

Heads of School Speech 2011

Toby McKean and, later, Tom Gibbs

Toby (alone): The end of term has fine traditions,
like Lists, or jumping in the pool
after exams. In top position's
the speech done by the Heads of School.
I did say Heads – but only I'm on.
I really miss my side-kick Simon –
he has a hurdling race to run
in Gateshead, so we're down to one.
If only he were that bit faster
he could be here – if out of breath.
So there's just me. This is the death
of a tradition. It's disaster.
We need two speakers every year;
so can I have a volunteer?

Enter Tom Gibbs (from somewhere). Toby continues:

Oh look! Tom Gibbs. Phew, that was lucky.
He's such an educated guy,
And now we know he's also plucky.
Somehow he always seemed so shy.
Mate, read this out. It took me ages.
Tom (looking at script):
You're sure? You'll need to cut three pages.

Toby:

No, why?

Tom: They're mostly Rugby brags.
The rest is Mr Clayton gags.

Toby:

Hang on. Didn't you used to edit
an underground school magazine?
You're telling *me* to keep it clean?

Tom:

Don't worry, you'll get all the credit.

Toby: All right. Now Gibbs has had his way,
let's hope there's something left to say.

Tom: Now, on that subject. How inspiring
the sermon was that we just shared.

It's an accomplishment requiring
a speaker who is well prepared.

Toby: So spare a thought for our new chaplain.
She clearly came to Sherborne grappling
with Dorset, huge choirs, and, each week,
a huge Abbey in which to speak.

Tom: It surely is a lot of pressure,
So now it's our turn to forgive
our otherwise superb Rev. if

she once said, like a stage-struck fresher,
“My sermon’s vanished from my head.”
Toby: so Mr Gillott spoke instead.

Tom: And while we’re talking of new faces,
there’s one we simply can’t ignore.

Toby: headmasters come from many places,
But his, we hadn’t known before.

Tom: He came from somewhere edgy, urban,
and rose to be Headman of Sherborne.

Toby: We’re here to say that he supports
most things, except for cars in courts.
Welcome, Headmaster. You’ll keep steady
the mighty ship that Sherborne is.

Tom: I’m quite convinced that he’s the biz.
Just look at what he’s changed already.

Here’s one achievement we salute:

Toby: Sir, you made Hilly wear a suit.

Tom: This is no time to mock. We’re sorry
to hear of teachers moving on,
such as that young man in a hurry,
the trendy Mr Henderson.

Toby: He did things fast, and now goes faster
to Bradfield as a young headmaster.

Tom: I’d say that puts him just a shade
above his Baseline Standard Grade.

Toby: Adieu to that aficionado
of 24-hour cricket games –
great Dr Such.

Tom: For me, his name’s
the very by-word of bravado.

Toby: Really?

Tom: Sure. When he speaks in Spanish,
most of his inhibitions vanish.

Toby: And Bootstrap’s hanging up his laces –
he’s off to teach Harrovian rogues.

Tom: How odd that such a nickname graces
a man who’s happier in Brogues.

Toby: Bad rhyme alert: Yes, let’s be honest –
Turner’s tutorials were the funnest.

Tom: Did you just say “tutorials”?

Toby: Sorry, I meant, “bootorials”.

Tom: We’ll miss, too, Mr Duggan’s lessons,
on much more than antiquity:
his headstands proved Duggan to be
suppler than many adolescents.

Toby: Do you recall the things he said?

Tom: Yes. And he said them on his head.

Toby: For many years of wise, calm service,
Mrs Coultas deserves our thanks.
Often her put-downs could unnerve us
and hush our huge choir's ranks on ranks.

Tom: We'll miss that legendary doctor,
Claire Pemberton.

Toby: So little shocked her,
and she immediately revealed
a gift for coaching track and field.

Tom: Biologists must find new pastures:
Miss Roper leaves, as does Miss Wood,
who learns the joy of motherhood.

Toby: With more exams now than in past years,
Thanks, Mr Bradshaw, calm, forgiving,
who made the examined life worth living.

Tom: I gather Rugby was impressive.

Toby: Sure was. How was the cricket team?

Tom: Similar, only less aggressive.

Toby: Won all your matches?

Tom: We can dream.

Toby: Rugby now has a new director.

The northern Mr Guy can hector –
in fact, he's quite like Mr Miles,
except, occasionally, he smiles.

Tom: Our football fields now look like Wembley;
our first eleven wouldn't shame
England's – it plays the long-ball game
to entertain the awed assembly.

Toby: They're good-looking, they run about,
But seldom take injunctions out.

Tom: Music enjoys a golden era,
and Music School's one classy joint:
you hear rehearsals even clearer.

Toby: I thought that wasn't quite the point?

Tom: The choir's sublime noise reaches heaven –

Toby: It should – it has one boy in seven –

Tom: with fanfares fit to burst a dam,
While RocSoc's getting still more glam.

Toby: From social comedy to thriller,
drama at Sherborne's "on a roll".

Tom: Nice one.

Toby: Thanks. And they've stuffed the Powell
with Alan Ayckbourn, Arthur Miller...

Tom: Hey, did you go and see Dick Barton?
Vitaly Gan played Dolly Parton.

Toby: Isn't it time to hear more speeches?

Tom: At least, the speakers are all there.
I'm sure that, unlike certain preachers,
they took the trouble to prepare.

Toby: Before we go, and boys get prizes,
can I just ask you: in your eyes, is
being at Sherborne School at all
like Glastonbury Festival?

Tom: You're tired? You can't go out of bounds?

Toby: There is a kind of youthful cheer...

Tom: It's more expensive every year...

Toby: But most of all, the joyful sounds
will stay with me. So, Thank you – from
Toby (and Simon) –

Tom: And from Tom.