArthur the Manager says, will you sign that now! I said to myself signing off compensation.....I said "Not me John, I'm not signing off that!"

Q. Why did he want you to do that?

A. They wanted me to sign off, so that I wouldn't could claim any more compensation but the Doctor told me that these are thin, that skin is thin.....

Q. On the back of your hand?

A. And it could burst any time! You can see the marks there! So I never signed off! I wasn't getting a lump sum anyway, I was only getting about thirty bob! I didn't sign off! But och.....I don't think that they would get anybody back to the shale if they started it up again!

Q. You think not?

A. I don't think so! I don't think so!

Q. Conditions were bad, weren't they?

A. They weren't too bad, but it was high, you see, it was nine to twelve feet high some places, and the likes of the coal was no more than five or six, you know what I mean.....

Q. Did you ever work in the coal mines?

A. Aye, I was in Bowhill!

Q. Where about?

A. Bowhill! Cardenden! I was in there! I was in the pit all the time that I was there!

Q. Were you ever a faceman in Breich?

A. No!

Q. No?

A. No, no!

Q. So, you left Breich and went to.....?

A.The sinking.....I left Breich and went to Fife, and came back here.....

Q. You went to the coal mines and came back to the shale?

A. Aye! I got a job sinking the Fraser Pit! Sinking it!

Q. And what did you do, to help sink the Fraser?

A. Oh well, there was one that bored holes, he didn't bore them, he just..... they weren't bored, they were just a sort of pole going down the muck into the muck you see.....until.....and it was.....there was some rock in it right enough, but not an awful lot! There was about six or seven of us all round the kettle all filling it up, you see, with the stuff, till we got it all out! And then they put in a round thing, and wood on the top, and then built that up with brick, you see! Every so often! Every bit, they would be maybe.....get down about twelve feet, and you started putting this brick on your.....on your see! Putting bricks round about!

Q. Was this circular?

A. Circular?

Q. And what diameter do you think it was?

A. Oh it was..... there were two cages in it anyway!

Q. It was a two cage.....shaft?

A. Single deckers.....But oh, it was alright!

Q. And was there a private contractor actually.....?

A. Aye.....McCallum!

Q. McCallum? And where did they come from?

A. I don't know where they came from! I think that it was about Slammanan

way, or something. I think that was where it was, but that's who had it!

Q. They had the contract?

A. They had the contract!

Q. They had the contract to do the sinking?

A. They had the contract to do the sinking!

Q. And you were on oncost work when you were working.....helping?

A. Aye.....we.....were all oncost, we were filling it! We were all filling in the kettle!

Q. And did you work in the Fraser as a miner?

A. Aye!

Q. After it was.....?

A. I was a faceman in the Fraser!

Q. You were a faceman there? Yes?

A. Well, I started on the wooding first, that was putting the crowns up, and then they put me on the face!

Q. Can you remember what field it was, that was in the Fraser?

A. The Dunnet!

Q. The Dunnet

A. The Dunnet! It was a bad roof in some places then, right enough, you know! If it had been a good roof, I believe it would have been going yet! Because there's shale from here to Ayr you see!

Q. Is that right?

A. Aha!

Q. And how do you know that?

A. Well, I've heard that often! I've heard it often, shale from here to Ayr, I mean.....you had it maybe twelve feet high, and nine feet high and..... there was a good hard roof, and it was only so far then, just meal above that, you know, soft stuff above that!

- Q. Was there a restriction in what width you went to?
- A. Aye, you only went twelve feet wide!
- Q. And did you keep to that all the time?
- A. Aye, you had to keep to that.....you had to tape sites but we used to tape ourselves just to keep it right, maybe two feet on one side and ten feet on the other side of these sites, you see!
- Q. And did the fireman check and did he have to tell you anytime to reduce or whatever.....anything to do with safety?
- A. Aye, he had to tell us to put up crowns and trees if we needed them, but we knew ourselves really, you know what I mean! But there were some of them quite good! I remember one fireman up there used to tape sites with one string! I don't know how we done it but they took it! You were supposed to have three you see! But he used to have the one! He was some fireman! However, we got on alright, and I mean that I had good drawers all the time that I was on the face!
- Q. And when he was doing the siting with the one string, how did he go about that?
- A. I.....I don't know how he took it!
- Q. You weren't there to see him?
- A. No!
- Q. And did you see anybody using the three strings?
- A. Oh aye, we always used the three
- Q. You yourself?
- A. Aye! Oh, we used the three!
- Q. How did you go about that? Did you line these through using three strings?
- A. Aye, you had to line right through using the three strings! You see, well, you put them up on the roof, with maybe a wee clog of wood, and then with a staple, and hung the string down three, and just lined the

three of them right up and boy on the top had his lamp, you see! And his lamp was shining through the three strings and whenever you said.....kept on moving them back and forward until you got that site, you see! And you would say, right, chalk that! And that's how you did it, you see!

Q. So, that was you keeping in line, and.....?

A. Keeping in line!

Q. But you couldn't understand how this fireman did it with one string?

A. Sanny Bradford! I don't know how he did it! Do you know Sanny Bradford?

Q. No!

A. Did you not know him? He used to stay in Pumpherston! Oh, he was some man!

Q. And how long were you in the Fraser?

A. Ah, well, now, ten years it would be! Wait the now.....1939 we started sinking it.....and we were in Hermand before that.....no.....

Q. You went to the Hermand after the Fraser?

A. We were in Hermand twice! Well, I was in Hermand once, but it was going before the Fraser! And it stopped when the Fraser started! And then when the Fraser stopped we went back to the Hermand! You see!

Q. So, you were at the Fraser when it finished up?

A. Aye, and we were in Hermand when it finished up!

Q. And why do you think that they finished up?

A. Just that they weren't getting the subsidy from the Government! And then we went to Westwood! You see!

Q. And did you work in Westwood as well?

A. Aye, I finished up in Westwood!

Q. And.....?

A. That's how we got the money you see! If it hadn't went to Westwood, and went somewhere else, we weren't getting.....we would have to have

got some money, but not very much! You see, there were ten per cent of your wages put by every year for us, every year!

Q. Was this your Provident?

A. The Provident scheme yes! But if you left, you didn't get it! Some of them got five per cent and some.....I got ten per cent all the time! But the only thing that I was funny about, I was in Breich, for about ten years, nearly (inaudible) but it didn't count, with the pension scheme! And yet it counted for the Provident scheme!

Q. Why was that?

A. I don't know! Broken time, and yet it didn't count for the pension, because if it had counted, I would have got the pension from Grangemouth, you see, for.....because four years there and twenty three in the rest of the pits and.....was twenty seven, but you had to be twenty five before you got it! So, well, 1962, that's when the pit finished, that's when the shale finished, 1962, May 31st, 1962! And.....well, I didn't try for the pension then, but I thought that I would have got it, but I didn't get it, so seventeen years after that I tried and I wrote to Grangemouth, and got word, no! I wasn't long enough in it! And then in December, 1961, I got word from London from the B.P. saying that they had put my name and my wife's name in, and sent it away, so I did that, and word came back, where do you want the money paid in to! You know, I got paid back till July 19.....1979, I got paid all that money back!

Q. And that would be surprise to you?

A. It wasn't half! So I'm still getting it! I get it every month! There's two or three been at me for the address, but I said that there was no use sending to the address, if you are going to get it, you'll get it! I mean, I didn't send away for it! That was a surprise to me!

Q. And you had no idea how that happened?

- A. No idea! I think it would be going through their books, or something and seen it, you know! Because there's a boy just up the road there, Micky Doonan, he went to the coal, and he gets half of what I get! Because he wasn't long in the pit, you see! But he still get's half of what I get! It's not that much, seven pounds a week, but it's alright!
- Q. Can you remember at the Fraser and the Hermand, who the Managers names were there?
- A. John McArthur and.....
- Q. He was at the Fraser?
- A. And.....Tam McVicar.....
- Q. Tam McVicar?
- A. Aye, that was two of them, and John Stein was the agent! Aye!
- Q. And you find much difference working in these various places? Were there some worse than others?
- A. Well.....I wouldn't say.....the worst place that I worked in was Westwood! We had just got the Broxburn shale.....is it.....all small stuff, you see! And a bad roof! An awful bad roof! You had to have a crown about every three feet! It had an awful bad roof down there! It wasn't a smooth roof, you know! Full of dross!
- Q. Did they make allowances for that? Did the Company make allowances for that?
- A. No, no, you got paid for the crowns that you put up and the shale that you produced, tonnage! It suited me alright, you didn't need planks or that, away up high! For me to bore holes, you know!
- Q. And what kind of drills did you use, was it the ratchet, hand ratchet? Electric?
- A. Electric!
- Q. Was it always the electric?

- A. No, the hand ratchet in Breich, and it was electric elsewhere!
- Q. And how did you find the difference between them?
- A. Och well, you bored the holes no bother, you know! With the electric, but you had to set up a tree for the hand grinder, set a tree for it!
- Q. And did you have a left and right hand ratchet?
- A. Well, there could have been! There could have been!
- Q. So, you said that you finished up at Westwood? When was that? Was that when Westwood closed?
- A. 1962! The 31st of May!
- Q. So that was the three pits and mines that.....you were there when they all closed?
- A. Aye!
- Q. 1963?
- A. 1962!
- Q. 1962?
- A. Yes!
- Q. And can you remember any of your old workmates or anything that would stand out in your memory?
- A. Och, aye, I can! That and Dougie Yule, he was in.....have you been at Dougie Yule yet?
- Q. No!
- A. He stays up in the Grove there! Just up above the shops.....shop! He was my drawer for years! A good worker too! Dick Kelly.....he was on the roads there a wee while.....och aye.....
- Q. How.....when you started work, you stayed at Seafield, and when you left the school, or even when you were at the school, and you stayed in Seafield, was it miners cottages that you stayed in?
- A. Aye, miners cottages! Aye, rows of houses! They are down now, though!
- Q. They're away now? Can you remember anything about the conditions?

How many rooms did you have?

A. A room and a kitchen! Aye!

Q. Did you have running water?

A. Oh aye! Aye! Aye!

Q. And did you have an inside toilet?

A. Aye, but the washhouse was round the corner, and four of them used it! Four! (Inaudible) there were eight houses in a block, you see! So four of them used one and four of them used the other one!

Q. So it was shared washhouses?

A. A shared washhouse!

Q. And sleeping arrangements? How many were there in your family, did you say?

A. There was.....wait the now..... there was two born in Breich, that would be nine! Eight of us, plus my father and mother, anyway!

Q. And how did you all sleep in.....?

A. Oh.....we just had two beds in the room you see.....an you made up two beds in.....the kitchen..... two rooms, two beds in the kitchen, and one bed in the room!. We just all slept together, of course, we were only youngsters at the time! You know! But that's all that we had! A room and a kitchen!

Q. And eh.....

A. Paraffin lamps!

Q. That's it! There was always paraffin lamps up until then, you wouldn't have electric light?

A. No, we didn't have electric light, no!

Q. Was there any street lamps in these days?

A. No.....no!

Q. Of course, you would have no gas?

A. No, there was no gas, no! No gas nor electricity!

Q. How would you get on now without these? Facilities?

A. Everything was cooked in the fire!

Q. You had the big range?

A. The big range aye! And everything was cooked on the fire!

Q. And for hot water for a bath or anything.....?

A. Aye, you had to heat it on the.....heat it on the fire! A big zinc bath! Aye!

Q. Were you ever a member of the Union when you were with the Scottish Oils.....?

A. Oh aye, I was a member of the Union! When it burst up, we all got so much money each off it!

Q. Did you? Can you remember who the officials were?

A. Well, Jimmy Johnstone was the only one that I knew! He was to do with it, when I was in the Fraser! Jimmy Johnstone! He's dead now!

Q. And where did he come from?

A. Northfield Cottages! But he's dead! And I think that Billy Arnott had to do with it.....of course. Billy died years ago too!

Q. Did you ever have any reason for to approach the Union for anything? For any grievance or anything like that?

A. No! Not me, no!

Q. Do you know of anybody that.....had.....?

END OF TAPE

- A. No, I don't think that there was any trouble with the Unions right enough, there were no strikes or nothing like that, and they kept us well informed about everything that was going on!
- Q. So, there were never any strikes when you.....were working?
- A. No, not when I was working!
- Q. With the Scottish Oils?
- A. No!
- Q. And did you feel that the Union did any good?
- A. Oh aye, they did good right enough!
- Q. In what way?
- A. I mean well.....you see, they got your holidays, and they kept you in line for holidays because I knew one boy, that he wouldn't take his holidays, he wanted to work them, and the Union said, you've got to take your holidays, because we were getting paid for them, you see! You must take your holidays! Well, he took them about Christmas time, he wouldn't take them in the summer! But he was made to take them!
- Q. That must have been later on, because when you started off, you wouldn't get paid for holidays!
- A. No, no, no, no! We never got paid for holidays! We never got paid for holidays till when.....och, till I came back from Fife!
- Q. And that would be roughly when.....?
- A. 39, I would say about 19.....I think that you got paid for them then!
- Q. So, did you feel that it was the Union that actually got this.....?
- A. Aye, it was the Union that got it!
- Q. And what did you get for holidays then?
- A. A fortnight! You got to take a fortnight!
- Q. So, you got paid for a fortnight.....after '39.....?
- A. I think that it was anyway! It wouldn't be far after that anyway!

Q. Of course, that was the start of the War?

A. That was the start of the War!

Q. And did the War affect you at all?

A. No! That was the day.....one Friday when I was in Fife..... that was the 5th of September, is that when they raided the Forth Rail Bridge

Q. Round about then.....!

A. I was going up for my pay and they tried to turn me back and I had the lassie with me.....the laddie with me.....no, the lassie..... she was only about a year.....not much more than a year! And they turned me back.....wouldn't let me go! So it was the 20th of November that I left Fife to come here!

Q. You wouldn't have any experience with the three weeks on and one week off?

A. No, I was in Fife at that time, aye, I was in Fife at that time!

Q. Do you know of anybody that did have that?

A. Old Wull Scott he was that, and Jimmy Brown and the Ellises, they would all have that, they would all have that!

Q. And what was your views on that, did they enjoy it?

A. Oh, I couldn't tell you! Never asked them, you know! You see, when we were in Fife, we were only getting four days a week, and you couldn't get dole, you see.....

Q. So, then the War started, that would finish all that short time?

A. Aye!

Q. You would then be in a reserved occupation of course?

A. Aye!

Q. And you wouldn't be called up?

A. Well, I wasn't called up, but I registered! After I came over here! I registered then, but there was an awful lot of options as we cried

them at the Fraser Pit, they wouldn't join the Army, you see, they wouldn't join the Army, and yet they were taking them away from the shale! But there weren't many shale miners in the Army, because they joined up and they were sent home! They were sent home! They needed oil, you see!

Q. And you said that there were some miners.....coal miners came to the shale?

A. No!

Q. No?

A. Away from as far as Kirkcudbright and all these places! Slaterers, joiners and everything! Bankers.....they were all there!

Q. Was this because they didn't want to go in the Forces?

A. They didn't want to go to the Forces, you see! Aye, we had them.... I had one from.....not Kirkcudbright.....what's that place.....away down that way, anyway, somewhere!

Q. Down about the Borders?

A. Aye, down about the Borders!

Q. And what was he? Was he a tradesman or.....?

A. Eh!

Q. Was he a tradesman?

A. A faceman?

Q. A tradesman?

A. He was a tradesman of some kind! But I can't mind what he was!

Q. Was he a professional man?

A. He wasn't a professional man!

Q. He wasn't a banker or.....?

A. No.....he was only a young fellow!

Q. And what was his attitude to working down the mine?

A. Oh, he seemed to do alright! Some done alright! I mind of one boy,

an option, saying to John McArthur, he said, "Here, John, what about my wages?" John McArthur said, "Why, what is wrong with them?" "Well", he says, "I want paid for what I am worth!" John McArthur says, "Well, it's a pity, that I can't pay you below the wages that you're getting the now!" That was some of them that wouldn't work at all! That was a laugh that day!

Q. Did you feel that they didn't want to work?

A. They didn't want to work! You see!

Q. And that was.....any of them ever on earning related to what their production was?

A. Well, they had a set wage, you see, whether they worked or not? That was it! On the oncost!

Q. Were they always on the oncost?

A. Aye! The oncost had a set wage!

Q. So, they didn't work as drawers or anything like that?

A. No, no! Maybe emptying timber into the places or.....sorting hutches and you know, leading hutches and all that, and maybe working on the pit bottom!

Q. What was it that you called these men, that did that, that left their other jobs?

A. Options! Options!

Q. In other words.....?

A. They were getting the option whether to go the shale or go to the Army, you see! That's why we called them that, you see! We cried them that!

Q. You called them options?

A. Options!

Q. And they were widely known as that in the (inaudible)?

A. Aye, oh aye! They didn't cry them that to their face, right enough! And there were some of them good workers and there were some that were

there just for to pass the time! That was all!

Q. Not interested?

A. Not interested! So.....!

END OF TAPE

Transcript

Mr RB

Industrial
Information

I started in Breich pit when I was seventeen years old, but I had been down the pit before in Seafield when I was thirteen years old. I got the job through my father.

My job at Breich pit was a pony driver. We had to groom them and brush them down. They were Clydesdale's, and some were bad ones and wee ones. To start with I had two ponies called Victor and Douglas. There was also a big one called Watty, who we used to say counted, the couplings, but you had to start on a Sunday night with three hutches.

Drawing

I did not do that job for very long, then I started drawing with my father. That was filling hutches for my father, he only had the one drawer that was me.

Pay

I never got pay, I just got pocket money, which was eighteen bob a week.

Fraser Pit

I left Breich and went to Fife, then I got a job sinking the fraser pit. There was the one who bored the holes with a pole going down into the mick. There was about six or seven of us all round the kettle all filling it up with the stuff, till out. And then they put it in a round thing, and wood on the top, and then they built that up with brick, it was circular and it took two cages. McCullam had the contract for this.

At Fraser pit I was a faceman, I started on the wooding first that was putting the crowns up, and then they put me on the face at Dunnet.

The Roof

The roof was bad in some places, if it had been a good roof it would have been going yet, because there's shale from here to Ayr.

Width

You were only allowed to go twelve feet wide, and you had to keep to that width all the time you had tape sites, but we used to tape ourselves just to keep it right. I remember one fireman used to tape sites with one string you were supposed to have three.

To use three strings you had to line right through using the three strings, you put them up on the roof, with maybe a wee clog of wood and then a staple, and hung the string down three, and just lined the three of them right up and the boy on the top had his lamp shining through the three strings until you got a site, and you would say chalk that, so that's how you did it.

I was at Fraser until it finished and then I went to Hermand, which finished after Government subsidy was withdrawn.

Westwood

From Fraser I went to Westwood. The worst place I worked was Westwood. You got paid for the crowns that you put up, and the tonnage of shale you produced.

Drills

We used hand ratchet in Breich, and it was electric elsewhere. You had no bother with the electric drill, you had to set up a

tree for the hand grider.

Accidents

My father got shot at Breich pit. He couldn't get out of the road quick enough, and my brother flung himself on top to save him, and his piecebox and flask were flattened, and he had a big hole in the back of the neck and back. I can mind of them coming over with wet clothes ken, they could hardly hold them in their hands.

I was lighting the shots, and I should have been using the caps and pliers. I was suppose to light two at a time, but I was lighting about six. I came down out of that heading quick enough. My neighbour took me to Dr. Thwaites, who sent me to hospital.

Pensions and Provident

When I was in Breich, about ten years it didn't count to my pension yet it counted to the Provident scheme. I would have got a Pension from Grangemouth, because of four years there. I wrote to London in December 1961, and got word back from London to say I would get a Pension.

Social Life

We played football when I was at Seafield, but we just played at the back of a house. I played a couple of trial games for the Fife Select twice over at Fife, we were playing at Dunikire who were playing Kinglassie.

Domestic Life

When I was a Seafield we stayed in miners cottages, (rows of houses). We had a room and a kitchen. We had running water and an

inside toilet. The wash-house was around the corner and four of them used it. There were eight houses in a block, so four of them used one and the other four used the other one. There was nine of us in the family. We just had two beds in the kitchen and one bed in th-room. We just all slept together.

Lighting There was always paraffin lamps, as there was no electricity or gas.

Cooking Everything was cooked on the fire, we had a big range.

Bathing We had to heat water on the fire, which was put into a big zinc bath.

War Then the war broke out.