

WG

SIDE ONE

WG Well, as I say it was, in the Spring, away about March or April 1927, before I started. I just left the school at Christmas before that, I stayed in Duntarvie View with my mother and father, he was a retort shift foreman in the Works at the time, so I got into the labouring squad. Well, the youngest laddie that was in it! However, the carry on that used to be, you know, with the older ones, you got a bit of kidding and one thing and another, there was some heavy work then too. You were working with the older men and you had to do your share! So I mind, I would be about.....about sixteen years old, I used to be up in the stow, carrying two hundredweight bags of sulphate, and there was one year there was an awful carry on, an awful lot down with the flu, and they had to use some of us young ones for to do some of the work that the older men were doing! Of course, we thought..... that we were daft enough.....we could do it, and that's how it went on, so I was there, I guarantee, oh, before I was eighteen! I was shifted across to the retort squad. Well, at one.....at one time, they used to start at twenty past six in the morning. Well, they reverted back to half past seven. Well, with being half past seven, there was nobody there to take the place of a man that couldn't come out at six o'clock, and the chargers at the time started at seven, so it was a matter that they had somebody, so I got chosen, to be sort of spare man, and I was out there at six o'clock in the morning. Well, if there was nobody turned out on the tip, I was to go up the tip, or if the dropping, taking the shale over from the retorts, burnt shale, I would go on to it, and then I had to wait till seven o'clock to see if the chargers were out, if there was somebody off there, I'd go on to the charging and I started that! But during the period before that, there was.....I had a wee spell on the chain, you know, the haulage,/ you know, sending the hutches up to the chargers, and the boy had an accident, and he was off for about three months, and it was on it! But eh.....

GC Can you remember how that accident was caused?

WG It was caused with.....he got knocked down with a car in the main street! That was on a Saturday afternoon. I think that he was coming out of the Tally-Ho, and I got put on the job, so I was on it for quite a while, and the green shale, at that time, as I say, it was all, the shale came from down near Hopetoun, Duddingston Mines, and Whitequarries, and that other mine.....oh, I can't mind the name of it, again now, but there..... there were three of them, anyway.....

GC Was that Glendevon?

WG No! No! Duddingston was down this way, down near the Newton Village!

GC Yes!

WG And Whitequarries, it went towards the other way, there was a railway put in across to it, and (speaking to someone else in the room) and Eh! What was the name of that Mine that used to be over there again! (Someone else speaking) Tottlywells? Tottlywells Mine, that was the other one, Tottlywells, that was nearer hand, and it was all electric locos, just something the same style as the tram cars, the electric cars in Edinburgh, the Westinghouse Patent, with the overhead wire, and it used to be quite a time, maybe sitting in the morning, or whenever you started, on the charging, when I got on to the charging. Well, before I got to the charging, as I say, I was doing spare time, charging, dropping, even in the sulphate house, and the dryer, and the machine taking the bags off, and one thing and another! Anything, gas pipes or anything, you got on to it! I got quite a fair share of the lot, but eventually the idle week started, that was three weeks work, and then a week on the dole, well, they brought in men from Philpstoun and that, they had been idle..... their Works had shut down..... and put an extra shift on, therefore you had three weeks work and a week on the dole. Well, I got put on the ratchet pumps, and that was three shifts, but I wasn't too happy with that! Right enough, I knew the job, and you had all the work to do there too, because you had to watch for the pumps, and you had to regulate them to get so much shale down for the dropping, you know to see that everything was working and

you had to go down and use a key, and turn down the retort to the man up on the top, he was dipping them to see if they were moving. If there were maybe some that were wrong..... the heating up, they wondered what was wrong, you see! You had to check up and see what was doing. However, there was another chap, we had a change of the charging and it was only two shifts and he asked me out, but that time, the Manager was Mr. John Peutherer. His son was Doctor Wilson Peutherer, that was the Manager of Grangemouth, and Davy and him, they stayed in the house across there, off Castle Road here, and I.....remember I asked him about this chap wanting a change and he wasn't going to change and I says, "Oh well!", "I doubt he wasn't very happy about it". However I gave him another week and I asked him, and he says, "Well, I don't want you to change, but, if you like, go on". So I went on the charging, and I was on there for twenty odd years, but it was the heaviest hitches we had, as I say, in the shalefields, but it was a heavy job! Well, you went out there in the morning, a wet morning, a frosty morning, snow or anything, snow, that was your biggest bug, you know, pushing those hitches up empty, or even trying to get them down into the retorts in the snow and frost, and in the morning you would maybe get soaked, you would be sitting there waiting maybe, on the shale coming in, after you got the place cleared up in the morning, and you were waiting on the shale, and you would get it, (inaudible) your clothes just dried on you! But they built baths and you had hot and cold showers in there, that was a godsend to us being used to coming into the house and having to get into the sink and the boiler and get washed up, that way, it was.....it made a big difference when they put the baths up. But really, going back, we had some good times, too. Well a lot of them, there was a chap there, the now, I think he's working in, .... Young Nicol, he's working up there in the Cameron Iron Works, I think, or somewhere up there, he had a photograph lately there, and he was showing it, and a boy brought it down, he was letting me see it. It was Winchburgh Gala-day one day, and we were going out on the backshift, and we were standing across there at the wood going up there to the Work, where you went up to the charging, and this photographer came down and took a photo of some of us. There was young Lappage from Broxburn, and Natty dark from Broxburn, there was Alfie Nicol, that's

the boy that I'm talking about that's got the photographs, and one of the old loco drivers, Jock Johnston, and Bobby Pritchard from Winchburgh, and myself, and I came across that photo lately, but I can't.....I don't know where it is now, you know what I mean, when you put things away, and as I say, old photos..... there was an argument had got up about that one that I was telling you about, that was in the Courier last year, and it was old ones, and they said that it was 1939, now, it couldn't be 1939, because I wasn't in the labouring squad in 1939, I was married then! In 1929 I was only a laddie of about sixteen years old, in the labouring and as I say, there was only two of us left now, Hughie Crawford and I, now Hughie's dead, and I'm the only one left, in that photograph, but it used to be quite enjoyable. I've seen me, sometimes, even after the war years.....when we weren't away in the Army and that, they would maybe come up for you, on a bad night, to go up to the tip, to give them a hand. Well, you were a family, and you took extra shifts and you done it, and I've seen us getting up that tip, and whenever you got up the top, you had to go on your hands and knees to get along to it, along to where the men were, to give them a hand, but as I say, they were all good sports and good fun. Everybody, I mean.....we maybe had arguments.....and anything like that, but they were all friendly arguments. There's none of them like they are in the present day! Really it was.....we had.....but I don't... know.....

GC What would you say was the hardest of your jobs, at Niddry Castle Works?

WG I would say the charging, because the weather had a lot to do with that! See.....you weren't covered across, and your rails were wet, or they got mucky, or if it was frost or snow, or anything like that, it was murder, you would need a horse. Some of the Yankees came up during the war, American Servicemen, and they were up there..... there was a big deputy with them, and they were standing looking, and there was a Sergeant there, and he says, "My God!", he says, "You know, in America", he says, "The darkies wouldn't do that!" He said, "You use a horse

(inaudible) on a job like this!" I said, "But we happen to be the horses!" But we felt fit, we were alright! I thought nothing of it! I'm paying for it now, for the soakings that I got now, with arthritis and that, in my legs and shoulders! But really, oh, I don't know! We had our own thingummy..... the bowling club and everything else, down there, the Scottish Oils, the Works, they had the bowling club. We had it! And then they had the golf course down there, at Niddry Castle, and it went defunct, but it's opened up again now! And really, I was quite young, when I started the bowling, and now I'm just on the old side now, for getting down to do it, but my son, he's taken over, Billy, he's doing well! Indoor bowling and that! But I don't know...

GC And where did you live when you started work?

WG When I started work with the Scottish Oils, as I say, I lived with my mother and father, at fourteen years old, but when I was married, I stayed in Castle Terrace, that was my first house, I lived in a room first and then I got a house down in Castle Terrace.

GC That was a single end?

WG A single end.....aye! Aye, in '53! I lived in.....and an old chap gave me his room first, and I was in it for about nine months, and then I shifted in to 53 Castle Terrace, and then I got across a swap from an old woman, Mrs. Young, into 46, across the road, because it had one room more, and by that time I had four of a family, three sons and a daughter! Then when they started renovating the houses here, they asked me to come in here, but I wanted to get back to my own house over there, but no, the family, they wanted to stay here, so that was it! But, taking it on the whole, well, the Company had a lease on ground round about here, and there were allotment holders and that, and I started.....my old grandfather worked in the Oilworks there, he originally came from Oakbank, old Tarn Brown, down here, and I stayed with him for a wee while, and he had allotments all over the place, at the back of the tip, near Niddry Mains Farm, the.....had a big one, and I used to go there, I was twelve years old, and I've still

got that allotment yet! I've been working it all these years, and I took another two on, but now, the farmer..... there's some of them away, and I'm the only one that's left.....and the Hopetoun Estates were telling me, that as long as I'm doing the garden I can keep it! But if I give it up, there's none of my sons or the rest can take it, it's going back to the Estate, with the farm like! So, I was always keen on the gardening, especially potatoes and vegetables, but I was never much of a flower man, but it was really good, when you think on it like! I remember once, I was only about sixteen years old, when I was in the labouring squad, the long turn on, on a Saturday, you were out at two o'clock..... the shiftmen like..... this was the sulphate house and the drier, and this chap had been on the backshift.....well, the long turn on, he'd finish at nine o'clock and go home for his supper, and come back, to start at ten till six in the morning. Of course, he never came back! He was away to the dancing after a lassie in Linlithgow, he went to the Town Hall, the dance in Linlithgow, and never came.....never sent word across.....so they sent..... they sent for this other chap, older than me and here they couldn't get anybody! Eventually, they came for me and asked me if I would do it! Right enough, I was under eighteen and if your.....you went out on night-shift, you weren't supposed to! But, I wasn't bothering, I was..... getting double.....I was getting time and a half at that time, for going out, and it was more money for us, so I went out and done the shift! So, I.....went home and I went.....I think that they got somebody else to go on the Sunday night. I'm not mentioning any names, but the boy that didn't come out that they had sent for, that was in the labouring, when he came out on the..... labouring squad on the Monday morning, and I was there, there had been word left with the foreman that he was..... he was to go home! Because he hadn't turned out to do.....that job! In fact, he was off for six weeks before they started him again!

GC So, he was suspended?

WG He was suspended! In fact, he was going to get his books! But as I say, I had thirty four years! I was made redundant in 1961, and I was too young

for a pension.....fourteen to forty eight, and I went from there..... I thought that I would have got down to Grangemouth at the time, but however I got a job, finished up.....my last sixteen and a half years in Bruce Peebles in East Pilton, that's where I finished. And I retired in 1977, but.....

GC See, when you worked in the sulphate house, did you ever do any.... do you remember any of the countries that they used to export sulphate of ammonia to?

WG Well, I remember the first time that I went, and I was only a laddie at the time on the labouring squad, and that was before I left the labouring squad, I would be only coming up to sixteen years old..... we were working all night to put a big load, there were so many thousand bags going to Yokohama, and we were working all night at it! And we would get a break, and I remember we had a break, and they used to have .....well.....checkweighmen..... there was a belt, there were so many of us harrowing the two hundredweight bags up, and dumping them on this elevator belt and there were two men in the railway wagon loading the wagons up! And it kept going like that.....and there was a boy standing with this stencil, and stencilling the top of the bags as they went up, sulphate of ammonia, and that's.....what they were, and it really was quite interesting, but the light went out above the belt and here they wondered what was wrong, and of course, I got sent across to the power station there, and I went to get a globe, for to be put in, to come and put a globe in, and it wouldn't work, I said there was no juice coming through and they put the switch on and aye, it wouldn't go! So I stood on a bag of sulphate and put my finger up and I landed against the wall at the other end of the sulphate house..... there was juice alright! Those funny things like that, you never forgot them! I used to think, that was my playground when I was a laddie..... the Work! I was always getting on (inaudible) for playing in the Work and nearly ..... there was another thing that happened.....when I was on the charging we used to be.....you kept back so much, as I say, for putting shale into the chutes as I called them, reserved for a Sunday, you know, for taking the shale out on a Sunday, for the miners didn't work on a Sunday, and this was all taken out on a Sunday, well, on a Monday

they were usually empty. Well, when we were charging there was a man there to let us get so many, he put so many in! But, if he worked with us, we all went to that and put them in. So, the chutes were empty, and it was a Monday, and this stuff from Whitequarries was dour stuff to get out, you had an awful job of getting it to run, and I was.... we were finished charging and we were putting some on the chutes and we heard this sound like a youngster greeting, and one of the boys, Shug Sommerville's uncle, he went across to the other side, to look and see, for there was a wee path under the gantry.....scaffolding... and they used to use that.....going into the wood.....no.....he didn't see anything! So, just when he got up, he looked over and he looked down, there were three youngsters playing at miners, down at the bottom of the chutes, and one of them was my own son! And the shale.....it was lucky, it didn't come out when we were pooking it, and we drew the lever that opened the door of the hutch. If it had been Whitequarries stuff, they would have been dead, it would have killed them, and we wouldn't have know they were there. We wouldn't have got them till the Sunday, when we opened the chutes. I got a fright, I can tell you! Somebody went and told the Manager, Jimmy Peutherer was there then, and Jimmy came across, he was in an awful state about it! But the next day, there was barbed wire getting put up round about it, to keep any of them from getting round about it! Aye, there were three of them in it!

GC Do you reckon that saved them?

WG Aye, oh I mind, we used to have some queer jobs there! I've seen a wet day.....I mind one New Year's day especially, the chains broke three times and normally we would have cleaned up and we would be going through our shift, there was no backshift at that time on a Sunday, they..... they were all out on dayshift, and we usually got finished at about twelve o'clock, or the back of twelve, but we didn't get finished till about four o'clock that day! And it being a Sunday, well the pubs were open on New Year's day, right enough, from twelve o'clock till three, and here when the chain broke three times.....

soaking to the skin.....it was one of those days! It couldn't have been worse! With sleet and snow and everything! I was standing on top of the benches looking over and seeing some of the old ones carted down drunk from the pub, and I said, "New Year's day!" "Look at me, and look at them!" I said, "I don't think that I'll be working another New Year's day!" because they were paying us for it, and I never did work another New Year's day after it! I was married at that time and staying.....my family was coming up, but as I say they were happy days, they were all good mates that we had, and some days you could have a good laugh! Well, we used to play tricks on one another and one thing! I mind a boy, it was the time of the idle week, he had went across to the Fife line across there, there used to be a surfaceman's hut across there, and they took some of yon fog signals. Well, the rails that we had were narrower than the main line rails, you know, on the railway and put them on. Here they put this one on, we were sitting with this heat, we were waiting on shale coming, and the haulage was started, and the shale was coming up, and here they put one down below the gantry, and this old boy jumped on, and it went off with a bang! Well, there was hardly much danger of giving that man a fright! For that man was a Military Medallist in the First World War, old Wullie Cochrane and at the time, I didn't know, they put one down in front of where I was standing, well, I had been sitting and I got up to go and watch this .....and here it went off! But here, the hutch thingummied and it went right into my leg, into my thigh, and I could feel it! I had a pair of thon heavy pink drawers, that we used to wear, you know, the heavy salmon pinks as we used to call.....call them and moleskin trousers on, and it went right into my leg! So I said, "Oh my God, there's something wrong here!" And the boy came in to me (inaudible) walks in, and I opened my trousers, and the blood was running down my leg! You see, my father was shift foreman that night..... that day.....and he said "What's wrong!" I said, "It's alright!" So I had to go to the power station to get it dressed. They tried to get the Doctor, but he was away to a confinement in Philpstoun that day. It was Doctor Eraser Orr, he was a right old worthy, a good man! And.....however, at night, I went up to the Surgery, and he said, "I'll need to be cruel

to be kind here!" And he had forceps in it, and he put a thing away in it, and it was about an inch and a half deep, the thing that went into my leg, and he says, "You've got to see that this is clean, because that's covered, those things!" So, he couldn't stitch it, but he put a couple of clips in it, and however they wanted me to try and get out to the Work the next day, supposing I did nothing! I think that it would be for insurance purposes, but I couldn't go! My leg was as stiff as a poker! I couldn't bend my knee, because it was just above the knee, you see, and the flesh of the leg like that! But that was one instance.....of course, the likes of the charging there.....if the hutches came off the road, you had a bit of a struggle to put them back on, you had.....had to leave bits of fallen trees, you know, for lifting them! But otherwise, I would say, to be quite truthful, you wouldn't get young ones doing it nowadays! You wouldn't.....too much work!

GC Were there any strikes or anything, while you worked with the Scottish Oils at all?

WG Not where I worked, no, there were no strikes during the time that I worked not in all the years that I was there, there were never any strikes! There was a strike in 1926, before that.....went! And I mind of being a laddie walking with the band up to Uphall Station, and old Mick O'Hagan standing and saying "Right, boys, you'll have to go back to your work!" I mind of that and I was only a laddie!

GC Your father would be involved in that one?

WG Aye, aye, they were all involved in that one! But, oh no, there were no strikes!

GC And were you a member of a Union?

WG Aye, I was a member of the Shaleminers and Oilworkers Union!

GC Do you remember any of the officials names?

WG Oh.....now, wait a minute! Oh, I couldn't mind the name now! I think that he stayed in Pumpherston!

GC Was it Joe Heaney?

WG He was one of them! There was another one, I think it was, before him! I think it was before him!

GC And did you get any compensation or anything for that injury that you had?

WG Och, it was just a matter of, you went down to the office, and you didn't get much! At that time, you didn't get much compensation! I was off another time, for a wee spell! I got a lump of shale in my eye, a splinter of shale, in my eye! I had to go to the Infirmary, and....

GC And what kind of haulage system did you have when you were working at Niddry Castle?

WG It was just the same principles as the electric tram cars in Edinburgh, the Westinghouse overhead wire! Well, you see, they went to Duddingston, as I say and Whitequarries, and what was that old mine.....? Duddingston.....Duddingston and Whitequarries.....and the other one .....och, I can't mind the name of it again! But..... they used to bring in a rake at a time! Well, we had about a couple of miles to go till we got to Duddingston, and it was quite a way down, under the main road there, and under the Fife Railway, and right up, Tottlywells, that was the other one, Tottlywells mine! You see! The third one... it was nearer hand, but it was later in coming on! Duddingston was the first mine! And they had a haulage that went to Whitequarries. Well..... they were brought in and went through the breaker at the mine and the hutches were filled at the chute, and loco went in and it drew..... the wee loco drew twenty wagons at a time, but as I say, they were the heaviest hutches in the shalefield at that time, that we were using, and they brought up a rake. Well, sometimes you would get two coming, there was.....a bypass halfway up, where if a loco

was going up with the empties to take to the mine, it stood there, till the other ones came through, and then he carried on up to the mine with the empties, and came back with another rake, but they used to come in and we had laddies.....we had laddies coming up on eighteen years old, snibbling the hutches. Well, they would be stopped in the "lie", and then the loco would go out and the laddies would bring them in and put snibbles on them. Sometimes they would put a bit of sand on the rail to keep them from skidding to far in, and they put them in one.....I was on the haulage then, shoving them up to.... the chargers, up the hill, on the chain, and there was a laddie there on the snibbling and there were two.....at one time there were two greasers, and there was another one at the top, he was catching the empty hutches as they came off the haulage off.....off the scaffold, coming down from the chargers, and he coupled them all up, and he was quite a good wee.....you know.....company! (Son talking) I was a snibbler! Aye, but you weren't there that long! But, oh, after being so long, you know, on the heavier work, well, it got to be my turn on to the chain, and I was quite happy about that! I.....was only a year or two on it, before the Works shut down in 1961.

GC What had you to look out for, when you were on the chain?

WG Well, what you had to look out for was.....to watch and see that you didn't overload the brae, you know, put them too close together, for if you put the hutches too close, sometimes another brae, you had to watch when you were putting a hutch on that you didn't jerk the chain in too quick, because if you jerked it in too quick, there was a possibility that you would lift it out, the "jigger" as we called it, that held the chain, and the hutch in front, and it would caw back and cause a crash on the brae. And then you weren't in very good popularity with the chargers then, they had to come down and give you a hand to lift it on, but.....on a Sunday, as I say, it was all spare work, working on the chutes, and there was so much shale put into these chutes throughout the week, for a Sunday, and then you had to put the chain up on another gantry, and they came round like an express train,

coming round that curve, coming out of there, and you had to catch them when they were on the top of the brae and time it, so that you didn't jerk the chain! Sometimes you had somebody on.....on the front to give you a hand if it was a busy day, to help you steady it down, but really it was.....the weather had a lot to do with it, if the weather was good, everything else was good, but the same for the laddies down there, when the snow was on it, it was murder! Or frost, you know, the rails got dirty! They used to have nothing but greased hutches and then they got oil ball bearing ones, and they were a bit faster! (Wife talking) Was it over there that Robert got his foot hurt!/? Aye!

GC And what happened there?

WG Oh, he was a laddie at the school and I came across one day to get my tea. There was a certain time that you came across for your tea, I think it was about four o'clock, when you had cleared up the place, and one or two of the kids had been across there at the green shale. We called it the green shale across at the haulage, and one of the locos had been coming in with about twenty hutches, well, they waited until the loco was coming in the "lie" and they jumped on the back and got a hurl in to where it stopped, but here, this laddie of mine, he jumped on to this one here, he jumped into the second last one! They were just the railway wagons, whenever they stop, you hear the bump, bump, bump, bump, of the buffers, coming together when the train stops. Well, when this loco stopped, did his foot not slip down, and it got jammed in between, and there was a young boy, Arthur Devlin, a local lad, he took his piece across there in the bothy, and I was sitting having my tea, and the laddie came over to the door with him on his back, and the blood was running out of his shoes, so here, we sent for the Doctor, and took him down to the Baths, and sent for the Doctor, and the Doctor sent him into the Sick Children's Hospital! I had a job.....you know, when I went in for him, I had to carry him on my back along to the tram car to come home! He was in there for a wee while! The other one, the oldest one. Billy, he got his head burst down in the Work, too, jumping into a railway wagon, one of yon, with the sliding doors. He missed, and hit this bar for the sliding

doors, and burst his skull! He was sent to the Sick Children's Hospital! He had to get about twenty six stitches in his head! And he was in there for a week or two! It was just one thing after another!

GC Can you remember what your wages were when you started?

WG Well, the wages when I started down there at the age of fourteen, was twelve and six a week. I got a shilling pocket money, that's what I got! My old grandfather used to work down there, and I took my pay to him.....I was staying with him at the time, when I started working, and I gave him my pay, and he gave me half a crown. But after that I had to give it to my mother, and my mother wasn't giving me half a crown! She gave me a shilling, and that was enough! Of course, you could get a bag of coal for one and six at that time! As I always say, the old men, they could get a pint of beer for a tanner. You could get five Woodbine for twopence! Capstan, a tanner for ten! The wages then as I say, at my age, for a laddie in the labouring squad was twelve and six. A man on the labouring squad got thirty five shillings! If.....you had a shift job, the likes of the charging or dropping, you had about two pounds ten for seven shifts. That's what you got! But, as I say, there were no Baths at that time! And you were coming home like a nigger, and you usually had to boil up the water in the boiler or something like that, for to get washed, but whenever they got the baths, it made a big difference down there! Oh aye! Wages! Huh! Of course, as I say, maybe the wages weren't big, but the stuff wasn't dear, not like the present day! I started smoking the pipe when I was twenty years old! I was getting a two ounce tin of tobacco out of the Store for one and eleven, old money! At the finish up, I had to cut down the smoking, because I was hurting myself, I was smoking an ounce a day! I used to go to the fishing, with the Angling Club, and I took an extra ounce with me, and even on the charging, I used to go up and down with the pipe in my mouth, but here, now, if I want to go and get a bit of tobacco, I've cut down, I'm only getting an ounce and a half a week now! One pound, thirty odds..... one pound thirty four pence it is! For an ounce of Reeve Club, and I was

getting a two ounce tin for one and eleven, old money.....so.....

## END OF TAPE

Transcript	WG
Industrial Information	I left school at Christmas 1926, and I started work about March or April 1927.
Labouring Squad	I got into the labouring squad, and I was working with older men and you had to do your share. I had to be up at the stow carrying two hundredweight bags of sulphate.
Retort Squad	I was then shifted across to the retort squad, where I was chosen to be a sort of spare man. If nobody turned out on the tip I had to go up there to take the burnt shale from the retorts.
Haulage	I had a wee spell on the chain sending the hutches up to the chargers. At Whitequarries the hutches were brought in and went through the breaker at the mine and were filled at the cute, and the loco went in and drew it.
Loco	The wee loco drew twenty wagons at a time. There was a bypass half-way up, where if the loco was going up with empties to take to the mine, it had to stand there until the other ones came through, and then he carried on up to the mine

with the empties, and came back with another rake.

#### Snibbles

We had laddies coming on eighteen years old snibbling the hutches. They would be stopped in the 'lie', and then the loco would go out and the laddies would bring them in and put the snibbles on them. They would sometimes put a bit of sand on the rail to stop them from skidding too far in. I was a snibbler, but not for long.

#### Chain

When I was on the chain I had to watch and see that the brae was not overloaded with the hutches being too close together. If you jerked the chain there was a possibility that you could lift it out the 'jigger', as we called it, and the hutch in front would caw back and cause a crash on the brae, and then you weren't popular with the chargers then, because they had to give you a hand to lift it on again.

#### Sunday Work

On a Sunday it was all spare work, working on the shutes. You had to put the chain up another gantry, and they came round the curve like an express train.

#### Ratchet Pumps

I was put on the ratchet pumps, but I wasn't too happy with that, because I knew the job, but I had all the work to do there. I had to watch the

pumps and regulate them to get so much shale down from the dropping. When everything was working I had to go down with a key to turn down the retort, while the man up on the top was dipping them to see if they were moving.

#### Shifts

There was no backshift at that time on a Sunday. It was all dayshift, and we usually got finished at the back of twelve.

#### Idle Week

Eventually the idle week started, that was three weeks work then one on the dole.

#### Wages

When I started at the age of fourteen I got twelve and six a week, and from that I got a shilling pocket money.

#### Accidents

I came across one day to get my tea, and one or two kids had been across at the green shale, and one of the hutches with the loco was coming in the 'lie' and they jumped on the back of it and his foot was jammed in between. I was off another time for a wee spell. I got a lump of shale in my eye, and I had to go to the Infirmary.

#### Compensation

I didn't get much compensation for my injury, because compensation was poor in those days.

#### Unions

I was a member of the Shale-miners and Oilworkers Union.

The one official was Joe Heaney from Pumpherton.

Domestic Life  
Housing

I lived with my mother and father. But when I was married I stayed in Castle Terrace. It was a single end. Then I got a swap from an old woman, Mrs. Young, because it had one room more. Then they started renovating the houses here, and they asked me to move.

Family Size

I had four of a family, three sons and a daughter.

Allotments

I have still got an allotment, and I've been working it all the years since I was twelve. I was always keen on gardening, especially potatoes and vegetables. I was never much of a flower man.

Social Life

I used to go fishing with the Angling Club.

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