TELLING TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

Chris Lowe and friends

**Number 101**

*It is my 83rd birthday today! And quite inadvertently this is the 100th Tale I have told in the daily Covid series between 26th March and 3rd July 2020 – as I equally inadvertently published one Tale twice.*

*This famous old poem is a perfect way to sign off…. well, at least the daily Tales…. But I will add a few more when the muse rouses me…. and you are in the mood to read them.*

*But I thank the nearly 200 readers who have accepted the daily mailings without complaint….. although for all I know….. you may be extremely kind, polite and forgiving, and have simply deleted them on arrival…… a perfectly natural reaction to unsolicited Tales!*

*I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have made useful comments and suggestions….and amused me with your own anecdotes…..and offered ideas for tales. In particular, my enormous thanks go to Jill for her very apposite poem early on, Glyn for his two tales, Dic for his two tales and John for his reminiscing about retirement, and to Kim for her musings…. to Max for his howlers; Dai for his daiisms, and to my old, old (not too old) pal, Mike, for his illustrations.*

*I also need to acknowledge the great influence on my approach to the game of cricket…. a topic which has cropped up a few times in the Tale, you will have noted.… of the writings of the incomparable Herbert Farjeon, E.W. Swanton, John Arlott and Brian Johnston…. May there stumps never be drawn.*

*And to all the prototypes for the characters in the Tales…… a very hearty thanks for being…..just you.*

**MANY HAPPY RETURNS**

**by**

**Archie de Bear (1933)**

Down at the school house at Runcorn,

The 'eadmaster walked in one day

Looking all 'appy and cheerful,

Which wasn't his habit, they say.

The boys were completely dumbfounded,

And whispered 'Hello, what's to do?'

But the headmaster still went on smiling

And said, 'Boys, I've some good news for you.

'It's like this. Today is my birthday,

So it's no time for classes and such

You can go,' but the boys were too staggered

To even say 'Thanks very much.'

They could scarcely believe their own ear'oles

As they welcomed these tidings so bright;

But soon they all cheered to the echo,

And very near busted with delight.

Said headmaster 'Now there's no hurry',

Before very long you'll be free;

But seeing as how it's me birthday,

How old would you take me to be?'

Well, the boys didn't like this delaying,

And one of the younger ones swore

At the silly old fool of a master,

And the satisfied smile that he wore.

He didn't swear any too loudly,

Or he'd have been out on the mat

For calling the master a silly old beggar

Or something that sounded like that.

'I bet you won't guess it correctly,'

The headmaster went on with a wink,

"Cos I've got a sort of a notion

I'm not quite as old as you think.'

A new boy jumpeel up and guessed twenty,

In the hopes that he'd get off for a week;

While another one guessed ninety-seven

Although with his tongue in his cheek.

Said the headmaster 'Don't let's be funny,

Or you'll be here all day I can see;

So who'll give a serious guess now,

Come on,just between you and me.'

Then in walked the junior tutor,

In a very old mortar board hat.

He said, 'I hear there's a game on,

W'ell, I'd like a basin of that.'

Said the headmaster 'Mind your own business,

And kindly do not interfere

Or you'll lose half your rasher of bacon,

And all your allowance of beer.'

The tutor said 'Don't be a cad, Sir,

I don't wish to make any noise;

But you might at least try to be sporting,

If only in front of the boys.'

With that he swept out of the classroom,

Fearing the look that he saw,

For he knew that in less than two seconds,

He'd get such a sock in the jaw.

Then in came the language professor,

French teaching was one of his jobs,

So he bowed to the Head and said 'Bonjour,'

And the Head said 'Bonjour, avec knobs.'

'But if you've come here to give lessons,

You can take it from me - it's no, bon

Because today's a holiday. Savvy?

So you might as well allez-vous en.'

Then a small voice called 'Sir, why it's easy,

Forty-four is your age I should say.'

Said the master 'Now what a remarkable thing,

You've guessed my right age to the day.'

Said the boy 'Well my brother is just twenty-two.'

Said the headmaster 'What's that to me?'

' Well, Sir, if he's twenty-two you must be forty-four,

'Cos he's only half barmy... see.'

Then the whole class joined in the school anthem,

Which nobody wanted to shirk:

'For he's a jolly good fellow,

So long as we don't have to work.'

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