

Horse Bolted and Spilt all the Milk

Sydney Nicholson was born in 1906 and interviewed in 1990

My father died of pneumonia when he was only 39 and my mother was left with me and my four sisters. She wouldn't have any money then so she had to go out cleaning, washing, anything she could get. I went to Castle Street School and a lot of people don't remember this but it was two schools. It was mixed to seven years then, if you were a boy you moved to the other school which they called the "British School" which I think it finished up as Senior Boys School; then they moved into Stramongate and eventually on to Appleby Road.

One of the people my mother worked for was a Mr Atkinson who was Postmaster General and she just happened to mention that I was ready for leaving school and she asked would there be any chance ... "Well," he said "we are going to have a vacancy for a telegram boy." They used to have boys on bikes taking telegrams. He said "Get him to come and see me." The General Post Office was in Finkle Street in those days just above where Musgroves was. He asked me when was I likely to leave school. I said Easter break. My birthday was on April 13th and we restarted school on the 12th but they wouldn't let me leave school, and Mr Atkinson said he was very sorry but he couldn't leave the job open until the school holidays in August, just for one day.

I had a morning job taking milk out for a Mr Atkinson of Low Gross. Milk wasn't in bottle then. It was in cans and a measure. It used to be a pint measure, with a little peg if you wanted half a pint and everybody had their own jugs and you filled the jugs. I got a shilling a week. Mam got that. Opposite where Katherine School is now there were two big fields and during the First World War there were two horse regiments, the Westmorland and Cumberland Yeomanry which was on what we christened Soldier Field and the Duke of Lancaster's, they were a horse regiment on Longlands. They changed them into infantry, foot regiments and they sold most of the horses to the farmers round about and Mr Atkinson bought one. He said it was a milk horse and he kept it until we had our four week's summer holidays off school. So he said "I don't want you to deliver milk I want you to stand with the horse to get it used to the job." So I did that for the full holidays and it got to the weekend, Saturday morning, and he said "Well, you'll be at school on Monday, we'd better give it a trial. So you go on your round" I used to go down on Far Cross Bank and he went down the other and we used to meet on Longpool. So I delivered my milk and got down there and I stood and stood away and after a bit one of the farmers, they called them Steeles, and they had a farm nearby called Must Hill, came by and he said "No good you standing there me lad." I said "Why?" He said "Your horse has run away!" It had run off and spilt all the milk. So standing with it for a month didn't do any good. Mr Atkinson didn't use the horse on his milk round again although he used it on his farm.

Interview No R013

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