

Mags Hutchinson

Great tales about being a runner and cashier

Born 1952 in Whitby. Dad worked for ICI in Billingham. Mother brought up 8 children (twins died at 3 months). Fifty years ago she moved to London and lived with someone who worked part-time at the stadium. She got a part-time job working on the tote selling tickets. Didn't know anything; put in the dog number and pulled out the ticket. In 1974 she went on to shift work on the Tuesday, Friday and Saturday meetings.

She worked in the oldest part of the stadium paying out the winning bets. She was the cashier underneath the restaurant where the runners came. She went on to be a runner for the restaurant and then moved to the grandstand above the restaurant where she paid out the winnings. Once overpaid by £500 but managed to chase down the person she had given it to. Been in the booth a little while and one of the owners used to buy her drink every time.

Because she took so much money she was not allowed to carry more than £2,000 at one time. Cross over the little office with security. Some people bet over £100 on a race. There was some scamming so punters would try and delay handing over the money to just before the race started. She went from being cashier to being a runner in the restaurant where she used to take home more money in tips than she did in wages. One guy she got to know used to empty out his pockets and give it to her just in case he lost. If someone won £100 most likely they would give you a £5 tip. John McCrerrick the famous commentator apparently never gave a tip. Lots of people came back to the same person in a booth because you were 'lucky'.

Remembers a big meeting in the summer and after the races being in an enormous hall at the stadium with tables just covered in cash that needed to be counted.