

Life in a shale village
Worksheet 1 - Alec's story

Read Alec's story and then answer the questions on the next sheet.

My name is Alec and I'm 15 years old. I was born in Winchburgh. We lived there until I was 11. The house was quite new. It had water and a boiler in the kitchen but no electricity. We used paraffin lamps around the house. There was electricity on the street though to give us street lights. We moved to Faulcheldean for a few years but when I was 14 we moved to Roman Camps. This was great because we had electricity inside the house for the first time. It was only one of two houses with electricity. We also had water inside the house but other houses had to use the wells outside to get their water.

When I was 14 I left school to follow in my dad's footsteps and work in the shale oil industry. I went to work at Roman Camps oil work. I had to get up at 6.20am to go to work for 7am. I finished at 4pm but then went to Broxburn for night school. I was an apprentice so I got to spend time doing studies to help me learn more. All my friends would be going to watch football on a Saturday but I had to study instead. At least that meant I didn't have to help my mum clean the house. She was always trying to clean because there was a lot of black soot inside from the oil works. I can't wait until I'm finished studying and I can work as an engineer. I will get to work on the trains and locomotives. It will be dirty work but better than working down a mine. Just now I get to help out the engineers by passing them what they need. When I'm older I might be able to get my own house but just now I only make enough money to help mum and dad out.

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Read Alec's story. Use his story to help you answer these questions.

1. Where was Alec born?

2. What did they use to help them see inside the house?

3. What was special about his house in Roman Camps?

4. Where would you get water from if you didn't have it inside your house?

5. How long was Alec at work during the day?

6. What was unusual about how Alec spent his time out of work?

7. How is Alec's life different from yours? Would you have liked to be a child in his time?