

## **Foreman said “Who’s is that finger” – it was mine**

### **George Hutchinson was born in 1908 and interviewed in 1994**

I was born in Barton, about five miles from Scotch Corner. We didn’t stay long. We did a lot of moving about from one farm to another. There were eight children, two boys, in the family. I was sixth in line. There’s only two of us out of the eight alive now.

After school I’d run errands. Somebody, you’d be going past would call out “Hey George will you do this for me?” “Certainly,” I’d say and I’d go off with a note or whatever it was, like taking horses to the ‘smiddy.’ Well I’d maybe get threepence. With threepence you were a rich man in those days.

My father would get to a farm and if he didn’t like it he had to stop there for twelve month until t’hirings came round. You see my father was a farm hind. Over there the married man was called a “hind.” He would go to Darlington and stand to get hired. The hirings were just once a year for hinds but a single person could go to two a year.

Father was a stockman looking after the cattle and mother was always wanted as a milker. Father couldn’t milk, well he wouldn’t try. When we lived at Caldwell she used to have to walk a mile at night and morning to milk six or seven cows.

There was a lot of jobs then that isn’t there today. My first “real” job was on the farm where my father was working at the time. It was loading turnips into turnip houses. Then I got to ploughing. I loved that job. You could take pride in your work and see the benefit of it. Another job we called “looking” in spring when corn was starting to grow. That was for thistles. You’d a bit of a plate thing on a long shaft and you used to go up and down t’fields looking for and smashing thistles. Then harvest time came - barley for the pigs, oats as well for the horses, and wheat for flour. That was sent to the flour mill at Selby. For that and many other odd jobs I got ten shillings a year.

When I was sixteen me and my brother went into a quarry at Barton. We used to bike seven miles there and seven mile back. On a Saturday we used to do that then go into Darlington to the football match. That was eleven mile either way. The quarry produced stone. They used to fire it with shots then we had to break it up so it would go through an eighty-inch ring. Then it was loaded into railways wagons and it went to Dorman Long, a well-known steel manufacturer at Middlesbrough.

My next job was driving a horse drawn tree trunk transporter. There was a storm brewing and we were loading wood into the station. On timber wagons there’s a bolster at the front and a bolster at the back and there’s a long pole in the middle holding them together. Well one tree hadn’t just reached each bolster and it had dropped down. So I had to put a chain on to pull it out. I had just put the horse back, got the chain and was pulling it through the ends of the stretcher when a clap of thunder came and away went the horse and I went down for the horse. When I came back the foreman was standing on the heap of wood. He said “Who’s this finger?” “Oh” I said “it’s mine.” And my hand was covered in blood and I never felt it. They took me to Greenbank Hospital in Darlington and they fixed me up. But if it had been today I could have got it put back on again cos it was lying there.

When I was off drawing compensation for my finger John Howson went out of business and then his brother Harry came to see if I would work for him. We were all up and down the country he bought woods, then the woodcutters went and felled them and we went to take them away. I thoroughly enjoyed it – it was all horses in them days.

In 1938 tractors and wagons came on to the job and horses were finished and I was very sorry about that because I loved me horses.

I went from horses to a Ford wagon in 1938. It was the same as timber wagons drawn with horses. It had two wheels at the front, then a long pole and two wheels at the back and you could lengthen it or shorten it. We used to get trees up to 70 feet long. It wasn't very good. For one thing you just had rod brakes and you could stand on them and they were no good. So when you got a few tons at the back of you, they were useless. You had to use your gears for going down and suchlike.

I had two large Alsatians when we lived at Gatebeck. They both lived to be thirteen years old. The second one was a marvellous dog. I trained it to do all kinds. At one time I was mates with a bloke that had just come out of the army and he wore a beret. He used to come into our house and never took it off. That's a thing we allus had to do when you went into a house. You took your hat off.

One day he came in and said "Take his cap off Smoke." One big paw here and one there, then one on each shoulder and just lifted it off. As proud as punch it was. He never came in the house again.

I used to work until six o'clock on a night. That was an hour's overtime and three on a Saturday morning. That was my pocket money and I used to come home at six o'clock get my dinner – I allus had a hot dinner then I used to be off with the dogs. I used to walk four or five miles. Feeding time was none o'clock. As long as I got back for nine o'clock everything was in apple pie order.

I finished working at Netherfield. I was in the repairs for a start off. I was on t'mops brushing shoes and then they went it to the shoe room to be cleaned after that. Then when I finished up I was more or less an errand lad running about all over both factories.

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