

Good afternoon,

I find this gaudy speech that I have to give a bit puzzling. I have always assumed that most pupils and staff would dislike wearing uniform or graduation robes and sitting in what swiftly becomes a very hot and sweaty marquee. No doubt you cannot wait to escape, so I assure you I shall not keep you long. However, since becoming head boy I have noticed a curious attraction to Gaudy. Throughout the year, I have been inundated with excited parents, pupils and staff asking me if I'd started my gaudy speech yet. However, those who know me as a last minute person are well aware that if the deadline is in July there isn't a hope in hell that I will start the undertaking in November. I doubt that it will live up to your expectations, but here goes:

To say I was greatly honoured to be appointed last year is an understatement. It's difficult to sum up the sense of pride that I felt, having been chosen to contribute to the running of such a wonderful school. I had just got back from Henley, a year yesterday, and received an answer-phone message from the mighty man Mr Murray, telling me to report to the Warden's lodgings. Chloe and I were then bundled into his study and before we could even sit down, were told of our appointments and asked did we accept, yes or no? I accepted instantly without a moments thought. Now looking back, I truly understand why I said yes.

Education is not purely about form filling and league tables. Exams are of course tremendously important, but in a world where live-or-die testing is routine, and where box ticking dominates education, what makes Teddies special is that this school has the uncanny ability to encourage imaginative individuals to thrive and the more shy amongst us, to grow in confidence. St Edward's has never labelled its pupils, but instead creates countless opportunities for one to become a Jack of all trades and relish in the diversity. The Teddies experience has enabled me to busk on the steps of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, row on the

Charles River in Boston and to hunt tarantulas in the Amazon. I doubt that any head boy from Radley has been lucky enough to play Hitler in a school play, for example, a role that many of my friends said would require no rehearsal and little in the way of acting. I have also sampled the delights of rowing, rugby, CCF, music, a smattering of A-Levels on the side and best of all, wine tasting. If I have one thing to say to the pupils today, it is that you would be crazy not to get involved in as much as possible at St Edward's. In a unique manner, I have found that this school has allowed me to do so much. I have tried where possible to be as involved as I can and I speak from experience when I say that if you also try, you will be exceptionally happy.

Thank Heaven for not so little girls at Teddies. After all, life is Co-ed and coming from an all-boy prep school, I found the company of the fairer sex a breath of fresh air. There is no doubt that the inclusion of girls at Teddies has been a roaring success. While increasing the male membership of the golf course ten-fold, they are civilizing influence on the more boisterous elements of boarding school. The Warden's aim to achieve a 50/50 balance of girls to boys in the future is without doubt a desirable goal.

Four years ago, as a Shell, I remember hearing my predecessor, Peter Greenall, urging us in his Gaudy Speech to be less arrogant and more appreciative of our privileged schooling. I believe this still holds today.

During my time here, particularly this year, I have come to recognize that the behind the scenes groundsman, cleaners, laundry ladies, caterers and secretaries are the very fabric of Teddies. The non-academic staff consistently displays kindness, warmth and a willingness to help the pupils enjoy their life here. They should never be ignored.

Everybody has stories to tell when they leave school and a Teddies leaver is by no means an exception. I am not going to recount the times of inter-house Christmas Tree raids, a definite taboo subject in the winter term, nor will I tell stories about the infamous boat club banter, as the latter is definitely not for publication. But I wonder if you know Tom Womersley? As

a die-hard Manchester United fan, he once joked that I could never mention Carlos Tevez and Cristiano Ronaldo or Wayne Rooney in this speech. But, Tom, do you remember the incident when as a Shell, in an attempt to prove your herculean strength, you lifted an 18 litre bottle of water above your head. After triumphantly declaring “Look guys, I’ve done it!” those present witnessed the bottle fall backwards in slow motion to deliver a miniature tsunami across the entire dormitory floor. All those meticulously dropped garments on the floor, so typical of a shell dorm, along with the infrequently seen carpet were treated to a rare wash. Never fear, Mr Womersley has since bulked up and would have no problems with a PowWow capsule these days, but it is hundreds of everyday moments such as this which ultimately make the school experience memorable. Despite the tyranny of Health & Safety and the best efforts of the ‘Fun Police’, Teddies pupils will forever find moments of hilarity and create new ways to enjoy themselves.

It has been an unforgettable year for a great many reasons. In a recent email sent by the Warden to replace the lack of school assemblies, I found it poignant that half the notices were about acts of memorial for Kris Aves and Grace Hadman. In the aftermath of both tragedies, the Chapel, thanks to the tireless efforts of so many girls, quite naturally became a living memorial and focal point to express our grief. Despite these moments of horrendous torment, I have found it so enjoyable, rewarding and an utter privilege to have been joint Head of School of Teddies this year. Our successors, Fergus Bibby and Lily French have a wonderful year ahead of them which I know they will make the most of.

It would be unforgivable for me not to thank the Warden and Mr James for making the school what it is today. Thank you Warden for always listening and Mr James for your wealth of advice and experience. Without such dedicated figureheads, Teddies would find it difficult to uphold its balanced attitude to life. I find it difficult to even imagine a St Edward’s without the Kerr-Dineens. I’m not sure that anyone can convey the effect that you have had on Teddies. Even last night as I sang in the Gaudy concert, I felt immense pride that I was part

of Anthony Kerr-Dineen's chamber choir. I am very sad, not only for me but for the lower years, that you are leaving but hope that you enjoy Forrest school and living in London.

I read in the Tatler School Guide that Field House produces the best boyfriend material while Oakthorpe is famous for its large TV. I'm not sure how much of a part Richard Murray played in Oakthorpe's television but doubtless he has significantly contributed to Field's flattering status. He is an inspiration to me and all the Field boys and I will miss him dearly. Finally it remains to be said that I would have never ever chosen any head girl other than Chloe. She has been truly outstanding and nothing would ever get done without her.

I wish leavers, both staff and pupils all the luck in the world. For those returning in September, live the vibrant life that Teddies has to offer as much possible or I fear you will regret not seizing the opportunities that passed you by with such surprising speed. Thank you very much indeed for listening – I see you all mopping your brows, so I shall allow you to have a wonderful holiday.

Thank you.