

Heads of School review, Commem 2015

Robert: Hello – can everybody hear?

Jack: No? Good. Nobody has to fear
a stumbling speech made all the worse
by the constraints of old-school verse.

Alternative version if in the marquis –

Jack: No? Good. Nobody has to fear
a speech in sometimes stumbling verse.

Robert: And then they've made the project worse.
They've given us a tougher task – a
speech from inside a Baked Alaska.

Jack: Who cares? However hot the school,
in here, we're like, totally cool,

Back to main speech –

although in *Bake-Off* terms, we've met
surely our biggest challenge yet.

Robert – We must review a – quiet year.

Jack – It's true folks, nothing happened here.
There's nothing special to report.

Robert – Didn't we do quite well at sport?

Jack – We always do. The Nat West Vase
for junior Rugby now is ours.

Robert – Rory Macmillan – wasn't he
chosen to be in Team GB?

Jack – He was, Rob, but for Chemistry.
That doesn't count. Let's say instead,
we're grateful to our wise young head –
The mighty Ralph, whom guvnors gave us
when things were just too quiet, to save us

from –

Robert – whatever he saved us from,

and did it with a rare aplomb.

At least we've had a busy day;

as Mr Barlow's apt to say,

we've heard some readings, said some prayers

and sung some hymns.

Jack – Soon Black Rod spares

the time to spoil us children with

wisdom, experience and pith.

Robert – Meanwhile, sorry, you're stuck with us,

and almost nothing to discuss.

Jack – It's quite like sitting an exam

and wishing you'd made time to cram.

Robert (sounding like something between a hypnotist and an add for a hangover remedy) –

Thankfully worries melt away

with Mrs Clayton's tips of the day.

Jack - Some seem quite sound. Here's one:

Robert: Prepare.

Jack - Or failing that, there's always prayer.

Robert – We'd ask the Rev., but she fell flat

listening and dancing to Take That –

Jack – Yes. From afar, she saw a star. Lo!

It led to Mr - Gary - Barlow.

Robert – Meanwhile the trusty Reverend Mercer

has wielded his computer's cursor

so far ahead he can remember

who says each prayer till next December.

It looked as though we'd need a miracle

to make inspectorates wax lyrical,
but when the School was on the spot
that was precisely what we got.

Jack – I heard the verdict from a chap
I met down at the Digby Tap,
and we got talking, as you do,
until we'd seen the evening through.
Then, when I asked him how it went,
he told us we were excellent.

Robert - Now, much of this we can attribute
to staff, so let us now pay tribute
to those who've given us so much –
let's hope that you can stay in touch.

Jack – It's been a help that Mr Jones
has Hellenism in his bones –
his accent, and guitar, make meter
in odes and epics all the sweeter.

Robert – Mr Pannill's filled our chapels
with lovely talks; he's powered by apples.
He's written poems that eclipse
the doggerel coming from our lips.

(A couplet about B Kalinsky to come)

Jack – I love the electronic mail,
especially when staff regail
600 boys with gleeful tales
of how their cricket team prevails;
Tom Flowers' tenure's reached an end,
but please, sir, keep on clicking "Send".

Robert – Now that we're 18, Mr Carey

That first-rate rugby and tennis coach
is someone we can now approach.

Jack – Careful, he could be watching you.

Robert – I'd worry, but I'm leaving too.

I heard that Mr Kimber taught
young Classics students how one ought
to translate that forensic flow
of Lysias and Cicero
by dressing up in toilet roll
to be unravelled like a scroll.

Jack, you're quite good at Latin.

Jack - Yup.

I'm pretty much the Andrex pup.

It's Dr Stiff who will declare
that Geography is everywhere.

Once he was on the SMT
he soon embodied Geography.

Robert – The one-stop call for Soviet Foreign
Policy's always Mr Warren,
who gave his set excellent marks –

Jack – He means, Karl Marx; our Richard harks
back fondly to Cromwell's protectorate.

Robert – So when the ISI inspectorate said that the school keeps getting better, it's 'cos they hadn't seen his sweater. It's fading fast.

Jack - What do you mean?

It's never changed. It's ever-green.

Robert – Now, those of you who've ever had reports from Mr Haigh, be sad.

Jack – Be very sad. Yes, when he ran Wallace, its residents began to see if they could use a word that Mr Haigh had never heard.

Robert – They never could. To win the cup you really had to make them up. And even then you weren't so sure he hadn't chanced on that before, or he'd invent some synonym.

Jack – It's time for a report on him: (*big breath*) – Patrick's unceasing lucubrations are seen by some as exhortations to join in the semantic games evocative of Henry James while deconstructionists prefer the joy of text – and I concur.

Robert – Jack, steady on. I should remind you that Mr Haigh is right behind you. Sir, if the wording wasn't right, we really meant to be polite.

Jack – That's really what we've learnt from you. We've picked up some choice language, too.

Robert – Are you all right, Jack?

Jack - I'm OK, but need another tip of the day if I'm to keep us on the tracks.

Robert - Good. (*Hypnotist again* -) Mrs Clayton says – relax.

Breathe in. Play Minecraft. You'll soon find
things flooding back into your mind.

Jack – Thanks Rob – it's working! I recall
that this year wasn't quiet at all!

The school sent all those letters out –

Robert – (*nervously to the audience*) – I don't know what he's on about –

Jack – to warn the townsfolk that the boys
of Roc.Soc really make some noise!

Here music is a massive thing.

When we sing masses, masses sing.

Robert – Phew. Art this year has been intense.

I don't know how we can dispense
with Mr Cuerden and his wife,
who brought such colour to our life.

Jack – They made Shirburnians so right on
we'll want to go with them to Brighton.

Drama's intense, too – Mr Reade
makes actors give until they bleed.

Robert – They leave the audience wanting more,
till there are organs on the floor.

Duchess of Malfi? That was fun.

Jack – For sure. Chopped liver, anyone?

opt cut couplet? Theatre shocks. Oh jeepers creepers –
King Oedipus popped out his peepers.

Robert – In 2015 came the age
when drama took a national stage,
so party leaders and their fates
were mirrored by our own debates.

Junior debates were so well run –

so good that everybody won.

Jack – So, as in the UK election,
there was, bizarrely, a rejection
of Labour.

Robert - Yes, we turned on Ed
for being far too weird, and Red.

Jack – Yes, funny as it sometimes seems,
throughout the night, Ed Polsue dreams
of raising the taxation scale
and nationalising Network Rail.

Robert - Time to spruce up the nation's health.
Righto, chaps, redistribute wealth.

Jack – Those winds of change that blow and blast
ceaselessly bear us to the past
and bear aloft our royal flag
so that morale can never sag.

Robert – Yes, each term, when the flag's unrolled,
you'd almost think the school was old.

Jack – It is? That's why directors came
to film *The Imitation Game*.

opt cut*Robert* – Hurray! Each time the Courts appeared
our schoolboy audiences cheered
so loud in Yeovil Cineworld
that all my toes completely curled. **end opt cut**

Jack – Still, if Napoleon was beaten
upon the playing fields of Eton,
then on some sunlit Sherborne green
we broke the German code machine.

Robert – You see, like flags, it's hard to hide

that funny sentiment called pride.

Sometimes we fear that it's adjacent

to being cocky or complacent,

which isn't a good look when set

against a world we haven't met.

Jack – We face the future, yes, but feel

our past experience is as real.

If Sherborne's history empowers,

the past five years of it were ours –

Robert – Years that we doubt we could have spent

in a more warm environment.

Jack – And so, although we leave you now –

although we take our final bow,

our thoughts will keep us coming back –

Robert – and so might we – *Robert* –

Jack – and Jack.