

WG SIDE ONE

WG Well, I started in Duddingston Old Mine, the one that ran under the Forth, which, you never knew that you were under the Forth....when you went in, you know, when you went down! I worked there for about....I think it would be about two years, and then they transferred us to Tottlywells, and we sank the No.1. Dook, and then we dug the companion to the No.1. Dook.

Q. When you were at Duddingston, what kind of work did you do?

WG I was a drawer! I was a drawer at Duddingston!

Q. And who did you work to?

WG I worked to my uncle, my other brother and my dad double shifted us, but at that time, places were very scarce in that mine, for the simple reason that it was beginning to run itself out. Though there was sometimes maybe in the region of about four or five in the one working place. So, you had quite a few, a lot of stuff to handle in that, these days, when you maybe had to handle about ten hutches apiece, which is running about 18cwt. to 1 ton each hutch, and oh, you maybe had about thirty six hutches, forty hutches, it's an awful lot, but you had two drawers and two facemen, or something like that.

Q. What year was this?

WG That was 1938!

Q. What age were you?

WG I was twenty six, well, I was twenty six when I left, I was twenty four when I started. I was about twenty six when I left, when we were transferred from Duddingston. That was the time when Wullie Thornton's dad was....Wullie Thornton's father was the under-manager then!

Q. That's the Rangers?

WG Aye, that's the Rangers.....father! Well, the places got that they were so short that they just said that we had to get transferred to somewhere else, so we were transferred to Tottlywells.

Q. Was your uncle....was he a contractor?

WG Well, actually my father and my uncle, were both the contractors, but in these days, it wasn't much of a contract business, it was just a matter of the faceman paid the drawer, such as.....actually paid us what they liked, if you could do a good days work, you could get a good days wage! I think at that time, when I started it was about 11/6d for a shift like, so maybe the faceman would have four shillings over that, or five, whichever! However, it didn't matter how much you earned, you maybe got the same, practically ever week!

Q. Did you get a fair deal with.....?

WG Well actually, the faceman used to make out the facts, but he had to buy all the shovels, all the ammunition, but he got a better deal than any of us, any time! But I quite.....in fact....the first day that I went down the mines, I had to.....I was on the drawing, and it was quite a long road, but it was level road. Now, I had never snibbled a hutch or nothing in my life before, and my oldest brother, he says, "Just take one hutch, and I'll take two". He had been at the game a wee while longer than me! I took one hutch in, but the sweat was dropping off me by the time that I got it in! He says, "You take two in the next time!" But however, we got there, and I just got them in slowly. You got used with it right enough!

Q. But it was hard work?

WG Oh aye, you had to work! You had to be able to use a shovel, you know, there were no mechanical loaders or shovels then, and it was all hand machines that they used, but over and above that.....and things were quite normal.

Q. They didn't have the electric machines then?

WG No! We didn't have them then, but we had the electric ones when it came to.....it wasn't electric, it was jumpers, it was air pressure ones, when we came to Tottlywells, but, when we came to Tottlywells, we dug the dook so far, then they dropped levels, and they broke a companion, too, in Tottlywells, but Tottlywells was one of the wettest mines in the area.. You had about 150 gallons a minute running into the dook, and you had to have a "snorer" pump in the dook, you know, draining it away from you all the time, and you were working in Wellington boots and oilskins, and a hat, trying to keep the water off you, but the naked light that you were working with was a bit of a problem too!

Q. So there was quite a difference from the first mine that you went in to?

WG Oh aye, the first mine was bone dry, when I was in, but we got this....it was actually under contract. We took a contract on, but the contract was only a set wage, you know, it wasn't making a wage, it was a set wage! But the set wage was over and above the ordinary wage, for the simple reason that you were working under conditions that were not normal! Actually there was 2/6d a day for working in the water, which wasn't paid.....

Q. It wasn't worth what you.....?

WG It wasn't worth it, but you....right enough, you didn't get pushed in any way, but you were still working! You had to show, you had to show that you were cutting ground and then you were going down 1 in 4, which wasn't very easy, you know, everything just fell, the water all fell to the face, and you were working with verges over your head, but you know.....

Q. You were still a drawer then?

WG Aye, of course, there was no drawing! You hadn't any drawing, for you see,

you had a tail haulage, and your tail haulage put your hutch at the face, and the tail haulage drew it away when you had it full. This is.....they had to have a special....well, it wasn't actually a special haulage of any kind, but, they had to pay attention more to the dook, than the actual..... the levels.....where they had levels off, they were taking a level off maybe every sixty foot, as you were going down sixty foot, they broke away another level on both sides. It was shaped on a basin shape, and it went round in the basin shape, you know, right round about, for your levels. And after that we went into a sand to a cross cut, because that was where we used the jumpers, we used the jumpers on it, it was a worse job then what the dook was actually. You had to lead in your screen cloths for to give you ventilation, it was only a half ventilation actually, you were getting, it wasn't like a return, just a half you had with the screen cloths up, so far to your face, and it was real sandstone too! It was a bit dusty too that, that job. You had to.....some of the jumpers that you could use, you could use water on them forbye the boring that you had, could put water right through your drill. I'll tell you about that later on, we used that in Whitequarries. But I ken quite a few years in Tottlywells.....in fact, I was in it, practically till it was finished, but after we sunk the dook in Tottlywells, it was more natural workings after that.

Q. Can you remember any of your workmates then?

WG I still worked with my own family, see this.....my father and my brothers .....and we were all in Tottlywells. My brother was with us too, there, but actually we weren't working four and five in a place, we were only working two in each place, double shifting each other. But the Manager there was my dad's cousin John Gibb. Not that we got on very well.....

Q. And where did he stay?

WG He stayed in Winchburgh! He stayed, in fact, three or four doors down from where we stayed, but him and my dad didn't get on very well, as far as being miners were concerned!

Q. Can you remember why they didn't see eye to eye?

WG Well actually, in the working conditions in a shale mine, you've certain clods and a stone pavement, and you sometimes got the roof breaking, when you were working in a shale mine, and what they termed blaes, was above the roof. There wasn't the same quantity of oil came out of it, and you often got a bit check, whether you were filling blaes instead of shale, but often that was the way! Maybe there was a bit argument on the point of that, and well, it was just a matter of, before.... the Manager, the under-manager was trying to tell you what to do, and they didn't even know very much themselves! To my idea! I'm maybe criticising more than I should but it was all the points that came up, during your working day, you know, you just..... That was in Tottlywells, which was alright, but the wet weather, with the wet conditions, was bad you know! Really bad! Mr. Keddie was the Manager then, he was overseer over the whole lot of the mines at that time. He was quite a local chap too! Actually in my boyhood days, I got a pair of leggings.....he was a bit older than me....I got a pair of leggings from Mr. Keddie, and I wore them quite a lot, in my boyhood days like, and they were good leggings! Aye, but, Tottlywells went too, it didn't last an awful long time, Tottlywells, it wasn't a big mine! And we worked quite a lot in the open....you know, near the surface! And this was during the time when the guns were going, at Tottlywells, during the time of the war, and sometimes when you were working right on the surface, sometimes when you took out so much of the step, what we called the step, and you had very little covering above clay and what not, we sometimes went up on the surface to take our piece. You could go up through the hole in the step, you know, to take our piece which was quite handy, but we were....but in the winter, the likes of this time, the winter time, the snibbles that you were using, they were sticking to your hand with the frost, you know, whenever you touched the iron snibbles, they were sticking to your hand, and of course we were taking that out of there, but we still had to draw it down to the haulage. It was actually near the surface and we had to go away down into the mine with it, for to get it up to the surface again! Which didn't seem very...what would you say.....didn't seem very right! But it was just a matter of....that you had to go down, what they called the cuddies, we called them cuddies,..! don't know whether you understand about cuddies, or not, but it was one hutch....you took one hutch down and the full hutch came up on the haulage

side, and there was sometimes maybe three of them to take down to the bottom level again, to go out to the level road.

Q. So you were working quite close to the ack-ack guns, were you?

WG Aye, aye, when you came up for your piece, you could see the gun-sites! There was actually a road, the Tottlywells road divided you...between you and the guns, you know, you were on the opposite side of the guns. There was only one road between you like, but you could see the guns right enough!

Q. And did they disturb you any?

WG No, no, I mean.... like.... they didn't disturb us much! The thing that we had to watch, was that we weren't disturbing them! But of course, the guns .....any time that I heard the guns, it was usually at night, you know, well through the night actually! And there was no nightshift in the mines, at that time.

Q. Where did you live at that time?

WG In Winchburgh! Abercorn Place! We were in Abercorn Place, even longer than our own house, you know, it was.....

Q. Was this an Oilworker's house?

WG Aye, aye, a Scottish Oils house. I was born in there, I was born in the .....and I stayed there for six years then..... twenty, thirty.....

Q. What conditions did you have, house wise? Did you have all the mod cons?

WG Aye, well, we hadn't all the mod cons, but we had quite a good house right enough! You had to make it nice yourself, and they had the baths of course, they brought in....the baths for getting washed in which was quite handy, they put them up, and some of the miners, if they wanted to use the baths, they got to use the baths! So I was wanting to use the baths, so we paid

four pence halfpenny a week, I think it was, for using the baths, which was....and you had a hot locker and a cold locker, one for your clean clothes and one for your dirty clothes!

Q. Was this in the Oilworks?

WG Aye...they were fitted in....we just travelled home from the mine, and we went into the baths, and then that was you, you just got bathed and into the house, which was only two minutes from the baths, which was really handy for us! It was a big difference to the miners, right enough! And yet, some of them didn't use them, which I think was stupid! Aye!

Q. And you went from Tottlywells to.....?

WG To Whitequarries, but it was a different kettle of fish altogether, of course, it was.....we had.....went into what they termed the "boss" workings, and it was actually a cross cut we took down there too, and we were started before we hit the "boss", and we were using..... that was diesel machines..... boring machines, and it was the water going, you know, a tripod type, and the water, you had water line, and you had an air line, and we were working maybe about fifteen feet high, and circle girdering, all the way, like when you circle girdered it, if you were going in. And that was diesel, had the water line in, as you were boring, you just had pressed the handle and your machine rose to your level, that you wanted it up to, and you bored your face like that. You were boring in the region of maybe about twenty eight holes, in the sandstone, in the cross cut like, and it was all electric shot firing, and you could fire maybe in the region of twenty six, twenty eight shots at the one time, which was your whole half circle breaking, and your shot firing system was from nothing to nine, at a tenth of a second delay. You had a delay of so long from nothing to nine.....and it was just actually.....you just thought it was the only one shot going off, but they were...all delayed and you didn't get the real break of the noise, for the simple reason, that they were so clean, one was just breaking into the other, into a system, we got them....we used, what they termed the "Burn" but, you had about six holes to bore in the centre of your face and you just...that was actually your "Burn" cut, at an angle, and you cut about six or eight holes

in the centre, and then you layered it after that, from top to bottom, you layered the bottom, and then you layered the top, and everything that was left to fire, you went back, so far back, if it went into a manhole, you just got a plunger and plunged it, the whole lot! Out! And it was all Emco loading, you didn't use a shovel....you had a shovel right enough, but you didn't need to do much shovelling, for your rails were laid right tight up into your face, and you had what they termed an emco loader which was a tip overhead bucket, and that did most of your loading, for you hadn't a lot of hard handling of sandstone, and then we hit the "boss", and the "boss" was....you hadn't as much boring, but you had an awful lot more safety work to do with your circle girdering and woodwork and everything.

Q. Did you feel that safety was quite important?

WG Oh aye, safety was quite good, the only thing that you had to watch was your shottfiring. You had to watch that nobody was around and you had to make sure that you were safe. You line was maybe in the region of forty yards back, back of the road, but you had to be maybe round two right angles from that, before you had to use the plunger. You know, you had to come back your road, maybe about forty yards, and then you had to go through two right angles into a manhole, and then round another right angle, in case anything..... the stuff had to fly by the manhole! But it was quite safe!

Q. Did you ever come up against any accidents? Fatalities or anything like that?

WG No....I never.....I was very lucky that way, I was never in where there was any accidents, but my older brother did! One of the.....when he was in the old mine.....my older brother, he carried a man up, who.....he had been killed.....

Q. which mine was this?

WG That was in Duddingston! I never experienced any bad accidents, at all, to

tell you the truth!

Q. Did you know what had happened to this man?

WG Well, it was a fall! Just a fall of....you know, something had just came in like, accidentally! I didn't know the man at all, it's just that I know that my brother, he carried him up, so far, till they brought him up the haulage line, carried him out. But I never even saw any real accident! Quite experienced about gas, now and again, right enough! For, in White quarries.....

Q. Was that a bad mine for gas?

WG Well, actually, where you get the "boss", you can get a collection of gas filtering up through the "boss" workings, and if you're up, you're putting up a circle girder, and if your light accidentally, above your head, if you put your head above the girder, you were maybe inclined to hit a wee pocket of gas or something. I got it maybe once or twice, maybe hitting a pocket of gas, but there was no.....there was no danger.... there was danger enough if there was time for it to collect, but it didn't have time for it to collect, you had your air system, which wasn't too bad, and

Q. That was capable of clearing it up?

WG Aye, capable of clearing the gas, of course, you had to test the place every time, after you fired your shots, for the simple reason, that you were always breaking into the....the new cracks, into the new "boss" workings which you can relieve gases out, you know, and where you get a lot of water, in any of the solid workings, when you get a lot of water, you usually get gas! We got experience.....we had experience of it quite a lot when I was in Tottlywells, right enough, when we were sinking down the dook. If you got a heavy surge of water, you got gas! Coming out along with it! You could see the gas bubbling out along with the water! That was Whitequarries! Well then, it finished in 19.....28.....52....I was four years in it....I was 48 anyway, when I finished in the mines. Actually they were transporting the shale to Pumpherston by this time, from the mines, (inaudible).

Q. Was this by rail?

WG No! By motor lorry! Actually it was the.....Orrs from up about Pumpherston or somewhere, they came from, at that time, they came from at that time, and it was all done by lorries. Actually the Oilworks were closed by this time, which, all the Oilworkers were mostly away into Grangemouth by this time. When Whitequarries finished, I was kind of lucky, I got pushed into Grangemouth too, so I had fourteen years in Grangemouth, in the work shops there, as a fitter, they took me on as a fitter, well, you were actually a fitter or a welder or anything, you just had to go with any of the tradesmen like, in the chemical factory. So I done thirty eight years within the Scottish Oils and the B.P. area.

Q. And did you prefer working at Grangemouth? Rather than underground?

WG Aye, of aye! I had a good job in Grangemouth, aye! In fact, I feel as if I could have been working in Grangemouth yet! However we had to retire! I retired from Grangemouth when I was sixty two, from 1958, (inaudible).

Q. Were you ever a member of the Union?

WG Oh aye, I was a member of the Union, I was in the Shale Oil Workers Union, in....when I was in the mines all the time, I was in the Shale Miners, and I was in the Transport and General to begin with, in Grangemouth, and then I was transferred into the A.E.U.

Q. Can you remember the names of the officials?

WG No...I couldn't....I couldn't tell you the official Union,....officials now! I knew some of the shop stewards right enough, that's about all! I can't.....

Q. Can you remember their names?

WG I couldn't think what their names are now! It was actually chemicals and I never took much....I only paid my dues and that was it. I never took

much interest in the.....as far as running anything within the Transport and General, or the A.E.U. Of course, you had no say in the A.E.U. anyway, it was all the engineers that had all the say there, you know, fitters and what not!

Q. Can you remember any incidents that happened when you were underground?

WG No.....well, you got an odd time where there was an accident, but we were always very lucky. I mind of one or two breakaways, the tail chain, you know, coming off, breaking away and there was two hutches on it. I just had to jump into a manhole when I heard it coming, but you could see the / sparks flying off the rails. You know, just breaking away, they were very near at the top, when something....och.... I don't know what happened, whether it was the chain broke, or two rope broke, but the two hutches were badly coupled up.....and you see it was four hutches that I took up at a time, and two of them broke away, so that.....it must have been a coupling, or something that broke, but oh.....you could just look out of the manhole and see them coming down and they just smashed right into the face at the bottom of it.

Q. And what did you feel was the cause of that?

WG Well, maybe it was just deterioration in the metal, you know, metal fatigue, that was in the couplings, I think would be the biggest problem that was there.

Q. Were these not inspected regularly?

WG They were supposed to be, but it's just like everything else, neglected at times! I believe.....but over and above that.....

Q. And when you went to Grangemouth, what kind of work did you do there?

WG Well, I actually started on the lawns, in the garden bit, and we used to go up to where the.....what they cried the Big House, but it was the place where all the Managers and everything, maybe met for conferences and what

not, Avon Hall, and done a bit of gardening up there, and finished up, they had some new starts, and they started them on the gardening and that..... I was put into the workshops. I worked..... I was connected to the workshops as a.....in fact, I actually pioneered the high-pressure water washing machine, which done quite a lot of cleaning tanks and cleaning out the inside of.....you know.....all the old carriages, and anything..... that done it all to a high pressure water, which was, that you were working with anything up to eight thousand pounds to the square inch, and in fact, it came in as a trial, and I was on the trial at that time, but I was nine years on the actual.....machine, when they got the machine, and there was quite a lot of .....it was wet work again, of course, so we were well fitted out in..... Grangemouth, you know, as far as the visors and everything were all.....

Q. So, you had all the protective clothing?

WG Aye! All the protective clothing! You had to, of course, because you were sometimes washing chemicals that were dangerous to your hands and face or anything, and you were sometimes washing a Phenol drum or something like that, a phenol tank. Actually I've seen quite a bit of the factory, in Grangemouth, for any job that turned up, it was a mobile machine, and you could go anywhere within the factory with it. We used to go to, maybe, that plant and this plant. You just went round about doing jobs. It was on a three shift system. You done three shifts.....

Q. When you were in the mines, how did you travel to your place of working?

WG You sometimes walked down....it was only about a quarter of an hours walk, twenty minutes walk, that was in Tottlywells, but when we were in Duddingston we got a hurl with what they cried the loco, you know the thing that hauls the.....wooden carriages. It was like some places in China, when we went in, in the morning, it was like an opium den! They were all sitting smoking!

Q. Did you smoke when you worked down the mines?

WG No! I've never smoked in my life! I've tried it, but I could never make any success of it!

Q. That's good! Did you ever have any experience of men that did take cigarettes and matches underground?

WG Aye! oh aye!.....

Q. Or the kind of thing that they got up to, to try to avoid being caught?

WG Well, you actually...hardly any of the mines that we worked in, they weren't what they called dangerous mines, I mean, there was never a search on. I think the coal is more into that kind of category as far as searching men, but practically all the mines, that I've been in, there were no searches on anybody, and they smoked in the mines quite..... Of course, you were working with naked lights most of the time, till I went to Whitequarries and then we were working with the electric batteries.

Q. And there were no searches on there either?

WG No! There were no searches! No! You just lifted your Glenny in the morning and checked with the fireman, and that was it, and that was you till you were coming back up again. The fireman visited right enough, underground, but that was about all! For this area....for...your ammunition caps, you're firing shots.

Q. And what was your relationship with the fireman?

WG Oh, it was very good! I mean, the relationship with even the Managers and everything, you just thought people the same as the miners like, I mean, actually the fireman had to be in communal...with the men, for the sake of his job, like, and that! Oh, the fireman...oh, there was no bother with any of the firemen! Oh, he could shout at you for not paying attention to your wood or anything like that, but it was for your own safety, that you were paying attention to your wood.

Q. And had he the authority to tell you to.....

WG Oh aye, he could check....your fireman could tell you that you were needing a tree up there, or you were needing something down there, or you were taking too much roof! Something like that!

Q. So he was like a safety officer?

WG He was just a safety officer! He carried a box or something like that, and that was the detonators for firing your shots. You only got issued with the amount of detonators that you were needing that day.

Q. And where did you draw your detonators from?

WG From the fireman! The fireman gave you...you just told the fireman, and he would take a note of how many detonators that you got, and he would just calculate it out at the end of the week, you had to pay so much for your detonators. I used to buy all my own ammunition, that was through the surface magazine, you took them down with you when you were going down.

Q. And where was the magazine situated?

END OF TAPE

WG SIDE TWO

WG Well, the magazine, it was, I reckon it would maybe be eighty yards or a hundred yards away from the pithead, or the minehead, whatever you would like to call it, but you had to collect your own ammunition, and carry it down yourself, but you were only allowed, I think it was in the region of .....you were only allowed about ten pounds of each. You had a certain amount, anyway, that you could only take down, maybe about ten or twelve pounds of gelignite, and maybe ten pounds of powder.

Q. What size was the magazine? Can you remember roughly?

WG The magazine would be maybe in the region of about twenty by ten, and it was just an ordinary stone building, but it had a railway sleeper fence round about it, so that nobody could get near it. You had a lock both on the magazine and on your sleeper fence, which was well secured, and you had quite a good lightning conductor on the magazine too.

Q. And who held the keys for the magazine?

WG The actual engine man....the haulage engine man held the keys for the magazine, for it was a three shift job too, and before the mine started in the morning, the engineman went to the magazine, and gave out the ammunition .....most of the time anyway! Other mines...some of the other mines had really had a magazine man, a man on the magazine all the time. In fact the one in the old mine, when I started, was a Mr. Landel, and he had only one leg, and he was the mine....he was actually the magazine man. Of course, it was a bigger place than Tottlywells, but over and above that.....

Q. And had you to sign for anything that you wanted?

WG No, you didn't have to sign for anything, your name was on the can, the magazine can, so you maybe had two cans or three cans with your name on them, and you just collected them, and your name was put in the book, and charged against you! You had to pay for it at the end of the week. They paid you .....it was a Friday then!

Q. That was common!

WG Aye, that was.....some of the old boys, would owe half their pay in the pub!

Q. I'm sure that would happen!

WG Aye, oh aye, you used to get tick in the pub at the time, not that I ever had any tick in the pub. I know them that had, it was most of the old Irishmen, they were all mostly old guys, that came over during the hard times in Ireland, as it was, they started here. But they were hardy boys! By Jove, they were still working some of them, well after they were sixty five in the mines!

Q. Did you find that they could do the job well?

WG Oh aye, they were hard workers! Of course, they were hard drinkers, that's the way that they were hard workers!

Q. So, they lived hard.....and played hard....and worked hard!

WG Aye, they lived hard, and played hard.....and lived long! There were some good long livers among the whole lot of them! Actually, they worked hard all their days, all the days that I knew them anyway! About the John Finlay case in the old mine..... that was over in the Duddingston mine.

Q. Is that a worthy that you are talking about?

WG Aye, he was actually a clerk, a clerk above the mine, but he took it into his head that he was a Manager! And this old boy that was a labourer on the surface.....and there was a (inaudible) in the area of the mine, and they would (inaudible) with old bricks or something. It would (inaudible) the pavement, and this John Finlay says to him, "Is that all you've done, Jock". "Aye, that's all that I've got done....but why?" "Well, I could have done more myself or something!", he says. "I could have done a lot more myself!" "Well!", he says, "You're the man for the "bl....y" job!" That was old jock McLeary, and.....an old worthy miner too, but he had been off, he had been retired out of the mines to the surface by this time. But..... there were some quite worthy ones too, right enough! But, oh, that Jock Finlay, he thought that he was the Manager!

Q. Because he was an office worker?

WG Och, aye, and he was mingy too! But he wouldn't even give you two pennies for a ha'penny! Aye, he was mingy!

Q. Did you find that you were all well run to....as far as payment went? You know, that you were well paid?

WG Well, actually the miner in these days, was a better paid man than a....trades man in the Works! In the Oilworks, I mean, the tradesman in the Oilworks were working for even sweeties at that time, but I reckon the tradesmen in the Oilworks would have about eight shillings or something, a shift, and we had eleven and six, basic, where you could make more than eleven and six, if you had a good faceman and a good drawer!

Q. Then again.....did you not feel that you would be worth that bit more?

WG Aye, oh aye, you were worth it, if you worked it! If you could work it, you could..... there were some of them that weren't worth it, for they couldn't do it! But I could always manage to hold my bends as far as that was concerned. I don't know actually, when we went to Tottlywells to sink the "wet" dook, Mr. Keddie came to us, and asked to make a contract, and my brother had the place at this time, and I was double shifting him. He wanted us to make a contract, on what they termed the cutting, making distance....cutting so much a week, and you got more for it. Of course, at that time, you were working in water, with 115 gallons of water, and you didn't know what you were going to do, whether the pump was going to break down, or what was going to happen! So he came, and it was finally settled, and my brother said to him, "You give me a fair wage," he says, "And I'll give you a fair day's work!" So it just happened that we got half a crown extra! We thought we were well off!

Q. Did you have anything to do with the three weeks on, and the one week off? In every four weeks?

WG Yes, we had a spell...we had quite a spell of that, at one time, I was in

the Duddingston mine. That's the first mine that I started in, that's when it was, when Philpstoun closed down, and the Works at Philpstoun, and they accommodated some of the Philpstoun men through putting you off for a week. You got half a crown off the dole!

Q. Did you enjoy that, that one week off?

WG Actually at the time, you wages worked.... they worked through a half week basis, and you didn't feel it so much, when, you maybe had three days one week and four days the next week, if you were working every weekend or any thing like that or....it,....was you had two good weeks, and two bad weeks, the way the pays worked.....

Q. And did you feel that was reasonable to give more employment?

WG Well.....the Winchburgh men didn't....it didn't go down very well with them, with the Winchburgh men like...for the simple reason, that...if it had been Winchburgh that had closed down, I don't think that the Philpstoun ones would have accommodated the Winchburgh ones! But on the point that it was Mr. Crichton stayed in Philpstoun, and it was Mr. Crichton this and Mr. Crichton that, and that's how I think that they got accommodated in Winchburgh, and the Duddingston mine.

Q. So, you reckon that it was accepted by the.....?

WG Oh aye, the men accepted it! I mean like some of the....most of the men accepted the fact that they got a weeks....a week on the grass, so to speak. They got a rest, to build up their energy!

Q. And what did you do when you were off that week? Did you have any pastimes, .....or hobbies?

WG No.....actually the garden has been my hobby all my days, as far as that's concerned! I've always worked the garden since I left the school.....

Q. What about bowling?

WG I've never been a bowler! I admit it, I've never been a bowler! Never in all my days have I been a bowler! But the whole.....uncles and brothers and them all, there are all bowlers, I think, bar me, of course, there's none of them is a gardener! All my time's taken up with my pots and my wee hothouse!

Q. And that's been your main interest?

WG That's been my main interest all my days! My garden, you know! Not that I profess to be anything spectacular, but I get my share of results from

Q. And does this go back to when you were working in the mines?

WG Aye, we had a garden just in front of the house, when we were working in the mines, you know! My father had a garden before that, in fact, I built..... I got a hothouse built when I was....when we were staying there, in the rows but they built houses on it, where I had it, so we just had to shift it! Never.....I shifted it right enough, but I just let it go after that! But I've still got a wee one, a wee hothouse, about eight by ten or something like that. The garden, in point of view, has paid quite a lot! Well, through vegetables and what not, and now even more so, as far as vegetables are concerned.

Q. Is it the more vegetables that you grow.....?

WG Aye, well, potatoes too and.....

Q. And you did then as well?

WG Aye, I got quite a few potatoes, a quite a few varieties. Save for this year, you would have got about sixty five varieties.

Q. What was your variety when you were a miner? What was the favourite for the house?

WG Oh, Great Scot was the favourite then! Great Scot, and Kerr's Pinks, that was about the only two potatoes that you knew then. Now, there's about twenty, I think, twenty or thirty maybe! I don't know how many Pentlands that you've got, maybe in the region of eight or ten Pentlands, and you've got "Lisana", and you've got "Emmanuel", and you've got "Epicure", and you've got Midlothian (inaudible), and "Arran Victory", which is a blue one, and I always grow quite a few tomatoes, but I've no heating in the hothouse, but I just plant them maybe in June, and take what you get off them. The bad weather last year, of course, we didn't get a lot last year. I was quite successful two years before that though! First prize I got at the show for that, twice!

Q. Had you any experiences with ponies down the mine?

WG No! It was actually.....practically, all the time, I was never in the mines, with the ponies at all in fact. Well, maybe I'm telling a lie, maybe when I went into the mines first, maybe there was ponies, but I never had anything to do with them. It was usually diesel.....wee diesel engines, that done the haulage underground, like, when I was there.

Q. Fine!

END OF TAPE

Transcript	WG
Industrial Information	I started in Duddingston Old Mine as a drawer for my uncle when I was twenty four. Duddingston Old Mine ran under the Forth. We sank No. 1 dook and then we dug the companion to No. 1 dook.
Shifts	My brother and my dad double shifted us. Number in a Working Place There was maybe in the region of about four or five in one working place. So you had quite a lot to handle in those days.
Number of Hutches In those days	You maybe had to handle about ten hutches apiece, which is running about 18 cwt to 1 ton each. hutch. You maybe had about thirty-six to forty hutches but there was two drawers and two facemen.
Shovels	The faceman had to buy all the shovels and ammunition.
Drawing	The first day I went down the mine I was on the drawing and it was quite a long road. I had never snibbled a hutch or anything in my life before so I took one hutch and he took two, but the sweat was dropping off me by the time I got it in.
Wages	In those days the faceman

paid the drawer. I think at that time when I started I got 11/6 for a shift, so maybe the faceman would have four shillings left over.

Transferred To Tottlywells The places got so short they just said that we had to get transferred somewhere else, so we transferred to Tottlywells.

Equipment & Conditions At Tottlywells We didn't have electric ones at Tottlywells, it was jumpers worked with air pressure. We dug the dook so far, then they dropped levels, and they broke a companion. Tottlywells was one of the wettest mines in the area. There was about 150 gallons a minute running into a dook, and you had to have a 'snorer' pump in the dook draining it away all the time.

Clothing You were working in Wellington boots and oilskins and a hat trying to keep the water off you, but the naked light you were working with was a bit of a problem too.

Wages at Tottlywells We took a contract on, but the contract was only a set wage, but the set wage was over and above the ordinary wage, for the simple reason you were working under conditions that were not normal.

Actually there was 2/6 a day for working in the water, which wasn't paid. It wasn't

worth it.

#### Duties at Tottlywells

There was no drawing at Tottlywells, because you had to tail haulage. You put your hutch at the face and the tail haulage drew it away when you had it full.

#### Levels

They had to pay more attention to the dook, than the actual levels, where they took them off maybe every sixty foot. When you had gone down another sixty foot, you broke away another level on both sides. It was shaped like a basin, and it went round in the basin shape, right round about for your levels.

#### Jumpers

After that we went into a sand to a cross cut, because that was where we used the jumpers. It was a worse job than what the dook was actually.

#### Ventilation

You had to lead in your screen cloth for to give you ventilation. It was a bit dusty, because some of the jumpers you could use water on them. You could put water right through your drill.

#### Working Conditions

The actual working conditions in a shale mine if you had clods and a stone pavement. You sometimes got the roof breaking when you were working in a shale mine, this was

what they farmed blaes, blaes, which was above the roof. There wasn't the same quality of oil came out of it. You often got a bit check, whether you were filling blaes instead of shale. We worked quite a lot near the surface, and sometimes you took out so much of what we called 'the step'. You could go through a hole in the step to take over piece which was quite handy. But in the winter time the snibbles we were using stuck to your hands, and you still had to draw it down to the haulage. It was actually near the surface, and we had to go away down into the mine with it for to get it up to the surface again. You had to go down to what they called the cuddies, which was one empty hutch which was taken down, and the full hutch came up on the haulage side, and there was maybe three of them to take down to the bottom level again to go out to the level road.

Whitequarries

From Tottlywells I went to Whitequarries, but it was a different kettle of fish altogether, of course.

'Boss' Workings

We went into what they termed 'boss' workings, which was actually a cross cut, and we

started before we hit the boss.

#### Diesel Machines

We were using diesel boring machines, which were a tripod type. You had a water line and an air line. We were working maybe about fifteen feet high, and circle girdering all the way. You just pressed the handle and your machine rose to the level you wanted it up to and you bored your face like that. You were boring in the region of maybe twenty-eight holes in sandstone.

#### Shot Firing

It was all electric firing, and you could fire in the region of twenty-six to twenty-eight shots at one time, which;was a half circle breaking.

The shot firing system was from nothing to nine, and a tenth of a second delay. You had a delay of so long from nothing to nine, but you didn't get a bread in the noise, for the simple reason that they were so clean, one was just breaking into the other. This was what they termed 'Burn', but you had about six holes to bore in the centre of your face, that was your actual 'Burn' cut, at an angle, and you cut six or eight holes in the centre, and you layered it after that from top to bottom, and that was ready to fire. If you went into a

manhole, you just got a plunger and plunged the whole lot. It was all Emco loading, and you didn't use a shelve, because your rails were laid right tight up into your face, and the emco loader which was a tip overhead bucket, and that did most of your loading, and then we hit the 'boss'. There was an awful lot more safety work to do with your circle girdering and woodwork.

Gas

Where you did get the 'boss', you could get a collection of gas filtering up through the 'boss' workings, and if you're up putting up a circle girder. You were maybe inclined to hit a wee pocket of gas, but there was no danger. There was danger enough if there was time for it to collect, but it didn't because you had your air system which wasn't too bad. You had to test the place every time after you fired your shots, because you were always breaking into new cracks in the new 'boss' workings which you can relieve gases out, and where you got a lot of water there was usually gas as Well. We had quite a lot when I was in Tottlywells, when we were sinking down a dook. If you got a heavy surge of water, you got gas with it. You could see the gas bubbling out along with the water.

Safety	Safety was quite good, the only thing you had to watch was your shotfiring. You had to watch that nobody was around. Your line was maybe in the region of forty yards back of the road, but you had maybe round two right angles from that before you had to use the plunger.
Closure of Whitequarries	Whitequarries finished in 1948, and by this time they were transporting the shale to Pumpherstoun from the mines by lorries. When Whitequarries closed, I was kind of lucky I got pushed to Grangemouth.
Grangemouth	I had fourteen years in Grangemouth in the workshops as a fitter.
Wages	I reckon the tradesmen in the oilworks would have about eight shillings a shift.
Short Time	We had quite a spell of that one time. It was when Philpstoun closed down. They worked through half a week basis, you maybe had three days one week and four days the next week, if you worked every weekend you had two good weeks and two bad weeks.
Dole	The weeks that you were off you got half a crown off the dole.
Ammunition Magazine	The magazine was eighty to a hundred yards away from the pithead. You had to collect

your own ammunition and carry it down yourself, I think you were allowed about ten pounds of each. You could take only ten or twelve pounds of gelignite, and maybe ten pounds of powder. The size of the magazine would be in the region of about twenty by ten, and it was just an ordinary stone building, but it had a railway sleeper fence ground about it. You had to lock both the magazine and the sleeper fence. You had quite a good lightning conductor on the magazine too. The haulage engine man held the keys for the magazine, for it was a three shift job. Before the mine started in the morning, the engine man went to the magazine and gave out the ammunition. You didn't have to sign for it because your name was on the can, you maybe had two or three cans with your name on them and you just collected them and put your name in the book, and charged against you. You had to pay for it at the end of the week.

Safety Officer

The fireman was like a safety officer. He carried a box or something like that, and that was the detonators for firing your shots. You only got issued with the amount of detonators that you were needing that day.

The fireman would take note of how many detonators you got, and he would just calculate it out at the end of the week, and you had to pay so much of your detonators. I used to buy mine through the surface magazine.

Inspections

You were supposed to be inspected regularly, but just like everything else it was neglected at times.

Searched for Cigarettes

There were no searches as such for cigarettes, because they were not dangerous mines. I think it was more in the coal mines that you were searched for cigarettes.

Unions

I was a member of the Shale Oil Workers Union, I was in the Transport and General to begin with, and then I was transferred into the A.E.U.

Incidents

I can't remember any incidents.

Accident

You got the odd time where there was an accident, but we were very lucky. I can mind one or two breakaways where the tail chain came off the hutches, and the two hutches broke away. I just had to jump into a man-hole when I heard it coming, but you could see the sparks flying off the rails, they were just breaking away. I don't know what happened, whether the chain or the rope broke, but the two hutches

were badly coupled up. Maybe it was just deterioration in the metal.

#### Travel To Work

You sometimes walked down to work, it was only about a quarter of an hours walk. But when we were in Duddingston we got a hurl with what they cried the loco, the thing that hauls wooden carriages.

#### Domestic Life Housing

I stayed in an oilworkers house at Abercorn Place. We didn't have all the mod cons, but it was quite a nice house right enough, but you had to make it nice yourself.

#### Baths

The baths for getting washed in were quite handy. If we paid four and a half penny a week we could use the baths at the oil works, we just travelled home from the mine, and we went into the baths. It was only two minutes from the baths, which was really handy.

#### Social Life Hobbies

Gardening was my hobby all my days. I always worked in the garden since I left school. All my time was taken up with my pots and my wee hothouse. We had a garden just in front of the house. The garden paid quite a lot. We had quite a few varieties of potatoes. My favourite was Great Scot and Kerr's Pinks. There was no heating in the hothouse.

Retirement                    I retired from Grangemouth when  
I was sixty-two, that was in  
1958.

## PLACE INDEX

Duddingston	-	Side One Pages 1,8,12
	-	Side Two Pages 3,4
Grangemouth	-	Side One Pages 9,10,12
Philpstoun	-	Side Two Page 4
Pumpherstoun	-	Side One Pages 9,10
Tottlywells	-	Side One Pages 1,2,4,5,6,7,9,12
	-	Side Two Pages 1,3
Whitequarries	-	Side One Pages 9,10,12
Winchburgh	-	Side Two Page 4

## INDEX OF CONTENTS

Ack-Ack Guns	-	Side One Page 5
Ammunition	-	Side One Pages 2,13
Arran Victory	-	Side Two Page 5
Blaes	-	Side One Page 4
Boss Workings	-	Side One Pages 7,8,9
Burn Cut	-	Side One Page 7
Clods	-	Side One Page 4
CRICHTON, Mr.	-	Side Two Page 4
Cross Cut	-	Side One Page 7
Cuddies	-	Side One Page 8
Diesel Engine	-	Side Two Page 6
Dook	-	Side One Pages 3,4
Electric Batteries	-	Side One Page 13
Emmanuel	-	Side Two Page 5
Epicure	-	Side Two Page 5
FINLAY, Jock	-	Side Two Page 2
Gas	-	Side One Page 9
GIBB, John	-	Side One Page 4
Great Scot	-	Side Two Page 5
Hutches	-	Side One Pages 1,2
Jumpers	-	Side One Page 2,3,4
KEDDIE, Mr.	-	Side One Page 5 Side Two Page 3
Kerr's Pinks	-	Side Two Page 5
LANDEL, Mr.	-	Side Two Page 1
Lightning Conductor-	-	Side Two Page 1
Lisana	-	Side One Page 2
Loco	-	Side One Page 12
Magazine	-	Side One Page 13 Side Two Page 1
Midlothian	-	Side Two Page 5
McLEARY, Jock	-	Side Two Page 2
Pentlands	-	Side Two Page 5
Phenol	-	Side One Page 12
Plunger	-	Side One Page 8
Shots	-	Side One Pages 9,13
Sleeper Fence	-	Side Two Page 1
Snorer Pump	-	Side One Page 3
Tail chain	-	Side One Page 10
Tail Haulage	-	Side One Page 3
THORNTON, Wullie-	-	Side One Page 1

