

WH SIDE ONE

Q. Just tell me when you started in the pit, what age and what you did to begin with?

A. I was fifteen year old when I started in the pit!

Q. Aye! And what was your first job?

A. I was working on the pit bottom for och....two or three years.....

Q. Aye!

A. And oh.....you got shifted about the pit....when I started I had 2/101/2d a day.....I had eight....and every six....every birthday, you had 2d of a rise..... that was every year....you got 2d of a rise! When I finished up braking ponies and that, I was getting five shillings a day.....that was.. you couldn't go any higher than that, five shillings!

Q. That was the maximum?

A. That was the maximum! You had to go on to the drawing then if you wanted any more!

Q. And how did you break these ponies? Were you working down underground?

A. Oh aye, you broke them down underground!

Q. You broke them there!

A. You had to....two of you, one at each side of it...learning it...and then you broke it in to.....go without the rounds.....the rails and that....you had no room to go about with....just run on..... oh, if you had a good pony, you had a good job, but if you had a bad one, you had a bad one!

Q. Some of them were bad tempered, were they?

A. Oh, what! They learned fly things too! There was one there, down the pit, it was kidded on it was lame.... there was another one could take the cork out of your flask and drink your tea! Oh, they were up to all the tricks of the day! There was a chap in Pumpherstons, I don't know whether you've heard of him or not, Wullie Young.....

Q. No, don't think so!

A. He got the sack for eh.....see when you slept in or wasn't out, your horse was idle too! Och, it wouldn't go out of the stables without you!

Q. Would it not go with anybody else?

A. No, you had carrots and apples and that with you in the morning...and on the backshift.....

Q. Oh, I see, he was kind to it!

A. Aye, and it wouldn't go out without him!

Q. So that was it?

A. Oh aye, he was loused' it wouldn't go without him, it wouldn't work! Oh, there were some of them fly! There was another one, a pure, white one. Star, and see when it came quarter of an hour before lousing time...you wouldn't have kept that thing out of the stables for love nor money.....

Q. It knew the.....?

A. It loused itself and went away!

Q. It could gauge the day!

A. Oh aye, it kent the time! Aye, they were fly!

Q. That was in Westwood Pit? How many ponies had they?

A. Oh, there was about, I would say, forty! There used to all ponies, and there were ones, there were one,three, four down in one stable..... there were six in another one, and there were thirty four down in the big one....the Lightening dook.....it was a big stable!

Q. Did you do any other jobs in the pit? What other work did you do?

A. Oh, I couldn't stop for contracting!

Q. What were you doing after the pony driving? what did you do after that?

A. Oh, I just went on to the breaking them in, and then I went from there... up to....on to the drawing.

Q. On to the drawing, aye?

A. With my uncle.

Q. with your uncle? And what was he... the surface.....?

A. He was the contractor!

Q. He was a contractor, aye, and your worked to him?

A. Aye, eight shillings a day!

Q. And he paid your wages, is that right?

A. Aye, he paid the wages!

Q. Eight shillings a day?

A. You had to coax him out of it!

Q. Is that right?

A. If he bought a file, it was off of you on the Friday!

Q. Did he take it out of your wages?

A. If you were getting a tip off him, you were getting a good week....he paid your doctor or.....

Q. Oh I see!

A. This was....all the patter....and I worked with a man, Jock Haddow was his name.....the best man that I've ever worked with! And I worked with his brother, Dod, and he died with cancer; And Dod says to me, this week, he says...."We're not pulling any more than ten hutches!" We used to fill twenty! So we broke it down to ten! But Jock, give him his due, he never said a word! It was the manager that tumbled to it!

Q. Who was the manager then....what was his name?

A. It was....the under-manager was Tam Brown....and Gordon Cowal.....

Q. Gordon Cowal?

A. Was the manager! And he came in.....and "What's wrong?" Dod told him, and he said we're getting the same wages for filling ten as we did for filling twenty!" So he said, "What's the good of us filling twenty?". So that.... that started the ball rolling! And then....we got on to the co-operative, do you ken, we were getting three times more wages on the co-operative than what we were getting, and we were well paid mind!

Q. What was the co-operative?

A. It was the pay split in four! That was....instead of him paying you...you went and lifted your own envelope, you see, there was only one envelope then and he had sat and counted it all out in bundles.... that's yours and.....

Q. He split it up, aha!

A. He split it up! But when you went on the co-operative, you went and lifted your own envelope!

Q. It was all individual pay packets!

A. And then you kent what you were getting! And you kent how much he was getting!

Q. He wouldn't like that, would he?

A. Oh, he was.....he was fair enough, aye.....

Q. Was he?

A. Aye...he was a good man to work with.....you see, him and his brother couldnae get on....Dod....Dod was...he was a twisted man....oh, Dod it into him! And the week it started we went into the office...you see, they told us there was no difference in your wages, come in on Friday! Well, Dod and I went in on the Friday, and here it happened that Crichton was in the office! And Crichton....oh, he had the books all there! Waiting on us coming, and he said, "Do you ken you are the best paid two drawers, in Westwood?" Dod said, we are not in about that, you told us to come in...Gordon Cowal telt us...if we didn't get any improvement on our wages to come in, so there it is! Jock came the following week, "You are on the co-operative!"

Q. That was it?

A. Oh, that was it! Finished!

Q. That was it! Aha!

A. And this was a man, mind you, see Jock, he was the last man out of the pit!

Q. Oh?

A. He was the last man out of the pit! Dod and Tam...that was his cousin..
Dod was Tam's uncle...and they were going away to the Home Guard Camp..well,
that was no bother getting away, but Dod was going to have to lose a shift,
and the manger said, the two of you come out on the Saturday!

Q. Was that overtime, was it?

A. Aye! Well, it was to save us from going out on the Saturday backshift!

Q. Oh, I see!

A. Just the Sat....well, we had two places at the time, it didn't really matter
Well, Dod said to me...he said "I'm "bl...y" sure that he will not be late
today!" And Dod went and shifted his watch! Do you ken, he walked out
three quarters of a mile to the top of the brae to ask a boy the time, and
went back to the face! He went back to the face....and he was the last man
out of the pit at the end!

Q. Conscientious man?

A. Dod was....Dod would have been better leaving him alone!

Q. Aha! So he would have!

A. Aye, he would have been better leaving him alone!

Q. And how long were you on the drawing then?

- A. Oh, I had a contract....I started with my Uncle Bob....and I was on the drawing for about seven years...and then I got a contract the pit.....I was earning three pounds a day! And that was big money!
- Q. Big money then! And what year was that? Can you hazard a guess?
- A. That was.....just before the war broke out! Three pounds a day...that was big money!
- Q. That was big money, aye!
- A. And eh.... that's.....well, when it came the war...everything was changed! Everything changed all the gether! But the money was still there!
- Q. Was it?
- A. But then all the guisers started to come in to it! D.P.'s and managers sons and that....
- Q. This was them filling in for the war? Aye?
- A. Aye, to get away from the Army you see! Oh, aye, there were a lot of guisers around!
- Q. What did they call them? Was that the Bevin Boys? Was that Bevin.....?
- A. Aye, it was supposed to be!
- Q. Was that the name that they gave them?
- A. Oh, there were some queer characters....and we had one from the Borders.... what did we cry him....Shepherd....!

Q. Shepherd!

A. Oh, the toes of his boots were that....oh....

Q. Aye, I was going to say, these boys would be.....

A. Oh aye, it was a shame for them....the boy....the boy packed up.....

Q. Did he?

A. Oh....he said...it was a tree cracked and he away!

Q. Is that right?

A. Aye....he didn't ken there was nothing in a tree cracking down the pit..he off....we were going to the fishing down in the Borders that night, and we met him in St. Andrews Square on the Jedburgh bus...and I said, "Where the hell are you going there", with the wee case. "I'm going home!" he said, and we asked the driver to let us off at St. Boswells afore it got up to the New Town, and we had a drink with him, . And I said, "Christ," I said, "Thon is a good drop above you anyway!" He said, "I'm having the blue sky above me!" he said.

Q. He had had enough!

A. Aye!

Q. Did you work longer hours was it, during the war time?

A. No, when I started....you see, you worked.....you worked seven hours.... and you had no piece time, you had no break....you had to eat your piece where you were working!

Q. Work right through?

- A. And then they were shifted to eight hours and you got half an hour break! You had to be working eight hours before you got the break! And you got half an hours break then! That was all that you got!
- Q. Not very nice, too, sitting down a pit, eating.....
- A. Och, well, see, when you were working with these old contractors, you didn't get ten minutes...they were sitting gunking down their piece, till you could get started again!
- Q. To get back to work?
- A. Aye! Oh there were some..... there were some queer tales.....!
- Q. What about accidents? Did you ever.....?
- A. I've seen plenty of accidents! I had a helmet out in my old hut there,och, it hung there for years and years....Adam McCulloch from the Deans.. he got killed and there wasn't a mark on him! A stone hit him on the head there and hit him on the helmet and broke his neck! And there was not a mark on him! His helmet hung in that hut there, for years!
- Q. My goodness!
- A. The first man that I saw killed in the pit was Tam Haddow, that was Dod's brother, oldest brother, and you want to have seen.....there's some of the from that Mid Calder yet! He wrote some great poems!
- Q. Did he?
- A. Aye!
- Q. And what happened to him? Was it a roof fall or.....?
- A. Aye, a stone, aye! Och, I seen an old Christian...fireman...he got mangled

too! Just with a man....you see, the fireman gave you your orders see, going down, and he telt Geordie Fleming...old Geordie.-.he stays here... he telt him to take the stone down! When the old fireman went down, he walked in to the face to get him, to get him...bring him out, take it down, but the stone came down, when he was going in below it! My christ he was.. I was driving an engine then! Mangled....he was mangled...he was like a concertina!

Q. It just crushed him, did it!

A. Aye! It was a stone, about twelve ton! Och, I seen a lot of accidents!

Q. Was there a special team of men to get these blokes out?

A. No, oh no!

Q. Just the miners!

A. Aye, oh aye. You had to.....it was a thing,...you ken, you were born and brought up with! There were some boys got excited and some boys didn't! There was an old boy with me, old Bob Grant, he was the coolest man ever you seen in an accident! Well, this woman next door, she's a widow! Her man dropped dead! He was a miner too! But his brother, he got killed up beside of me, in Broxburn! And that Jock Prentice was fireman! And he gave him two dogs, he was a great Powderhall man, this Jock Murphy, and he gave him two dogs, and he forgot the dogs names, and he came back, he said to come in to the place that I was working in, and he said "WH.. well, if you were a couple of hundred feet away from a man, you wouldn't walk, it was too far away, and he came in, and he said, "What was these two dogs. Jock?" I said, "Oh, I can't mind!" He said, "I'll away in and see him!" Well, he went in and Jock was lying dead! A stone belted him on the head! And he came in, and said, "You stay there!", and took old Bob Grant out! Old Bob.....in and no bother.....

Q. Where did you live, when you worked in Westwood?

A. Oakbank!

Q. Oakbank?

A. That was the miners rows at Oakbank!

Q. Were they pretty modern houses were they?

A. Oh, no! They were rubbish!

Q. Were they...the old pit baths treatment was it?

A. They were nae tin....ay, there was nae tin baths....a stone scullery floor... Christ, it was murder! Damp! Well.....I used to do a lot of shooting and that, and see in the summertime, when I put the gun in the press...see when I went for it, it was green moulded! Dampness, aye!

Q. All these houses are knocked down now, of course?

A. Aye, they are all flattened now! Of course, you only paid four and five pence a week!

Q. Was that to the mine owners or what? Who owned these houses?

A. The Scottish Oils!

Q. That's right! So you paid the rent to..... employed..... it was off your wages?

A. Aye!

Q. You would be in the Union too, at that time?

A. Aye! Och, that was a ham and egg union! Half of it was bought over!

Q. Was there much bother at Westwood.....?

A. No! There was no bother no! There was no bother! In fact, I can never mind of a strike! But mind you, I've seen when there was laddies...I've seen them sending for men, to come and do a laddies job, and the men wouldn't do it! They wouldn't have done it! I refused to go and do a laddies job myself! I wouldn't have done it! For the money that they were getting! Of course, they would have had to pay us our wages.

Q. That's right, aye! So, they were trying to get you to the boys job, but pay the boys wages, is that right?

A. Oh, no! They were paying us our wages!

Q. Oh, I see! It was just in principle that.....?

A. The job was harder than the one that we had!

Q. Was it?

A. Aye! There were some hard laddies jobs!

Q. There must have been, aye!

A. It was very unusual if you went three weeks without getting the sack!

Q. Somebody getting the sack?

A. Aye! You.....everybody.....

Q. Did you.....?

A. Everybody you couldn't speak back then! There was somebody waiting on your job! Aye! It's different days now! The gaffers is nae good now! They've no say! Because if the gaffers speaks now, there is a strike!

Q. They were pretty strict then, eh?

A. Aye!

Q. What about gases in these pits, were they dangerous....

A. Oh, aye, some....some bits of it.....I was in one hot place....one helluva bad! We had a laddie cawing hand planks to us in this one, and we were working awy this day, and Geordie Callendar.....

Q. What kind of hand planks? What was it like?

A. You had to it, the laddie had to stand and do that for eight hours!

Q. Turning the fan!

A. Turning that fan! And this day, I said to Eck Callendar...this was a bad, you couldn't keep the Glennie in, for whenever the Glennie went out, that was explosive! So, I said, "That laddie is smoking through there, I feel the smell of it coming through that fan!". And Christ, when we went out, the laddie got shifted right enough!

Q. He was smoking?

A. Oh, aye, he was smoking! Aye, there was some hot bits! But if you had water, that was where you had more gas! If it was damp!

Q. If it was wet?

A. Oh aye, that was the cause of my trouble! I worked for three years, the wife will tell you, she seen me coming home wringing up to there, working in water!

Q. Did you ever have any accidents yourself when you worked in the pit?

- A. I had only one, it was just....it was an electric machine...and the "bl....y" thing got jammed and it rowed my arm into the cable!
- Q. Were you off work?
- A. It was just....aye, I was off work! Just.....I had this Greenhorn working with me too! He was a bus conductor! He had the presence of mind to run out and go the gate end box, what we cried the gate end box, and switch it off!
- Q. Was that the switch? The gate end box?
- A. Aye! It stopped the motor, and stopped the engine!
- Q. You were lucky then! Did you get compensation when you were off?
- A. I landed in the Infirmary.....aye! You had a pound a week more than what you had on the insurance! But you had to go to the office for it! Every time, you went along for your compensation, they were wanting you to sign off!
- Q. They were trying to force you.....?
- A. Oh, aye, they had men there! And see, when you went before a compensation doctor, it was the Scottish Oils doctor you went in front of!
- Q. A company man?
- A. Aye!
- Q. Were you on the drawing all the time, or were you contracting.....?
- A. See when I went on to the contracting, you got the face all the time, you see you were howking the shale for them to fill!

Q. How many men worked under you?

A. There were four!

Q. Four....four men aha!

A. I seen this..... laddie down here he stays just a couple of blocks over the road there. It was the managers fault, the managers name was wee Tam Brown, he was twisting with my good brother, Coxy Davidson, he just stays over there. He should have got the job! But before he would give Coxy, he gave that laddie, Stewart it, and the first day that he was on the face.....the first day that he was at the face, I'm working away and the drawer was working away, and here the pony driver comes in and "You'd better come oot. WH!" I said, "What way?". He said, "Bob Stewart's shot!" Well, I run oot, but young McKelvie from Livingston was there....he was an Army man, he was a boy that he buried the dead during the war.....this was after the war....stopped....and I went down and he said to me, "You'd better not go in there. WH!" "What way?" I said. "You'd better not go in!" "There is nothing that you can do anyway!" So here, the manager and the under manager came down, and he spoke to the manager and the under-manager and he said, "You had better not go in there!" "It's bad enough seeing it before", he said, "If you leave it to me, I will go in an....." and he went in with a lump of cloth and put him on it....

Q. He was used to that?

A. Aye! He was used to that! Well, that boy Coxy Davidson, I was working away this day and he came in, it was just early in the morning, starting, and he said, "I'm not going down there to start!" This was the place that young Stewart got killed in! So he said.....I said to him, "What for?" "Christ!", he said, "There is half of that man sticking on the stoop side!" "Down there yet!" "Well," I said, "Away and phone and tell them!". I'll tell you the.....a man...I don't know the other old chap from West Calder, I forget his name now....I can't mind now,.....but Peter Hoseberry from Dedridge, they came in with a kist of water.... that was a big kist...an

iron kist.....

Q. It was called a tank of water, was it?

A. Aye! And big course brushes and they washed it all down!

Q. They washed it all down?

A. Aye! Aye! According to him, there was only half the man in the coffin....
och....it was terrible! But see, what he tried to do is.....well, to make
you understand, you broke the rules all the time in these pits! Because
you wouldn't have made no money if you had kept to the rules. You were
supposed to fire four shots at a time, and I've seen me putting off sixteen!
But...he had four plugs, well that was a plug...it was only that length...

Q. What's a plug.....a

A. Like a shorthole!

Q. A short hole aha!

A. Aye! That was miners talk, ken, a short hole or plug!

Q. And how deep would you say, about twelve inches?

A. Aye, about that, and you just bored a plug, whatever was needed at the time!
And you had four bored....well, with him just being his first day, he used
the safety caps, we never used our safety caps, we took them out of the
magazine because you had too, because if you weren't taking them, they kent!
That you weren't using them!

Q. They would know what you were up to?

A. So we just....we just took them and threw them away! And eh, he put four
safety caps on...well, the first one went, the second one went, but the

third one missed! And it went in, and hit short! He went in to get another one and put it on, he got them on and got them all lifted, but they nailed him before he got anything....just out of the road!

Q. He wasn't quick enough?

A. No! See, when he was firing the plugs, he should have at least left that length of strum...to them, because strum takes I think it is, twenty seconds to defact...

Q. Is that the normal speed of burning, is it?

A. Aye, twenty seconds! To defacting!

Q. And he left it short!

A. He went to cut neat to the hole! ().

Q. How did they light that strum?

A. Well, we licted it.....you'd better put that off! We used to take a bit.. you ken...if we had strum that length, if our hole was that length and we had sixteen to go, you put eighteen nicks in a bit strum every inch, and you just went round touching them....the one the other one see!

Q. Oh, I see!

A. And then you could.....you got time to get out! That's how you done it!

Q. What did you use to light it? Was it a match or what?

A. Aye!

Q. A naked light!

A. Aye, you used a.....

Q. You wouldn't be allowed to do that nowadays in the pits? With a naked light, with the electrical...what is it called.....

A. Aye, it is all batteries now!

Q. That's right, aha!

A. Well, I was in a place in the pit that it was all batteries....you could fire as many as you liked then!

Q. What kind of head lamp did you use in the pit?

A. Battery!

Q. All the time like?

A. No, it was carbine....

Q. At the beginning?

A. Aye, it was all carbine...there was an accident.... it was the coal boy that bored through....you see, we were under the Coal Boards rules too! Down the shale! But they would never start a shale miner down the coal face, they took too many risks! Sanny Wallace and Caffer Reid and Tam Dick.. they started in the coal, they got a job in the coal! See, whenever they kent that they were shale miners().

Q. Was that under the NCB?

A. Aye.....no, it was private ownership then!

Q. But that was the reason, that they thought they took too many risks!

- A. So they did! Och, you didn't bother then, it was only a job, the same as any other job! I've seen on the winter mornings, you would be glad to get down the pit for to get out the cold!
- Q. When you were talking there earlier about the section being hot, what did you mean by hot....was it....was it warm?
- A. Aye! Christ, it was warm!
- Q. The air was warm, aye?
- A. Aye! Well, see, you ken where Westwood is....well, we were working away the other side of it...and do you ken those crossroads into Stoneyburn,?
- Q. Aye!
- A. Well, we were away at the other side of that! Stoneyburn....and the shaft was a hundred and twenty fathoms...where it was sunk and we went down all the road after that. . .when you got on to the pit bottom, you had to go down all the road!
- Q. So, when you hit the pit bottom, you had to start dropping again?
- A. Aye, you were dropping! You dropped for about what....well, ye ken from Westwood to Stoneyburn Cross.....
- Q. So, you had some depth? When you were working?
- A. Aye, some depth, aye! But yet, it wasn't as bad....all that depth was shallow! We were....you'll mind of the Burngrange...you'll not mind of the Burngrange disaster?
- Q. I don't, no!

A. Well, we took all the shale out from Westwood! I was in the two seams in Westwood!

Q. So, they broke in from Westwood to Burngrange?

A. No, they didn't break in!

Q. No!

A. We were in the same seam!

Q. You were in the same seam?

A. In Westwood!

Q. Oh, you just worked that ().

A. They wouldn't have....with the disaster, that was it finished! But they let us strip it! To so many feet off of Burngrange!

Q. For safety?

A. And then we had to turn back....we had to turn back....they wouldn't let us open it up! You see, they sealed that off, and that was it sealed for good! If anything is sealed up in a pit, it is sealed up for good!

Q. That was.....was that gas.....what caused that accident?

A. Gas!

Q. How do they seal it up anyway? Do they brick it?

A. Aye, brick it! Aye! Brick it! See, that's the way that Seafield Colliery is getting.....

- Q. Aye, that's right!
- A. You see, whenever they draw a brick wall across it, that's it! Oh no, you'll not burst down the brick wall!
- Q. Once it is sealed, that's it for ever? That's it, it's working days are ended!
- A. Man that was.. () from Broxburn, we had a far bigger ton rate than the twelve dook seam up the.....down the big seam, we had a far bigger.....because we had only four feet six of shale!
- Q. That was what you were working in, aye?
- A. Aye! And it was twelve feet down the big seam....and see in this..going up to Burngrange.....well, we only had maps....and there were sometimes you were away up and you were turned back down, see that shale, it was the greatest bit of shale that ever we worked!
- Q. What did you take out in a day, or week or whatever?
- A. We always averaged about twenty hutches.... that gave you good wages!
- Q. What was in hutch, about a ton.....?
- A. Aye, about a ton!
- Q. So, what a shovelling?
- A. Aye! They were great times though!
- Q. How many men worked at Westwood? Can you hazard a guess? In its peak....?
- A. Oh, three or four hundred!
- Q. Was there baths there?

A. No! No!

Q. Not even at the latter end?

A. No! There was never a bath at Westwood! You just had to come home and stand under the sink! Aye! Oh, it was.....christ, I've seen me coming down the pit bottom there, and I've seen me wringing up to the "a...se" and they wouldn't let....there was a place up on the pithead that was all piped and the pipes was red hot...if they had let you up quarter of an hour, you could have dried your clothes on the pipes nae bother!

Q. What pipes were these like? The steam pipes?

A. The steam pipes! They wouldn't let you up!

Q. You were actually wading about in water too at that time?

A. You were working in it!

Q. You were working in it!

A. Aye, and I'll tell you what made it worse, by Christ it was cold! You never felt as cold water in your life when you were going down there in the morning! And you were in with just a on and you couldn't keep yourself dry because your cable for your light...the water was going on to your helmet.....

Q. It was dripping on to it.....dripping on your back?

A. Aye, and you'll ken what like it was!

Q. Did the water run out of the ceiling or what.....?

A. Aye, the roof!

Q. It just poured down on top of you?

A. And then you had all your powder to shove in plastic bags.....!

Q. To keep it dry!

A. And then you got....we got other powder.... you got other explosives that you didn't need to.....you ken, gelatin.....water does not have any effect on gelatin....you just...you'd need to stem a hole...as long as there was water in it, that's it! As long as it was airtight! That's all you'd need with gelatin.....

Q. Did you take your own gelig....gelatin down...?

A. No, there was a magazine at the pit head!

Q. So, there was somebody responsible for bringing it down.....?

A. No...you went and collected it.....!

Q. Collected your own.....?

A. You weren't supposed to mind! That was breaking the Coal Boards rules again!

Q. Again...aye?

A. You.....you were allowed to carry five pounds....but I've seen me carrying fifteen pounds, and you weren't allowed....it was supposed to be down the pit before you went down....but you carried it down with you just the same! The Company broke all the rules too! They should never have let a man with a can of powder on the cage!

Q. Was it normally sent down without a man on the cage?

A. That's right!

Q. That was the rule?

A. The man was waiting on it down ()!

Q. So nobody should carry it on their person?

A. No, no, there was nobody allowed to....it shouldn't have been allowed to be carried....and then they weren't allowed to....there wasn't supposed to be....there was no two brothers allowed on the cage!

Q. For safe.....because.....

END OF TAPE

WH SIDE TWO

Q. Aye, I didn't know about that one!

A. Oh, it goes in the coal yet!

Q. Were there any of your family worked in the shale mines? Any other members of your family.....?

A. My father worked in it!

Q. Where did he work?

A. He worked in....he didn't work in Westwood....he worked in the Dedridge..

Q. Dedridge?

A. And Tarbrax!

Q. Oh, aye! That's far enough away! Did he live in Tarbrax?

A. No, No! They cycled up!

Q. From where?

A. From East Calder!

Q. From East Calder to Tarbrax?

A. Aye, and my father was down the pit when he was thirteen years old!

Q. And did he retire from the pit?

A. No, he worked in Oakbank Works till the finish up!

Q. That's right, it would be '62 they would close! What did you pay for the Union, can you remember?

A. Three pence a week!

Q. Three pence a week? Aha?

A. That was plenty for them too!

Q. They didn't do much for you!

A. No! No, no, they didn't....by god, you had some job getting money out of them!

Q. Was there a lot of Union men was there or.....not so many?

A. There weren't enough!

Q. There wasn't enough?

A. No, them that was there were all . If you were a Union man, well, I'll give you one instance of a Union man...he wouldn't have howked himself out of a Snowdrift And he had....he was making good money!

Q. And what did he do like?

A. He as the head of the Union!

Q. So, he was just a full member of the Union, full time member!

A. Aye! he was on the committee.....he was the man, if we complained about water money...you got three pence extra for water money. When you went with your complaint, he had , I'll not mention his name.... he came and he settled whether you got it or not! Well, this day, was up to there, over the heads, there wasn't enough water!

Q. Oh, I see! And how deep should it be to get water money?

A. () Over the head, I think!

Q. Over the head! It was an unhealthy job that.....

A. Aye!

Q.Working in water like that!

A. Oh, I was in the Royal Infirmary four times with pneumonia!

Q. How could you see your shovel? How could you see to shovel the shale?

A. Oh, you just had to griddle it!

Q. You just had to griddle it with the shovel? When the water was deep....?

A. Of course, you aye had to....when the water gathered.... they always had a flush to punch through and let it away! But some other "bu.....r" was getting it then!

Q. They had a what to push through?

A. They had a hole to push through! On the low side!

Q. Oh, did they! Could you drain it away like?

A. Aye!

Q. It could be drained?

A. I mind when the water broke in! There was Harry Diamond and there was a Pole.....a D.P, what a brute of a man this, you want to have seen his arms, they were like hams!

Q. A big strong man?

A. You want to have seen his photo when he came out of the concentration camp! He showed us it, he was skin and bone! But he went off his head at Westwood! Bob Grant....have you been at Bob Grant down there? He cleans

Q. I don't know whether we have a tape on him or not! We may have!

A. Well, this Harry Diamond, Bob Grant worked with him! He was sent down to see if he could get a couple of boys to give him a hand to put this girder up, and here this big Andrulas came in, and when Bob Grant and Harry Diamond went out, they had the girders up!

Q. They put it up themselves!

A. Aye, by christ, he was some man! Well, he went off his head at the finish up!

Q. And you were....it was quite interesting about the ponies... that was...?

A. Oh, aye there were some good horses down the pit!

Q. How many hutches did they pull at the one time?

A. Four!

Q. Four? That's about four tons, plus the weight of the hutches?

A. Aye, and then they had.....well, there were some of the roads alright but, others they weren't, there was a good brother of mine killed a horse down the pit! He was.....you'll ken what they took you...he was in the Navy during the war, and he applied to get out of the Navy to get in to the pits, and no, but the Scottish Oils wouldn't start it! No chance! His name was in the book in red ink!

Q. Was this because of this thing with the horse?

A. He done a thing he shouldn't have been doing! The best of it was, I was horse breaker at the time, and he shouldn't have been in the stable! He was getting his work done after the men were loused that he should have been doing through the day, and he was loused....he shouldn't have been loused, but his horse should have been in the stable, and I got the phone message to come down, the ruddy horse was lying with its back legs torn off it! And in below that.....if the horse had have got a chance, it would have kicked the tail out and let the hutches go, but its foot went in below the sleepers! You see, they'll not let you....this horse it walked about what..... twenty yards with three legs to get shot!

They wouldn't let you take it up the pit, living! They won't let you take a pit pony up the pit living! You had to get an insurance...they were all stamped on the hoof....

Q. On the hoof?

A. Aye, and there was one....Victor was his name, I bet its hoofs were that length and they wouldn't let it , the vet wouldn't let them shoot it! No, it was and healthy enough, it wasn't fit to work, but he wouldn't let them shoot it!

Q. Did the vets come down the pit periodically to look at.....?

A. Aye!

Q.To have a look at the animals?

A. No, they didn't come bar they were sent for! But see that one, that you've got the photo, I kent that horse was lame for something, and I was telt that if they sent for the vet for it, well, it must have cost them something for big Wull Easton, and this horse, he said, there was nothing wrong with this horse, and you're finished! The vet came down and examined all this horse, and it had broke a wee bone in its leg, and I had to go to the pit head for the gun and shoot it in the stable. They put a wood bogey, that's a bogey with four.....just like four palling stabs on each corner....

Q. On each corner.....?

A. Aye, they took two off, and shot it, and it fell over on to the bogey itself.

Q. How did they normally lower them down, was that a sling or....?

A. Down the pit?

Q. Aye?

A. Put them in the cage!

Q. Put them in the cage aye?

A. See, I took....when you are talking.....see that day that I went to Linlithgow show, I had to wait till after they loused to take the horse up the pit. Aye, and by Christ, I'll tell you big Dick
And we put the horse box on the cage, and put the horse in it, and up the top of the cage, with a rope apiece, and see, to the top and you ought to have heard the squeals of this pony!

Q. Did they raise it faster than these men.....?

A. Aye, right up! By Christ, I said, never again! Never again! Because, see, whenever it got the smell of the grass, oh, they go daft!

Q. They are blind are they?

A. No, they're not blind! They're not blind! We took this one out to Currie, the City Farmers Field, opened the gate and let it in, and by Christ, they are not blind! They're not blind, but whenever they get the smell of the grass! Oh, they go daft! You see, it wasn't like a mine, in Pumpherston the ponies all came up the pit every weekend!

Q. Oh, every weekend, did they?

A. But not in Westwood!

Q. How long did they keep them down there?

A. Well, there wasn't many in Pumpherston....oh, they were down till they were,the first time they were drawn out was when the haulage went from Westwood to the Deans.....

Q. You mean when they went down the pit to begin with, that was them! Until they were.....?

A. Either shot or.....!

Q. Till death!

A. Aye! Oh, there were...there were two pedigreed horses in Westwood! Glennie, Glennie, Glennie Bathgate, trotters, they were two great horses too! The wife will tell you, we were staying in Oakbank and auld Sanny Wilson said to me, "There's something wrong with that horse down there, WH!" His son George, he's a gaffer with Wimpey, he said, he was driving a horse and he said, "There is something wrong with that horse down there Wattle!" Oh, it was going mad! And I went down, and I got a hold of it, and spoke to it, and took the blinders of it, and I said, "Geordie, you'll not put any blinders on that horse for about a month!" And it was a while after that I was going down the road, and old Sanny Wilson was standing, and he said, "WH, see that horse, he never carried on like that in the pit, he was a good horse in the pit!" So old Sanny.....I said, "Sanny, . I jumped the dyke and I took the bit out its mouth, and I said to Hughie, old Hughie, an Irish boy, a ploughman, "It'll walk up and down there, like a cat now!" "By Christ, it'll walk up and down with me!", he said, "I had to take it down one and bring it up!" I said, "You'll have not bother.... with the bit being....you see, they didn't want the bits in their mouth in the pit, bar when you were breaking them!

Q. Your whole career in the shale mines, was at Westwood was it? Did you not work anywhere else?

A. No! You were thirty four years there, that's a long time?
Aye, I was thirty four years down it!

Q. You would serve a wee bit time on the surface though, did you?

A. No!

Q. You went straight down?

A. Straight down! Straight down! And by Christ, you see the bit of teasing you got cleaning windows and all this

Q. All the jokes?

A. Aye! Of course, everybody got it! Aye, there's different days now!

Q. It would be hard work for a young man at that age going down the pit?

A. Aye, well, I was fifteen years old when I went down it!

Q. Aha! We got through that quite well! Would you go back down the pits again? If you had your life over again?

A. Aye! Aye! Christ aye!

Q. Did you quite enjoy it, did you?

A. I'll tell you one.... thing.... there was no arguing, you could have a battle with a boy, an argument, but see anything if you were in any danger in the pit, he was the first boy to be there! There was that....

Q. A lot of camaraderie...?

A. Aye, so I'll give you an instance, old Breaker Preston in Mid Calder, we were in the Black Bull this night, and what an argument, it was just a silly argument, old Breaker said it was his round...his turn to stand a round, and Dan Carey he said that it was his! And they were going to fight over it! Christ, and the beer was only a tanner a pint then! Whisky was sixpence a nip....seven pence a nip, and Christ, down the pit on the Saturday morning, they started again, the same argument, but no..

Q. What morning, the Saturday morning?

A. Saturday morning...and oh they were going to battle! And my Uncle Russell stopped them! And Christ, they went..... they got it stopped right enough and went to their work! Do you ken that Dan Carey wasn't half an hour away, and he was dead! And the driver came running in and said to Breaker, "Dan Carey's buried!" Christ, Breaker, he very near went off his rocker! And we ran down the end, but with the stone, and he was buried that sore....that was all that you could see, his light in below it! And Breaker grabbed the foot, and his boot came away in Breakers hand! And that was Breaker finished, he was away! And Breaker was the only one that was taken into the enquiry, but he never seen bugger all, that was all he done, grabbed his foot! I'll tell you what the Scottish Oils done with that man, him and his brother stayed in Dedridge, do you ken they took that boy home and put him in the house! And not a bugger in it! Aye!

Q. So that was the argument down the pit!

A. Oh aye! Oh, I've seen a lot of arguments and squabbles down the pit, but mind you it was a serious offence!

Q. You could be sacked of course!

A. Oh aye! Oh aye, you were sacked on the spot if you got caught fighting!

Q. Was a Saturday an overtime shift?

A. No, no!

Q. Was that part of the working week?

A. Oh, Christ, that was part of the working week!

Q. Saturday morning, or the whole day?

A. Saturday morning, just! One o'clock you loused on the Saturday!

Q. So how many hours a week was that you worked? Was it forty five, forty six or that, was it?

A. Aye!

Q. In these days?

END OF TAPE

Part of transcript after this, not sure if it has been meant to be recorded.

Transcript

WH

Industrial
Information

I started in the pit when I was fifteen years old. I was working at the pit bottom for two or three years.

Pit Ponies

I was with the pit ponies at the pit bottom, this was where two of us broke them in. You had two, one on each side, learning it. You broke it in to go without the rounds and rails. If you had a good pony you had a good job. Some of them were bad tempered, and there was one there who kidded on it was lame, and there was another one that would take the cork out of your tea flask and drink it.

Drawing

I went from the pit ponies to the drawing. I worked with my uncle, he was the contractor. I had another chap working with me called Jock Haddow, the best man I have ever worked with. We used to fill twenty hutches, but we lowered it to ten after Dad had spoken to me. I was on the drawing for seven years then I got a contract at the pit, where I was earning three pound a day. Then it all changed when all the guisers started to come in. D.P.'s and Managers sons. That was them filling in to get away from the army when the war started. We called them

Beven Boys. When I was contracting, you got the face all the time, and you were howking the shale for them to fill. I've seen this laddie, it was his first day on the face. I was working away, and the drawer was working away as well, when the pony driver came in and, 'You'd better come out.' He said Bob Stewarts been shot.

Firing Shots

You were supposed to fire four shots at a time, and I've seen me putting off sixteen at a time. I had

A Plug

four plugs. This was miners talk for a short hole or plug. It went about twelve inches. You just bored a plug, whatever was needed at the time. You Bored four, we used safety caps, we took these out of the magazine. We took the rest and threw them away. It went in and hit a short. I went to get another one and put it on, and he got them lifted, but they nailed him before he could do anything. You see he was firing the plugs, he should have had a least left that length of strum, because strum takes about twenty seconds to defact.

Lighting

We used a naked flame to light the plug, something you would not be allowed to use today. They would never start a shale

miner down at the face, they took too many risks.

Westwood

We took all the shale out of Westwood. It was in two seams. It was a far bigger ton rate than the twelve dook seam, down the big seam because we had only four feet six of shale, and it was twelve feet down the big seam, and we only had maps, and there was sometimes you were away up and you were turned back down, see that shale, it was the greatest bit of shale I have ever seen and worked with.

Hutches

We always averaged about twenty hutches a day, that was about one ton per hutch.

Working Conditions

You were working in water all the time. You never felt as cold water in your life when you were down there in the morning. You couldn't keep yourself dry because your cable for your light made the water go on to your helmet. The water came from the roof. You had to keep all your powder in a plastic bag to try and keep it dry.

Gelatin

Then you got other powder called gelatin, it only needed to be kept airtight. There was no magazine at the pithead, so you collected your own. You were allowed

to carry five pounds, but I've seen me carrying fifteen pounds, which you weren't-^ supposed to, but you carried it down with you just the same.

Griddle

You just had to griddle the shale when the water was too deep to see what you were doing and when the water gathered they always had a flush to punch through on the low side to let the water away.

Hutches

Here they pulled four hutches at a time, which was about four times plus the weight of the hutches.

Service

I worked thirty four years at Westwood, and I didn't serve any time on the surface, I just went straight down.

Accidents

The first man I saw killed was Tam Haddow. A stone fell from the roof. A fireman got mangled too, the fireman gave you orders see, going down, he telt Geordie Fleming to take the stone down, he walked into the face to bring him out, but the stone came down, when he was going below it. He was mangled like a concertina. It was a stone about twelve tons. The woman's husband that lives next door, he dropped dead.

Gasses

The gasses in the pits were dangerous. I was in one hot place, where we had a laddie cawing hand planks to us.

My Accident	I had only one accident myself, it was an electric machine, and the thing got jammed, and it rowed my arm into the cable, but luckily I had a chap called Greenhorn working with me and he had the presence of mind to run oot and go to the gate box end and switch of the machine. I landed in the Infirmary.
Compensation	You had a pound a week, more than what you had on the insurance, but you had to go to the office for it every time you went along for your compensation, they were wanting you to sign off. You had to go before a compensation doctor, it was a Scottish Oils doctor.
Pay	We were getting the same wages for filling ten hutches as we we did for filling twenty, that was eight shillings a day.
Co-operative	That was when we started a co-operative. This meant the pay split into four, instead of him paying you, you went and lifted your own envelope, you see there was only one envelope, and then you knew what you were getting, and you kent how much he was getting.
Unions	I'll give you one instance of a Union man, he wouldn't have howked himself out of a snowdrift. He was the head of the Union, and if we

complained about water money, he came and settled whether you got it or not. We used to pay three pence a week to the Unions, but you had some job getting money out them. I can never mind of a strike, but mind you, I've seen them sending for men to come and do the laddies jobs, but there jobs were harder than the ones we had. It was very unusual if you went three weeks without getting the sack, because you couldn't speak back.

Domestic Life
Housing

I lived in miners rows in Oakbank, and they were rubbish. There was a stone scullery floor, and the house was very damp. They were owned by Scottish Oils.

Rent

The rent for the house was taken off your wages, if you were employed, it was about four and five pence a week.

Bathing

There was never a bath at Westwood, so you just had to come home and stand in the sink.

Social Life
Shooting

I used to like shooting and that in the summertime, but when I put the gun in the press, when I went back for it, it was green moulded with the damp in the house.

Camaraderie

There was a lot of camaraderie
we used to go to the black Bull
in Mid Calder, where the beer
was only a tanner a pint, and
whiskey was sixpence a nip.
I would go down the pits again
if I had my life over again.