

There were at least two important families of Hutchinsons living in Great Ayton in the nineteenth century. One group were farmers, and were particularly associated with Bank House Farm. They are described in another entry. This entry is about the Hutchinsons who were shoemakers; they were possibly related to our Hutchinsons of Bank House, but by the mid-nineteenth century seem to be quite separate.

In 1840 there were no fewer than 8 shoemakers in the village¹. At that time the normal means of transport was by walking, and work on farms or in the quarries caused boots to quickly wear down. Robert Hutchinson was one of these shoemakers, known as a cordwainer at the birth of their first child. He had been born in Ayton in 1786. He married Hannah Weetman from the village on 20 December 1808². Most of the Weetmans lived in County Durham, but there are recorded marriages of what is presumably a Weetman family in Ayton in the first part of the nineteenth century (Hannah in 1808, Elizabeth in 1818 and John in 1819). Robert and Hannah had at least three children. Their first son, William, was born on 28 June 1811 and died one month later, being buried on 30 August 1811. Harriet was baptised on 12 November 1808, and a second son, also named William, was baptised on 28 June 1810. In 1850 Robert took on his 14 year-old grandson Robert Jackson as an apprentice. Grandson Robert's parents, William and Harriet Jackson, were living next door. Harriet no doubt acquired sewing skills from her mother, who had been a dressmaker, and used these in her hat-making business. Harriet is later described as a straw hat maker. Believe it or not there were six straw hat makers, excluding milliners, in Ayton and Stokesley in 1834³ falling to four by 1848⁴. These occupations are a reminder of how self-contained villages were until the mid 1800s when increased prosperity, factory-made products and railway transport combined to start the shopping revolution.

Harriet's husband William, from Hutton Rudby, had been a linen weaver. At the start of the nineteenth century the villages of Rudby and Hutton had the largest number of linen weavers in the whole of the North Riding, with around 120 linen weavers in the villages⁵. These 120 included four Jacksons, Oliver Jackson (age 80), John Jackson (age 400, and John and James Jackson (both age 35). Baines Directory of 1823 lists a William Jackson, draper and hatter. If this is our William Jackson, it is possible that he was in business with his wife Harriet, the milliner. It was not uncommon for linen weaving to be done on a part-time basis, and he may have shared working on a loom belonging to another member of the family. The cottage-based linen industry collapsed after 1837, due to the competition from factory-produced material, cheaper lined products coming from Scotland and Ireland, and competition from cheaper cotton materials. By the time of the 1851 census there were only 74 linen weavers in Hutton Rudby. Of course this depressed the whole economy of the village. So it is easy to see why William and Harriet left to start a business in Ayton. William had started a barber's shop in Great Ayton, possibly lacking the capital to open a draper's shop, but still added "linen weaver" on his census return of 1841. Perhaps he hoped that he might return to the loom one day.

By the time of the 1861 census⁶ Robert was 77 and still working as a shoemaker. Grandson Robert, now 26, was working alongside his grandfather, and they had been joined by another of Robert's grandsons, Joseph, who was a shoemaking apprentice and 16 years old. Also living in the same house were Dinah, a granddaughter age 25 and Joseph, a great grandson aged 1. So in the two adjacent houses there were now four generations of the Hutchinsons. The 1871 census contains no trace of the Hutchinson family shoemaking business in Ayton.

References

- 1 History, Gazetteer & Directory of the East and North Ridings of Yorkshire
Wm. White, 1840
- 2 The Parish Register of Great Ayton (1600-1812)
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The Yorkshire Parish Register Society, 1931
- 3 National Commercial Directory – Durham, Northumberland and Yorkshire

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- 4 Directory for Yorkshire and Lincolnshire
Slater, 1848
- 5 Hutton Rudby: Industrial Village c1700-1900
R P Hastings
Hutton Rudby and District Local History Society, 1979
- 6 Census returns for Great Ayton 1841 to 1901
North Yorkshire County Record Office, Northallerton