

# **Funny and Brilliant Contributions from George White**

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**Thanks a million, George, for bringing smiles to many faces and for lightening up our days.**

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## 1. A Guid Talking Tae

I've been telling myself this for ages and now it's happening more and more...talking to myself I mean. These days it happens all the time...in the shower or making a meal...it just bursts out. Now I don't mean I have long conversations with myself, you know, discussing at length some deep philosophical problem, no, it happens when I'm replaying something that may have happened a long time ago in my head and I find myself blurting out some response to this...you know like, "Bugg\*\* off" or "Aye...that'll be right". Now this is fine if I'm alone in the shower or digesting my bacon and egg toasty while watching re-runs of the "Big bang Theory"...there's no harm to anyone. But shouting out "Bugg\*\* off" in Lidl while rifling through the frozen food section can cause havoc as I've already found, and now after trading a few words with the Manager, I have to trail all the way up to Aldi. There is a distinct lack of training among supermarket staff with regard to the peculiarities of the elderly I've found, and this extends to memory lapses...you know...forgetting to wear trousers and the like. Anyway...it's getting worse, this shouting out I mean...and it's happening more often and is rapidly getting out of control. The Manager up at Age Concern where I have my lunch took me aside and as she put it... "Had to express her concern". This was because I shouted out a little something in the middle of the pudding course, (Angel Delight it was), and though I can't remember what I said exactly, it made the old lady across from me at the table swallow her dentures. Two of the volunteers had to hold her upside down while another two took turns to thump her on her back. Everybody at the table agreed that somebody of her age should never think of wearing those thong things....and Wullie at the end said he was never coming back.

You would have thought that when you get to my age, folk would be more understanding...you know...about these wee things, more flexible like, but no, and now I have to eat sitting in a draft at the front door on my own, and folk think that I have that Corona virus thing and cover their mouth when they walk past. It's just no right...and I'd stop going there altogether but I'd miss their lentil soup and it's the only thing that keeps me going.

## 2. By the Eden

By the Eden's gentle waters  
its surface sparked by shifting glints of light  
I walk the winding path...but slowly now.  
Through the deep-pooled shadows made cool by countless shades of verdant green  
a few steps only...then back into the light  
the heat now fierce upon my face.  
I pause crossing the old bridge  
resting my hand on the warm honey-coloured stone  
and then walk on to where sits the bench...  
long familiar, it looks out on an open space  
and here I sit...now thankful.

Content to be here...I watch the faces passing by...  
some are closed tight...eyes fixed on one raised hand  
willing prisoners in some self-fashioned electronic world  
while beneath their feet...the very earth is singing...  
they do not hear the birds filling the air  
with liquid sound...each calls a question  
ever repeated...and sometimes answered.  
But there are other faces...open to the world  
and they meet my gaze willingly and unabashed  
happy to acknowledge our sameness...our shared destinies  
replying to my greeting willingly.

Now we say the same time-honoured things  
long worn and gently rounded by usage and custom,  
but such a thing...though it seems simple enough  
warms me...and so I smile as I watch the families  
remembering how it was...how it felt...back then.  
Time to go home...tomorrow the sun may shine again.

### 3. Doing my bit

Earlier this week I hosted a cardiac event  
you know...wanting to do my bit like...  
I had lots of help mind  
so I can't take the credit  
I mean I just lay there  
as lots of lovely helpers turned up  
and not one of them over fifteen  
as far as I can tell...  
buzzing around in their soft-soled shoes  
doing all sorts of things...you know...  
sticking things on and ripping them off  
sticking things in...and leaving them in...  
pumping things up then letting them go down  
writing things down for others to read  
propping me up...then lowering me down  
everyone had a great time really  
while I just lay there watching it all  
as this seemed to be what was expected...  
anyway...no-one got a wink of sleep  
went at it all night long they did  
these young people...never stopped for breath...  
all in all the whole thing went well  
hand on heart I think I can say  
...it was a huge success.

#### 4. Ach.... but the heart is gallus

Ach...but the heart is gallus  
his nae care where it flees  
claps doon only whar' the fancy taks it,  
wi nae thocht of richt...or wrang  
an cannae be fortelt...  
it micht well shun beauty or perfection  
tae land oan some passing face  
seen but for an instant  
in some clarty windae  
or fa' in a dwam ower somethin'  
a wee bit oot o' place...  
wan tooth no weel aligned  
a mouth that's faur too big  
a wee bit lisp...which at first hearin'  
enslaves forever the listening ear.

Nae justice rules in these affairs  
an' anither's pure devotion...true an' tested  
may be spurned an' turned awa  
an' favour foun' in wan less worthy...  
Ach...but the heart is gallus.

## 5. Past Times

Like some wonderful golden cloud shot through with metallic glints, the wig proclaimed itself, shouted out its presence from the sea of white and grey. This was no apology of a wig, this was an in your face statement of proud wigginess, a huge bouffant celebration of sixties style held high and proud above the dull crowd. The bearer of this wonderful creation was a tiny woman with stick-like limbs, and it was a wonder that her neck could bear the weight of her crowning glory. Her face was skull-like with little flesh, and her large, blade-like nose dominated, giving an impression of inner strength. She was heavily made-up, with nothing missed, and her eye lashes were long and black and she used them to effect. She was dressed as if she had just stepped out of a Carnaby Street boutique, with knee-length white boots complemented by a bright pink mini skirt and a white polo neck sweater, and her hands were encrusted with rings. As far as she was able, she held herself upright, but this was offset by her back which was slightly bowed. A rather elegant cane completed her ensemble and when she rose from her seat and turned I recognised her. This was the woman who was standing in the Newsagent's when I entered; she was holding the leash of a tiny dog while wiping her hands with a tissue. The owner was behind the counter regarding her with an air of horrified bemusement as she did so, having obviously been bludgeoned into providing the tissues. She turned as I entered, looking me up and down and abruptly asking me, "Are you single"? For the life of me I can't remember how I replied but she dismissed me, turning to the door and making her exit.....and now here she was in all her undimmed glory.

It would have been so easy to see her as a foolish old woman, a travesty, her appearance a ridiculous attempt to cling to a time long past and which now lacked grace and good taste. But what I thought was, how brave she was, what courage it must take to try to hold fast to that time when she was young and triumphantly alive, a time when her shapely legs drew admiring glances as she sashayed along the pavement, resplendent in all her glorious youth.

## 6. The Howe of Fife

The Howe lies dreich and grey  
sodden to its very bones  
a low-land...once an inland sea  
the memories of that time keep surfacing  
pooling in the farmer's fields and causing him to curse

The wild grey Geese are here  
ever wary as they feed they rise as I approach  
wave and wave again...circling...calling  
their calls awakening something within me  
not of this time but older by far and long-hidden

There was a time when this was forest  
wild Boar ran here...the prey of pampered Royals...  
all gone now and the ground long-tamed  
it lies field alongside manicured field in uniform flatness  
and each with no time given to catch its breath  
before another crop is seeded  
another cycle imposed

Little life can I see here in the hard time of the year  
the narrow path I walk is frozen hard and treacherous  
the fields on each side are waiting...  
harbouring life yet suspended...waiting for the Spring  
and as with every year I long for it to come

## 7. The Nudge

I keep this photo by me...

it hangs on the wall beside my chair

and every time I rise I look at it...

a young man is kneeling on some tropical white beach

looking at the camera and smiling from sixty years past

I recognise him as from some long-past dream

a bronzed familiar stranger...no longer relevant to the life I now lead

and so unknowing...so unsuspecting of what's to come...

I need him there to remind me...over and over

day in and day out...of how it used to be

so that each time I slowly rise he can say...

now remember...it was not always like this.

## 8. All Hail

All hail the wrinklies...  
the irritating ones who block the check-out queue  
and can never find the correct change...  
dropping coins all over the place making customers wait...  
the very same that hesitate at Zebra crossings  
making others push impatiently by  
to get to where they are going in time  
All hail to them...  
as now I have reached the age  
where "two for one deals" have no appeal  
and I have time to talk to old wifies  
who now I find are interesting  
and reply to saucy suggestions with belly laughs  
and speak of interesting pasts  
not always totally respectable  
but interesting nevertheless....  
what tales they tell  
of husbands going for a little walk  
and never heard of again  
of past loves now famous and known by all...  
all at once I feel at home in their company  
heaven knows why.

## 9. Just perhaps...

It has been known...just sometimes...  
that some fragile stem will spring from the dung heap  
to blossom just as fresh as any other...  
even though born from loss and death  
seeded by the inhumanity of men to other men  
and nourished by unthinking callousness  
nevertheless it grows and flourishes

will it be like this for us I wonder?  
can something fresh and good emerge  
changing what we have for something  
better...more human?  
or will the lesson taught remain unlearned  
and once again we turn our face away  
choosing to ignore the links  
that bind each to the other?