

Farewell to 'Dear John.'

(A backward look at the Thanksgiving Service
at
Defford Church July 30th 2019.

Yesterday was special,
We sent dear John on his way.
Most funerals can be sad times,
But not so yesterday.
The village was right, the church was right,
The returning Vicar too.
Peter Thomas was brilliant,
Still the Peter we once knew.

A sense of joy was in the place,
The church itself packed full.
But the tone from Annies' welcome
was of warmth and far from dull.
Always there at funerals
We see friends from long a go,
Friends who moved far away - lost touch
In the passage of lifes' flow.

Funerals bring folk back again,
Their faces good to see.
Remembrance of old times come back,
For you as well as me.
It took a death to do so,
Yet to meet again, brings life,
A reminder too of forty years,
Since Johns' farewell to his wife.

Yet it was a celebration
From beginning to the end.
Not here to see the back of John
But to a joyful onward send.
He had a Faith, believing
From Churchwarden and beyond
And all who had to deal with John,
Of him they were all very fond.

John was a delight to know,
An encyclopedia too.
His knowledge gained of nature
Was massive, old and new.
He never closed his mind at all,
Found new things every day.
Excited to the very end.
A Gods creation by the way.

On trees, insects and flowers.
Nothing was too small for him.
He'd study them for hours.
Such was his love of nature,
Rural science was his forte
That he bubbled over with it all
After every outdoor sorte.

Hence a teacher he became in life,
At three schools around here,
Bredon Hancocks, Bredon Hill
And Evesham High, quite near.
To many "Mr Meiklejohn"
Politely, his full name.
Few would dare say otherwise,
Respect, his claim to fame.

John would stand no nonsense.
He made that quite clear from the start.
Calm he was, no shouting.
But step out of line - not so smart.
Once on a trip to Malvern show,
Two boys reported late.
John drove back to school without them
And left them to their fate.

One pupil, despite the gulf between,
Was Johns' good friend Philip Gage.
They corresponded to the end.
Despite their gap in age.
John would often mention him,
Philip this and Philip that.
'His name was never far away,
Whenever we chose to chat.

They shared a common interest,
At school, right to today.
A relationship uncommon.
A bond that would never go away.
And John was not the only one.
Ringing Jenny Newbury on the phone,
To tell her of dear Johns' demise
Through Philip Gage she'd already known.

A lovely lad is Philip
Pupils like him are rare.
Though living at Bradford on Avon,
At Johns' funeral he was there.
Jenny couldn't make it,
She had an urgent call away.
I was the only teaching colleague,
That attended on that day.

Lynne, she did a reading,
As did dear Annie's son.
With Peter, all exuded warmth
.....then time in church was done.
It had been a celebration
For both family and his friends
And memory never ends.

Then on we went to Deffords' Oak,
Despite a shower of rain,
Not enough each one to soak,
To add to inward pain.
I hear they'd booked for seventy,
Annie was worried that there was more
But all socialised with remembered friends
For the next hour in store.

Dear old Harry Green was one,
A naturalist of fame.
John and he were lifelong friends
So we were glad he came.
Right now he is quite elderly
A loner looking frail
But it doesn't stop him writing
About nature in 'The Vale'.

Maranatha friends were there,
Ones from the Abbey too.
Where latterly John worshipped
In the short time here he knew.
And lots of friends from Defford,
Most I didn't know
All there to send John on his way
When came his time to go.

Ninety two long years he lived,
Yet was always with a smile.
His stay in Pershore was short lived
But none the less worthwhile.
We did our best to spoil him
And trust that we did succeed.
Flat six will be remembered
As John's flat in time of need.



I'll remember John in Tiddesley wood
Upon one open day
Standing with a crowd beneath a tree,
Lecturing, as was John's way.
He was standing in the middle.
One knew that it was he.
Who else could hold a crowd like that.
One knew who it had to be.

Bridge, that was his passion,
The same night every week.
He took the game so seriously
A good partner he would seek

John started with us at Bredon Hill,
Till now we are the last three.
Together we returned there
to plant a 'black pear tree.'
Three people attempted to use one spade,
So Jenny took that role,
We just stood there watching
As she filled in the hole.

From three we are now down to two.

Who will be the next to go?
None of us can ever guess..
Good that we each don't know.
But dear John we will not forget.
Whatever then our age.
The one that will outlast us all
Is his good friend Philip Gage.
He will miss John, I know it,
For he was like family,
Of all the lads that John ever taught.
A special one was he.

To Jeannie, Annie, Lynne and Kay,
and the extended family.
I trust this tribute goes down well,
That's how twas meant to be.
The celebration, it went well.
Johns' pilgrimage is over.
All things in life coming to an end.
His vast knowledge used no more.

The Meiklejohns will long live on,
Some by a different name.
He hardly had an enemy,
His zeal and claim to fame.
A life hard to live up to.
John has gone but don't be sad.
In him they had a priceless gem.
Best dad you could have had.

Written by Wesley I. Adamson.
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