

Interviewee(s): David Baird (DB) Mrs. Baird (MB) Unknown Male [UM]	Interviewer(s): Unknown Female (UF)
Date of Interview: 1988-1997	Ref: EL2-1-1-3-T
REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Tranent

Running time: 00.00

UM: [unclear] for maybe a fiver extra. Working on the shifts all the time. It's no good, there should be a bigger gap between the...

UF: It's not just on the face line you work shifts though, is it?

UM: Near enough. You get the people who run the belts and that but, it's nearly just face men who work shifts. Ken at Monktonhall you get about eight hundred on the day shift. And what? About three hundred on the back shift and the night shift? Now you don't really get that much more coal up on the day shift than what you would get on the back shift or the night shift. The amount of men down the pit on the day shift, you wonder where they all go. Crawl into dark corners.

[laughter]

UM: So they do they eh. But it's half the battle with people that work... If you get on with them.

UF: And you get on with your mates?

UM: Aye, oh aye. Get on well with my leading man. That's how I got the job I've got the now, you see? Good crawler.

[laughter]

UM: And they ken a guid man when they see yin.

UF: So what about this social life that's interrupted by shifts? What do you like doing that you can't do?

UM: A lot of things.

[laughter]

DB: You go up the toon maist o the time.

UM: Aye.

UF: What do you do in Edinburgh?

UM: Jist go to disco's or that. Have a drink. Pretty good.

UF: Do you have to go to Edinburgh for it?

UM: No really, no. Lot o places round about you can go tae, licensed late. There a lot of clubs especially now can get a late license. So, better up in Edinburgh eh. Nobody knows you or that.

[laughter]

Running time: 02.00

UF: Does everyone still know everyone else in Tranent?

MB: Practically.

UM: Near enough, aye. No so much now I dinnae think, as what it used to be. A lot of changes in Tranent nowadays ye ken. I mean I could go intae a labour club the now and I wouldnae recognise a hell of a lot of people.

MB: Nut.

UM: Same wi any other club.

UF: Would it be mainly sort of young men working on the coalface?

UM: You do get a lot of them, uh huh. Especially from 20 to 40. That's the majority of young people on the coalface.

UF: Where do you think the rest of them are?

UM: What do you mean?

UF: Well, I mean, the older chaps. Is it the tendency that they work [unclear].

UM: Well, once they get sort of old and done, I mean, mibbie still get coalface wages but they get a job outside the coalface. Still get a few older chaps sort of learning you the job, you see? Oldest man in our section that's the leading man and it's him that's learnt me the job I'm on the now, you see. But apart fae him it's all young chaps ken.

UF: Would you have your life over in the pit again, Mr. Baird?

DB: Dinnae hink sae.

[unclear]

UF: Is there anything you see now in the way of jobs that you'd maybe like to have? If you could have your time again?

DB: No, no really.

UM: Fitbaw players.

DB: Jist when I was younger, my mother's folks were aw Merchant Navy, you know? Fae Grangemouth and that so I would've liked to have done that. My mother and faither [unclear]. "Dae what yer telt" [unclear] Ken years ago? Ye'd day what yer telt, ken? Little boys shouldn't be heard...

UF: I'm saying, does he do what he's telt?

DB: Naw, I brought him up different to what I was brought up.

[laughter]

DB: [unclear] Brought him up a wee bit more liberal, even the lassies tae.

Running time: 04.00

UF: You think that's a good thing that's happened now?

DB: Oh, aye. I think there's more hooses are liberal nowadays eh? So, it's for their bairns. And you actually bring them up tae be yer pal, sort of style nowadays isn't it? Well that's the way I look at it.

MB: I never had any bother with any of them though ye know? Never had any bother, no. For aw that they were brought up sort of liberal they've aw been awright, ken? They've aw got jobs, ken good jobs and that and everything.

DB: It's only when I first leave the school... Start kennin whit life's about [unclear].

MB: Been good.

DB: You learn quick when you go into the pit, ken? Maybe different if you go to an office or something. You learn quick when you go in the pit. Meet a lot o nice people anaw. Lot o clowns but a lot o nice people.

UF: Do you get the feeling that when you're down the pit, that someone else's life could depend on you?

DB: On me?

UF: Yeah, or...

DB: Doubt that very much... No, it could, aye they could. I'm the production man you see. Get the coal oot. I get all the medals you see. But it's a bad place I'm working the now, it's a right bad section, but it's good experience as I say. Lot o good jobs at Monktonhall. See, you could work doon there.

[laughter]

UF: Were you at the pits when it was piece rates?

DB: Aye, doon [unclear] piece rates. All depends [unclear]. Think I was gettin about, what? £2 a shift or something - that was a good wage then. Was comin hame wi about £20. 1956, 57 [unclear]? Was coming hame wi £20 then, and the going rate in the pit anyway was only about £8. So, ye ken I had to work for it.

Running time: 06.00

UF: Do you think this idea of going for productions from a pit rather than piece rate is a good one?

DB: I'm glad the piece rate's away, ken. [unclear]... having a steady wage instead of piece rate, good thing.

UF: Do you think it took too much out of you?

DB: Ye can say that again, took too much o the lot o me. So you're no gonnae get a slow man trying tae keep up wi another man. Which is...

UM: Fair system, isn't it? Still the same now though wi the bonuses. I mean you can be working a

good section you're earning £50 bonus a week. And I'm working in a place that's the worst section [unclear]. We're no earnin half o what they're earnin. Cause that used to sort o split us up, you see? Section to section [unclear] it's no good. [unclear].

UF: Is there a lot of absenteeism down Monktonhall. I mean you hear at Bilston Glen not many turn out for the day shift on Monday.

DB: Aye [unclear].

UM: You dinnae usually [unclear].

DB: Naw [unclear] but you get a lot o them. There's a guy I see about once every month. Never see them. A lot o the like that. Sometimes the Monday morning up there they cannae open sections up cause there's no the men to man them, Monday morning day shift, ken. It's true. Course the bonus is a lot tae do wi that. If you got maybe 40 quid bonus one week you'll no go oot on Friday night or that, you see? Cannae blame them though.

UF: Is there contract buses come and pick you up for your work?

DB: Aye, that's right aye. Get the bus every morning. Waiting for you when you come up.

UF: So, that's not to bad, at least you don't have to walk to the pit.

DB: Aye. Wouldnae fancy that.

UF: What about the changes you've seen, Mrs. Baird? In terms of... Well, you've not got the washing to do now, have you?

Running time: 08.00

MB: No, eh. I canna really say very much about... Jist, wi the washing and things like that, I think, that I've noticed a change, difference. Because I used to have awffa dirty things to do, but now it's just underwear and socks and that, ken? No got the filthy trousers and that and things tae dae. Think I've noticed that mair than anyhin.

DB: [unclear]... washing machine... [unclear].

[laughter]

MB: I think ye jist get used tae it, ye never think in terms o changes in yer life, ye know? Through the years. Ye jist sort o jist do the same things and get used tae it aw the time, ken? Sort o a routine.

DB: Things jist sort o crept up, eh? Things just creep up on ye as ye get older.

MB: Jist get used tae things.

DB: And it'll be easier and easier now, wi the new technology and that now. And ye get a lot o they pits in England, I mean there's no work involved. I mean it's different to Monktonhall there are some work involved. But the pits doon there it's aw machinery.

UF: And do you think you're going to run out of jobs?

UM: Aye.

DB: Wir running out o jobs the now. In Monktonhall they're running out o jobs.

UM: Aye they're peyin the men off, men are getting asked tae take early redundancy.

[unclear]

DB: And you've got the power... That nuclear power station up there. [unclear] No tae depend on coal.

UM: Plenty coal there, ken? Jist the government wants us to conserve the coal [unclear].

DB: A lot o coal there.

UF: What about this merry-go-round we're hearing about? Is it called a merry-go-round? The coal train that comes from Monktonhall down to the power station?

DB: Uh huh.

UF: Is that a pretty frequent trip that's made? Do you know anything about that?

DB: Aye, four or five times a day, the train gets filled at Monktonhall, come doon. And there's trains goin ower tae Longannet complex from Monktonhall tae, tae the power station ower there.

Running time: 10.00

UM: That's all Monktonhall was for, was power station coal. I mean you don't get much quality coal from Monktonhall.

DB: It's no house... They couldnae sell it as household coal.

UM: Aye, they'd try it.

DB: It's poor quality.

UM: That's good coal.

DB: It's mixed wi Bilston coal.

UM: Is it? Didnae ken that.

UF: So, you still get so much coal in a year?

DB: Seven tonne.

UM: You'll get seven tonne in there the now, aye.

UF: So, we still haven't had out of you what you do in your spare time.

UM: That's private, isn't it?

[laughter]

UF: Apart from discos, pubs?

MB: That's aboot aw, eh?

UF: You not interested in the dogs, or pigeons or anything like that?

MB: Nut.

UM: The duggs?

MB: Nane o them.

UM: Football. Football.

DB: He likes the fitbaw.

UM: Used to play football. Cannae play anymore, too knackered. Well, before I started smoking and drinking I was quite a good player, eh? Wasnae a bad player at one time, cannae dae it now. Tried it last year in the Davies team, I lasted about half a game, that was it - couldnae run any further. Takes it out you.

UF: What about you, Mr. Baird? What do you do in your spare time?

DB: Naw I dinnae dae very much naw. I like a drink now and again.

UF: Just recover? For the next shift?

DB: Aye, that's right. I usually come hame and faw asleep.

UM: Aw, I dae that.

DB: Dae a lot o walkin in the pit, the fresh air makes you... And you're up about quarter past five in the morning, so it's a long day, really.

[unclear]

Running time: 12.00

UM: You ever tried getting up at quarter past five?

UF: Yes.

[laughter]

UM: It's no easy.

DB: I work seven days a week.

UF: Do you?

DB: Aye.

[unclear]

DB: [unclear]... when I had TB?

MB: Uh huh.

DB: Lost about thirty pounds a week eh? So if you work the weekend it makes it up. I was always used to a good wage in the pit. [unclear]. 1956. I always had a good wage.

UM: Still takes it out you, I mean in about thirty years time I'll no be worth much, you know?

UF: You think you'll stick with the pit? For as long as the works...

UM: Progress, I think. I mean, you can become a gaffer, ken [unclear]. But, eh, might fancy doin that. I mean it's on the railway, ken you progress. No tae be a [unclear] aw ma life. But at the same time I mean it's still, forty years time I'll no be worth nuhin. Ye deh hink o they hings though dae ye?

UF: What about, you know, if you got married? Would you put your kids down the pit?

UM: Wouldnae bother me. They'll have brains like, might be cleverer than me. Get a job in an office or something. That'll be a while yet though.

