

RAISING THE SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE

Just as the government is raising the school-leaving age again, Lib Ed received the following relevant message.

My name is Alan Nettleton. I've just been reading a post about alternative education on the Dartington Hall School Facebook site and found it interesting. I was involved in a sort of alternative education myself.

The first four years of my secondary education were at Northcliffe High, Conisbrough. It was a standard comprehensive school with the standard curriculum of the time (early seventies) and I hated it. There was nothing to hold my attention or spark an interest in what I was going to do with the rest of my life, so imagine my joy when in 1972 ROSLA (the Raising of the School-Leaving Age) was rolled out. I would have to spend another year sucking the tit of the "great farting pig that is comprehensive education." But wait! A shining white knight was on the horizon in the shape of Royston Lambert.

Arthur Young, the headmaster, asked me, along with fourteen other underachievers, if I would like to take part in an experiment set up by Royston and I think Alec Clegg. We would be taken to the Dartington Hall School annexe in Conisbrough, which was called The Terrace and managed by Pat and Dick Kitto.

We were taught by Neil Fitzgerald in the Dartington Hall School ethos, that is to say useful work. We restored antique furniture for a local dealer, and this part-funded our trips to Dartington where I met wonderful, warm people with a different view on education and life.

I'm not sure what Royston's aim was with this experiment - maybe it was just to see if the Dartington way would work in a different environment. It certainly turned the final year of my schooling into one of the happiest years of my life.