Interview with Donald Mackie.

Q. It was the Westwood pit that you worked in wasn't it?

DM. Yes.

Q. When did you start.

DM. 1941/2.

Q. Had you just left school.

DM. Yes, I was about 15.

Q. What seam were you in at Westwood.

DM. Well, I worked on the pit bottom first and after that I went to the

Broxburn seam. I had been down the Dunnet seam but not a lot.

Q. What was the Broxburn seam like to work in.

DM. It was low about 4 or 5 ft, in some places.

Q. Were you in the drawing.

DM. I started in the on cost first and then I was a chain runner at Broxburn

and then eventually went on to drawing in the Broxburn

Q. Were you paid extra money for working in water.

DM. Certain conditions you got extra 1d or 2d. If you had to put up crowns

(big larch trees) across the roof then you got paid extra for that,

because it was a big job.

Q. Was it quite dusty.

DM. Yes, working in all that fine dust, as well as the conditions you had

anyway, because you were a long way from the shaft.

Q. What about smoke from the explosives.

DM. It was always there but some areas the air system was better than others it depends on the distance you were away and if you had a good flow of air then it cleared the smoke and dust a bit. It didn't clear it entirely but it cleared it, and in others (places) it would hang for quite a 'bit.

Q. Were you ever working with explosives yourself .

DM. Yes, well once you have done two years in the drawing you were allowed

to work yourself. So if you were out on the back shift or day shift

and the faceman did not turn up, then you were liable to be sent to work for someone who needed a drawer, or vice versa a faceman who was available somewhere would maybe be brought to your place, I did that.

Q. What were the dangers down the pit.

DM. Hopes could break, something knocking the hutches off the road, trees

depending how they were put in, there was always the danger areas where

you were taking out the shale, of the roof falling in on you. You do

get warning when a place is going to close but you also got large stones

coming away from the roof, 8, 9 or ten feet long, with no warning. There

were people killed with something coming away with no warning or very little warning.

Q. What about gas.

DM. There was gas in Westwood, but it never affected me in anyway. There was gas there in the Broxburn Section, it wasn't bad but there was gas in that area, there was always gas in the waste areas but if the air system was kept right then it was not dangerous.

Q. What were you paying for rent.

DM. About 7/. a week.

Q. What did you do in your leisure time, did you go to the Institute

DM. There was not much to do at Dedridge, you made your own entertainment, whatever you wanted to do, any kind of games, quoits, the small quoits, anything to whittle away the time. We didn't have a hall, a bowling green, too wee a place for that, there was one at Oakbank, Deans, Seafield, Pumpherston. The nearest one attached to the Company was Oakbank, but that was another village, you didn't bother. Mid Calder was our area, but that wasn't Scottish Oils. There was snooker and billiards, you paid for that separately.

Q. Was there football matches between the villages.

DM. Every night, even when we were at school, there was quite strong

rivalry, to the bitter end. There were no drawback, there was no

special games, though in the years further back they used to gather teams Mid Calder, East Calder. In my time we went into the amateur league and vent round Bangour, Larbert and various other places, they used to write and ask you if you would come and play.

*Questions*

1. *Which pit did Donald work in?*
2. *What dangers did Donald face in the pit? Describe them in detail.*
3. *Describe the leisure pursuits that Donald would have taken part in.*
4. *Come up with another three questions which you would be interested to ask Donald.*
5. *Select what you feel are the five most important facts from this interview for someone who knows very little about mining in West Lothian.*