

SHALE OIL STUDY

Interview with Mr. E and Mr. E (Brothers)

Place of Interview: Langside Gardens, Polbeth.

Date of Interview: 4th January, 1985

A & B = Messrs. E (Born 1905 and 1902 respectively)

SR = Dr. Sara Randall

SR So were you both born in West Calder?

A We were both born in Mossend ...

B There was a miners' row - two miners' rows, built by the Youngs Paraffin Light and Mineral Oil Company and, well, the housing was a wee bit primitive, there was no inside toilets and nothing like that, they were outside - maybe about 200 yards away from some of the people, and eventually, oh after some years, they extended the houses and put on a kitchen, well what we called a scullery anyway, with water and everything like that - inside toilet.

SR Yes, when did they do that?

B That would be ...

A Oh it was well on . . .

B That would be after the First World War, about 1920 something, I believe.

A I think it was before that.

B No I don't think so, I don't think they were built before that.

SR Which year were you born in?

B I was born in 1902, and he was born in 1905, as we were saying in these Council houses . . . well there were no Council houses but Company houses built by Youngs.

SR Yes. Was your father a miner?

B He was a miner. We were a family of five brothers and three sisters. Families at that time were usually very big.

SR Yes, and how many rooms was your house?

B There was a room and kitchen. But later on they made two houses out of three. I remember we got an extra room and the people on the other side, they got the other extra room you see. That made three.

SR How did you sleep - boys in one room and girls in the other?

B Yes, aye. Pretty congested! It had these beds that sit back, what did they call them ... I forget what they called them.

SR Oh, the box beds?

B Aye. They would sit back in the corner.

SR Presumably you had two or three children in each bed?

B Aye, I think if I remember correctly, there was three of us in one bed. We had a sort of folding down bed too if I remember. Sandy, that's my younger brother, my mother died early you see, he was adopted, he was taken in by an aunt.

- SR Oh I see, so you weren't brought up together?
- B Ho, not until . . . what age would you be?
- A About ten.
- B About ten when he came back to us because my eldest sister by that time was looking after the house you see.
- SR Oh I see. What happened to your mother, did she die in childbirth?
- B She died when the twins were born - Sandy and Bell.
- A Our sister died about a year ago, she was 90 when she died in Canada. Quite a number of the houses had only stone floors.
- SR Were you (A) brought up in Mossend by your aunty or did she live somewhere else?
- A I was brought up mostly in Mossend.
- B Aye, but the aunt that you were brought up with was in West Calder.
- A Aye, West Calder.
- B Although, we had uncles and aunts in Mossend as well. There were five, my father was one of five brothers and they all lived in Mossend.
- SR Oh, so your father was born in Mossend as well?
- B No, my father was born in Winchburgh. It was quite a friendly community.
- SR Aha, when you were little, when there was no woman in the house, who did all the cooking - your sister?
- B My sister, in fact I think she was only about 14 when my mother died and she did all the cooking.

SR It must have been tough for her.

B It was - very.

SR And did you have to help her by getting water and

B Oh aye, yes, my other sister that was just two years younger than Jean, my elder sister, she was some help as well you see, but whenever she was 14 she was away to service as they talked about it - a servant - in a house in Edinburgh. One sister that I don't remember, she died as a child, a very young child. But, we were quite strictly brought up: must go to school, must go to Sunday school, and then from the Sunday school the Bible class, Church every Sunday, everything.

SR That was your father's influence?

B The whole family must go to Church, everybody went to Church and sat on the same pew.

SR And you were a Protestant family?

B A Protestant family. Well, that's one thing I could say about the community at that time, it was friendly, it didnae matter whether you was Protestant or Catholic, there were no very very little bigotry of any kind at that time. The only rivalry was in sport - the football team and the cricket team.

SR Aha, was that between Mossend and West Calder?

B Mossend and West Calder and then there was another company village built by Youngs Paraffin Co. and that was Gavieside. They had a football team, Mossend had a football team and West Calder had a football team and another company village: Hermand. they usually had a football team. Mossend had a good cricket team and Addiewell, that's where the retorts were for refining the oil and so forth, they had a cricket team. So as far as I can remember it was very good.

SR Were you very poor in that were there ever any times when you didn't have enough to eat?

B No not that I can ever think of, although the food as far as I could remember was always whole food, you know. there was always porridge, lots of potatoes, soup.

A I suppose there were some families that wouldnae have enough.

B Oh yes, some would have a hard time at that time, but talking about ourselves I think we would be considered lucky, our sister, although she was young, she was a good manager I thought.

SR What about during the periods like the strikes?

B Well, in this area, in the shale mining area, there were very few strikes.

SR Even in 1926?

B 1926 would be the worst time. I was away at that time. I was in America at that time, until 1936. Then 1921 there was a strike but I don't think there was a great deal of hardship. I remember there were soup kitchens and things like that.

SR In 1921 was it the miners or the oil workers or everybody who was on strike?

B I think it was more or less the whole shale community that was on strike at that time. There was a time before that when the shale mines had a bad spell, the scaffold that took the shale up on to the bing was burned and while it was getting repaired, the shale mines were idle for quite a number of weeks. But I don't think that err well you could say there were hard times but not too bad.

SR Did you go to school barefoot or did you have boots?

B Oh we had boots. We had what they called, boots with what they called "tackets" in the soles - heavy boots, they don't wear them now' In the summer time if it was warm enough, she let us go with bare feet for a time. We used to cry to get our bare feet, then when it got cold, we'd cry to get them back on!

SR And when did you leave school?

B Well I left school at 14.

SR To do what?

B To go to the Cooperative butchery as an apprentice. West Calder Cooperative. I was there for a year and a half, the last six months I was working in the slaughterhouse at West Calder but that was quite an experience, I always remember when they let the blood out of the . . . maybe a bullock, maybe it was a pig that was cut, you know, they ran the blood into a tub - a round tub, and you had to keep your sleeve rolled up and you kept turning the blood to keep it from congealing up too quick. Ohhh! That was blood for making black puddings.

SR Then what did you do after that?

B Then, oh I was fed up as apprentice butcher, because Saturday nights after working Saturday afternoons, at eight o'clock at night the butchers shut, that's when it shut and I wanted to play football along with my pals that were working in the mines so I finally got a job in a coal mine driving a pony.

SR Was that at Baads?

B Aye, up there in Baads. But I always remember my dad telling me: "How you're making a mistake but if that's what you want it's yourself for it." So I got a job in the mines.

SR Which was better, the butcher or the mines?

B Well, driving the pony and that wasn't too bad but after that when I left West Mains to go to the shale mines and then became a drawer of the hutches you know, taking the the hutches out and filling them and that, that was a hard bit of work and not so comfortable.

SR When did you do that?

B That would be I was 17 when I started filling hutches.

SR Aha, which mine was that?

B That was No. 40 shale mine at Gavieside, across from the farm.

A Aye there are quite a few old shale mines here.

SR Yes.

B Well 40 shale mine, it was a mine you see, it sloped down and went through below the Almond river and the seam rose up on the other side of the Almond river, in fact the shale lay like a basin, you know, it was up on both sides then a flat. In fact, latterly they had an open-cast shale mine over on the far side of the Almond there. You know, the shale was up near the surface, so they took the soil off the top and .. .

SR When did they do that?

B That would be what 1920's.

A No it would be later in the 30's.

B The dates is

SR Oh it was just to have an idea, I hadn't heard of that.

B Aye, oh yes, they took quite a lot of shale off that side. You know it rose up like that and there was this soil on the top of the shale and they bulldozed the soil off the top and they took the shale away to the retorts at Addiewell.

SR And how long did you work down the mines as drawer?

B I worked till 1923, I was 21 when I went to America.

SR Why?

B Oh my elder brother and I went to America in June 1923, we worked in the coal mines there. We did well there until 1929 when everything went bad in America at that time: banks closing down, factories, in fact the mine I was working in closed down for some time and I went to Chicago and worked for the American Telegraph and Telephone Company there, that was good, I was doing well there but that went bad, oh it was a big, big factory, there would be about 40,000 employees, oh it was vast. They laid off men, they were laying off in thousands. Well the way I got the job there was playing soccer, playing football you see, so every time one department was very slack you see, they laid off so many, well there was two or three of us Scots football players and instead of getting laid off they transferred us to another factory. Three times that happened till finally it got so bad we had to go too!

SR Then you came back here did you?

B Then I came back here aye. The first year we got back here I was at Westwood there, I was a labourer at the shale tip there, Westwood tip. My brother came back with us too and we both got a job after that in the coal mine at Foulshiels at the Foulshiels colliery, we worked there for about 9 months I think and then we got back into the shale mines. And we worked in the shale mines until when did Burngrange shut down? 1956 Burngrange closed down and I got transferred down to Pumpherston oil work and I worked there for a while. Finally I got made redundant down there along with another 2 or 3 hundred.

SR And then you retired?

B No, no I didn't retire, I was, what, about 63 at that time. I went into Edinburgh and got a job in Monroe and Millers and I was there till I was 65 and I retired then. In fact I tried to get a job at the motor plant down at Bathgate but I had lost an eye in Burngrange and they wouldn't employ me in the motor industry. Sandy was in the shale all the time until it closed down and then he went to Leyland factory and finished up in Leyland's factory. Was it nine years?

A Eight years.

SR Did a lot of men go and work at British Leyland when the shale closed down here?

B Yes, quite a few.

A A few didnae get in but quite a big number did though.

SR And did you commute or did you actually move over to Bathgate and live there for a while?

B No no, we went by bus.

SR So have you both always lived here, apart from the time you were in the States?

A We've lived here all our days in West Calder.

B We lived mostly in Mossend to start with. My brother was married and Polbeth here was built, they started building in 1939 here, and Sandy and I moved in with our brother and sister-in-law and we lived there for a while. That was in Polbeth, we used to stay in the Avenue down there and then my brother died of cancer and my sister—in—law died of cancer and we flitted from the Crescent, Polbeth Crescent, up to Polbeth Avenue. That was an upstairs house, and then we got this house here, an old age pensioners house, I was quite pleased about that, there were only the two of us,

two old batchelors.

SR Neither of you ever got married?

B No, no we never got married.

SR Why did you keep moving from the coal mines to the shale mines and back again? Which was the worst?

B Oh I would prefer the shale.

SR Why?

B For it was higher you see? In the shale mines you would have from maybe about 8 to 12 feet high, it varied a bit, there were different seams of shale, there was the Dunnet and the Broxburn shale and there was a black shale and there was what they called a Pattison shale as well. It was cleaner work really — shale mining.

SR Mmm, but heavier?

B Heavier, but you were nae cramped like you were in the coal, you'd no height when you was cramped up.

A The shale was heavier work.

SR Was that for everyone — for both the facemen and the drawers?

B Oh aye, it was heavier, oh yes.

SR Did you (A) work in the coal as well?

A No, no I was in the shale all the time.

B Well, you did have a wee spell.

A Oh aye, but I came back.

SR And did you leave school at 14 as well?

A Aye.

SR And did you start work straight away?

A Aye I started in the pithead at the No. 40 shale mine. That was usually the style in Mossend or around here, when you were 14 your father put you down the pit.

B That's right.

SR Why did you start in butchering, was that your father's decision or yours?

B Aye, he wanted to keep somebody out of the pits I guess.

SR Did people really not want their sons to go down the pits if they could avoid it?

B I think that was true, only in this area there wasn't much else at that time. It was mostly pits, in fact it was pretty near taken for granted that whenever a boy was 14 or 15 his dad took him to the shale pits or the coal mines. But I did get my chance and I didn't take it.

SR So, when you were a butcher's boy, what sort of hours did you work? You stayed till eight o'clock at night but what time did you start in the morning?

B The shop opened at 8 o'clock in the morning.

SR So you did 12 hours?

B On a Saturday, aye. The weekdays it was from 8 in the morning till 6 at night.

SR And how much would you get paid for that?

B Well, I started at 9s. a week, that's about 45p a week.

SR And did you give all of that to your sister.

- B Och yes. And when I was sent up to the slaughterhouse I got another 2s. and I was there a year and I got 7s. rise, I was on 18s. when I left.
- SR And then when you started with the pony, how much did you get then?
- B That was I think it was 3s. 10d. a shift, that would be about 23s. I had.
- SR Aha, and you still gave it all to your sister?
- B Aye, oh well I can't remember, we didnae get much pocket money! You couldn't expect it, we just took what we got.
- SR But did she give you money to buy your clothes with or did she buy them for you?
- B Oh no, they were all bought, we just got a shilling or two. For playing football, you'd to save up to get a pair of football boots at that time, nobody could afford to buy them for you. We managed alright.
- SR And was football the main entertainment?
- B Football and cricket, in this area, football especially. Och aye, everybody was - young and old - seemed to be interested in the football. You see in this area there was a very famous team called Mossend Swifts, a way back before 1900 until about 1902 or 1903. They played against Hearts of Midlothian and Partick Thistle and these teams, at that time. We had uncles - one was an international - Uncle Jim, he was a left back, and then my Uncle Dave - he got his leg broke and was finished at that time. Three of my uncles were pit managers. My Uncle Will was a pit manager and my Uncle Dave, and my Uncle Johnny, well he was a foreman at Baads for a while. My Uncle Will and my Uncle Jim, they emigrated to Canada and America. Uncle Jim went in for farming and my Uncle Will went in to the coal mines.

SR He couldn't keep away from the mining!

B Oh he was a first class manager.

SR And your father, he was a shale miner all his life was he?

B All his life aye, he was a shale miner. He'd five brothers and they all played football.

SR Were you in Burngrange when there was the accident - the disaster?

A Aye I was there.

SR Actually working at the time?

A Yes, I was on the opposite shaft?.

SR What happened, it was an explosion was it?

A Aye it was an explosion.

B The initial explosion killed one man and the explosion set fire to the shale in that area and that's what caused the damage — the smoke, it wasn't the fire, it was the smoke. There wasn't a mark on the 13 men that died.

SR It was suffocation?

B Aye suffocation. Sandy was there at the time they brought them out.

SR Were there many accidents down the shale mines?

B No, I wouldn't say there were many accidents. Fatal accidents were few I think, but although there were few there were maybe too many, you know? Well, at the time of the Burngrange disaster, I was working on the surface at Baads mines because I had an accident - I lost the sight of this right eye, so I was at Burngrange until I had that

accident. We get a pension.

SR From the oil company, from BP now is it?

B Aye it started with the Scottish Oil Ltd.

SR Oh, this is the Provident Fund?

A Aye, we had the Provident Fund, but it's two pensions. We get paid by the BP ...

B You see we had one pension from Scottish Oils Ltd. and two years ago it was combined - the BP gives a pension as well, so that now we get the two pensions together. It's sent from London from the BP. So it was quite a good thing for us.

SR So when you were working, what sort of help did you get, did you get free medical services and so on?

B Yes, yes.

SR And were the doctors good — I'm talking about in the 1920's.

B Oh aye, yes. They used to take so much a week for medical expenses. Way back at that time you paid for the doctor.

SR Aha, and did people who got sick at that time get compensation and sick pay?

A Oh aye, there was compensation right enough.

B Well yes, when I lost my eye I got compensation right enough. Oh aye there was compensation.

SR What were conditions like down the mines, was it dusty; was it wet; was it really unpleasant working down there?

A It was very heavy work.

B It was varied, like you could get some sections of the mine where it was kind of wet possibly, and then when you was using explosives and that - now that caused a lot of dust you see when you was blasting the shale and so forth, and then if you was boring holes you see it used to be an old, what they called, an old "rickety(?)" machine that you put up a prop and put your machine against it and you bore holes - ratchet sort of style, and then we came on to the electric drill and you had to hold this on your shoulder and there was always a certain amount of dust.

A But the shale dust didnae appear to do what the coal dust did. You see there's no cases of that lung disease.

SR Oh. silicosis?

B There were two cases that tried to get compensation but I think they failed.

A We used to get a lot of dust, of course there was lot of water you see, you were spittin' up black ...

B Yes, but It didn't seem to do as much harm as the coal dust.

SR But it still wasn't very pleasant working down there?

B Oh no, especially after you had used the explosives and that, and then you had to go back into your working face and start working, and the atmosphere was nae what you'd say clear. Then being anxious to make a wage and that you were inclined to go in too quick before it was really clear.

A But in this area - those men that worked on the coal for a long time, most of them were affected.

B Oh aye, quite a lot. But we seemed to get rid of a lot of it, it didnae seem to do a great deal of harm.

A Of course we were non-smokers you see.

B Aye, that helped, we're both non-smokers.

SR Were most of the shale miners smokers then?

B Oh yes, aye.

SR And drinkers?

B Drinkers? There were some heavy drinkers in the shale mines.

SR Were there families where the children and the wives suffered because the husband spent all his money on drink and cigarettes?

B I would say so, I would say so, there was bound to be, because wages were nae big anyway and a certain percentage of their wages went on drink, well, something had to suffer and it would be food.

SR But nobody knew about this, they weren't pointed out, these families, as being bad?

B So, you knew a few but it was amazing - they were real hard workers and yet at the weekend they would just drink and of course drink was cheaper than tea, much cheaper.

SR When you were working with the pit ponies at Baads, what sort of hours were you working there?

B Oh well we worked 8 hours, at that time it was an eight hour day.

SR Six days a week?

B Aye six days a week.

SR And did you get any holidays?

B No. we didn't get holidays, we didnae get paid holidays, we were always idle on what was called 'West Calder Sports Day', that was usually the last Friday in July, and we were idle on the Saturday but there was always quite a number in the end, because it was up to themselves - they could go and fill shale off the bing you see, they always put a certain amount of shale onto a bing and it was left there, and at holidays quite a number of men would take a shift filling that shale of the bing and maybe work till about 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock if it was a Saturday, and that's how it went.

SR But you never got paid holidays where you could take a week of and go down to the seaside?

B No not at that time, no, there were no paid holidays at that time. The Cooperative always had a trip on a Saturday -West Calder Sports and

A Usually to Portobello!

B Aye, that's as far as it could get sometimes!

SR What did you do, hire a bus or something?

A Aye or a train.

B You got a cheap train. When the First World War broke out in 1914, the Cooperative trip was to Aberdeen and on that day there was a big movement of troops and the people that were on the trip to Aberdeen didn't get home till early in the morning because they didn't put a train on for them you see, it was priority for troops.

SR Were you on that trip?

B No, I wasn't on that trip, in fact, but I can always remember that's when I burnt my face you know. What was it, I spilled over a pan or something that was on the stove and the steam burnt my face and I always remember my sister

and them - they were all away on the trip, I can remember standing at the door greetin' till they came home! I always remember the cure: a white cloth with castor oil on it and the eyes, you know the eyes were cut out across my face, I remember that well.

SR Did the doctor give you that or just your sister?

B No, the doctor - Dr. Young - he was a great old guy. But, a bossy man. Dr. (Gillam?), liked to rule the community, but I guess he was a good doctor.

SR Was there any pollution and dust from the oil works?

B Yes, oh aye, there was quite a bit of black smoke and that, and then the burnt shale, after it came out of the retorts and it was emptied on to the bing, if there was a wind blowing you see, there was a lot of dust off that and it could come towards West Calder and the men that worked on the retorts, there were a lot of them affected - badly affected with their chests. Quite a few died I would say early, I could mention quite a few whose chests were ruined working on the retorts.

SR So working on the retorts was worse than the mines?

B Oh aye, I would say. And the wages were poor. I gave Mrs. Braithwaite two books, one was the wages way back at that time, I think they were getting on the retorts about 9d. an hour or something like that - terrible wages. It gives you all the scale of wages for all the different the men that were working underground and the men that were working on the surface, it gave you all the different wages.

SR Was it mainly Irish people that worked on the retorts?

B Quite a number aye. Quite a number came over from Ireland. In fact at the Pumpherston oil work too, there were quite a colony of Irish people too, but there was definitely a number of Irishmen at Addiewell at the retorts and the Candlehouse too.

SR And did they stay here afterwards or did they go back to Ireland?

B No there are quite a number here yet, but quite a few of them, well mostly they died, but their families there are quite a few of their families here — their offspring are here.

SR Was the black smoke from the oil works so bad that if you hung out your washing and the wind was in the wrong direction it would get all black?

B Oh I think it did affect the washing at different times. I'll tell you there was one time and it was West Calder Sports Day, remember that (Sandy) and the wind was blowing towards the sports ground at the West end of West Calder and oh, your shirt was dirty at the neck, it was bad that day. You would notice that the bings have been gradually reduced - the Addiewell one especially, they're using it for foundations now - roads at different places, and they made bricks at Pumpherston with that, although the bricks that were made didn't seem to be too good for building the likes of houses, but an awful lot of them was used underground for making (?), but the dampness, if they were used for houses and that, seemed to work through them, I don't know if they ever remedied that or not, but the company used them themselves underground.

SR In the First World War, did men who were working in the shale mines and the oil works get exempted from going to fight?

A I think they were exempt weren't they?

B I think there was some exemption latterly, in fact some that volunteered and went away got sent back to the mines but others there were quite a number of shale miners volunteered. My eldest brother was killed, in fact, he was killed in April 1918, not long before Armistice, he was wounded before that, he was buried in the dug out, by these round - mouthed shovels that they used for making trenches and

that, he had broken his ribs on that, and then he was alright again and he was sent back and he was nae long back and he was killed. He died on his way back to the base, he was only 23 when he died.

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SR What happened to men who survived the war but who came back with shell-shock or other illnesses? Did they go to a hospital anywhere, do you know where the hospital was, because I'm trying to locate ...

B You know Bangour Hospital, well in fact I think it was just built then, it was nae a great hospital at that time but there was one, Robert Boyd, he was shell-shocked, he went to Bangour at different times, in fact there were quite a few wounded soldiers treated at Bangour, quite a number.

SR And during the First World War, when so many of the young men were away, did women start working in the oil works?

A No, I don't think so.

B No, except in the Candle House, I think there would be quite a few women there, but not in the mines.

A I believe in some coal mines there were women worked ..

B On the pithead aye, but I can't remember any woman being in the shale mines, or on the pithead either in the shale mines.

SR Did your mother come from this area as well?

B Aye, yes, she died when Sandy and Bell were born.

SR Aha, and did your father remarry?

B Aye, he did, when oh I cannae mind the date! He did remarry, he married a local woman — a widow, there's two

step sisters living yet, both in West Calder.

SR Can you tell me a bit more about your childhood, were you at school in Mossend or in West Calder?

B No, there's no school at Mossend , there's a small school at Gavieside though. I went to the school at West Calder, we called it the wee school, and then there was the big school further up. You went to the wee school first until, now what was it ... the second standard I think it was, and then you went up to the big school after that. And you went through the different classes until the supplementary and that was the last one before you left school.

SR And did almost everyone leave school at 14 or did a few people stay on?

B Very few stayed on.

SR Was that because they weren't clever enough or because they just had to go out to earn money.

B Some went to Heriot Watt and things like that.

SR Would you have liked to stay on?

B I don't know, I cannae remember whether I was anxious to stay at school or not to tell you the truth. Latterly I was thinking about staying on.

A They get better chances now, we've a nephew - he's a French teacher now.

B Aye, he's French Principal at Craigshill High School.

SR And what did you do outside school hours, did you have to help in the house or did you just go off and play?

B Oh aye, we had messages to go for and

A Well you see there was an outside well, you had to get the

water from there ...

B Where we were it was about 50 yards down the street, and we went messages.

A Aye, we went messages to West Calder.

SR And getting the water, you got it in big buckets did you?

B A pail, aye.

SR And where did you store it in the house, just in the bucket?

B Aye, we just kept it in the bucket, a nice clean pail, and I'll tell you another thing: my elder brothers and my dad - they of course came home from the pit, and the boots they wore were often pretty dirty and we had to scrape these outside the door and keep them clean and then put them in the house again. And the washing, when they came home from the pit, there was no real place, it was a tin bath thing that they had to do their washing in before the sculleries were built. And the pit clothes, if they were kind of wet they had to be put before the fire to dry at night and that was nae so nice either, but it had to be done because you could nae have them putting on wet clothes in the morning again.

SR So the kids had to sit behind the clothes and get cold?

B Oh aye, sometimes you'd see the steam rising off the pit trousers and jackets.

SR And where did the waste water go, was there a gutter in the street?

B Aye, do ye ken what a "shock"(?) is? A wee drain right down the street and you emptied it out there.

SR It was just open?

B We did, but every house had a barrel, a water barrel

outside, the rhones from the houses, you see, and there was a pipe came from the rhones down into the barrel and that gave you rain water and they used a lot of that for washing and that, but before the sculleries were built, washdays were nae very nice either because everything had to be dried at the fire mostly. Sometimes it was taken outside, we had gardens at the back, Mossend had all gardens at the back, some of them had lovely gardens and we all kept vegetables and flowers and of course you had them that was really gardeners and others that didnae give a ...

SR And what was your family?

B Oh we had quite a good garden, aye.

SR And did you have a toilet for each household?

B No, no. After they had put on the extension, but before that you had tae go to the outside toilets. From where we lived in Mossend, we'd have about ... at least a hundred yards to go anyway, it all depended where you lived. It would be handier for some people than it was for others.

A We had quite good water you see, it was nae hard water.

B Good drinking water aye.

SR But were the toilets flush toilets?

B No, open toilets. Oh terrible!

SR What - sort of a big midden and huts round the edge?

B That's right.

SR And that was for women and men?

B Women and men.

SR And did it smell?

- B Yes, definitely. It was cleaned out so often but before they were cleaned out there was quite a stench.
- SR Do you reckon it was unhealthy living there at that time?
- B I don't know if it had much affect anyway, I don't think so.
- A At that time, we could nae go out with any boots or shoes, and often in the summertime there were kids running about with their bare feet all over.
- B But I don't think you could say it was unhealthy although you would have thought so.
- SR Did many children die young.
- B No, I don't think so, I don't think so. Just looking back and thinking of the people you lived among and that I don't think there were many died young - as far as Mossend was concerned anyway.
- SR And what about TB, was there any TB?
- B Aye I think there'd be a case or two of TB.
- SR Aha, and what happened when a child was sick, whether it had a bad cold or diarrhea or scarlet fever?
- B Well, with scarlet fever you were sent to Drumshoreland Hospital - when they had measles or scarlet fever and things like that.
- A There was an epidemic of scarlet fever at one time right enough.
- SR But if a child was just a bit ill with, say, something like bronchitis, did they just carry on staying in the house, sleeping in the bed with three other children?
- B I don't think we ever had that problem, but I suppose that's the only way they could handle it. If it was young child, if they had a pram or something like that, or a cot ...

- SR And where did you play, did you go and play on the bings?
- B Aye, there was a bing at Mossend what we called "Mossend Bing", we used to play up there on that but we had a playing field — Mossend Park, where we made a lot of entertainment for ourselves there, playing football and different games.
- SR Did you swim in the streams?
- B Aye, we made a damn at Mossend Burn, it was nae sometimes too clean!
- SR Was it polluted from the oil works?
- B No from the oil works, the Almond was polluted from the oil works over here, but Mossend Burn here - that was nae polluted by the oil works. In fact there used to be trout in this burn here at one time, but then latterly, for a while anyway, before Baads mine shut down there were a lot of bad yellow coloured water used to come from Baads, they called it 'the yellow burn' for a while, but its cleaner now, much cleaner than it used to be.
- SR And what about the Almond, was that very polluted?
- B That was polluted both from Addiewell and the colliery — it was very black at one time. They got it cleaned up a bit, they fish in it now too.
- SR Did people used to swim in it even when it was polluted.
- B Aye, more or less, but no' so many. It was nae a very common practice to swim in it.
- SR You said that Mossend was a good community, what do you mean by that
- B Well, everybody seemed to be kind of friendly you know? Like, you never thought of locking your door or things like that, the neighbours always seemed to be good.

SR And did people help each other out, if one family was very hard up would somebody else give them some money?

B Oh aye yes, I can remember the people - no' next door to us, but two doors up — they were quite a big family too, and my sister, if there was any soup left or anything like that, she would take it up to them often. Things like that happened quite regular. Oh yes, there was very little vandalism of any kind at that time, as far as I can remember.

SR When did they knock the Mossend houses down?

B Well, people had started moving from Mossend to Polbeth here in 1939. We came up to Polbeth from West Calder in 1939 because the war started just two weeks after we came out.

SR And the houses up in Polbeth were much better?

B Oh, a big difference! Everybody was really delighted with their houses.

SR Were the rents much higher?

B Aye they were quite a bit higher because you was only paying let's see, at one time it was only 4s. 6d. a week for a Mossend house at that time - a way back. Well, you'd a wee bit more if you had three rooms like we had, we had the extra room so we'd a wee bit more, but the rents were cheap right enough.

SR And they always belonged to the oil companies?

B They belonged to the oil company, aye.

SR And did they keep the house as well, did they paint them and

B Yes, and they swept the chimneys and looked after any repairs necessary and that.

SR And did you have electricity at Mossend?

B No, no, - coal fire.

SR But what about lighting?

B Paraffin lamp.

SR Up to 1939?

B Up to when. Sandy?

A I don't know whether we had any electricity in Mossend or no'. I don't think so.

B I cannae mind we had electricity at all. I always remember the paraffin lamps, you'd to do your school homework and everything else, you never seemed to mind. We have one yet in fact, a paraffin lamp.

SR You may need it if there are power cuts!

B We haven't used it, but we keep it along with some candles.

A At that time there was Front Street, Mid Street and East Street in Mossend and everybody knew each other more or less.

B Aye, you see, at Mossend, the Front Street was right down the side of the road and Mid Street went that way and East Street went that way, and you had your usual wee sweetie shop and Granny Stark used to make the toffee, the white toffee, mint flavour. Oh aye, you used to see her stretching it out, and you used to get a pennyworth of toffee now and again and there was one, two, three - there'd be four people with a shop.

A Just people having a shop in their houses.

B Aye, just in the house.

SR And that was just little things like tea and sugar and ...

B Aye, no' very many things at all, and sweeties, they did nae have a big stock or anything really.

SR Did people do their main shopping at the Cooperative?

B At the Cooperative aye, you see Gavieside had a Cooperative as well.

SR Aha, and Mossend used to use the Gavieside Cooperative.

B Mostly Mossend used West Calder, but Gavieside Cooperative - it wasnae big - but it was a good going concern, they gave quite a good dividend. At one time they paid 4s. in the pound and that was good at that time. West Calder did the same: 3s.9d. and 3s.10d.

SR And was it the dividend that bought your clothes for you?

B Aye, that's when you always looked forward to the dividend to get some extras, aye. Gavieside's no more and Mossend's no more.

SR But Polbeth is mainly Gavieside and Mossend people is it?

B That's who came here first: Mossend people and Gavieside people.

SR Have a lot of new people come here from elsewhere?

B Oh, I don't know half of the people here now, no, there are a lot of newcomers here.

SR Aha, and when the shale mines started to close down, did people move away from the area altogether or did most people stay here?

B No, some moved away, some went to Fife, Sandy? To the coal mines?

A Aye.

SR Aha, and did they come back here when they retired?

A No, the two or three that went to Fife didnae come back.

B Of course, they had families.

A Some of them will be retired now you see.

SR Is there anything else you think I should know about what it was like living here?

B No, as I say the only rivalry that was here was the football, I've seen quite a ruckus at times at the football match at that time, you know break-ins and things like that, no' like what we have now but they did have their fights at that time at the football. So, as I say, the Protestants and the Catholics - nobody seemed to bother what you were, it was just like that, everybody seemed to get on pretty well. Of course, latterly you'd get one here and there that was a wee bit biased and things like that but on the whole it was very good.

SR Was there rivalry between people who worked in different mines or different oil works?

B No, I don't think so, no rivalry at all.

Transcript	Mr. E & Mr. E (Brothers) Referred to A and B
Industrial Information (A)	We were both born in Mossend, in two miners rows built by the the Young's Paraffin Light and Mineral Oil Company. I was born in 1902. I started at the pithead at No. 40 shale mine. That was the usual style around Mossend, when you were fourteen your father put you down the pit.
Conditions (A)	You used to get a lot of water and dust, you were spitting up black and it was heavy work. Most of the shale miners were smokers.
Industrial Information (B)	I was fed up as an apprentice butcher, so I finally got a job in the coal mine at Baads as a pony driver.
Filling Hutches (B)	I then got a job as a drawer taking the hutches out and filling them, that was in No. 40 shale mine at Graveside across from the farm.
No. 40 Mine (B)	Number 40 shale mine, it sloped down and went through below the river Almond, and the seam rose up on the other side of the river, in fact the shale lay like a basin, it was up on both sides then a flat. Latterly, they had an open cast over on the far side of the Almond. The shale was up near the surface. They took a lot off shale off

that side. It rose up like that and there was this soil on the top of the shale, and they bulldozed the soil off the top and took the shale away to the retorts at Addiewell.

America
(B)

I worked there until 1923. Then I went to America at twenty one years old with my elder brother in June, 1923.

Returned to U.K.
(A and B)

We both returned to the United Kingdom. The first year we got back here I was a labourer at the shale tip at Westwood. We both got a job then at Foushiels, where we worked for nine months.

Burngrange and
Pumpherstons
(A and B)

We then got a job at Burngrange, until it shut down in 1956. I then got a job at Pumpherstons Oil Works, where I worked for a while until I got made redundant along with two or three hundred other men.

Monroe & Millars
(B)

I then got a job at Monroe & Millars until I was 65, and then I retired.

Why I Preferred Shale
rather than Coal
(B)

I preferred shale to coal, because in the shale mines the shale would be about eight to twelve feet high, it varied a bit the different seams of shale. There was the Dunnet and Broxburn shale and there was a black shale and there was what they called a Pattison shale. It was cleaner work really.

Wages
(B)

When I started I think I got 3s.10d. a shift, that would be about 23/- I had. Working on the retorts the wages were poor, I think I got 9d an hour or something like that.

Holidays
(A & B)

We didn't get paid holidays, we were always idle on what was called 'West Calder Sports Day', that was usually the last Friday in July, and we were idle on Saturday but there was always quite a number in the end, because it was up to themselves. They could go and fill shale off the bing. They always put a certain amount of shale on to a bing and it was left there, and at the holidays quite a number of men would take a shift filling that shale of the bing working until 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock if it was a Saturday, but there were no paid holidays.

Pension
(A & B)

We got a pension from the Oil Company, B.P. as it is now. We had the Provident Fund, but it's two pensions paid by B.P. We had one pension from Scottish Oils Ltd., and two years ago it was combined. B.P. Gives a pension as well, so that now we get the two pensions together. It is sent from London from B.P.

Accidents

The Burngrange disaster was

Burngrange Disaster	caused by an explosion. It initially killed one man and the explosion set fire to the shale in the area and that's what caused the damage, the smoke, it wasn't the fire. Thirteen men died through suffocation.
My Accident (B)	I had an accident, I lost the sight of my right eye. I was at Burngrange until I had that accident.
Domestic Life Housing (A & B)	Our first house was a room and a kitchen. But later they made two houses out of three. I remember we got an extra room and the people on the other side, they got an extra room. That made three.
Family Size (A & B)	We were a family of five brothers and three sisters. Families at that time were usually big.
Sleeping Arrangements (A & B)	It had these box beds that sit back. I think, if I remember correctly, there was three of us in one bed. We had a sort of folding down bed too, if I remember.
Toilets (A & B)	We did not have a toilet for each household. We had open toilets, sort of a midden and huts round the edge. It was cleaned out often, but before they were cleaned out there was quite a stench.
Water (A & B)	We got water in a pail, we just kept it in the pail, a

nice clean pail.

Bathing
(A & B)

When we came home from the pit, there was no real place. We had a tin bath thing.

Washing
(A & B)

The washing was done in the tin bath too. The pit clothes, if they were kind of wet they had to be put before the fire to dry at night and that was nae so nice either, but it had to be done, because you could nae have them putting on wet clothes in the morning again. We put the waste water down a 'shock' (a wee drain), right down the street, you emptied it out there.

Marriage (A & B)

Neither of us got married.

Health
(A & B)

There were a few cases of T.B. and scarlet fever. If you had scarlet fever you were sent to Drumshoreland Hospital.

Bangour Hospital

Bangour Hospital was just built then, it was nae a great hospital at that time. There was quite a few wounded soldiers from the war treated there.

Social Life
(A & B)

The only rivalry was in sport, the football and cricket team. They had a football team Mossend and West Calder. Mossend had a good cricket team. I've seen quite a ruckus at times at a football matches at that time, but no rivalry at all.

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