
David Hutchison, accordionist 1900-1975

A memoir by his daughter Hazel Hutchison

The picture that was painted of my father, by my older brother, has to be corrected, and here is what my father was really like. I am the eight of ten children and I was the youngest girl in the family. My Da was born near Cairnlob Cottage on the 15th August in the Parish of Lonmay, near Fraserburgh, 1900. Travellers usually lived outdoors in the summertime, gave birth outside, and worked outside, although they usually had a property to return to in the wintertime.

My memories of my Da, are of a fair and just and educated man. I cannot recall an illiterate tinker for a Da otherwise I may have disowned him. My Da had a great interest in music, because I used to watch him shave, put on his black suit and white shirt with a clean stud collar every night, that he was hired to play for weddings and other venues when I was very little. I used to sit by the fire, in a big fireside chair watching him, shave etc, while he was getting ready to perform his music. I could never get to sleep till he came home very late and tucked me in, and sometimes he took his overcoat off and put it over the blankets, to make sure that I was nice and warm.

My Da used to have another job, and that was that he was a self employed watchmaker, and he used to attend the Kittybrewster Mart, a couple of times a week to collect his work that the lairds had sent via their farmhands, because my father was trusted by the upper classes, who knew him to be an honest man. His work usually consisted of Westminster Chimes clocks, gold watches, ladies watches, and sometimes jewellery that needed to be gold carets classed, or mended. We had many clocks around our living room all tick-tocking throughout the day and night, till they were returned to their owners, then they would be replaced by various other clocks, waiting to be repaired too. Seeing as my Da, sometimes drove a black car, he would use that to get around, until times were hard and he would have to sell it, and wait till he was better off to get another car.

I had a very stable life, and my Da was kind and generous, and every pay night on his way home, he would bring me a comic called *the Topper*, and my two brothers would get *the Beano* and *the Dandy*. My Da always brought us home a small thin tuppenny chocolate bar each, and at night time we sometimes had fish suppers and lemonade, after our main tea time. At the weekend, we were sent to the cinema on Saturdays, and swimming on Sundays while my parents rested and read a huge amount of newspapers, such as *the Sunday Post*, *the News of the World* and other Sunday newspapers that everyone else read in those days. His favourite read was detective magazines, and he was interested in forensics, and he really enjoyed these magazines, which he bought monthly. Illiterate indeed? We had a huge Sunday dinner when we got home after our swim at the Uptown Baths, in Aberdeen.

My father was respected by everyone, and everybody liked him, liked his music, liked talking to him as he was a great conversationalist, and it was an art that he had acquired in the course of his life's journey. At home we had a piano in the living room, and we could play it whenever we wanted too, and mouth organs were always on the go by all of us too, and sometimes our house would be invaded by relations such as Curley Mackay, and many others, who came for lessons from my Da, and to poach his ideas and musical talents. Sometimes the neighbours would call the police as the music was so loud seeing as it included bagpipes, piano accordions, fiddles, button accordions, and anything else that somebody saw fit to bring along for a lesson from my Da.

A Scottish Musical Miscellany
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My Da read music very well, and I often watched him taking out the sheet music from the piano stool, and playing some real oldies on it, such as Music Hall kind of songs and accompaniments. Sometimes he would sing to this music too. Sometimes my Da sang love songs to my Ma when he came home a bit boozy and he knew that he was in a bit of trouble with my Ma. They loved each other so much those two, and they always stuck together, and never contradicted each other, and if one of us got into trouble over something, they first asked what happened, and then they sided with each other, against us kids. There was no getting between them. I needn't have worried, because I always tried to please them, and to never get into trouble, so as they would be happy with me.

My Da was a wise man, but he was not the best babysitter in the world. Once when my Ma was working and I was very little at the time, he would be fixing and soldering his watches over the gas cooker in the kitchen, and I decided to climb on a chair and look to see what was on top of the high mantelpiece over the fire in the living room. Suddenly, my long nighty was ablaze, and I was mesmerised by a huge blue circle of flames around me, when my father came back into the living room, saw what had happened, and immediately dropped all his soldering stuff, and squashed the flames with his big hands, before ripping the burning nighty off of me. Just then my mother came home. They had a huge row, and the next day a brand new large brass coloured fireguard appeared around the coal fire. That was the only time I ever saw them quarrelling, but after that time, everything was okay. I did not have any burns on me, but I think that my Da burnt his hands on that day, and I can still remember him panicking, and grabbing at the flaming parts of the nighty, to stop me from getting burnt.

My Da liked to play cards with us kids, and he played for real, in that, if he won, he kept the money. I was a very bad loser, so I stopped playing cards, and to this day, I have never gambled, and I don't even think that I have ever bought a lottery ticket. I think that gambling is a bit like drinking, you either do it, or you do not, but apart from playing cards with us kids, my Da had never been in a bookies in his life. Later on, my Da was drinking now and again, but he never showed any anger, or bad temper or violence towards any of us. Once an older brother was seen by a neighbour to commit a very cruel deed on our collie dog, by throwing the dog over a fifty feet tall bridge into the river leading to the sea. Somehow the dog survived the terrible ordeal, and when that particular brother got home, I heard my Da smacking him and he thoroughly deserved it.

Another time, one of my older sisters, was demonstrating to us three young ones, how to take the top off a bottle of sulphuric acid to look at it smoking, and my Da came in the door just then, and us young ones were cowering as we could it that it was bad stuff. My Da slowly took the dropper from her and replaced it onto the bottle, put it far away on the top shelf, and smacked her hand about six times. She never did it again, but I did, to copy what she did, I found it scary so I never did it again. So you see, my Da only smacked when there was no option.

When it came to schooling, we had to go every day, unless we were ill, as it was not negotiable to take time off. My Da was a great believer in Education, but our only options were to leave school and get a job at fifteen. I returned to full time Education later on in my life, and I became a Business Graduate, and also I have an HND in IT amongst other things. I think that because of not being allowed to go to college as a teenager, I have been an eternal learner throughout my adult life, and I am still learning now. My Da had a great sense of humour, and he was mostly cheerful, all through my life, and I can't remember him giving me bad advice, or being horrible to me.

Later on, I understand that he began to drink heavily, and my mother left him, however, I think that he began drinking heavily because she left him, as she had plans to have a life of her own. She met a man and moved in with him. I felt so sorry for my Da because he followed her down south, to try to get her to come back, and my Ma kept hiding from him instead of being open about it, and she involved all of us, instead of dealing with it herself. The last time I saw my Da was in 1965 when I visited him in the old family house, and he was keeping company with drunks, one of whom I looked at with disgust, and

he immediately tried to attack me. My Da threw himself between the attacker and me, and threw him out of the house.

I really missed my Da, and if I never visited him during his declining years, it was because of me, and my life, not him, and that I was going through many storms myself, and I was in no position mentally or supportively, to be of any benefit to him. I deeply regret not being around when he was getting old, so when my mother was in her declining years, I dedicated quite a bit of my life to her final year or two. Sorry Da, I really did love you, your compassion and wisdom, and I miss you and your stories and the loud music, and all the family stuff that we all did together. I would not have missed it for anything.