

Interviewee(s): David Spence (DS)	Interviewer(s): Unknown Female (UF)
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REGION	East Lothian
TOWN	Tranent

0h 00m 00s

DS: We're on the top o The Heugh here. It's now a carpark... for the Bridge Inn, across the road, and am looking down where I used tae slide on our bottoms, down this gradient. And on the opposite side o The Heugh, ye could see where I mentioned outcrops at times and one on fire. So, this is a big open heugh that [*incomprehensible due to poor sound quality outside*] we're walking in now because there's a vennel there, as we called it. Just for passengers. And it's obviously never used by anybody now but am seeing the bridge that I've already mentioned earlier, where the railway went through in 1849. We're now on the north side; we're in The Heugh, actually, the top end, south end and this is the A1 road just passing at my right and left hand. So, I've just a bit nostalgia; I wanted tae have a look here this morning. And they've tarmacked parking places where we used tae kick on our balls and play against each other and sweat. This was a [?] and just- the Co-operative buildings here, and this one on the wall- because we're- driven through the Coal Neuk and that's the road round there, the ancient, ancient road. But in there, in ma young days, because the store killing house was there and the beasts were open and the smell when it was getting emptied... and the bullocks that we heard the screams, they were poleaxed, just like I said... it was a hard and cruel life.

0h 02m 00s

It frightened me, once I went through and seen one getting poleaxed. [?] So, these are Co-op- they're all Co-operative buildings, and the methodists' chapel, there, and this is the A1 we're on now, just going up-

[*pause in recording*]

DS: Well, it's been quite... these have been two nice expeditions we've had, last week and this. And I've been putting a lot o [*laughter*]... stuff off ma chest over the period. A hope it's of... some interest tae somebody. But I've been a long time in pits now... 1915... tae '82.

[*pause in recording*]

DS: We've just stopped... on the Tranent-Pencaitland road, just past New Winton... at the site o an auld pit, or a pit that I... I've learnt more about since I retired. And it's called Sebastopol, now. So, that almost dates it, doesn't it? even back tae Crimea, in a way. It almost dates it. But there was a wee pit there and a know some that lived in it, the Rosses that a've mentioned in Penston band, etcetera, there were Rosses lived in there in ma day. The pit buildings- but there's the old engine house, etcetera... and that was... the pit. And a think the date was about eleven- eh, 1851, and Lady Ruthven o Winton Castle... for the miners o that pit, she built that wee village that I've already told ye about: New Winton, it was called, and she lived in Winton House or Winton Castle, as we called it.

0h 04m 08s

And I've already described that village and that was... and behind me here, on the opposite side, there's a road leading up tae that wood which is a link through tae Ormiston. There was an engine pit there when a was a laddie in New Winton and a remember the big engine. But the pit had already closed but the big engine was there, so it must've been a big pumping engine for water,

similar tae what we had at Prestongrange nowadays. And this is just this wee short- couple o hundred yards short o Winton station. And a don't know if I've mentioned before... but in 1872... but let me stop a moment because from there, right down tae Seton, is the tramroad and I've only learned from the first Ordinance Survey maps, which is about 1850, that, frae there, nearly two miles, right down tae Seton from here... and that- no idea when that was first built but it runs on the outcrop belt, o the East Lothian field which stretches from the lands o Seton. And ye can depend that the Setons didn't settle there just without reason and the reason is, am certain, it was cause of coal outcrops, cause they had a wee... and in these early, early centuries, timber was getting short, and getting coal from and beaches and outcrops in the open was just like manna from heaven, tae them.

0h 06m 30s

Quicker tae boil them because making their salt was the prime, prime purpose of fuel they needed, for salt. So, here just above frae Winton station, just beside us here, they had over roond about two miles o track, right down tae the sea at the lands o Seton on the coast road, was a tramroad, and the pits galore that were on it. Henmuir. Down at Seton, there's about five pits all mentioned on that map: small pits, rigging head pits, ascension pits, the Seton pits and so on, so on, so on – numbers on them. And... the same tramline – and I've mentioned this railway frae Ormiston tae Macmerry – the NBR extended that line, right tae Macmerry, on the bed o the auld tramline, wi the standard-gauge locomotives. Now, it's all abandoned but the old station's here... and certainly the history's there, in this old man. This old pensioner that still can remember his boyhood days, round about here.

0h 08m 05s

I remember just coming oot the village there. There was the midden, the midden – that speaks for itself – because the men and the boys, they went tae the wood but that was a midden [*laughter*]... and we kept clear when that midden, farmers was emptying it.

[*pause in recording*]

DS: Well, we've just came down the coal road – that's from near Pencaitland – and we're within sight of Longniddry, and a've never heard or read any reference tae when it got the name 'the Coal Road'. But what I do know: that it's roughly on the outcrop line, the eastern outcrop line o the small East Lothian coalfield. And mebbe I should just mention the western line o the same East Lothian coalfield because I've not-

UF: Engine.

[*pause in recording*]

DS: It's alright. So, there's not so many knows about the western outcrop line of the East Lothian field because it is separate and distinct from the rich, deep, Midlothian field... cause the Midlothian field, from the sea at Portobello, through Niddrie, Gilmerton, Loanhead and right intae the hills... the seams outcrop... almost tae the vertical. In fact, No. 13 shaft, up The Wisp...

0h 10m 28s

UF: Mmhm.

DS: From what was called the Jewel Cottages. It went over the top, beyond the vertical. That was where [?], No. 13 shaft. And there was some vertical shafts like Newcraighall which I know intimately because a managed Newcraighall. Originally, Newcraighall had two inclines, laid on the inclination o

the seam at seventy degrees. And these was dangerous jobs that miners had and there was lots of lives lost, laying these lethal inclines. But No. 13 up, they found that one, as I said, that had a five decker incline on it. That was five settings, a hatch on each deck, etcetera. That's just an instance o the engineering and skills that were needed tae get coal... oot seams lying at these lethal grades, before they had the steams, they had the modern... industries and all the rest of it. But tae come back tae East Lothian, the [?] frae Smeaton...

UF: Right.

DS: And Fa'side and I've worked underneath on both sides; there's no coal, the outcrop o the East Lothian field short o the [?]... and a've been in Carberry and someday, in both pits and Fleets, on the East Lothian side, there were bits o incidents that's well worth recording, but not here.

0h 12m 20s

I'll have tae take up ma pen at some time [*laughter*]... that's rather doubtful if I ever will but it's needing tae be penned or else taped because there's tremendous history. But this small East Lothian field, shallow, flatter... or if I could put it a different way, near the Ship Inn in Musselburgh, which is roughly in the depth, the full deepest part, o the Midlothian basin, and that basin tae give the inclination runs from, say, the Ship Inn tae the top at Eskbank Toll. And the outcrop lines more or less follows the same parallels. But at the Ship Inn in Musselburgh, there've been nearly... well, twenty-five tae seven, twenty-seven seams o coal; but in East Lothian there were none o the true coals. There were no millstone grit; they only had eight o the lower seams. And East Lothian is a tremendous evidence o glacial action, tremendous millions o years ago but the history wi the flatness and the nearness tae the surface, because just a couple o months ago, a publican got about twenty tonne o coal oot the cellar, making enlargements [*laughter*].

0h 14m 06s

And in ma young day, a knew the folk, in ma young days, that had the pub, and I know that when they made their cellar big, they were in the great seam, also. So, all around Tranent, there was- centuries and centuries ago, there were seams just below the surface. A've already mentioned that Prestongrange, the [Moore?] that lost his life in 1847 is buried in the wasting o the great seam at the auld kirk. So, here we are on the Coal Road just short o... and there were pits up there at... Henmuir. The furthest south-easterly of all... and a have some notes about the miners wanting it all in agreement was Huntlaw; it belonged tae Fletcher o Saltoun. And a have an agreement that the miners, on request, made tae Henry Davidson, the factor o the... Fletcher's estates gave tae them... and he gave these colliers – and a have the terms o the agreement – but the last two lines of his agreement mentioned, 'as I notice', and he mentioned two men by name, 'are irregular in their work. No such agreement will be made with them', he says [*laughter*]. So, we're at- I've driven down here purposefully, through Penston, new town up there and in fact, it's beginning to earn its name wi the new buildings that are being- arising frae the ashes o the auld. But a very ancient, ancient place, that new town up there.

0h 16m 04s

New Winton goes back tae about 1850s, round about. So... all the coal side lies tae the west of us now, on the Coal Road but we're going down intae the lands o Seton and a've noticed and a can draw attention tae anybody who can get the East Lothian first Ordinance Survey map, o 1850... on it and a have a copy. There's a tramline nearly two miles from the lands o Seton up tae New Winton, or Sebastopol, it became called in later years and that is a Crimean connotation, surely. And it's

worth considering, I think, or worth... the Setons settled there, wi grants o land, away about the time o Malcolm Canmore. Am pretty sure they didn't land on that site by accident. I'm certain there were coal outcrops and shining black coal on the foreshore. And the timber o the land would be getting scarce tae make their salt, because the main ingredients for life in these days was salt and the only source o salt was seawater. And they needed fuel. And the wood- and a have names o Panwood, 1530, panwood but the panwood then was relating tae the lowest grade o coal.

0h 18m 00s

In East Lothian, there was a seam became known as the Panwood. So, there's a handover- there's a hangover from the ancient centuries. At Panwood, all the rubbish o the wood must've went tae the pans, tae make the country's salt because in these days, we've tae recognise there was no refridge- there was no fridges. Beasts had tae be salted up for the winter and they needed salt and they needed plenty o salt. And the salt, certainly a would assert, is far older than oor own mining here, coalmining. So, here we are on this outcrop belt, and the sun's been shining and am in the best o company, have a couple o ladies [?] [*laughter*]... and we'll have a brief stop at Seton, just talking about it, because I'll just mention the last time I went intae Seton the caretaker or whatever he is, the curator of it... it's a link a can get with Prestongrange no matter where a go. But his mother married a Cornishman as came up at the installation o that big Cornish engine. So, how's that for links [*laughter*]?

[*pause in recording?*]

DS: And the year o the strike, ye see, this was a wee bit o football, ye'll notice.

UF: As the car runs away [*laughter*].

DS: And at the '21 Strike, I was playing for Macmerry St Clair, first class juveniles, and we were all miners.

0h 20m 00s

And there were three o the summer months that was on strike. Oh, it was like all o yous were like young stallions, who was the strongest horse [*laughter*]? But anyway, we won five cups. We played at [?] Ground in Edinburgh... and down at Olive Bank in Musselburgh, the finals. But here was one... and the great team then, oor great rivals, was near Haddington Athletic, and there were great battles because Haddington could afford tae bring players from Edinburgh. They'd all their nice brushed hair and all the rest, ye ken [*laughter*]. Some o the miners... and, eh... anyway, there was a final settled between Haddington and Macmerry St Clair and it was an East Lothian cup. I think it was the Simpson. And we played at Longniddry. And... the road tae Haddington from Tranent, there was a branch line from Longniddry tae Haddington. They had a special train there. So, there was a big crowd. And we were one down and it was getting near the end of the game. And the Haddington centre half tackled our centre within a few yards o me... and pity, left a wee bit dirty, oh, we're dirty. But anyway, a got them by the throat, ye see [*laughter*]... and a was going tae- a was going tae use ma fist but a didn't get time. Macmerry crowd broke in; they were jumping over ma back tae get at him [*laughter*].

0h 22m 00s

So- but the referee, the referee was on strike too, and he worked in the pit that we worked [*laughter*]. So, a worked on him. Davie Jack was his name and a was keeping 'Davie, ye've tae abandon this game', ye see. We were 1-0 down. So, there was one single policeman. He finally got

the pitch cleared, Davie lined us up and a had one last go at him. A shouted it out loud, too, 'Davie, a damn shame this should be abandoned!' and he blew his whistle and abandoned the game. And we beat them on a replay [*laughter*]... in Tranent junior's park [*laughter*].

[*pause in recording*]

DS: -Haddington Neilson Park and there was a lot o fancy big folk in Haddington. But anyway... and this referee came frae Elphinstone, this time. It was a real dirty trick and he ordered off one o oor players. And I just saw- it was Davie Hay and I just saw Davie's old father throwing his jacket off and waving 'come on, boys!' [*laughter*]... and waving them on. [*laughter*] So, that was ma first break in [*laughter*].

[*poor audio due to recording outside*]

[*incomprehensible*]

DS: I'll need tae suspend that story the now.

UF: Ok [*laughter*].

DS: And tae get the coal out, there was a wee mine sunk here.

0h 24m 00s

What was its name called? And this was the site o the last wee... coal pit on this end and it was where the inclines opened, drifts. And John Cairns, the manager, still lives along at Port Seton – is it Port Seton? No, up on the mid road there, up there. What's its name? A forget. ...Glen Cairn. Glen Cairn mine.

UF: Mm.

DS: That was it. And it was a Glasgow firm... o coal importers and merchants that sunk it. And a remember them taking ma father away on a Sunday for lunch, etcetera, and a drink because he knew the workmen in St Germain, he knew all the seams; and afore they bought it, they had him in and got all the information they could about the conditions and the thicknesses and etcetera, etcetera. But the coal that was left in St Germain, some of it came up here, because this worked well intae Coal Board days, this little incline and this little Glen Cairn mine. And I see the name, there's industry o some kinds in it noo. And there's even ivy growing on the telegraph poles. So, it's got peace out o nature. And here we are on a Sunday – a sunny, sunny day we're getting for this, too. And am... stretchin ma memory tae get more. But we're going along tae Seton and a've already mentioned Seton a few times and we'll pop in and see if the boys there-