



In your Own Backyard: conference poem

Monday morning, nice little treat,
Training day to start the week.
Ten past nine, cups and saucers,
Check out leaflets, packs, great resources,
As teachers gather, home from home,
Some in pairs, some on their own.
One or two notes on housekeeping -
"If there's a fire alarm, don't do anything!"

Sue's introduction, remember frozen Jubblies, Spangles
And heads with under-the-desk King Charles Spaniels.
What leads to outstanding learning?
Taking children out and about and exploring,
And yes, our aims half-coincide with Michael Gove -
Is that why it's a half-rhyme with love?
Making learning live, explore together -
Teachers become learners, learners become teachers

Carrying pasts into futures
Whatever our age, we are history keepers -
What do we want?
WE WANT FRESH AIR
Where do we find it?
IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - IT'S ALL THERE.

Off to Cathy, Derbyshire Library and Archives,
Great local history pamphlets charting local lives,
She offers tailored sessions she can easily create,
And titles, I know the kids will find them great -
The Diary of George Mushet of Riddings,
Folders of intriguing press cuttings and clippings,
Headlines like "Sisters return to their roots",
Little George's carrot joke, and the class hoots,
Let's set young people's imaginations
Running riots of inspiration

Onto Derbyshire Record Office, the spell of the squiggle,
Curious old handwriting, more real than Google,
Yellow faded books, that you have to lie on cushions,
How kids will love the sense of precious possessions,
Baptisms, marriages, and Becky's favourite, burials -
These registers, the songbooks of our essentials -
And then Mark, from wondrous Derby Local Studies,
With maps, and teachers spotting the differences,
As they become learners, with wide open eyes,
Pens in mouth, leaning over, expressions of surprise,
With maps for the whole County, Strutt's drawing of course,
For fresh air brought to toilets by revolving doors
p.s. which kids will love again, just like me,
there's nothing like a bit of toiletry -

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Now Nick's extraordinary Picture the Past,
Online search the collection, and it comes up very fast,
Search Railways in Bolsover, for which there is no rhyme,
And 14 images of railways come up in no time,
Step into the mystery of elephants on Chatsworth Road,
And Ragged School children, these pictures let us know
How we've all moved on, and yet nothing's really new -
"Kids enjoying floods outside Woolworth's in 1932."

Onto Janet's great School Library Service,
Another local palace of resources,
Mini-beasts made giant, fiction boxes, packs,
A range of Owls, the Owl-babies story-sacks,
Canals and canal life, canalware and pottery,
Takes us back to the eighteenth century,
Real old things you can feel, you can handle,
Shawl, shuttle, soap, cotton, candle -
What makes us come alive? When we feel
The beautiful, the old and the real

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Environmental Studies with George,
On gravel, because you can learn anywhere of course
And how "Things don't come whole in history"
Which is part of the joy, and part of the mystery.
How to interrogate your artefact, some great suggestions,
And also follow children's natural questions -
And how because we're keen to do it right
As adult learners we are quite polite.
But give us games, and we can't help but smile and play,
And as archaeologists, when we unearth a key,
Even adults can't help an expression of childish glee.
And how great vocab makes us sound and feel important -
"Look at this building, it has a pediment."

Finally, last but not least John,
And I'm running out of time, so this won't be very long,
But for inspiring kids, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site
Couldn't be better, fine old Sir Richard Arkwright,
A fat man on a horse, some cotton and machines,
For learning resources, these are all dreams,
And gory accidents, and children dying in mills,
Big old buildings, and enormous millwheels,
Names as great as Strutt, Jedediah,
Children's living conditions, the dangers of fire,
Being paid wages for going under a machine,
Then stories of getting crushed - will keep your children keen
With eyes and ears out on stalks, as they learn
From the past, and to their futures turn

On that bombshell! thanks to all this inspiration -
And please, let us not forget Buxton -

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