

Heads of School speech, Commem 2018

Peter Folkes (P), George Sutton (G)

G- As almost everybody knows,
here's how Commemoration goes:

P - We hear some speeches, give awards,
we hear the Carmen's ringing chords,
then lunch, and sports, and fond farewells.

G - But sadly, there is something else:
the heads of school – that's him and me –
subject you to their poetry.

P- So here is George. Alas, we owe him
a chance to share with us his poem. [*George clears throat, maybe holds up some paper*]

G – Sunshafts are asparkle
flickering through the opacities of stainglass,
glinting on scholarly spectacles
while we, too, reflect, reflect, reflect...

P- George, stop, please, stop, that's so not it.
Excuse him – he did English Lit.
He was a sweet head boy.

G- But sweeter
by quite a way was perfect Peter,
who's fairly used to making speeches,
and has regaled us with such peaches
as "I'm a really **approachable** guy.
Tell me what's wrong, or just say hi."

P- I wish I hadn't. Ever since,
boys say "HELLO!" and make me wince.

G- Sorry, but I want one more try.

P – [wearily] Alright. 1 – 2 – 3.

G - Hi Pete!

P- Hi.

G - So now we must now reflect upon
the past twelve months of goings on,
and offer, to reflect those times,
not dippy verse, but tripping rhymes.

P - And haven't those twelve months flown by!

Our Head, another **approachable** guy,
often reminds us of the fact
that time slips by with his rare tact.

G – Yes, at assemblies, he will say,
"The first exam's four months away..."

P – "In 27 days, you'll all
be in th'examination hall.

It makes us all excited boys
waiting for Christmas, and our toys.

G – By summer, everybody keeps
a note: till French, it's just three sleeps!

The head has views on sleep. The best
is that the boys should get some rest.

P – He wrote an email telling them,
and pinged it off at 5 am.

G – Now, Dr Lockett, when we reach
the end of this, then it's your speech,
and so we thought you'd like to know
that there are eight minutes to go.

P- But now, the Abbey's clock face goes
back to a time when we all froze.

It wasn't many months ago
when these hot Courts were white with snow.

George, you remember snow?

G- Yes, snow [*goes into poetic trance*]:
snowflakes are asparkle,
fluttering on crepuscular gravel
while we, too, drift, drift, drift...

P- George, back. [*Clicks fingers.*] I'm sorry. He's as pure
as driven English Literature.

Remember when it snowed and snowed.

Drifts

G - drifts

P - blocked every rural road.

G – It snowed upon SG, upon
Taunton, the Gryphon, Bryanston.

When snow brought meltdown to the rest,
we stood alone throughout the West.

P- I'm not sure meltdown's what you mean.

G- I mean that Christmas card-y scene
that put Shirburnians to the test
and showed the world what we do best.

P – Keep Cold and Carry On?

G- Yes, that,
and knocking off each woolly hat
with well-aimed snowballs.

P- Now, our school's
got a surprising range of rules
on snowball fights.

G- **Like Eton's Wall Game,
or Winchester Football, when snowfall came,
then came our own school's chance to show
the world a new sport:**

P- **Sherborne Snow**
as codified by Jamieson.

You're not allowed to focus on
the head; no teams of more than ten;

G- no sallies near the stones.

P- And then
to stop it from becoming war

He gave us the five-meter law.

G – Five meters.

P- At that range, you've got
to be the most amazing shot.

G- It's Jamieson's plan for sending plenty
to Sandhurst's class of 2020.

So never mind the hail and sleet.

We are the snowball fight elite.

P- We would take other schools on, but
when the first snowflake falls, they shut.

G – Not us, though; in the winter freeze
Tom Mason came to school on skis.

P – It's not just when the white stuff hits
the fan **when we show we're true Brits.**

**G - We triumph in all kinds of sports,
which we play in exquisite shorts.**

P - Hearts beat in rugby players' chests
thanks to their thermolactic vests.

G- They scared our rivals, and a bonus
was knowing we could field Nick Jonas.

P- The football outfits could be swisher,
but who cares, when there's Harry Fisher?

G- Why's Harry like the school?

P - 'Cos he's
now heading for five centuries.

**G – Those, and George Whipple's long, long hops
make Sherborne cricketers the tops._**

[room for some lines here about England in the World Cup, depending on how it's going]

G- And it would take too long to name
the cricketers whose skill found fame.

P- At Lists we found out just how long.
I thought we'd never sing the song.

G- The Head kept the proceedings brisk,
so, at the very slightest risk
of bluntness, we say, in return,
we've four more minutes. Then, your turn.

P- Meanwhile, the music's grown again.
We don't just mean the many men
who populate the first-rate choir:
no, there's an organ to admire.

**G- So, at Commem, it's quite a bonus
to thank our many organ donors.**

I gather that it cost some money
and not a thing about it's funny.

P- We wouldn't want to go too far.

G – We know how serious organs are.

P- We're prefects, and we're not the types
to joke about its mighty pipes.

G- We're really not the sort of boys

to wonder if they make much noise.

P- They don't. Who knew? Though it purports
to outblast concerts in the Courts,
the organ has those pipes for show.

There's nowhere for the air to go.

G- Huge speakers make the roar instead –
the blast will blast us out of bed.

Jamie will play it with such brio
you'll think you're in Yeovil's Club Neo.

P- Yes, form, function and style unite:
there's mouth and trousers; Bach and bite.
(See what I did there.)

G- (I'm afraid I did.)

Now, at this time we must lament
some staff career development
and what an old boy, long ago,
Day-Lewis, once called "letting go".

P- Goodbye, Tom Mason, who will go
to Scotland, where there's proper snow;

G – Chris Roberts, that convivial chap,
leaves us, but not the Digby Tap;

P - and Mrs Salmon: what new master'll
be more on top of matters pastoral?

G- Our favourite fish went flying through
her new school Boxhill's interview.

P- Oh yes, I understand Boxhill
gave Mrs Salmon Quite. A. Grill.

G- She kept us under tight control
and gave our Plaice her heart and Sole.

**P – Next year Mr McGinty goes
to keep a new school on its toes:**

**G- He's going to put on action stations
that college of the world's great nations.**

**P- Yes, Sherborne International's gain
is quite a loss to Abbey Lane.**

**G- Well sir, we owe you loud applause,
but don't go starting any wars.**

P- There's someone else who'll be much missed:
a legendary physicist
who has spent decades here, ensuring
that we are heirs to Alan Turing.

G- Did he teach Turing?

P- I'm not sure.

G- He did. That's why we won the war.

P- He'll stay in town, so don't be stressed,
unless you're incorrectly dressed.

No untied tie, no unstitched stitch'll
escape the glare of Mr Mitchell.

G- Yes, boys will stay extremely smart –

even the ones who study art.

P- Especially art. Who else wears coats and suits like Nelson or Ed Botes?

G- Most boys now even have short hair.

We have some fine examples there.

P- Think of the time the barbers spent on very senior management.

G- Not one of them's been spared the trimmer except, perhaps, for Mr Rimmer.

P- A new head boy, though, takes the rein: Stagnetto has an ample main.

G- You know how power goes to the head? You could find that it's sheers instead.

P- So now we've **90 seconds** left, Headmaster, and we feel bereft when we give up our roles today and, like Day-Lewis, walk away.

G- Nevertheless, the sadness lessens when recall those vital lessons: not just mole calculations, nor the causes of the Civil War.

P- We mean the big ones, ones about the pitching in, the helping out, so that, although we're moving on, what Sherborne means is never gone.

G- If there are any tears to shed, here's what the poet Virgil said: when there's a task that takes some grit, be happy to remember it.

P- So well done, guys, for sitting through our speech; it's time to say adieu and, with a moist but merry eye to say –

G- now, 1 – 2 – 3 –

Both: Goodbye.