

My School Days by George Lake



I have now lived in Dolton for 42 years, but all my schooldays were in Torrington, because I lived at Bakers Farm Torrington from 1928-1942.

I started school at 4½ years old at the Council school in Whites Lane and enjoyed my learning days. 1939 was the year I remember most because on the first Thursday of May I was asked to become one of the two heralds on the May Queen cart. At that time the Queen was taken around the town in a cart drawn by a horse. We started at 10.30 am and arrived back at the fountain at the bottom of the Square at about 11.45. We had then to walk up to the crowning point at the top of the Square, to be held at 12.00 midday. After the crowning we were asked by the teacher in charge of us to take the Queen down to the mayoral stand by the Green Lantern. So the Queen and crowner, 2 heralds and 6 attendants set off to meet the Mayor. On nearing the stand I saw this tall Mayor stand up to receive us, and I recognized him as the Mayor of South Molton. I had to introduce the Queen to him and his wife – who grabbed my hand and said, “Well done George!” She was in fact my Aunt, my Mum’s elder sister. I bet that has never happened before or since.

Moving to Sept. 3rd 1939, war was declared on the Sunday, and the new school at Calvesford opened on the next day (Sept. 4th). I had one year to do at this place and was elected to be head of Drake, one of the 4 Houses. I held this post until I left in July 1940, to then become the last male Telegram Boy employed by Torrington Post Office. The next Boy was a Girl (!), and the post was not employed after she left.

The post of May Queen was not used between 1939-45 because of the War, and when started again in 1946 the girl was 10yrs old, whereas this had previously been held by a 13yr old.