Interview with PETER GRAYSON

A. Well, I left the school in 1924, on a Thursday, and started in Thirty Five Pit on the Monday morning.

Q. Were you fourteen then?

A. Fourteen!

Q. Now, your father, he was a faceman?

A. Yes!

Q. Can you remember what your wages were at that time?

A. Well.....I couldn't remember what it was.....the wages were, but I can remember the wages that I got when I was working on the top of the brae, was 3/9d a shift. And you had to be there in the morning and you didn't get away to three o'clock, I think it was three o'clock that you loused then! If you done any overtime, you just got a single shift!

Q. Plain time?

A. Plain time! Then.....for your holidays, what was supposed to be your holidays, you always got a Fair Friday and Saturday. For all they were idle days, there was no pay going! You got two days at New Year time. No pay going! They were just idle days, but they were counted as holidays! You always got the Glasgow Fair Friday and Saturday. That was your holidays in the summertime. And they talk about the good old days!

Q. And what about Summer, you got no.....you got the Glasgow Fair, that was the holidays?

A. Only two days!

Q. Only two days?

A. The Friday and the Saturday that was your.......

Q. Without pay?

A. Without pay! That was your holidays! If you wanted a Summer holiday......

Q. And if you worked.....could you have worked? Or was the pit closed?

A. No! It was closed these two days!

Q. That was Number Thirty Five because, if I remember right, Broxburn Gala-day was on the Friday, and Niddry Gala-day and Winchburgh Gala- day were on the Saturday, and that was the two days! Well, I stayed at Threemiletown, and we used to have a trip away on the Saturday, every year, that was our holiday! Q. Tell me about your working life?

A. Well, I was started as spare deputy and a shotfirer, in a section we called the wee dook. You all wore safety lamps in that section! This was a gassy section, and you had to be on your toes all the time! Because one time, you would get it, another time you wouldn't get it! It was just like that! It was clear one minute, and the next it would be there! You had always to look, and be on your toes! All the men in that section were all trained in the safety lamp procedures, and the air had to be led right up to the face!

Q. Did you have a fireman go in before you started your shift, to clear the...?

A. Yes, the fireman always started at four o'clock.....at half past four in the morning..... the fireman started! He went round the sections, and saw that they were all clear of gas, and then he came to the surface, and signed the books....all about....made his report, then he passed the men, and if there was gas in a man's place, he was told to stand to the side, till they all got down to see.....to clear it out!

Questions

1. When did Peter leave school?
2. What mine did he start work in?
3. How much did Peter earn early in his career?
4. What holidays was he entitled to? Was he paid for his holidays?
5. Why did a fireman go into the mine before the start of a shift?
6. Write down the five most important points from this interview.
7. Thinking like a historian try to come up with three more questions you could ask Peter.