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SHALE OIL STUDY

Interview with Mrs. MB and Mr. B

Place of Interview: Broxburn.

Date of Interview: 12th March, 1985

MB = Mrs. MB (born 1905)

B = Mr. B (born 1903)

SR = Dr. Sara Randall

SR So you've lived all your life in Broxburn?

B All my life, I've never been anywhere else. I married a Newbridge girl - she was born in Ireland.

MB So was I.

SR You were born in Ireland?

MB Yes.

B Her parents came across when she was a baby.

SR What year were you born in?

B 1903.

SR Aha, and you? (Mrs. B)

MB 1905.

SR So when did you come over to Broxburn?

MB When I was a baby - three weeks old.

SR Oh, so you don't remember much about it then!

B The same age as Sarah I think, when she came across.

SR So you've lived in Broxburn all your life apart from the first three weeks?

MB My father came from Ireland too to work with the Young's Paraffin Oil Company in the shale works, and my mother had just lost her baby with meningitis but she was pregnant and

she went home for a holiday and I was born. So she came back

B Where did they live in Ireland?

MB Oh in Guildford, County Down.

SR So you're a Catholic are you?

B No, oh no, we're Orange - are you Catholic?

SR No, it's just that I've been so many stories about the Irish coming over and the Irish being Catholic ...

B Aye, there are an awful lot of Catholics in the Broxburn area, oh terrible! They came across here to work in the oil works a way in the beginning of the century and before at the end of the last century.

SR And that's what happened ... your wife's father did that as well did he?

B Yes, he came across well there was four brothers, there was Tom, William, Samuel and Robert - they all came across. Old Mrs. Simpson, she was buried in Kirkliston graveyard - old Mrs. Simpson, old Sammy's mother - she died here when she was living in Newbridge.

MB And was that Sarah's granny?

B Aye, Sarah's granny - Sammy's mother. She came across here to live from (sounds like 'Killybacky').

SR Where's that?

B That's the other side of Ballymena.

SR But your family itself doesn't have any ...

B No, we have no connection to Ireland.

SR Your father was from Broxburn was he?

B Aye, well they landed in Broxburn. He was born in (sounds like 'Hilderson') that's near Bathgate at Torphichen. You've heard of Torphichen, well he was a mine manager at Hilderson.

SR A coal mine manager?

B Yes, he was born in 1874, my mother was born in 1875.

SR Also in Hilderson?

B No, she was born in (sounds like 'Westbenhar') you've heard of Westbenhar?

SR Yes, I've been making a study of this area you see.

B Aye, it's just a little village.

SR So you worked in the oil works?

B Yes, in the shale mines.

SR From when you left school?

B I started 1917, in August 1917, in a mine just across here - Stewartfield No. 1 was the name of the mine, it was a big shale mining area this, this was the centre of the shale mining area, never mind Bathgate, they give Bathgate the credit of being the centre of the shale but it never was the centre of the shale mining industry, Bathgate. Broxburn was the centre of the shale mining industry - there was Broxburn Oil Co., there was Young's Paraffin Co., and then there were others, oh there were about 20 shale mines round about Broxburn away in the early 20's.

SR And did you work in the shale mines for all your working life?

B No, till 1946 - I was 30 year with the Scottish Oils.

SR And what happened then?

B I was passed fit for light work only with the compensation doctor, I was on compensation at the time and the manager sent me in to visit the compensation doctor in Edinburgh and he passed me fit for light work only. I'd got a shadow on the urinal tract and instead of going to Middleton Hall with my letter, I demanded my release - you were held to the mines, coal miners were the same, you were bound to the mines with the war, so I got my release and I've been at every job since!

SR Like what?

B I've experience with everybody: the gas company, electricians, factories, oh everything, and the road men - finished up with the road men and then I worked for four years down at Bell's the whiskey place down there. I finished up at 70 - I thought I'd worked long enough.

SR Yes, and what was it like working down the shale mines – was it tough?

- B Aye it was tough. It was tougher than the coal mines.
- SR Have you done the coal mines as well?
- B No, I've never been in the coal mines but my father was a coal miner, his father being the manager up at Hilderson
- MB Aye, but you didn't have to work on your knees the same as the colliers did you?
- B No the shale mines was a heavier work, the shale was a heavier work than the coal mines, the coal was a lighter work, more speed attached to it.
- SR But it was dirtier though wasn't it, the coal?
- B No, the shale mines were very dirty too if you landed in the right place. The coal mines certainly were a wee bit dirtier I'll admit that.
- SR And was the pay good down the shale mines?
- B Well when I started to work in 1917 during the 1914 war, the pay wasnae very good - about 30/- a week.
- SR And you went down the mine yourself when you were 14?
- B No, I went with my father.
- MB Were you driving the ponies?
- B No, I never drove the ponies, no. I was at the face all the time, producing shale.
- SR What sort of hours did you work when you started?
- B Well the recognised hours were 8 hours a day and then it came down to 7 hours.
- SR Aha, how many days a week?
- B Six days when I was working.
- SR And how much holiday?
- B Very few - they get too many holidays now. They only work about three quarters of the year, they've one fourth of the year holidays, easy.
- SR But don't you think that's better that people have more time to enjoy themselves?
- B Oh yes, much better.
- SR Do you feel a bit bitter because you didn't have it yourself?

B Aye, I was born too early - 25 years too early. See the redundancy money and everything they get now.

SR And how about you (Mrs. B) what did you do when you left school?

B Well, I was in a shop in Broxburn, a hardware, general - half iron mongery - everything we sold and I was in it from when I left the school till I was married when I was 28, the only job I had.

SR And you stopped it when you got married?

MB Oh yes, I brought up a family of four and then when the youngest one went to school, that would be about the beginning of 1950 I think, I had various part time jobs in shops and the last job I had was in Broxburn here and I worked till I was 70.

SR Like Mr, B?

MB Yes, and well then I never worked after that.

SR Was your husband a shale miner?

MB I think he wasnae very long in it.

B He was in in the 1930's, he worked beside me in Kirkland mine.

SR Where was Kirkland mine?

MB It was a way up at Winchburgh.

B Up the Winchburgh Road, it was an isolated place, it wasnae connected with any village or anything. Faucheldean was the nearest place to Kirkland, and Totley Wells, you've heard of Totley Wells - that was a prisoner of war camp during the last war.

SR Was it, what, did the prisoners work down the mine?

B No no, there was a camp there in Totley Wells at the other side of the mine and there was a gun, there was an anti-aircraft gun there.

SR So what what did your husband do (Mrs. B) the rest of the time when he wasn't down the mine?

MB Well, he was just like Mr. B, he had several jobs. He worked for a long time at that Granton place where they were making a tunnel or something.

B At Granton? Did they make a tunnel at Granton?

MB I don't know, but that was where he was any way.

B Was he no' at Grangemouth a while?

MB Oh that was long after that, that would be after we were married. Then he was away during the war, he was in the foreign air corps, he was 39 when he was called. And then he started in Grangemouth again when he came back. Then he left that and he was working with a contractor at Roseburn, a contractor for Dalkeith - the brewery there at Roseburn.

B Oh aye, Tennents is at Roseburn.

SR But all the time you carried on living here in Broxburn?

MB Oh yes, I never was any place else.

SR And with all the jobs that he had, each of them had sufficient wages? Were they quite well paid jobs or?

MB Well, I was better off when he was away in the army, I had the four children and I had about £4 odd a week, but when he came home and started in Grangemouth and at that time they had their own bus fares to pay and, he came in with £3 odd.

SR And you had him to feed as well?

MB Yes, I had him to feed as well. And then the eldest, a girl, she worked in the Post Office, she was trained for Post Office work, she was there till she was married. And then the second son, when he was 18 he went to do his National Service and he went to the Air Force, he was in for 3 years, he was in India for most of the time. He's a police Sergeant at Dunbar now and then Wilson, he's the next one, when he left the school he went to Leith to train for the Merchant Navy and he was there for 26 years, he just came out about 1970 I think.

SR And he lives here with you now does he?

MB Yes.

B Is he 13 year out of the Navy?

MB (Asks son when he came out of the Navy. He replies 1976) Then the youngest one, she was a telephonist at Bathgate Exchange. So they had good enough wages but when I was working, in all that time I worked, when I finished working

35/- a week I had! And I had I think a shilling or something given me for unemployment.

SR When you were working what sort of hours did you work?

MB Well in the shop before I was married in the full time job it was from 9 o'clock till 7, and it was from 9 till 9 on a Saturday night.

SR It was long hours then?

MB Oh they were long hours. And then at Christmas and the New Year - Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve we were open till about midnight, and I got a shilling.

B The shops were open till 10 o'clock at night and 9 o'clock on a Saturday night.

SR And did you get any holidays in that time?

MB A week.

SR Paid?

MB Aha - paid.

SR Oh so that was better than some of the other jobs. And all that time until you got married, did you live with your parents? And did you give your mother all your wages or did you keep it?

MB No, I gave her them all I think until not very long before I was married. I think by that time I had 30/- and I gave her a pound and I had 10/- for myself. And I kept myself on that - I bought my own clothes. You could nae go and pay cash, you had to take a club in the store.

SR What do you mean by that, you sort of get it on credit and pay a bit each week?

MB Aha, you'd pay so much each week. (A few words inaudible - something to do with a 'shilling a week man' who came round to the houses each week.)

SR And when you worked down the shale mines, were your wages sufficient to live off quite comfortably or was it a struggle?

B No we lived quite comfortably off what we earned, aye.

SR You got married did you?

B Yes, I got married in 1930. I was 53 years married when the wife died - 53 years and three months.

SR And you lived at home with your parents until you got married did you?

B Aye I lived at home with my parents.

SR And did you give them all your wages?

B Yes, up to when I was getting married. I got engaged in 1929 and we got married in 1930 in June - the 27th June, 1930 and I kept my wage, well, I got so much of my wages - I just gave my mother a certain amount.

SR Oh that was so you could save up to buy things?

B Aye, to buy things.

SR And have you got any children?

B No the wife lost all her children. There was one born in 1942 dead, that was the only one we had to bury, she'd seven miss's. She went through an operation for appendicitis when she was younger, it went in to peritonitis, so it affected her womb I think. Her womb could nae expand so she was on special treatment in the Infirmary when the baby was born in 1942, but it died as it was born.

SR Can you tell me a bit about what life was like when you were children, what the houses were like, what sort of house did you live in (Mrs. B)?

MB A room and kitchen.

SR And how many of you were there in there?

MB Nine of us, not including my parents.

SR Nine children?

MB Nine children, we were all girls but one!

SR And what number were you?

MB I was the seventh. My mother said I was a bit of a witch - the seventh daughter!

B She was nae a seventh daughter was she?!

MB No.

MB This is Broxburn, I can remember all this when I was a wee girl because we stayed away along at this end and we had to come this way to go the Sunday School - the Church was up the Station Road, but that's all down now, that's the original old town.

SR Oh so you stayed along towards Grange Road?

MB Yes, not so far along.

SR Near the Smithy?

MB Not so far as that either.

SR I was taken a walk along there by Mr. Shaw.

MB Aye, well there was a road - old Mill Road where the sheltered houses are, well our houses were just before that, on the left hand side.

B They were wee cottages.

SR Did you own it or ... ?

MB Oh no, it was just rented.

SR And if it was just a room and kitchen, where did you all sleep?

MB Well I think the English folk talked about the Scots houses with the hole in the wall, and they were set in beds and we had the big bed and the wee bed and one bed in the room and we just

B Just all huddled together.

SR So your parents went in the wee bed and then there were four of you each in the others.

MB No my brother did nae go in the wee bed, he slept in the room bed and we slept with him. He was just a laddie you know, it's just like nowadays if you're in for a new house and they're no' adult till they're ten year old and then by that time the elder girls, they were going away to domestic service so we were nae too cramped.

SR It still must have been quite crowded?

MB Well, it didnae feel it. You didnae realise you were crowded.

SR I mean how did you manage at meal times, presumably you didn't have enough chairs for everybody to sit down?

MB Aye, we managed.

SR What did you do - have different sittings?

B We came from the school at 4 o'clock and my father and my brother had been in from the mines and had theirs and we got ours when we came in from the school at four o'clock.

B Three o'clock - the miners were home at 3 o'clock.

SR Oh, so your brother went down the mines too, was he older than you?

MB Aye he's dead now, he was just 59 when he died years and years ago. He had emphysema, I don't think he contracted that during the mines, he worked a good long time - he was in the mines during the First World War for my father went away so that he would nae be taken, with him being the only boy, he sacrificed to let him stay at home.

SR And your father went away and fought.

MB Yes.

B Was that in the 1914 war?

MB 1914 - 16 aye.

SR But he came back OK?

MB Oh yes, and then my brother went away to Canada - he was there for a few years in Canada and then he came back and he got a Job in the rubber works and then he was working till all hours making munitions and I think that was where he contracted it really, it was something there.

B Aye, fumes off the rubber.

SR When he went to Canada - was that when there were a whole load of people from Broxburn went away?

B Aye that was in the 20's, the oil works closed in 1926, there were oil works up there and there were oil works across here, the retorts were across here where they refined the shale into oil - they were across there, that big bing there, that was the last bing that was working.

SR Aha, and they all closed?

B They all closed in 1926.

SR And did a lot of people go to Canada.....

- B Yes, well a lot of people went away to the East and quite a few went away to Fife to the coal mines. There were quite a few left Broxburn to go away East to Newton Grange and Dalkeith and these places.
- SR And did they all come back gradually or did most of them stay away?
- MB No they never came back because there was no work. They never opened the mines again. That was the General Strike.
- B The mines closed in the early 1960's.
- MB Just the same as the coal miners are doing now, they did it the shale miners.
- B 61 or 62 the last of the mines closed here.
- SR So when did your brother go to Canada?
- MB Oh well, it must have been after that.
- SR It must have been very upsetting for your mother if she only had the one.
- MB Oh well, he was a good age then, he was past that, they had had to look after themselves.
- B I'll tell you a wee story about a family living in a 'but and ben' as they called them.
- MB As you came in the door and you went one road for the room and one road for the kitchen - that was a but and ben.
- B Aye, but this chap had 5 sons and the Simpsons had about 7 or 8 sons and they had 13 in their family the Simpsons, and the Ferguson's had 7 in their family. Well, they all played together in the house and that, so old Mrs. Simpson was away somewhere, maybe it was the pictures, so old Simpson had put them all to bed and he'd a job getting this laddie into bed so Mrs. Ferguson came across: "Did you see our John?" "I'm here mother, Mr. Simpson would nae let me out!". That was John Ferguson, he died last year, he was nearly the same age as me.
- SR So even the parents didn't know which children belonged to them!

(More photo's brought out here. Mrs. B points out Post Office etc. etc. - comments not transcribed.)

SR Did you live up in these Rows?

B Aye I went across from here when I was only an infant to Greendykes, Greendykes Road was the name of the place.

SR In one of these miners' rows? And what sort of house was that?

B A but and a ben to.

SR And how many of you were there?

B There were only two - a brother and a sister.

MB Were they but and a ben too?

B Aye, well you went in the door and there was a porch, these porches were built in 1908 - I was five year old at the time when I used to run about the brick layers building the porches, that was inside water and toilets for the houses. We were without toilets or water before that, you'd to carry your water from outside, there was what we called the well outside and you carried the water into the house and then you went outside to the toilets.

SR And were they dry toilets?

B Dry toilets.

MB We used to call them the "shonkeys", we used to say "I had a little monkey and I kept in the shonkey and I fed it on ginger bread"!

SR Did they smell?

B Oh smell!? That's the reason there was as much disease about.

SR And was there a lot of disease about?

B Oh there was a lot of disease aye.

MB There was a lot of TB.

B It was the same everywhere, England would be the same as Scotland.

SR Yes, but I mean I'm just interested in this area and what it was like here.

B Oh there was certainly a lot of disease.

SR And do you remember school mates of yours dying?

B Oh nearly all my school mates are dead.

SR No no, but when you were children, when you were actually at school - did children die in those days?

B Oh yes, there were quite a few died with appendicitis, appendicitis was a common trouble for school children to die with. They hadn't the know how about the appendicitis then and they died. Wally Keith died with appendicitis, Sandy Morrison died with appendicitis, they was two school mates of mine.

SR And you say there was a lot of TB?

B Aye TB was very prevalent here.

MB I can remember after I went to school, I just took one of these children's troubles you know, measles and what not, one thing after the other and it was the Coronation, 1910, and it was like a Gala day and I'll always remember a man coming to the door and giving my mother a bag and a new penny for me, I'll always remember that because I could nae get it. And then after that, I think I was about 7 or 8.....or 6 or 7, round about that anyway, and I took diptheria and that was a scourge too, and I can remember my mother was shut in the room with me and there was a blanket hung on the inside of the door, nobody got near me. However, I rallied, I can remember.

SR You weren't taken to hospital then?

MB No, I still have the wee mark just between my shoulders where I got the injection. It was old Dr. Kelso.

SR Oh, I've heard of him - he was the people's doctor?

MB He was the people's doctor aye, Dr. Scott was the Scottish Oils doctor.

B Aye, the compensation doctor, what you called the compensation doctor. I remember taking pleurisy when I was away on my holidays in (place name ?) and you know how they took the bad blood off? Leaches - leaches on my back, and they showed me the leaches in a big jelly jar, swelled up with my blood. That was the cure then, that would be 1912,

I'd be about 8 or 9 years old at the time, that was the cure then for pleurisy, leaches on your back to suck the bad blood out of you.

MB Aye, I mind hearing about them.

B Well I had them. I had the fever twice - scarlet fever. I had it when I was four year old, and my sister took it just after me, we were in the hospital just down there, down opposite the Golden Wonder factory, do you know where it is? Well that was a hospital at one time and I was taken there, well I took the fever again when I was working in the mines, I'd be 18 at the time. This woman told my mother "oh nobody ever takes the fever twice and lives" - that was a fine thing to tell my mother! Well Miss Laurie told me it was scarletina I had but my skin all peeled off my body, so it was scarlet fever I had.

MB Aye, a mild form.

B A mild form, I was kept in the house, there was nobody allowed into the house. I got it off o' Lottie Corstorphine - Lottie came out of the hospital with her mother and the first place she came was into my mother's house and I was working the mines when I came in from the mines I sat down on the same chair as Lottie was sitting on and that's how I got the fever. I must have, it's the only reason I would have got it.

SR So when you had diptheria, and your mum was shut in the room with you all the rest of the family had to sleep in one room did they?

MB Aye, they must have, because there was nobody allowed through that door. I can remember an older sister that was at home, when she prepared a meal for my mother for I could nae get anything to eat, I think it was just drinks, potash or something like that, and I can remember my mother opening the door and taking the tray and shutting the door quick again, you know?

B Aye, well I remember the inspector came. You know there was an inspector when you took fever or diptheria, the inspector

came, and he warned my mother "don't let anybody in the house, just keep him at home", and then when I got better and went outside "I thought you had the fever" - I was like a pudding bowl I was that fat, I was eating all the best of the meat and things. Dr. Scott was away on his holidays at the time and when he came back he said "I suppose you'll have been starving him", "Oh" my mother said "he's been eating twice what he usually gets". Oh he went daft about it. It was a nigger that was a doctor and he never warned my mother not to feed me - you starve a fever you see, feed a cold and starve a fever, well I was eating twice what I usually ate, it did nae do me any harm.

MB You must be eating twice as much now, you're putting on the weight again.

(More photographs. Mrs. B shows a photo of the well.)

SR Did your house have water?

MB Aye we had water, we did nae have to carry water in where we were. Maybe they did before I was an age to remember.

B Aye, there was a well along near Mrs. Brown I think.

MB No. This is it here, well there should be a photo I think. There's an old lady just at the brae there, well that was my great Aunt, we called her Granny Faulks and she had a model lodging house there, you know, just at the side there.

B That's a two storey building where the pub was in. Alexanders.

MB Aye, Hassons had it and up above was a dance hall, oh it was super.

B Aye the Orange Walk had it for a while.

MB No they had the wee house. The Church bought that for they needed a Church Hall and it was going to be cheaper to buy that than to build one up beside the Church, so they had that.

B It's comical when you look at the houses now, you would nae recognise it. This is the Baker's Brae, we called it the baker's brae.

SR And was there a baker's up there?

B Oh aye.

SR So did your house have a toilet as well, when you were a child?

MB They were all dry in these times. And then the people that took over the building, they put flush toilets and they built them round at the back.

SR When was that?

B About 1910, they were getting modernised in 1910.

MB Oh it would be later than that Willy.

B I don't think so, they were building the toilets in Greendykes - I would be five year old when they were building and that would be 1908.

MB Oh no, I was big lassie, I would be about 10 or 12.

B In the town - aye maybe that, but the working men's houses were all getting their houses toilets than that.

MB Well, these were nae working men's houses.

B No they were private.

SR But even though you had water in the house, that was just cold water was it?

MB Just cold water aye.

SR You didn't have a bath or anything, just one one tap.

MB Just one tap, aha.

SR So what did you do about baths?

MB We never had a bath.

B You'd a bath in a tin by the fire.

MB Aye, on a Saturday in front of the fire we got ourselves washed and bathed and into bed.

SR And that was it, just once a week?

MB Aye on a Saturday night, when my father was out at the pub.

SR And did you all share the same water?

MB Oh no, no. We were nae that dirty.

SR Well it was just the way you said we never had a bath!

MB Well I meant we didnae have the bath like we have now, although when we left the old town we moved up to Park Road, it's a road of the Station Road, just alongside the Church - the first house on the left hand side and even for all these were more modern houses, they had no bath in it and no hot water, just an ordinary sink like what we left but it was a better locality.

B It's just the last 40 years since they've built all the houses here. Those houses are up 19 years, they'll be 20 years up this November. We went into that house down there in 1965, November 1965, and that's 20 years come November.

SR Aha, and where were you living before that?

B Down in a two apartment down in Church Street. There were a woman got offered the house and she didn't want it and she asked if I'd change, so I was nae going to change till I came up and saw the house and "Oh" says I "I'll change right enough".

SR What was the house like in Church Street then?

B Oh it was a two apartment. Oh we'd water and everything in that. That was built in 1956, we were about 9 years in that house. It was built in 1956 before all the other houses were all built.

MB I think these were the first two apartment houses that were built.

B Aye, they called them pensioners houses just one bedroom and a bathroom. We had nae a bath though - just a toilet.

MB There's a bath now.

B Oh aye - a bath and toilet in the same room, that's right. That was 1956 and then these other ones were built the year after down there - Stuartfield Road and Stuartfield Cres, they were built the year after.

SR And it was mainly Broxburn people that moved up into these, Broxburn people from the older houses?

MB Aye, but these houses that we've been talking about (two words inaudible) because that was a new scheme,

they built lovely houses down there. In fact Harrison was the builder and they got very well recommended.

B Oh aye, Harrison's had a concrete factory down on the industrial estate there, it's still there yet. Harrison, it was him who built all the roads on the industrial estate. I worked with them a while. I was a nipper with them before I went to Bell's.

SR When were all the rows in Greendykes knocked down then - about?

B Within 20 years I think.

MB Oh no' as far back as that Willie.

B No within 20 years, do ye ken - less than 20 years. These houses were built before them,

MB Aye that's right because they shifted them out of there across here.

B Aye about 1966 or 68 I think - I'm no' certain though,

SR Yes, it's just to have an idea of when the good houses came in and the bad housing went out.

B And then they took the bridge away over the canal at the top of Greendykes, you would nae be here when the bridge was there. No there was a hump back bridge, you know how the canal bridge is, well they've levelled all that off now.

MB I've never seen that. I've never been up that way for years and I used to stay out near it, and of course the bridge as you talk of - the Refinery Bridge they called it, and then the road that ran alongside the canal - the candle works was there, they used to make candles. I remember when I was in the Ironmongers shop, oh round about Christmas, oh we sold dozens in big long boxes like what they would put in a church, you know, the Catholics were buying them.

B Oh it was a big candle works, oh there were lots of men worked in it.

SR And women, did women not work in it?

B The box works was just next to it, they made the boxes to pack the candles in to send abroad, Price owned it latterly - Broxburn Oil Co. owned it and then Price bought it - the

candlemakers. Then they shut it all down and then there was an engineering firm from Edinburgh came, do you remember that engineering works that was in the candle works?

MB No, it's a good job he came because I could nae have told you half of that!

SR Oh, I'm sure you can tell me other things. Tell me. When you were children, I mean your father was working in the oil works and there were nine children at home, did you have enough money to have any luxuries or anything, or were you just really poor and just had enough to keep you going each week?

MB Aye well, just about.

B You got a penny a week, a penny pocket money.

MB Aye, you'd get a penny to go to the pictures and a ha'penny to buy chips when we came out.

B You used to go to the picture house for two pence, two of the old pence too, that's only less than one pence now, they compared the old pence with the new pence, now there were 240 pennies in a pound and there are only 100 now. A penny now at that value is 2.4.

SR So was there a lot of poverty then, were there some families that were really hard up?

B Oh yes. There used to be plenty tramps knocking about, you never see tramps now.

SR But I mean people who weren't tramps but families who ...

MB Oh yes, there were there's a place beside the public house there, they called it Jeffrey's Close and I think that's where all the very poor folk lived.

SR Well how did they manage, was there any sort of ...

MB The Parish, they used to talk about the 'Parish'.

B And you know what you got for a pension then? A woman and a man - 10/- a week, that was the pension.

SR But was that enough to live on?

B Well it was hardly enough to live on.

MB Well, it seems as we talk now that it wasn't enough to live on, but things were really very cheap.

- B Aye, very cheap, you got a dozen boxes of matches for a penny.
- MB Aye and then tea and everything was like that, and milk a penny or tuppence a pint, and tatties and butter, and it was butter there was no margarine then, we had butter right enough.
- SR But did you have several sets of clothes or just ...?
- MB Well you had your Sunday clothes. I had three sisters below me and we were well dressed then because the older ones were all away in service and what not.
- SR But you didn't go away, were you the only one that didn't go away?
- MB No, aye, I was the lady of the family!
- SR Why was that, was that because you got a job or because you just didn't want to go away?
- MB No, well I would have gone if there had been nothing else and
- SR And the shop job is better or was, better than going away to service was it?
- MB Oh definitely, they were worked hard and for about 30/- a month - maybe less than that. Oh I can remember that. I had two sisters in service and one worked on a dairy farm at Newbridge - Hamiltons.
- B Oh aye, Hamiltons, Sarah was a maid in that house.
- MB Aye, but it was nae Hamiltons at the time, I forget ...
- B Aye, it was Hamiltons.
- MB Oh it would be their place but they rented it to Blain. Veil my sister was there, and then my other sister, she went away to Canada and got married there, she went out to the man that she married, he was a Broxburn man too.
- SR But all your other sisters after they'd finished in service, did they come back to Broxburn?
- MB No. the second one, she married a railway man from Newbridge, Ratho Station, and she stayed down that way. He was a guard on a goods train and then my next sister, she was in service and she went away to America, she married out there, the man

she married belonged to Dundee, but she stayed. They're all dead actually. The next one, she worked for a gentleman farmer, she worked in the house at Blairgowry, and then my brother as I said, he was in the mines, he was the only one and I was in the shop and then my sister next to me, she did nae work at all, she looked after the house because my mother was nae able.

SR Was this when your mother was old or did your mother get ill when she was quite young?

MB No, when she was older aye.

Side one of tape ends here.

MB And then my sister again below that one that kept the house, she was in Auchterader in service with that older sister and then she came home, she took a gland and the doctor up there lanced it and she had to come home and old Dr. Kelso was awfully angry because it has been a TB gland, and she could have got treatment, so she had the scar down her neck. So after she rallied from that she was in service in Edinburgh, she got married and stayed in Edinburgh, she still stays up at Gilmour Place, I think it is. Her husband died and then the next one again, during the war she married a soldier that was stationed up at Kirknewton no, no' Kirknewton, up round about Westerton Willy - there was some of them up there wasn't there?

B Oh that was up Newbridge - the top side of Newbridge, Bonnington. Aye Bonnington, it's a way up past Newbridge.

MB Aye, her and her chum met these two and they chummed up with them and my sister, she got married to the one she chummed with so when the war finished she went down to Pilaur.

SR Where's that?

MB It's outside Gateshead, she's still there.

SR So, you were quite scattered?

MB We were, mmm.

SR So you are the only one that has really stayed in Broxburn?

- MB In Broxburn - aye.
- B You're not the last of the Jones's are you?
- MB No, there's that sister that's in Edinburgh.
- SR And how about you (Mr. B), there was just you and your sister?
- B Just me and my sister. My sister was a tailoress by trade, she went to a tailor's shop in Broxburn - Stephens' - she did nae serve her full time. She went in to Edinburgh and went in to service, she worked for Lord Murray at the High Church in Edinburgh - she was with him, a tailoress with him. Well, you ken, knocking about there were 6 or 7 maids in the house. (A couple of sentences about Mr. B's friends, most of whom are now dead. Not transcribed.)
- SR Why was your family so small, was your mother ill or something?
- B She lost her first three at Stuartfield here, she had five in her family and she lost her first three.
- SR When they were very young or ...?
- B Oh when they were infants, I was the lucky one, I was the fourth one. I must have been lucky.
- SR But you don't remember any of the others, they were all dead before you were born?
- B Oh no, they were just infants when they died.
- SR Aha, and then there was you, and your sister was ...
- B And then Nellie's two years younger than me, she'll be 80 in June, 12th or the 24th June. So, she lost her man about 10 years ago - Billy - he was a Post Office worker in Edinburgh. She's two daughters, two identical twins, one lives in Crossgates in Fife and the other one lives at Curry, he's one of the head men in the Post Office, the telecom at Edinburgh - Frank, Frank Skelly and the other one's Gordon Horsecroft. (Mr. B. talks about his nieces' families - not transcribed.)
- SR When the oil works were going round here, was it very dirty, did they give off a lot of smoke and ...
- B Aye, there were fumes came off the big chimney, there was a big chimney, it was 500 feet high, over there. And the fumes

that came off were off the (1 word unclear - sounds like 'veetle') work. There were what you called the veetle work and there were terrible fumes, it turned the (1 word unclear - sounds like 'brashes'), it discoloured the brashes do you remember?

SR Really? Even in the house, it came in to the house?

B Oh aye, it depended if the windows were open of course.

SR Which were the houses that were most affected by that?

MB The Greendykes Road ones.

B Aye the old houses, the works was all closed and the chimney was knocked down about 1928. There were a lot of chimneys, there was a big oil works, there were 600 men worked in the breaker yard, what they called the breaker yard where the retorts were, and there were four mines there, there was Stuartfield No. 1, Stuartfield No. 2, the Hut Mine, the Dunnet Mine ...

SR And were they all operating since you remember?

B Yes, I worked in the Dunnet mine in 1923, the mine I worked in closed in 1923 - Stuartfield No. 1 just across the road there a wee bit, and it closed in 1923 and I went from there to the Dunnet, till they'd a place ready for us in Newliston mines - that was down through the arches just on the right hand side. Newliston Mine was there. Well I worked in there from 1924 to 1936 - my father finished the mines then and I was working in Kirkland, I went to Kirkland. We went up to the Camps to sink new mines at the Camps, the Roman Camps, we sunk new mines there, I was 6 weeks up there till they got a place ready for us in Kirkland. And then, when Kirkland closed I was sent to 55 Pit, that was a pit, the only pit in the shale industry: it went straight down, 600 feet down it was, so I worked there till I finished up in 1946. I was 30 years with the Scottish Oils and I never got a pension. It was my own fault, when I got the letter from the compensation doctor saying I was fit for light work only, I should have went to Middleton Hall with the letter and seen the manager, I cannae remember his name, he had a son, an oil works

manager an' all - Caldwell, old Willy Caldwell and Bryson were both born in the same village as my mother and they were friendly. Mr. Scott's wife was a Bryson, Dr. Scott's wife, and she was a school chum of my mother's at school.

SR When you worked down the mines, what were the conditions like, was it very damp and wet or ...

B No it wasn't damp, well the only damp place I ever worked was in Newliston, we got wet. We used to have to wear a waterproof coat, the water would drop down on top of you.

SR And did they used to provide baths for you when you came out?

B No, no. That was unheard of.

SR So when you came home did you have to wash every time in the tub in front of the fire?

B Oh you washed every night, aye.

SR So the men washed, it was just the children who only washed once a week?

B Aye, you took your clothes off and you washed all your body and your head and everything, when you'd worked in the mines you were that dirty. And then another wet mine I worked in was Kirkland. Kirkland was near the surface, and even on the surface you got the rainwater down - if you were working near the surface, and Kirkland was very near the surface.

SR And did you have to wash your clothes every day as well?

B Oh no, you did nae wash your clothes, no you washed them once a week or something.

SR In the old days when you were children, what was life like for women, for your mothers?

MB No, well they were at home bringing up their family, but they were contented and they knitted all the men's underwear and that you know, the long Johns and the simmets and all the rest of it, socks. They never, at least I never heard my mother complaining.

B My wife was a knitter, one of the articles she knitted, she won all the prizes at the rural. She won a prize at the Royal Highland Show.

SR But what about washing, did they not have to haul around great sort of pans of hot water and so on for the washing?

MB There was wash houses outside, and we all of us had gardens you know and at the foot of the gardens would be the wash house and it would take two at a time you know, there were two sides and...

SR Did it have a boiler?

MB Yes, two boilers.

B You'd a garden down the old town but there were none up at Greendykes.

SR So what was it like for your mother?

B The workin' men's houses had no gardens, but the private houses...

SR Did the Greendykes houses have wash houses?

B Yes, they had wash houses too, yes, and coal cellars.

MB And then there were so many - you had a different day each week and you had Monday and then the following week you had Tuesday and so on up till Friday and then it was empty on Saturday and I suppose whoever wanted to go in could have it.

SR And did you have to help your mother much in the house?

MB Never, I told you - I was the lady!

SR But when you were a child, before you became the lady?

B Lady Jones!

MB No, I never did.

B The neighbours all called my mother "Lady B" because she was always well dressed.

SR Aha? How did she manage that, did she have more money than the others - did she work or something?

B No, she never ever worked. Sarah my wife never ever worked - she never ever worked in her life! The only time she ever worked was before we were married. She worked down at the Highland Show there, when the Highland Show came she got a job down there, well it was a chum of hers - Meggy - with Crawford the bakery, she worked in there during the three times I think she did it, that's the only time my wife ever worked. She got an excuse letter from Dr. Scott, no Dr.

Thomson, we'd only Dr. Scott for the first baby she lost and she did nae like Scott so we changed to Thomson and we still have Dr. Thomson yet, well young Dr. Thomson's away but we're still in the same place yet.

SR Well why didn't you like Dr. Scott?

B She just didnae like him.

MB He got the name of being a kind of butcher you know, he was awfully quick at lancing anything, doing these sort of things in his own consulting room.

B Old Dr. Kelso said that this was the healthiest spot in Broxburn - Stuartfield.

SR Why?

B It stood up high.

SR I would have thought it just meant you got more smoke from the chimneys because you were closer to the chimney.

B There was a big shale bing there, that was before you came here, a big shale bing there, they've made public parks out of it now, took 'em all away for refuse for roads and things like that.

SR Can you tell me what it was like here during the strikes in 1921 and 1926?

B Well 1921 was the best year we ever had, we never had a year like 1921.

MB The weather.

B As regards the weather like. The sun shone for months and months, and the next year, 1922, they wrote a song "It ain't gonna rain no more, how the heck can I wash my neck if it ain't gonna rain no more", it was that wet. They never took in the harvest - everything was flooded in 1922, we never saw rain in 1921.

SR But what happened, was there a lot of families had to move away in 1921 because of the strike because they couldn't ...

B Aye that's true, there were quite a few families. That's when Broxburn got desolated in 1921 - they all went away to Fife and Newton Grange to the coal pits, aye.

SR And they never came back?

B No they never came back.

SR And the people who stayed here - were there soup kitchens set up or anything like that?

B Aye during 1921 they had soup kitchens. We were hard up in Stuartfield No. 1 there, I was 19 weeks idle. The Dunnet Mine just across the road was 14 month idle, the Roman Camps was 14 month idle. We got the coal, we could nae get the coal for the retorts and the shale was taken away to some place where they could retort it. We were only 19 weeks idle in Stuartfield. We went idle on the 4th May and it snowed on the 4th May, the morning that we were lifting our graith - we called it graith - the tools that you worked with. It snowed the morning and it turned to rain and it rained all day when we signed on the dole and ...

SR But you signed on the dole when you were on strike?

B No, we were nae on strike in 1921, we were locked out, we were locked out. The colliers came out on strike, we had a (sankey?) bonus that was included in our pay during the 1914 war, and they took the sankey bonus off in 1921 and that's what brought the coal miners out on strike - they lost the sankey bonus. When you went out to your work, whenever you hung your check up, your sankey bonus ... if you came home again, you got 8/- a day sankey bonus, that was 1921, and they took it off and the men all came out on strike. We were locked out, they could nae get coal for the retorts, that's the reason. The only places that was workin' was Winchburgh, Philpstoun and Pumpherston.

SR And so you all went down and claimed your dole?

B Aye, we got the dole right away. I was only 17 at the time, I did nae become 18 till the 30th July and that was the 4th May when we were knocked idle.

SR Aha. And to get your dole, did you have to just go and sign on once a week?

B Once a week then, that's all you did then, that was 1921. We were a special case of course, we were locked out.

MB And then the other ones, what about that when they went ...

B Three weeks on and one week off?

MB Aye.

SR Did you do that?

B Well, we were put on three weeks working and one week off and we would get 12½ % rise in our wages to counteract the week that we lost - that was 37½%, and then we were working the other three weeks, it was like a week's holidays we had. Well that started in 1931 and it continued till 1940 till the war broke out and then they abandoned it, we were put on full time.

SR Was there a lot of hardship when there was three weeks on and one week off, or was it quite nice because you had a week's holiday?

B No we were quite happy, aye.

SR Was your husband in the mines at that time?

MB No.

SR So he didn't get it. I bet you wished he was in the mines then.

B Oh we had good times then down in Newliston, I enjoyed myself in Newliston, the best mine I ever worked in. That one down through the arches.

SR And when a young couple got married, was it difficult to get housing, did people have to postpone their marriage?

MB Oh no, no.

B I got the chance of three houses.

SR So it was quite easy to get housing?

B Och aye, you got a roof without any bother.

SR And were there a lot of people - young men - who came here from other areas who had to get lodgings?

B Ireland, they came in their thousands from Ireland, that's the reason there's so many Irishmen in Broxburn: they all came across to work in the oil works.

SR But were they still coming across when you were ...?

MB No, the only time you say the Irish coming across in droves was when the Irish potato pickers came and they just slept in bothies on the farms.

SR Did they?

MB Aye.

B Bothies, what are bothies ... bothies, they were houses like, but they slept together, but they were nae wooden bothies they were houses, brick built houses, well, a shed like, but built with brick and that. Aye, oh the Irish were well looked after digging the tatties as we called them.

MB I used to hate it when I saw them coming into the shop on a Saturday night, they were trying to beat you down you know, with the prices, and they wasted as much of your time, could nae make up their mind what they wanted and.....

SR Was this men or men and women?

MB Men and women.

B That was the Irish from Eire, no' the Northern Ireland. There are a lot of Northern Ireland people here, the Orangemen, what we call the Orangemen, they're Northern Ireland.

SR But there weren't a lot of young men coming from Glasgow or anywhere else like that?

B Oh no, Livingston's full of Glasgow people. Livingston is populated with Glasgow people.

SR Is it?

MB Aye, they are the overspill of Glasgow, and as many of them have gone back to Glasgow because they don't like Livingston.

SR What do people here think of Livingston - of the new town?

MB Well we go up, or at least I do, go up to the shops - the big shopping centre and going round in the bus to it, the houses look very nice but it's a bit wild you know, they've an awful lot of thieving and what not,

B Aye, it's spacious, it's awfully spacious, it's not like a town at all.

MB But it's prosperous right enough because there's been a lot of new factories opened and that, they open with a flourish and then gradually die off.

SR So it hasn't actually created many jobs here for the people here?

B Oh there's a lot of factories down there and they're all ... the workers in them all come from outside the district, there's nothing but buses and vans and cars that comes in - they're polluted with them. There's Parsons Peebles (?) there with a few hundred in it, there's Halls - they've about 700 working in Halls, and then there's Bell's with a big crowd in it, oh there's a lot of factories down there, there's quite a lot of people work in it.

SR When the shale industry closed down in 1962, where did most of the people who were working in it go and work then?

B They got work in the BLM - the British Leyland Motors in Bathgate.

SR And were there buses laid on to take people from Broxburn?

B No, no, you had to find your own way there.

MB 1962?

B Aye, the mines closed about 1961 or 62.

SR That was when the last ones closed was it?

B Aye - 35 and White Quarries and that, they all closed in 62. Aye it's 23 year ago since they closed.

SR And earlier on when they closed in 1926 and in the 30's did people just move away then and go to the coal mines?

B Aye, quite a few of them went away.

SR Did a lot go to America?

MB I think they went every where, like what they've been doing just now going to Canada, America, Australia and New Zealand.

B There was a couple who went away to Australia just last year, Ryers (?) son and his wife, they went to Perth. He is a male nurse, he got married to a girl from Helensburgh, he met her in Bangour. So they went out to Australia, he has two uncles in Australia, they're in Sidney though, the opposite side of Australia, Perth's in the Western side of Australia - 2500 mile away separates them.

SR So what has happened is that all the people in Broxburn have left and all the people from Glasgow have come in so there's not many people left here.

MB Not from Glasgow - a lot of them are from Edinburgh and round about and through this Lothian Housing Scheme business, the two ... the West Lothian and the Edinburgh Lothian, they have arrangements: if they can nae satisfy the folk that want their houses, they're gettin' houses out here, but they would nae give us a house in Edinburgh if we applied for it.

B There's a couple across there, they come from Galashiels

SR Has this been going on for a long time or is this quite recent?

MB Just recent.

SR In the last 3 or 4 years?

MB Aye. Mr. B talks about various people who have come from different parts of Scotland to live in Broxburn, Not relevant material and not transcribed.

SR Do you think things are better here now than they were when say you were children and young adults?

MB Well the young ones are, for they have swimming pool and they have got everything they want and they can go away from the Academy and that, I have a granddaughter - she's going to Germany for a fortnight in the summertime and then they've been all over, Switzerland. I've another granddaughter, she's a teacher in Blackridge and she was in the Guides and she and another girl joined up with the Scouts and they camped out in Switzerland last year, they've been all around.

SR But do you reckon that living conditions and community life is better now than what it was.

B Oh a hundred times better.

MB Oh definitely, even for the older folk because I can mind our mothers and that - they were tied, then when their families grew up they were too old and there was nothing for them and they just sat in the house and they knitted and then of course maybe the Church Guild or the Women's Guild and that

was about the only thing ... or the Cooperative Women's Guild, and the Rural - well our mothers did nae but our wives did and young ones, but that was before their time, but oh no, we have everything now - we have our television and

B Oh life is a hundred times better, I don't know how they did long ago - they'd no television, no radio, nothing.

SR But did you not have good times going out, when you were young adults?

B You made your own pleasures then.

MB Oh I loved dancing.

SR And was that not better?

B You had to make your own pleasure.

SR Don't you think you got more out of that though?

B Ah well I don't know. You've more money now, that's what is wrong with the world today: they have too much money. I wonder where all the money went before all this sudden wealth came on the country, in fact on the world - a sudden wealth has come on them. The men used to be lucky if they earned £3 a week before the war and up to the end of the war there were brick layers working for 2s. 9d. an hour and in 1948 and 49 - that was after war - 2s. 9d. an hour.

SR Yes but things were cheaper then though.

B They were cheaper but then where did all the wealth all come from? You don't know. There were too many multi - millionaires in Britain, that's what's been wrong.

MB Aye but there's better wages now and even though things are dearer, well if you're careful you can manage alright, and the pensioners - I know, I've heard them, they're always moaning about the old age pensions and they have nae this and they have nae the next thing.

B That goes on the Bingo and the drinks and the gambling.

MB My daughter told me - my married daughter, she was in some sort of house party and somebody brought up this about the poor old age pensioners - their mother did nae get this and she did nae get the next thing, "Veil" she says "I don't know, I've heard my mother saying she never was as well off

in her life". And neither I was because I mean bringing up four on a wee bit, you could nae save, and I worked myself until I was 70 but that gave you a bit of (1 word?) you know, but you could nae save.

SR Everything went by the end of the week?

MB Everything went, aye.

SR And it went mainly on food and rent and clothes?

MB Well when we lived in these company's houses - these Rows houses as we've been talking about, the rent was only a few shillings a week.

B 4s. a week.

MB It went up, it was cheaper than that at one time Willy.

B Aye, 3s. 6d. - that included your rates, you'd no rates to pay. I got married in June and I'd a full year's rates to pay in January. The rent was 10/- - it came to about £21 or £22 a year like for the rent no, the rent was £26 a year: 10/- a week, I think that was including the rates though.

MB Was that in the company houses?

B No no, Melbourne Road.

MB Oh no, you would have rates over and above that.

B Ah, no I had the rates to pay in January, a full year's rates.

SR How did you pay all the rates if you just had a small salary, did you pay it in installments?

B No no, I never paid it in installments or anything like that, I paid it in a lump sum.

MB You paid it yearly in May.

SR But if you couldn't save, was it not very difficult?

MB You had to save to pay your rates, you had to scrimp yourself of something.

SR And do you reckon that life in Broxburn was very unhealthy?

MB Oh no.

SR I mean you talk about the dry toilets and the lack of

B That was the same every place all over.

MB We were young we didn't realise, maybe somebody was ill or something like that, but you did nae put it down to the conditions they were living in.

SR But looking back on them in retrospect, do you think that they were.

MB Oh well they were bound to make some contribution to the health of the district.

B We're better off now - a hundred times better off!

MB So we are.

SR What about community life though, was everybody much more friendly and helpful to neighbours and so on?

MB Yes, yes, that's true. Before these houses were built there were houses just the same as what was in Greendykes Road, but this was Stuartfield, but you know - the doors never were shut and they were all very friendly: Catholics and Protestants and when it was the Orange Walk, the Catholics were as excited about it as the rest. There was no animosity amongst them at all.

SR And what happened if a family was in trouble, if they got into debt or something, would another family help them out or not?

MB Oh well I don't know about that.

B No I would nae say.

SR Was there a pawn broker?

B Aye there was a pawn broker - down the old town.

SR And did people use him?

B Oh yes, he was well used.

SR And do you remember going down there?

MB Well I had to pass it to go to the school ...

SR But you never had to take things there?

MB Oh no we were nae that bad, my mother was handy she was a good machinist because she had been a shirt maker in a factory in Ireland and she could make our clothes you know and buy the material. I can remember when it was my elder sister's wage at the end of the month, my mother used to go in and meet her and she used most of that money to buy

material to make our underwear and nightdresses and so forth. Oh we were well enough the younger ones - I would say from me down low, we never knew any hardship at all.

SR But that was because your sisters had started work?

MB They were all out.

SR Do you reckon that they had hardship though?

MB Oh they would have hardship, aye, I think so. I can nae say much about it, I never ever heard my mother say much about it you know but ...

B Well it's time I was gettin' down the house, you'll no' be needin' me any more?

SR No, but thank you very much indeed it's been nice meeting you. I'd better be going, thank you very much indeed.

Transcript Mr. B & Mrs. MB

Industrial Information I started in 1917 in Stewartfield No.1. It was a big shale mining area this. Broxburn was the centre of the shale mining area. There was Broxburn oil Co, and Young's Paraffin Co. there was about twenty shale mines around Broxburn in the early 20's. I have experience with everybody, the gas company, electricians, factories.

Shale Mines Stewartfield Working in the shale mines was heavier work and also dirtier than the coal mines. I went with my father, where I was at the face all the time producing shale.

Dunnet and Newliston From Stewartfield I went to Dunnet till they had a place for us in Newliston Mine. I worked there from 1924 to 1956. When my father finished the mines I was working at Kirkland. We went up to Camps to sink the new mines at Camps. I was there six weeks until they got a place ready for us at Kirkland.

Pit 55 When Kirkland closed I was sent to pit 55, the only pit in the shale industry. It went straight down 600 feet down. I worked there until I finished up in 1946. I was thirty years with Scottish Oils.

Conditions The only damp place I worked in was Newliston we used to have to wear a waterproof coat as the water would drop down on top of you.

Baths at Work These were unheard of, so when you came home you washed in front of the fire.

Pension A woman and a man got 10/- a week to live off which was not a lot to live on.

Holidays We got a weeks paid holiday per year.

Strike There was a general strike and the mines never re-opened again, that was in the 1960s. The last mines closed in 1961 or 1962.

Domestic Life Housing housing was a room and kitchen, and there were nine of us in it not including my parents.

Groceries Milk was a tuppence a pint and tatties and butter, there was no margarine then.

Clothes You had Sunday clothes. I had three sisters below me and we were well dressed then because the older ones were away in the service and what not.

Rent When we lived in the companies houses, (the rows), the rent was only 5/6d, that included

rates. It then went up to 4s a week, when I got married in June and I'd a full years rates to pay in January, the rent was 10/-, it came to £21 or £22 a year for the rent. You paid it in a lump sum. You paid it yearly in May. If you couldn't save it meant you had to scrimp and do without something to find the money.

Toilets

We had dry toilets, we used to call them the "shunkey", and I used to say I had a little monkey and I kept it in the shunkey and I fed it on ginger bread. They used to smell terribly.

Health

the dry toilets spread a lot of disease such as T.B. We had to carry water from outside.

Baths at Home

We never had a bath you just bathed in a tin once a week beside the fire. that was on Saturday right. and straight into bed. I know I said we did not have a bath, but what I meant was we didnae have a bath like we have now, although when we moved to a more modern house they still had no bath or hot water.

Illness Appendix and T.B

There were quite a lot died with appendicitis which was a common problem with school children to die of. T.B. was a very prevalent here, I can remember after I went to school I just took one of those troubles, measles and what not. I have still got a mark between my shoulders where i got an injection. I can remember taking pleurisy when I was away on holiday. They took blood off my back with leaches, the leaches were put on my back and then they showed me the leaches in a big jelly jar all swelled up with my blood. That was the cure for pleurisy in 1912. The leaches sucked the bad blood out.

Scarlet Fever

I had scarlet fever when I was four years old, we were taken to hospital, that was my sister as well as me.

Diphtheria

I also took diphtheria and nobody was allowed through the door. I just had to take drinks of potash or something like that. I can remember my mother opening the door and taking the tray away and shutting the door again. The inspector came when you took diphtheria, he came to warn my mother not to let anyone in the house, she was told just keep him inside. When I got better I was like a pudding bowl because I was eating all the worst things.

Social Life Dancing

I loved dancing, but on the whole you had to make your own arrangements.

Television and Radio

There was no television or radio in those days.

Domestic Life
Housing and
Sleeping
Arrangements

Housing was rented accommodation consisting of a room and a kitchen. I think the English folk talked about the Scots houses with the hole in the wall, and they were set in beds and we had the big bed and the wee bed, and we just huddled together. My brother did nae go in the wee bed, he slept in the room bed and we slept with him. He was just a laddie you know, it's just like nowadays if you're in for a new house and they're no adults till they're ten years old and then by the time the elder girls went away to domestic service then we were nae too cramped. You did nae realise you were crowded.

Meal Times

We came home from school at four o'clock and my father and my brother had been in from the mines and had their meal, and we got ours when we came from school.

Clothing

Men's underwear such as long John's and socks were knitted.

Washing
Clothes
Boiler

There was a wash-house outside which were at the bottom of the garden. We had two boilers which supplied hot water for washing clothes.

Coal cellars

you had a different day each week. It Started with a Monday, Then the following week you had a Tuesday up until Friday and then it was empty on Saturday.

Finish with
Shale Mines

I was with Scottish Oils until 1946, that was thirty years service with them. I then developed a shadow on the urinal tract, and instead of going to Middleton Hall with my letter demanding my release and I've been in every job since.