FORTY YEARS ON

Posted on June 24, 2010 by Eddie

Category: Observations

In the summer of 1970, I was in my last year at Commercial Road Junior School in Sunderland. Like this year, it was a World Cup summer and we were convinced that England would go on to triumph just as they did in 1966: and just like every four years since, we were wrong!



In those days, I had an angelic soprano voice and sang in the school choir. That year one of the

pieces was called 'forty years on' and I had a one line solo that included the highest note I have ever sung. I now know that the song is the Harrow School song, but back then, I'd never even heard of Harrow.

However, even at such a young age, I did find the words rather haunting and evocative, and I still do.

> *Forty years on, when afar and asunder*
>
> *Parted are those who are singing today,*
>
> *When you look back, and forgetfully wonder*
>
> *What you were like in your work and your play,*
>
> *Then, it may be, there will often come oâ€™er you,*
>
> *Glimpses of notes like the catch of a song â€“*
>
> *Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,*
>
> *Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along,*

It's almost exactly forty years since I sung those high notes and it is rather difficult to imagine the boy that became me. I do remember that one of my friends complained that my dirty knees (due to playing football at playtime before the photograph) had spoiled the picture for the whole class!

Within a year from this picture being taken, I had discovered rock and roll music and rugby union and my brother had taken me on my first short walking holiday; these are things that have stayed with me over the succeeding years (though my enjoyment of rugby is has been confined to watching for a long time now). More importantly by the time the summer of 1971 came around, my dad had died of cancer, and the secure family world that I had grown up in was changed for ever.

Looking back; the summer of 1970 was the year that my childhood ended.