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JC SIDE ONE

Q. What age were you when you started in a mine?

JC In a mine? Oh, about seventeen.....sixteen.....

Q. Sixteen?

JC If the fireman wasn't out, I fired the boilers, and thon man that put the down, pitheadman, or runner, or wagon shifter, and then I got a job down the mine when I was nineteen on the what..... they termed oncost, and they started to renovate the mine in 1920.

Q. Now, which mine?

JC Twenty Six mine!

Q. Twenty Six, Polbeth?

JC Twenty Six, Polbeth!

Q. Yes?

JC They started to renovate that, and they were eighteen months at it, you see, they ran with a rake of hutches, four hutches at a time, and then a double road, on carriages that only held four hutches and as two.....as four of them were going down, four of them were coming up, and then I worked on there.....what they termed oncost. That was..... doing jobs, lining up cuddies, laying roads, laying crossings and all these things. You know, I always thought that I was working harder than the men that were filling the shale were doing. I told the boss..... Matt the gaffer, "I'm leaving this, I'm going to get a job in the drawing, filling and drawing".

Q. Now, what was your wage.....as an oncost worker?

JC Oh.....now I was up to about 18/- a day. That was in 1919. Aye.....
I was up to that, and my father and brother, they were both on it too,
and they had a shilling or one and six more than me a day, you know.
Well, I was on that till they got it in, I was kind of head roadsman,
you know, and eh.....oh, eh....I got on sweetly after that, done a lot
of stuff and one thing and another, you know, and then after being on
it for about five years, aye, five years, four or five years, I just
thought I was getting it put on to me. The man that was on the nightshift,
he would leave word with the gaffer, "Get JC to come out and
lay up my cuddy tonight", when he wasn't working you see, and he's
needing a crossing laid.....lay across them you know. All these things,
you know. And I said "No, to hell with this".....I'm working harder here
than what the fillers and drawers are working". I mean, I was doing
everything in the pit. In fact, one week, there was no under-manager
there, and I had to do under-manager, and I had no certificates or anything,
but I had to see that everybody on the oncost was working at their
stations and one thing and another, and I've seen me going out to the
pithead at night, and oh, the magazine man's not out the day.....go out
to the magazine and fill the powder, and then you were down the pit and
down the mine, and there was somebody else not out. "You want his job?",
and then I've seen me working there when I was on the oncost, somebody
would come along at 10 o'clock at night, to the house, just after I was
in bed, "Come up to Thirty Two pithead the night, and do pitheadman,
the pitheadman's not out". Well I said, "I'll come along if I'm getting
the same wages as I get down the pit". So he agreed to that.....and I
was out there all night on Twenty Six.....Thirty Two pithead, and then
I had to work on Twenty Six in the morning. Och, it was just getting
too much, I thought they were putting too much on me, I thought. I said
"I want to start on the drawing, filling and drawing". So I started on the
filling and drawing, and eh.....

Q. Now, did you work with your father?

JC No, I never worked with my father! I had two brothers.....! had three
brothers in fact, but two of them were in the army in the 1914-18, you

ken, the War, and the other one worked with him. He was a shale miner too, my father. He died in 1921. Eh.....where did I progress from there, then, 1930,no....about 1927 or 28, I told the under-manager, I said/ "I'm looking for a job on the filling and drawing". "Oh, no", he said, "You're not doing that". I said "I am, I'd be easier worked". He said "I'll give you a shilling a day, to stay on the oncost". I said, "No, no, I'm not staying on it". So I started on the filling and drawing, and in 1930, aye 1930, they were reducing the output to Twenty Six and sending us to Westwood. They sent three squads to Westwood. Well, from 1930 till 1939, aye.....the war broke out, I was in Westwood, and couldn't make any more than 9/9d a day. 9/9d.

Q. That was as a drawer?

JC No, that was as a faceman?

Q. You were a faceman.....a faceman then, yes?

JC Oh aye! And, 1930 till 1939, aye. And I mind in 1939, I was continually having a row with the gaffer. For Westwood was overstocked with men, you would get hutches to fill three days in a week, and then the next three days, you would get nothing. I had hardly anything in a week.....you couldn't make wages with it. Oh, many's the row I had with the gaffer.....he was wanting me, when the hutches did come in, to stoop them away, you know. "No", I said, "No, no, that'll not do, Tarn". You ken, wee Tarn Brown, that was the gaffer. So early in 1939, aye, just midway through 1939, wee Tarn Brown came down to me in the mine and says "How would you like to go to Hermand". I said "I'll go to Hermand, what's at Hermand". He said "They're starting to sink a new mine up there" he said, Geordie Sommerville, that was a man that worked all the stone mines up at Burdiehouse and that, on a lot of contracts and these things. He said "Geordie Sommerville wants to ken if you'll go with him, to double-shift him, to sink that mine". "Anything's better". "Oh, well", he says, "He'll see you on the pit bottom the night, when you go up". So I saw him and he says, "Fine, Jock, fine", he says. "Well anything. Tarn, I cut out height through

the clay". You know you're not on a seam to start with. The seam's coming down that way, and you're going down that way to meet it. "That's alright", he says. We set off with a boring iron, a big (inaudible) pointed, and somebody was standing with a big pot hammer, and one standing cutting to give it a bit of a run. Oh, well, we done alright! I mind it was Forbieson that was the Manager at the time, and he came up to try and get a contract, with us, signed. Oh no, we couldn't sign it for that. He said "I'll give you £14 a fathom", he says, "to sink that big mine, 12ft. wide and 9ft. high and laying the road across and brick it". So we had two brickies, Wullie Mullholland and Geordie Morris, to come when we were ready, when we had about 12ft. on each side. I had three men on my shift, and eh....Bruce Armour had three on his shift. We got it down.....about 12ft.....we went down to the founds.....for the brickies coming, and I came out on the dayshift, instead of the backshift, of course, two of us were on the one shift that week, and we laboured! I packed behind Geordie Morris, and he packed behind Wullie Mullholland, and the man on the surface sent down.....you see, I had two labourers, sending down bricks and cement, you know, for thingummying it. Oh, we done alright on that! Till we met the.....I remember, it went down like that, it had a plug at the top, you see, they surveyed it, from the road across, till they got the depth it was down on the road measured, and they gave us a gradient of 1 and 2 ¼ Well, I think we went down about 50ft., I think, on that gradient of 1 and 2 ¾, when a rib came in the roof. Do you know what a steel rib is? Well, up on the pavement there was a steel rib, about ¾ " to 1" thick, but you couldn't bore it through even, it was practically steel, and that was what we always termed a pavement rib, in the Duddingston. So I remember the Manager he used to go up to Armadale twice a week to the Golf Course, and always called in as he was coming down past, and he came in the next morning.....we were firing shots at the time when he came in, he came in, the next morning, he says to me "That's not....what rib is that, John". I said "That's a pavement rib". He says "It can't be". I says "How can it not be". "Well", he says, "Well it was all surveyed out and everything". "Well, I'm not caring, John, whether it's surveyed or not, there's not another rib in the Dunny Seam", says I, "comparable with the pavement rib". So it was going like that, and we were into it, it wasn't

going to come down to our bottom level, the grade we were at, so we had to level it out, then go down again, that made it different gauges in the mine, you see, and the year after that, when they go and take that, you know what I mean, out to make it suitable for the carriages, and then, how long were we there, oh, nine steelworkers got it done, I think, Sommerville got a place, and three men to work with him. I had a place and three men working to me. When they were coming to us, they were sinking that pit up at Bosmains, what was it you cried it?..... they were sinking the pit anyway, two shafts down it you know. It was the Donaldsons from Fife, they were the pit sinkers, and they had one of the shafts down to the depth it had to go.....they had 950ft. to go down, before they could connect it round, you know it, and of course they sent for Sommerville and me again. They put men on to sink this round, to take this round to the one that was down, to take it in about 100ft. then turn that way for the mains, to catch the other one. So they put men on it, and they couldn't hold the roof. It was underneath the shale, you see, and it was just pure muck, and they couldn't hold it. So they sent for Sommerville and me, to go up and have a look at it, and oh, there was some awful work in it. It was only just about 40.....30ft. in from the bottom, and when you were firing your shots, you fired with the electric cable of course, and you just carried the key, the thingummy, the firer in your pocket, like on the surface, and then you would bore your holes and fire them and roll a big scarf round your face and neck, and start the compressed air up, and go up again, and get your piece, oh, it was terrible, no wonder I've got bronchitis and all these things!

Q. Now, what about your wages?

JC Oh, we weren't on a standard wage, like shale miners! We fixed the contract.....we fixed the contract!

Q. So you were paid by the ton?

JC Paid by the ton, aye!

Q. Can you remember the tonnage rate?

JC No, I can't mind of that, there was no rate.....no, but I can remember the Fraser Pit, that was the name of it, the Fraser. I had what.... twenty two, or twenty three men working to me, some of them were machine men, other ones were stemmers, and then you had the wooders coming in behind that, putting all the trees, and then the drawers. Now,if a drawer filled a 100 ton a week, he got a pound extra, I can always remember that. If he went to the 100 ton in his six days! That was in the Fraser Pit, oh gee, it was terrible. You were boring holes, and the water was running on top of you, you know, making this road in between the two. Och.....

Q. In your opinion, which was the worst pit you worked in?

JC Westwood!

Q. Westwood?

JC What do you mean by the worst?

Q. The worst conditions and the worst pay?

JC The worst paid was Westwood. As I told you there were too many men in the pit. They couldn't give you quite the money that you would want. They would give you just enough to take in a day, and then, come the end of the week, they would pour more hutches into you, extra, to make up for what you had lost over the three days, oh a right rotten crowd of it. A right rotten crowd!

Q. And the best?

JC Oh, Twenty Six easy! That's Polbeth along there, that was the best easy!

Q. What.....the best in every way?

JC Every way! Best in every way! Well, there's only one pit better for

shale.....pure shale. Thirty Two..... that's the farm along at Limefield there, it had a roof like glass and a pavement like glass, every other pit you worked with plates, you know, to peel the shale off. You never needed them in Thirty Two. No, I never worked in it as a shale miner. I worked on the pit head, but not as aI done everything. I think I done every job in the pit. When I was in Twenty Six, and only a young lad, they would come to me. "Oh, the magazine man's not out the night, away up and give them their powder out. Jock, give them out their powder", you see. Then you would come back across the rope carriage that was taking the sixteen men down, stopped about three stooping from the bottom, and the engine-man came across, and shouted, "There's a guy not on the bell. Jock". Then I had to walk down that length of mine, to see what.....how the bell got connected, and all these kind of jobs, you know. And if anybody wanted a cross all night, or anything like that, send for Jock!

Q. So you were a Jack of all Trades?

JC Just a Jack of all Trades! I done every job in the pit, I think!

Q. As a faceman, did you work stoop and room?

JC Stoop and room, yes!

Q. Can you remember the width of the stoops?

JC Aye, 12ft. wide!

Q. 12ft. wide?

JC 12ft. wide. I left Westwood. Westwood is only 9ft high. 8ft.....9ft. whereas Twenty Six and Thirty Two, where you had this good roof, you see, you could just put your shots up to within a foot of them, and that would clear it off.....the good roof! All the rest of them were pretty scabby roofs, you know, flaky. Westwood was the worst, 9ft. high. You would go in there, 9ft. high, and you would be continually

pinching, pinching bits out of the roof, that were flaking off.

Q. So with a bad roof, you would need a lot of props?

JC That's right, that's right! You didn't need to.....they wouldn't let you put up crowns, you see, that's stretchers across the top, and fill on to one another. But you would just use the top of the tree, and they would just flake off all round the tree.

Q. Now, what kind of shift did you work?

JC Eight hour shifts!

Q. Eight hour shifts! Did you have backshift, dayshift?

JC No, no. There were only two shifts. There was either dayshift and backshift or dayshift and nightshift. I've never worked on the three shifts. At one time like.....you didn't do dayshift, backshift, nightshift. It was either dayshift and backshift or dayshift and night shift.

Q. Were you ever put on the make-up?

JC On the make-up, yes!

Q. Now, what was your rate? What were you paid?

JC Well, the make-up in Westwood that I was telling you about, you mean the wages, I had 9/9d a shift, a drawer, 9/3d. and that was all we were paid, but we could be paid if we'd got hutches to fill with.

Q. That was because there were too many men?

JC Aye!

Q. Now, what kind of deduction did you have from your wages?

JC Oh.....I don't know! I know when I started at first, I had four bob a day on the books. I had a penny for the reading room, and twopence for the doctor, that was about all I can remember.

Q. And what about the rent? The rent for the house?

JC The rent! One and six for that!

Q. And where was that? Your house?

JC Gavieside!

Q. Gavieside? What was it, a room and kitchen? Just a room?

JC It was two houses made into one! That was all it was then!

Q. You were spoiled.....you were spoiled for room!

JC Aye, there were eight of us in that! Two bedrooms! Four to a bedroom! Four boys! Two sisters and my mother and father in the kitchen, each for one bed, you know!

Q. Now, what about the heating and lighting?

JC Oh, heating and lighting! Lighting was the paraffin lamps, there was no gas or electricity for us!

Q. Where did you get your paraffin? Where did you buy your paraffin?

JC At the Co-operative!

Q. Can you remember how much?

JC No, but it was cheap!

Q. Cheap?

JC See, this is paraffin works, the shale mines, you know, the paraffin works, but I can't remember the prices! But we would go up to the Gavieside Store. Gavieside Co-operative Store. That was at the back of.....where we used.....

JC What about the conditions of work, in general, throughout the mines? What were they like?

JC Well, how do you mean, what were they like?

Q. Was it clean, was it healthy? Was it.....

JC No, it wasn't healthy!

Q. No?

JC Oh no! I mean that's what I say, when I started in 1935. I was 35 years back in the Westwood, as I told you about, when John Stein, the head Manager, came down to me and said "What about going to Burngrange, Jock". So I said, "What for". "Well", he says, "We're starting the machines up there, electric machines for boring with. "No, I don't think I would fancy it, John". "There's too much stoor coming out into the mouth, you know". "Well", he says, "I'll give you a job up there if you want, you know Siemens or electric - (ref. P.15) machines, the general machines, but when you're working with old ratchets, you know.....

Q. Yes your ratchet boring machine.

JC Four holes a day, and you can blow as much stuff as you need, with four holes a day. But when this came in, this general machine, it was murder, we were firing at all hours! You know, you could bore your holes

in half the time, but when you were firing at all hours of the day, and it was continually smokey and things!

Q. Now, what about water? Was there much water down the mine?

JC Oh well, I had a lot of water, in the.....in the dook. What do you mean the dook? The one that was going down? Oh aye, there was a lot of water there! We had a wee pump going, you know. Up into the (Inaudible)

Q. What about ventilation?

JC Ventilation was quite good in Twenty Six. Oh aye, but I don't like the one that's up there at Burngrange. Firing at all times of the day, you know. When you're working with four holes a day, you could practically tell what every man was going to be firing!

Q. What about sanitation within the mine?

JC No such thing!

Q. No such thing?

JC No such thing! You went up an old heading, or somewhere, if you wanted to do a job, that was all!

Q. Pretty rough?

JC Oh aye. Oh no, although talking about sanitation, I can remember about being at school, when an old man had a horse and cart and came round and looked through the buckets, out in the middens, you know. You know, we had no inside toilets or anything like that!

Q. It was all dry toilets?

JC Aye, outside! Out the back, and this man had a job, shoveling it into a cart, with a horse and cart, you know! Taking it away and emptying it! These were the conditions when I was at school!

Q. Now, when you were down the mines, were there ponies?

JC Ponies, yes! There were ponies in Westwood! A lot of ponies in Westwood! That would be about the only one though! The rest of them were all haulages, you know! They had made them into haulages!

Q. And Burngrange was diesel?

JC Aha! Twenty Six...we had.....one, two three,four.....five horses in Twenty Six Mine, that's the other one along near Polbeth.

Q. Now, what about baths? Baths at the pithead?

JC Baths! You couldn't even get a bath in the house, far less the pit head!

Q. Far less the pithead?

JC No such thing as baths! You got a tub in the middle of the floor when you came home, that was all. We had water carried round from the wash house from a boiler.

Q. Using the soapy water. Now within the mine, what kind of a supervision did you have?

JC How do you mean supervision?

Q. Well, you had a fireman, and you had an inspector and.....

JC Oh, you hadn't an Inspector. They were only inspected about once every what.....six months or something, but you had your under-manager and

the Manager.

Q. How often did they come down?

JC Hmm?

Q. How often did they come down?

JC Och, well, the under-manager would be down every shift, but the Manager never was, he would be down about once a week maybe. See, he was the Manager of the four of them! Forty, Thirty Two, Alderston and Twenty Six. When I started work.....when I started work as a message boy I had to go and get these fireman's books and bring them into him at the foot of Gavieside office, for him to sign.....

Q. Oh I see.....

JC Rather than him go round that way, I'd just go!

Q. Did you ever want to become a fireman?

JC No, I never wanted to become a fireman, no.

Q. why is that?

JC Oh, I don't know! I attended Heriot Watt for a year for Mining classes!

Q. Yes, and that didn't attract you at all?

JC No, it did not! Electricity was coming into it's vogue then, you know! They took us down to yon place in Edinburgh, what did you call it.....?

Q. St. Andrews Square?

JC Eh?

Q. St. Andrews Square?

JC No.....where they held the dummy runs and one thing and another, where you'd sling packs on your back.....all these things!

Q. Oh, I don't know?

JC It was in the Grassmarket, anyway! Oh no, electricity was coming into it's vogue then. I didn't.....

Q. So you didn't fancy it?

JC No I didn't stick it.....didn't finish the course!

Q. Now, what about the check weighman.....or the weighman at the pithead?

JC He was paid by the men!

Q. Can you remember how much?

JC Oh.....they were paid faceman's wages actually. Whatever they reckoned the faceman's wages were at that time, you know. Not exactly what the faceman made, but what was reckoned a faceman's wages. The more that were that were there, the bigger the wages the check weighman would get!

Q. So he would get a percentage of the main faceman's wages?

JC That's right, yes!

Q. As a drawer, you had a pin?

JC A what?

Q. A pin? What was your pin?

JC Oh.....J.C. I think!

Q. Just your initials?

JC Just your initials, aye!

Q. On a tin plate?

JC Aha! Some of them were just a number. Some of them were just a bit of slate or a bit of cork or something, you know, you knew them all.

Q. Now, we're coming on to accidents.

JC Don't talk about accidents! I saw the worst accident ever I saw in a pit!

Q. What was that?

JC Ever anybody saw in a pit!

Q. What was that?

JC Fearsome, as they call it! It was in Twenty Six mine, aye! Hermand Mine! I was working to the left of the mine, and this other man was working to the right, and at half past two one day, he came running into me, I was staying on my lousing chips, finishing shots, and he said "Come on quick, Jock, McGraws killed". I said "Oh, no, Jimmy". Old Jimmy Robson from West Calder it was. He said " Oh aye Jock, oh aye!" So I went down, left some men things you know, and I went out to the bottom, and I can always remember Alex McCallum and somebody else were standing at the pit bottom. "Come on in". "No, I'm not going in", he says. So I said to big Jock Pettigrew, "Come on Jock, come on in with me". So I went in and up a cuddy. A cuddy was where you had to balance with a bogey, and I went in, and I saw the most fearsome thing ever I saw in my life. The mans head was sitting 5ft. away, up at the top, with eyes staring, his head just.....

Q. What had happened?

JC A big stone had fell! He had been filling hutches and he had got...he must have been cut there, off the end of the hutch, and another chap, an oncost chappie, not working with Jock Pettigrew....he came in, and I said to him "Away and get a big dod of screen.....you know, what they hang up for the air.....and bring it in". So Jock and I broke the big bit shale that was lying on top of the body, and when he came in with the cloth, we laid it out, and we lifted the body on to the cloth, and we separated the legs out, and I lifted the head up by the hair, and I put it between the legs, closed the legs, then we wrapped it up, and sowed it with string, and Wullie Aitken went for stretchers, and we got it all done, and out to the pit bottom. We'd told them to keep the bogey there ready for us coming out. So we went up and sent for the doctor. He was there, but he never opened it up, when we were there. No, no.....I told him right enough.....Doctor Walker. But I remember at the cemetery.....we all got half an hour off and a bus took us down to the cemetery for the funeral..... the Manager and under-manager came over to me and thanked me for what I had done, you know. "Oh", I said, "You don't need to thank me, anybody would have done that". "No, no", he said, "Anybody can't do that".

Q. And what would you say the main cause, or was the main cause of accidents in the mine?

JC Oh, I can't really tell!

Q. Carelessness?

JC Well, no, I wouldn't say that.....carelessness. Some of the things you had to do, that was reckless, you know. There was a young lad there, only fourteen years old, and he started over in Breich Pit, driving the pony. He started on the Monday and was killed on the Friday!

Q Oh heavens above! What happened?

JC He was driving the pony, and he went to open the trap door or something and the pony bolted, and he got jammed between the door and the hutches. Oh aye!

Q. And what about dust and gas? Was that bad?

JC No, I wouldn't say it was bad! Dust of course was bad!

Q. Pardon?

JC Dust was bad, and more especially when it came to use them electric machines. You used to hold the roller in your mouth, but the old ratchet machine, it wasn't dust that was coming out of it, it was the wee bitty flakes, just where you would knock in a nail, you know, with ordinary drills, whereas with these electric machines going that fast, it was just dirt that was breaking off. Oh aye, that was in 1935-36 they came in to vogue.

Q. Were you ever paid water money?

JC Aha!

Q. Can you remember how much?

JC A shilling a day!

Q. A shilling a day for water money?

JC For water money! Aha! Working on the dook! Oh, aye, aye! We got paid water money! I think there were some under-managers far better than others, you know, some you could get on with, and others you couldn't.

Q. Now, in case of injury, i.e. a broken limb or anything, were you paid compensation?

JC Oh yes! Oh yes!

Q. Can you give me some details?

JC No.....

Q. Now, were you paid a lump sum?

JC No, no, no, no. I don't know anybody incapacitated for life, you know, I don't know about that, but this compensation, we only got so much of your wage, before you started again.

Q. About half the wage?

JC In about that, yes! In about that!

Q. And for how long did that go on?

JC Until you were able to start again!

Q. Until you were able to start again?

JC Oh aye!

Q. Now, we're coming on to the doctor. What kind of doctor did you have? Was it a Company doctor?

JC No, no, no, no. Just an ordinary doctor!

Q. Just the ordinary doctor? the local doctor?

JC The local doctor! That was all! What did I say we paid him.....a penny an hour for him, a penny.....

Q. Were you a penny a week?

JC Aye, something like that!

Q. Now, in case of accidents in the mine, was the same doctor called? Did the Company retain a doctor?

JC No, no. It was the same doctor!

Q. The same doctor? The local doctor?

JC No, no. The Company hadn't a doctor of their own, no. None of these things! Unless, of course, the same man's getting paid from the Company instead of from the men.

Q. He was retained by the Company?

JC He was retained by the Company!

Q. Now, we're coming on to explosives. Can you remember the price of explosives?

JC No.....I can't, but I could tall you where to get them!

Q. Oh what.....well, go ahead!

JC My wife, she died six or seven years ago, she was a Short and her one, two, three sisters worked in Camilty, up in the powder works, and her brother worked there too, and oh, they were there from when they left school till they got married, practically, so that's where you get the price and from Mrs. Reid.

Q. Mrs. Reid?

JC Up Burngrange!

Q. Pardon?

JC Up Burngrange!

Q. Up Burngrange. Well I can go up there and see her.....yes, and see her!

JC If that's all you want to know, she'll can give you it!

Q. Now, how did you handle the explosives? Did you have them in cans?

JC Oh aye, we carried them! Carried them to your work, like!

Q. Yes?

JC Five pound! Five pounds of explosives in a can! Powder built up in half.....half pellets....half eh.....

Q. Halfpounds?

JC Aye, halfpounds, aye!

Q. So you just carried it along with you?

JC Carried it with you, along!

Q. And how much would you require, per shift? Any idea?

JC Oh, well, some days you would go through maybe 10lb. Other days you would maybe need 15lb.

Q. 15lb.?

JC And of course, what you had left, if you had fifteen down.....you hid the rest, you know, you weren't supposed to be using it!

Q. Now, the regulations, you know, the 1911 Miners and Mining Act, clearly states that one man will not fire more than two shots.

JC That's right!

Q. Now, how many shots did you fire?

JC Oh dear.....!

Q. Oh dear.....!

JC You fired as many as you needed to fire!

Q. Can you remember your maximum?

JC Maximum number of shots?

Q. What's the most you've ever fired?

JC Oh, about eight I think!

Q. Eight?

JC Aha! Actually we were boring with a hand machine!

Q. Yes? And that was in the what.....seam?

JC The Dunnet!

Q. The Dunnet seam! Aha! So that would be what..... two at the bottom...

JC Three at the bottom!

Q. Three at the bottom?

JC Three at the bottom! Two, two.....

Q. Two, that's it. Eight shots! Now was it gunpowder you used?

JC Gunpowder, yes!

Q. Have you ever used gelignite?

JC Oh yes, plenty of times! Many's the time!

Q. Now, which one did you prefer to use? Gelignite or gunpowder?

JC Gunpowder!

Q. Why is that?

JC Gunpowder. Gunpowder spreads! Gelignite's quicker!

Q. Which one would you say is a safer one to use?

JC The safest one to use?

Q. The safest one to use, yes?

JC How do you mean the safest?

Q. Sometimes you had wild shots?

JC Wild shots?

Q. You know.....miss-shots, or whatever it is you call it?

JC Oh aye, miss-shots! I see what you mean! I don't know....that was one thing. I never had any miss-shots!

Q. No?

JC I didn't need to have any miss-shots!

Q. Now, what about your tools?

JC You had to buy your own tools!

Q. Now, that was called a graith!

JC A graith!

Q. A graith! Yes!

JC Oh, all you had to buy was a shovel, a pick and a mash and a pitch.
And a drill, both machine tools.

Q. Can you remember the price of your tools?

JC Oh, no, no, no, no. You're away too far back!

Q. Don't worry too much about that! Now what about snibbles? Did you use snibbles?

JC Yes, you used snibbles if the hutch was running too far, you couldn't hold it.

Q. Yes, and where did you get these snibbles?

JC Over at the blacksmith's.

Q. The blacksmith made them?

JC The blacksmith made them!

Q. And what about.....well....wedges?

JC Wedges?

- Q. Wedges, you know, the wedge to put in the mine? Did the blacksmith make them as well?
- JC What do you mean?
- Q. (Inaudible)
- JC Oh aye, you got these from the blacksmith! I suppose you could buy them from the shop too, you know!
- Q. Yes?
- JC An ironmongers shop, you could have got them too!
- Q. Now if you lost your tools, or damaged them in any way, how were they repaired or replaced?
- JC It depends on how they were damaged! If you damaged them yourself, you replaced them yourself!
- Q. Would the blacksmith repair them?
- JC Oh now, how could the blacksmith repair anything! When a shovel's done, it's done! Unless you can take the shaft out, and put on another one, just buy the blade!
- Q. Now, what about clothing?
- JC Clothing?
- Q. Yes?
- JC Well, a pair of moleskin breeks! Pit boots, with studs in them, you know, studs!
- Q. Tacketty boots?

JC Tacketty boots! Aha! That's all we.....singlet you know.....

Q. Pewitt?

JC Pewitt, aye, that's right! How did you get all these words?

Q. Aha!.....Now, what about your headgear? Did you wear a cadie?

JC Eh?

Q. Did you wear a soft cadie?

JC No, no!

Q. No?

JC Oh, no, you had hard helmets!

Q. Oh, helmets!

JC And of course, in the earlier years, it was the soft cadie, stuck up with a bit of leather on the front and hang the lamp on, later on it was all hats, hard cadies.

Q. Did you wear a "bowyank"?

JC Aye!

Q. Did you wear it round your knee or around your ankle?

JC Oh no.....your knee!

Q. I know some people did wear them round their ankle.

JC That's right!

Q. Yes!

JC But there was too much danger of them falling on to your foot! The knee was the best place for it!

Q. Can you remember how many pairs of moleskins you went through in a year?

JC I wouldn't say you went through very much!

Q. Two, three?

JC No, no. You only got three! No, no!

Q. Now, have you ever worked in an opencast?

JC In an opencast, no!

Q. What about the.....Oil works?

JC No!

Q. No?

JC I used to go about the Oil Works, when I started at fourteen years old, taking messages up to the Addiewell Work big office, that was the big office for the mine, to get the fireman's books, and any other things for the guards, all these things, you know and eh, I used to go to the candle house, and get some candles and one thing and another from the lassies... ..waiting on the mining man getting everything ready for.....

END OF TAPE

JC SIDE TWO

Q. Now, were there many Irish workers in the mine?

JC Irish?

Q. Yes?

JC Don't talk to me about the Irish!

Q. Oh.....why is that?

JC They came across here in the 1920's. All these.....came across, and we asked them "Where do you come from". "Shotts". I asked another one "Where do you come from". "Shotts". They all came from Shotts.

Q. Oh, I see!

JC They had just landed over here with the one big boat. Oh no, there were about eight or nine of them came over.....and my god, strong looking men....oh, big looking men. One of them couldn't sit down on that carpet without some of his backside being out at each side. Oh dear....but for all them being big and strong looking, they'd no knack about them.

Q. Clumsy!

JC Clumsy aye! They came in for me many a time, man's a time to lift a hutch on, come down in the cuddy, and the hutch would stoat off that end. You couldn't lift that hutch! And it was the easiest thing in the world to stop it from happening, you know. Oh.....they were stupid men!

Q. Were there many worked in the mine?

JC Oh aye! Oh aye! There were a good lot of them! A good lot of them

stayed on, you know, and they were quite good workers. But eh.....
they were never any bother or anything!

Q. Now, what about the strike of 1926. Can you remember that?

JC Aye, I can remember that!

Q. Well, could you tell me about it?

JC No, I can't. I can't tell you much about that! I mind of soup kitchens
and guiding handicrafts and all these things about it! There used to be
a crowd of them go away up Tarbrax and everything, singing and playing
melodeons, on their lorry, you know!

Q. To make money?

JC To make money and all these things! But eh.....

Q. Did the men receive dole money?

JC Hmm.....

Q. Yes?

JC Ten shillings a week.

Q. Ten shillings a week?

JC Ten shillings a week, that's all we got!

Q. And what about the parish money?

JC Oh, we never got parish money!

Q. No?

JC No, no, that's all we had, ten shillings a week!

Q. And how long were you out on strike?

JC About six weeks!

Q. Six weeks? Yes?

JC Six weeks!

Q. And what happened when you went back to work?

JC Hmmmm.....

Q. What happened when you went back to work? Did you not return with a 10% deduction in wages?

JC No, no, no, no. I never had a reduction in my wages! From about 1930 to 1939, the wages.....there was no wages at all! If you got £3 a week, you were lucky! You were lucky!

Q. Now during the 1930's, you had..... they worked the system of three weeks work, one week on the dole.....were you involved in that?

JC Yes, I was involved in that! I was in Westwood at the time!

Q. Now, can you remember how much dole money you received?

JC No.....

Q. No, is it too far back?

JC No, you're not going too far back! I can remember away further back than that, but I just can't remember.....

Q. You can't remember the prices.....?

JC Not their prices.....

Q. What about politics in the mine? Did that interfere at all?

JC No, no. You never congregated! You congregated amongst yourselves! You always had your own place, and you had your piece, your own road, you know! No, it was never talked about down the mines!

Q. And what about religion?

JC Oh no, that was.....

Q. That was never spoken about at all? Now what about the Unions, what can you tell me about the Unions?

JC I can't tell you anything about them! They sold us out in 1920 and about!

Q. Yes, what happened then?

JC The Secretary or something.....formula wage rise, it wasn't satisfying the miners, and Nellies and O'Hagan, they were the two men!

Q. That's 12 ½ %.

JC Aye, they signed it!

Q. And then you lost an hour's work per day, didn't you?

JC That's right!

Q. Yes, and what about 1925? You went on strike then, didn't you? Can you remember how long you were out?

JC 1925?

Q. Yes! That's the time when the Company was going to take a shilling off your shift rate, or 10 off your tonnage rate. Can you remember that?

JC No.....

Q. Remember they were going to close about 30 of the mines. Woolford, Tarbrax Broxburn....that was what.... three of them. Cobbinshaw was another one. Can you remember that? That was just before the General Strike. But you can't remember that? Now, what about the pensions for miners?

JC I never got a pension!

Q. You never got a pension? You don't get one now from.....?

JC Oh aye, I get one now.....originally from Scottish Oils.

Q. Yes?

JC Oh aye, and I've had one every week since that! Oh aye!

Q. And did you.....were you entitled.....did you benefit from the Provident scheme?

JC No!

Q. Did they give you nothing from that?

JC I never got anything for that!

Q. Now, what about.....I know in West Calder, there was no institute, but you had billiard rooms.....what kind of sport, what kind of entertainment?

JC Oh, we had a good billiard room there! In fact, West Calder won the West Lothian League, (inaudible) was second, and we had a good football team too, at that time! Oh, aye, life was, what will I say, life was

better then, than what it is now! You see young men running about in the afternoons, going into these places! Bingo and these things! No, no, we were on the football field every night, either playing cricket or football..... then maybe when it came night, we were away down the road for a walk, about five or six of us!

Q. And what about family entertainment?

JC One day at the pantomime. That was all! One day into Edinburgh with your father and mother. That was all! Every year from about 1920, I would say, we went camping.

Q. Oh yes?

JC There were about ten or twelve of us. After the First World War, we went into Leith and bought two big tents, and got all the implements that we needed. Cups, plates, tin plates, and stuff and urns, a lamp, waterproof sheets, everything like that. We kept them in the Mossend Pavillion in a box till the following year, and we done Aberdeen, Montrose, Perth, Ayr.....Berwick-on-Tweed, and then Southport and Whitley Bay, year after year we changed. We never went back to the same place twice! Always went on!

Q. You liked camping did you? You enjoyed it?

JC Oh I enjoyed it enormously!

Q. Well, it was a change from the mine!

JC That's right! I enjoyed it! And then, it wasn't costing us at the time! Well compared to these days! We got to Aberdeen for I think it was 18/9d, I think it was!

Q. Now, what about the Gala-day or the West Calder Sports?

JC West Calder Sports were always held on a Friday. And they would put

up a notice at the pit. "This mine will be idle on Friday 30th or whatever date it was. Work will be resumed at 6p.m. the following day".

Q. So you only had one day off?

JC One day off!

Q. And were you paid on that day?

JC Eh?

Q. Were you paid on that day?

JC Oh, no, you weren't paid! Oh no, the West Calder Sports were always held on a Friday!

Q. What about the holidays?

JC You had to take your own holidays! No holidays!

Q. No holidays?

JC No, no!

Q. And how did you arrange to take your holidays. Did you tell the Manager..... or?

JC Oh aye, we told him! After we had all settled with him, settled amongst ourselves like, when we were going! Oh aye, but we were never paid for them!

Q. And how long did you take? A fortnight?

JC A fortnight! Always went for a fortnight!

Q. A fortnight? Aha! What about Christmas then, and New Year's holidays?

JC That was only two days! Christmas Day and New Years Day, all the holidays we got!

Q. And what about drinking habits? What would a miner drink?

JC My father would.....when he came in from the pit.....he would have a wee glass of whisky, he was never in West Calder, never was in a drinking shop! That was all he had.....a glass of whisky before his dinner and then he went up on the Saturday and Geordie Crookson was the barber there, my father and he were the two best draught players in West Lothian, you know, and I've seen old Geordie Crookson coming down to our house on a Sunday and the two of them sitting ben the room for hours, playing draughts. But no..... that was the only..... father.....well, he took a drink when he went up to Crooksons on the Saturday. But I never saw him drinking much!

Q. And what about gambling games?..... i.e. whippets?

JC We never bothered with them at Gavieside. Stoneyburn.....out there, they were all in dogs. But on Gavieside where we lived, there were only one row of houses, of course. We never had any bother with them!

Q. And what about pitch and toss? You never played that?

JC No! A crowd of them would go on a Sunday, and they would sit all day, playing cards!

Q. Cards? Pontoon?

JC Pontoon. Aye!

Q. Have you ever heard of Poacher Rae?

JC Aye!

Q. Have you heard of him?

JC What do you mean, have I heard of him?

Q. Have you heard of him, have you heard that name?

JC I worked with him for years!

Q. Oh well, why was he called "Poacher" Rae?

JC Oh, I don't know, he was (inaudible), anyway!

Q. Was he?

JC His son was called "Poacher" Rae, and just ten, fifteen, sixteen years ago, I was out in Australia for about two years, and I stayed with Poacher for a while, stayed with him for about a month, for a holiday! That was Poacher Rae.

Q. Did you play quoits? Did you enjoy that?

JC Yes!

Q. Yes?

JC There was an awful lot of quiting teams round about West Calder at the time, in fact I was signed, on the Scottish...one year. Poacher Rae was the head man of that team, he was a good quoter.

Q. Now, do you know of any miner's superstitions?

JC Miner's superstitions?

Q. Yes?

JCSuperstitions?

Q. You know, somebody for example says that a miner would not work on his birthday! Or on the day before a holiday! That was one of them which I have heard. So you are unaware of them anyway?

JC Oh, I can always remember when I was on the oncost in Twenty Six. I went up this main waste end and I was talking to the gaffer, he was called Sanny, and we were standing when a man.....in about ninety, a hundred feet from the face, when he started to shout, all the trees began to crackle and crack, you know, and we were shouting for him to "Stay in, don't try and come out", and oh, it went on for a long, long, time, and then it settled down again. Now just after that, there was a funny thing, I was up a place on the nightshift, minding a man's cuddy or something, and there wasn't much going on, and, and so I was up at other places, and the fireman came up, and he says to me "Do you ever hear.....do you know old workmates make trees go like that". Says I, " No, I did not". He says "A full moon". He says "Midnight on a full moon, if you're down the mine, listen when it comes to 12 o'clock"; he says, "There'll be this thing all moving.....it does that....."

Q. And have you ever listened for it?

JC Yes!

Q. And it does work?

JC Aha!

Q. Yes? And do you know the reason for it?

JC It's something to do with the full moon. So he says anyway. That's all I know.

Q. If you were given a chance to go down the mines again, would you go back?

JC Oh no, no, no. No, no, I wouldn't dream of it! Wouldn't dream of it!

Q. Why?

JC Why!

Q. Why?

JC It's not paid, it's not half paid down there, specially with water or smoke, or anything that I had to contend with! Oh no, that's what wasted me. As I told you, when we were sinking the Fraser, and they sent for us to come and make the way right, when we went in and bored our holes, stemming them, you had the key of the electric battery in your pocket. You came back up, and fired them, put your hanky on again, and came back down and got the compressed air spray, spray it all, so you got it all away, then go back up and get your piece. There was no pleasure in that! No.....

Q. Now, do you know of any old mining songs?

JC Any mining songs?

Q. Yes?

JC Don't go down the mine, Dad!

Q. Is that the only one?

JC The stockbrokers wife is in (inaudible). A terrible place with a bag of coal. That women never was down a pit, and seen the rotten reeking

hell of it! There was dirt embedded in the miner's shirt. She hasnae seen as I have seen, the body of an only son, brought broken from the pit.....oh, I can't mind the rest!Never seen anything..... what does she know about it.....I can't mind!

Q. And what about the other one, "Don't go down the mine, Dad!

JC Don't go down the mines. Daddy.

Q. Yes?

JC Oh, that's an old, old one. I can't recall the words!

Q. Is it the story of the little girl's dream?

JC Eh?

Q. Is it the story of the little girl's dream?

JC Aha!

Q. She has seen her father's mine on fire, or.....yes, aha! Now, have you got any special stories about mines, about the mine, any special anecdote some funny thing which has happened to you in the mine?

JC Eh?

Q. Have you any funny stories which have happened to you in the mine?

JC Funny?

Q. Aye! Oh, not necessarily funny, maybe odd or even sad?

JC That's the awfiiest thing that I told you about!

Q. That accident, yes!

JC Putting the man's head to one side, the body into the back of the hutch, and lifting it down, and then there was another one, I went to bring him up the pit too, there was a big hole in him, a piece of shale had got into him, and laid him in the fireman's place at the sick bay, and sent for the doctor. He said "Give us a fag. Jock, give us a fag....a cigarette". He died that night!

Q. Were you involved in the Burngrange accident?

JC No!

Q. Can you remember that?

JC Oh yes! 1949!

Q. 1947!

JC 1947! Oh aye, I knew everyone of them that was killed!

Q. You did? Yes, aha! What do you think happened then?

JC Eh?

Q. What do you think happened there? I know there are some different reports out!

JC Ah, well! What I think happened is that they should have all been jailed all those.....for having a stooping section, and a closed section inside a stooping section, and yet that was their course. Right into the other places! Oh, I thought that there was something awful strange about that!

Q. Well, most of them came from West Calder, didn't they?

JC Oh, aye, aye!

Q. Yes, aye, aha! Are they mostly buried in West Calder. Are they?

JC West Calder Cemetery, aye!

Q. In West Calder Cemetery. Aha! Now Burngrange.....pithead is just behind the cemetery?

JC Aye, that's right, aye!

Q. Aye, that bing which is on the opposite road. There's a huge bing there, isn't there?

JC Opposite the road?

Q. Opposite the cemetery, across the road?

JC That's Addiewell bing!

Q. That's Addiewell bing?

JC Oh aye!

Q. And the one.....

JC It's only half of it now!

Q. And the one on the other side?

JC Eh?

Q. And the one, then you have the Five Sisters, which is the Westwood! That's the one up here somewhere.....isn't it. Aha! And then which is

the one which is way, way in the background?

JC At Westwood.....Breich!

Q. Oh, that's Breich?

JC Breich, aye!

Q. And where is Polbeth from here?

JC Polbeth is along the road there! Polbeth's along there! Twenty Six.... that place they had for awhat do you call it.....the women has it for concerts and everything!

Q. The Hall yes!

JC That was the winding engine room!

Q. Yes, in Polbeth?

JC Aye!

Q. Yes! You said your father and your brothers worked in mines?

JC Oh God, yes!

Q. What mines did they work in? Can you remember?

JC Yes, my father died in 1920, and he was working in Twenty Six mine.

Q. Twenty Six mine?

JC Aha!

Q. Twenty Six mine. Aha! And your brothers?

JC Twenty Six mine, too!

Q. And how old were they?

JC But they.....were in the Army for.....

Q. Oh yes?

JC My younger brother wanted to go too, but my father wouldn't let him.

Q. No?

JC Not my youngest brother, but the one older than me.....but my father wouldn't let him go.....

Q. Aha! Now, during the war, you had a lot of Bevan Boys.

JC Aha! That was the Second World War though!

Q. The Second World War yes!

JC Aye!

Q. Were they accepted by the miners?

JC Well, there were a couple of them coming down with their collar and tie on, their clean shirts, you know, oh aye..... they didn't come to their work. They just came to get out of the Army!

Q. Would you say that they were conscientious objectors?

JC Well, they could be called that!

Q. Yes, and what about the displaced persons?

JC A what?

Q. A displaced person..... the Poles?

JC Oh no.....

Q. That was after the war. They were called D.P.'s Aha!

JC Oh, there weren't many of them!

Q. No?

JC No. One or two scattered about!

Q. Well, I think that's fine, I think that's it!

JCthe Reckabites.....

Q. And what about the Shepherd's Society?

JC No, we were never in them!

Q. The Yearly?

JC Eh?

Q. The Yearly Society? Can you remember that?

JC Aye! But you got your money back out of that, once a year!

Q. Yes?

JC What you put into it!

Q. And that gave you your holiday money?

JC Aha!

Q. Yes?

JC Oh aye!

Q. And what about the houses?

JC Oh.....Nothing to what they are now. I wrote an old poem, a Paroday from Gavieside. Oh.....an awful lot of verses.....

Q. Yes, aha!

JC And I said it to a Guild round there, a Church Guild one night, and it brought back a lot of memories to them!

Q. Have you ever seen the poem that was written for the men who died in Burngrange?

JC No!

Q. Have you never seen it? Would you like to see it? I have a copy here. Yes you have it!

JC Can I keep this.....?

Q. Yes, certainly by all means! I can always get some more done!

JC I never knew this.....knew about this!

Q. There were a lot of men that died.

JCsomething about Jones.....

Q. Yes from Bathgate.

END OF TAPE

Transcript

JC

Industrial
Information

I started in twenty six mine when I was sixteen. I fired the boilers if the fireman wasn't out.

Oncost

I then got a job at twenty six mine when I was nineteen on what they termed oncast, and they started to renovate Twenty six mine, Polbeth in 1920. They started to renovate it, and they were eighteen months at it, they ran a rake of four hutches at a time, and then a double road, on the carriages that only held four hutches, as four were going down, four of them were coming up.

The oncast was what they termed lining up the cuddies, laying roads, laying crossings and all these things. I always thought I was working harder than the men that were filling the shale.

I told the boss. Matt the gaffer, 'I am leaving to get a job in the drawing and filling'.

Because I just thought that I was getting it put on to me.

The man who was on night shift would leave work with the gaffer, 'Get JC to come and lay up my cuddle tonight', when he wasn't working you see. I'm working harder than what the fillers and drawers are working. I was doing everything in the

Magazine Man

pit. In face one week there was no under-manager, and I had to do his job, and I had no certificates or anything, but I had to see that everybody on the oncast was working at their stations. I've seen me going out to the pithead at night, and oh, the magazine man's not out today, go out to the magazine and fill the powder, and then you were down the pit and down the mine, because there was somebody else not out. I've seen me working there when I was on oncast, somebody would come along to the house at 10 o'clock at night to tell me to come up to thirty two pithead, and do the pitheadmans' job as he has not come out. I told them I would do it if I got the same wages as I get down the pit. I had also to work at Twenty Six in the morning. It was getting too much, so I said I want to start drawing and filling.

Drawing and Filling

I told the underground manager that I am looking for a job drawing and filling. So I started drawing and filling in 1930. This was the time when they were reducing the output at Twenty Six, and we were sent to Westwood.

Westwood (Faceman)

They sent three squads Westwood. I was there from 1930 to 1939.

Wages	I was continually having a row with the gaffer. For Westwood was overstocked with men, you would get hutches to fill three days in a week, and then the next three days you would get nothing. I had hardly anything in a week, you couldn't make wages with it. Oh many's a row I had with the gaffer, he was wanting me when the hutches came in, to stoop them away.
Hermand	In early 1939, wee Tarn Brown came to see if I would like to to to Hermand.
Shaft Sinking Hermand	He said they are starting to sink a new mine at Hermand. I cut out the height through clay because you were not on a seam to start with.
The Seam	The seam's come down that way, and you were going down that way to meet it.
Boring Iron	We set off with a boring iron, which was a big pointed thing, and somebody standing with a pothammer and one standing cutting to give it a bit of a run.
pay for Boring	I mind it was Forbison, the Manager, he came up to try and get a contract signed with us. He said I'll give you £14 a fathom', to sink that big mine, 12 feet wide and 9 feet high and laying the road across.

Shifts I came out on dayshift instead of backshift. Two of us were on the on shift that week and we laboured.

Measurements I remember it went down like that, it had a plug at the top, and they surveyed it, from across the road until they got to a depth it was to go down on the road measured, and they gave us a gradient of 1 and 2-i, when a rib came in the roof.

Steel Rib A steel rib is about $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" thick, but you couldn't bore it through even, it was practically steel, and that is what we always termed a pavement rib in the Duddingston.

Firing Shots I remember the Manager used to call in when we were firing shots and he would say 'What rib that John', I told him it was a pavement rib, as it had all been surveyed out and everything. He said, 'I don't care whether it's surveyed or not, there's not another rib in the Dunny Seam, so we had to Level it out again, and go down again that made it different guages in the mine. I had a place and three men working with me. When they were coming to us they were sinking the hit anyway. Two shafts down it. They had 950 feet to go down before they could connect it. They put men on to sink this

round, to take this round to the one that was down, to take it in about 100 feet, then turn that way for the mains, to catch the other one. So they put men on it, and they could hold the roof. It was just about 30-40 feet in from the bottom, and when you were firing shots, you fired with the electric cable of course, and you carried the key, the firer in your pocket, like on the surface, and then you would bore your holes and fire them and roll a big scarf round your face and neck, and start the compressed air up and go up again.

Wages

We weren't paid a standard wage, like the shale miners, we fixed the contract, so we were paid by the ton.

Tonnage Rate

I can only remember at Fraser Pit I had twenty three men working for me, some of them we machine men, others were stemmers, and then you had the wooders coming behind that, putting all the trees, and then the drawers. Now if he filled a hundred tons a week he got an extra pound. If he went to the 100 tons in his six days in the Eraser Pit, it was terrible. You were boring holes, and the water was running on top of you.

Worst Pit

The worst paid pit was Westwood.

They wouldn't give you quite the money that you would want. They would just give you enough to take in a day, and then come the end of the week, they would pour more hutches onto you to make up for what you had lost over the three days.

Best Pit Twenty Six pit was the best in every way, but there was only one pit better for shale, that was Thirty Two, it had a roof like glass, every other pit you worked with plates, to peet the shale off. You never needed them in Thirty Two. I think I have done every job in the pit.

Stoop Widths The stoops were twelve feet Westwood, Twenty wide. Westwood was only 9 Six and Thirty Two feet high. These had a good roof and you could just put your shots up to within a foot of them. The rest of them had pretty scabby roofs.

Shifts We worked eight hour shifts. There was only two shifts, dayshift and backshift or dayshift and nightshift. It was either dayshift and backshift or dayshift and night-shift.

Make Up Well, the make up in Westwood that I was telling you about. I had 9/9 a shift, a drawer, 9/3 and that was all we were paid, but we could be paid if we got hutches to fill with.

Deductions I know when I started first I had four bob a day on the books. I had a penny for the reading room, and twopence for the doctor.

Burngrange Electric. We were starting the machines up there, they were electric machines for boring with, but I didn't fancy it. There was too much stoor coming out into your mouth. I was told I could get a job up there, you know siemeons or electric machines, but I was working with old ratchet.

Old Rachets You could bore four holes a day, and you can blow as much stuff as you need, with four holes a day, it was murder, we were firing at all hours! You know you could bore your holes in half the time, but when you were firing at all hours of the day, and it was continually smoking.

Water in the Mine I had a lot of water in the Dook, that means the one that was going down. We had a wee pump going.

Ventilation Ventilation was quite good in Twenty Six, but at Burngrange firing all the times of the day, when you were working with four holes a day, you could practically tell what every man going to be firing.

Ponies There was ponies in Westwood. Most of them were in the haul-ages.

Inspection The inspections only took place

about once every six months, and the undermanager would be down every shift, but the Manager would maybe come down about once a week, because he was the Manager of Forty, Thirty Two, Alderston and Twenty Two.

- Mining Classes I attended mining classes at Heriot Watt for a mining class, as electricity was coming into vogue. They took us to St. Andrews' Square, where they held dummy runs and one thing and another, but I didn't stick the course.
- Mining Tools You had to buy your own tools, which was called a 'graith'. You bought a shovel, a pick and a mask and a pitch, and a drill, both machine tools.
- Snibbles You used snibbles if the hutch was running too far and you couldn't stop it. The snibbles were made by the blacksmith. The wedges were made by him as well, although I suppose you could buy them as well at an ironmongers shop.
- Damaged Tools if you damaged them yourself, you had to replace them yourself.
- Irish Workers There was a lot of Irish Workers in the mines. They came across here in the 1920's, and when they were asked 'Where do you

come from?' they answered 'Shotts'.

They came in many a time to lift a hutch on, come down in the cuddy, and the hutch would stoat off that end. You couldn't lift that hutch, and it was the easiest thing in the world to stop it.

Strike

I can't tell you much about the 1926 strike. I remember the soup kitchens. Crowds of them used to go to Tarbrax, singing and playing melodeons to make money.

Dole Money

We got dole money of ten shillings a week while we were on strike. From about 1930 to 1939 there was no wages at all. During the 1930's they worked a system of three weeks work, and one week on the dole.

Unions

I can't remember much about them, they sold us out in 1920. The wage rise wasn't satisfying the men. The rise offered was 12 ½ % , and they signed it. That was when we lost an hours work per day. That was when the strike was called.

Closure of Mines

This was about the time when

they were closing some mines.
Woolford, Tarbrax, Broxburn
and Cobbinshaw.

Miners Pensions I never got a pension from
Scottish Oils.

Holidays We had to arrange our holidays
with the Manager, and after
we had settled with him, we
settled amongst ourselves
when we were going. We always
got a fortnight, but we were
never paid for holidays.
Besides the two weeks we got
the Christmas and New Year
holidays.

Finished with
the Mines I would not dream of going
back down the mines. It wasn't
a good paid job, especially
with the water and smoke you
had to contend with! Oh no
that's what wasted me. As I
Told you when we were sinking
shafts, and they sent for us
to come and make the way right.
When we went in and bored our
holes, stemming them, you
had the key of the electric
battery in your pocket. You
came back up, and fired them,
put your hankie on again, and
came back down and got the
compressed air spray to spray
it all, so you got it all away,
then go back up and get your
piece. There was no pleasure

in that.

Mining Accidents

I saw my worst accident in Twenty Six mine, Hermand. I was working to the left of the mine, and this other man was working to the right. At half past two one day, he came running into me, I was staying on my lousing chips, finishing shots. I was told to come quick. Jock McGraws has been killed. So I went down and left some men things you know. I went up the cuddy, (a cuddy is where you had to balance with a bogey), I went in and saw the most fearsome thing ever I saw in my life. The mans' head was sitting 5 feet away at the top with eyes staring, his head just in full view.

He had been filling hutches when a stone fell, he must have been cut there off the end of the hutch, and another chap called Jock Pettigrew came in, and I said, 'Away and get a big dod of screen and bring it in' When he came in with the cloth, and I lifted the head up by the hair, and I put it between the legs, and closed the legs, then we wrapped it up and sowed it with string. We'd told them to keep the bogey there to take us out.

There was another accident at Breich Pit. A young lad there

he was only fourteen years old, he started on the Monday and was killed on the Friday. He was a pony driver, and he went to open a trap door or something and the pony bolted, and he got jammed between the door and the hutches.

- Compensation If we had a broken limb you were paid compensation in a lump sum.
- Doctor The Company did not have a Doctor. In the case of an accident the local doctor was called.
- Explosives We carried explosives in a can in half pounds. We used 10 lbs to 15 lbs. If you had any left you hid it. The maximum of two shots could be fired at one time.
- Miners' Clothing We wore a pair of moleskin breeks. Pit boots with studs in them (Tackitty Boots), and a pavitt. You wore a soft cadie, stuck up with a bit of leather on the front and a lamp hung on it, later on it was all hard hats, hard cadies. We also wore a 'Bowyank', you wore it round your knee, but some people wore it round their ankles. But there was too much danger

of them falling on to your foot. The knee was the best place for it.

Oilworks
The only thing I had to do with the oilworks, was when I started at fourteen years old, taking messages up to Addiewell Work big office, to get the foremans' books, and any other things for the guards, I used to go to the candle house and get some candles.

Domestic Life
Family Size
Our house was a room and a kitchen. I was two houses made into one. There was eight of us. Four boys, two sisters and my mother and father.

Lighting
Lighting was by paraffin lamps, as there was no gas or electricity. We got the paraffin at the Co-operative, and it was very cheap.

Social Life
We had a billiard room at West Calder, and we won the West Lothian League.

Football Team
We also had a good football team, and we were on the football field every night.

Pantomime
I went one day with my father and mother.

Camping
There were about ten or twelve of us. After the First World War we went into Leith and bought two big tents, and got all the implements that we

needed. We kept them in Moss-end Pavilion in a box till the following year. We went to Aberdeen, Montrose, Perth, Ayr, Berwick-on-Tweed, and Southport and Whitley Bay. We never went back to the same place twice. And then it wasn't costing us at the time. I think it was 18/9d.

Gala Day West Calder Sports were always held on a Friday, and they would put up a notice at the pit. 'The mine will be idle on Friday or whatever date it was. Work will be resumed at 6 pm the following day.'

Drinking Habits My father, when he came in from the pit always used to have a wee glass of whisky before his dinner.

Playing Cards A crowd used to go on a Sunday and they would sit all day playing cards, like Pontoon.

Quoits There was an awful lot quoiting teams around about West Calder at that time, in fact I signed on the Scottish one year. Poachers Raw was the head man of the team, he was a good quoter.

Miners Superstitions I can always remember when I was on the oncost on Twenty Six. I went up this main waste end and I was talking to the gaffer, called Sanny, and we were standing when a man

in about ninety to about one hundred feet from the face, when he started to shout and all the trees began to crackle and crack, you know, and we were spouting for him to 'Stay in, don't try and come out', and it went on for a long long time, and it settled down again. Now just after that there was a funny thing, I was up a place on nightshift, minding a mans' cuddy or something, and there wasn't much going on, and so I was up at other places, and the fireman came up, and he said, 'Do you ever hear that old workmates make the trees go like that.' Says I, 'No, I do not.' He says, 'A full Moon.' Midnight on a full moon, if you're down the mine listen when it comes to 12 o'clock, and there will be this ting moving. It's something to do with the full moon.

I wouldn't dream of going down the mines again.