

Heads of School speech, 6 July 2012

H: I love Commem. I love the Courts;

The sounds of lawnmowers and sports;

T – A time of picnics; barbecues –

H - Wait – Toby – everyone's in pews.

T- I see – And look – some rain just dripped

Through the fan vaulting on my script.

H – We thought the puddles would have dried,

But no, we're doing this inside,

And, fearing just such an immersion,

We drafted a wet-weather version.

T – Where is it, Harry?

H – Just a minute –

I have it somewhere.

T - Did you bin it?

H – No – here you go.

T - "I love Commem;

The pews; the parents filling them."

We love the mediaeval rule

That you must hear the Heads of School

Who, ever since King Edward's times

Have bashed your ears with dodgy rhymes.

H – Yes, Toby, who could once reduce us

To trembling awe with his cadeucus

Has come up with a threat far worse –

Pages of his iambic verse.

T (wielding his cadeuceus) – So you were Head of School? How come?

H – You know the Bursar? She's my mum. *(Toby is trumped by this, and stops wielding.)*

T – We're grateful for the wise advice

We heard here from the Reverend Tice.

H – And weren't they clever to invite

That old Shirburnian, Michael Wright,

Whose columns in the Telegraph

So regularly make us laugh

About his life in deepest France.

T – We'd join him, given half a chance.

Meanwhile, it is our turn, I fear,

To contemplate the passing year.

H – And with it pass staff to admire,

Who relocate, or else retire.

T – It's sad we're losing Mr Smith.

I have to ask – is this a myth?

The programme he likes most of all,

I'm told, 's *High School the Musical*.

H – He sings, *and* he can hold a tune,

Amazingly, on the bassoon.

T – But that's the problem with bassoons.

Nobody really gives them tunes.

H – Thanks for that, Toby. And on cue

His friend John Storey's going, too.

He gave Rome's emperors some glamour,

And spent a while playing *Warhammer*.

T - The CCF's enduring hunk

Knows how to kayak and spelunk.

H – That’s potholing.

T - Whatevs. He'll ply

His expertise at Ardingly.

H – And goodbye, too, Mrs Bonnell

Who made so many boys do well

That the results were often good

For boys who never thought they could.

T – With Mr Ambrose, we're surprised

That maths could be so civilised.

H – And he did more on our behalf –

He tried to civilise the staff.

It's odd to think, it's been a year

Since we had Mr Weston here.

T – Our one-time deputy headmaster'll

Be in our hearts for all things pastoral.

H - He would drop everything without

A second thought to help us out.

T - (*slightly painfully*) In French, he showed us *Ratatouille*.

(*as if tragic*) We lose him now to Qatar, do we?

H – Ouch. That's the best that you can do?

T – Yes, but it's funny 'cos it's true.

H – Then there's our longest-serving leaver –

The most persuasive Mr Cleaver.

T – No matter that the fees were dear –

He charmed us into being here

And gave parents a pitch so fine

They'd quickly say, "Where do I sign?"

H – Who else.

T - I can't think.

H - Don't be silly –

You very nearly missed out Hillie!

He brought out matches so much fizz.

T – A boy once pointed out, “This is

No “i” in the word “team” but still

There really is an “i” in Hill.

H – He’s gone, but set aside your grief.

He left us with a core belief

In language we all understood:

Both – Don’t just be good, be bloody good.

H – Shall we regale you with our thoughts

On Sherborne’s progress in the sports?

We have a lot to brag about,

Except, we’re not supposed to shout.

T – No, chanting’s back, but subject to

Assessment from a chant review.

H – What *does* the chant committee do?

T - They say, “Did that chant work for you?

I thought it was derivative.”

Then, round the table, they all give

Each slogan points, from one to ten,

Add them all up, and only then

We get to say them on the Upper.

H – Or else it’s bedtime and no supper.

So we use gentle tones to say

The rugby season went OK

While adding, with a humble hush,

Rain turned the cricket into mush.

T - Who knew that musicals could be

Risky as rugby?

H - Toby’s knee

Was dislocated during *Grease*,
But Toby's back, and in one piece.
Now, Toby here cut quite a dash
In his house play, with false moustache.
T- Weren't you in one, in quite tight trousers
Surrounded by young men in blouses?
H – The choir's continuing to grow.
The stalls begin to overflow.
T – Are you guys in the choir as well?
H – No – it's so big it's hard to tell.
Musicians pulled out every stop,
With swing bands, orchestras and pop –
From organ strains of Sandy May
To the Courts Concert's own DJ.
T – I'm pleased to say that nearly all
School talks were inspirational.
Some boys gave Toby Young a rinse –
He's not been back to Sherborne since.
H – One speaker made boys chat a bit,
Which helped our own Ed Haynes admit
He's a dab hand at taxidermy.
T – The very notion makes me squirmy.
(We had to tell you that, and yet
The rhyme is one we'd best forget.
H – Since our exams, we left our buddies
To new timetables for their studies.
One aspect of it's pretty sweet –
There are so many times to eat.
T – The biggest highlight has to be

The tea – or rather, *enhanced* tea.

H – The caterers will sure enhance

Your lunch.

T - Then afterwards, we dance

As if into the sunset, but

We know that Sherborne's gates don't shut.

H – I think you'll find they do. At night.

T – That was a metaphor, all right?

We passed them once as boys, and then

We pass the other way, as men,

Grateful for all the time we spent.

H – Amazed, too, at how fast it went.

We leave you now, and now you carry

With you high hopes from Toby and Harry.