

Community Poetry

Boscombe BIG POEM

Wollstonecraft and Walpole, the names of streets we walk down,
The Old Ragged Cat Inn, the first in Boscombe town.
Buildings still share their story of lives that were there.
It was all so long ago - do we really care?
Like Frankenstein's creation, neglected and abandoned,
Shelley Manor all alone, locked up and in the dark,
its theatre hosting shadows, haunting leafy Shelley Park;
sewn together like the seam that runs like a thread,
not a Frankenstein creation, a terror that we dread,
but reborn and revitalised, new doors open now to all.
It's time to play and write our story, if you hear the curtain call!
So switch off the telly and and come to the Shelley!
A place of culture, food and ale,
talent is alive and well here,
music for any age or taste,
and Chaplins' at the centre,
a vision of arts as the passion of the past remains,
treading the same path, a destination into history;
of glamour and wonder and a glimpse of yesteryears,
as you follow the steps where nothing has changed,
do you still see through, as you rest for a little while,
and take in a regeneration locked in a time capsule,
where poets and artists of past and present unite?
Sallow fingers, clinging to base paper cups,
beggars and choosers- horse haired brushes-
and needle heads, spew graffiti
in the neon brail of trembling.
Dark and grim we look to the west.
The hills will take it, all that you can give.
Down Sea Road we hurtle
into a blue panorama.
Roundabout we circle
avoiding collision drama.
Bikes and shoes discarded
plunge joyfully into the sand.
Wooden pier planks tread,

look back at Boscombe Seaside land.
The bay is alive with your future to see.
Another beautiful evening rolls along.
Clouds gather with different hues,
rays of sunlight offer relief.
We stand and wait on the overcliff.

*BIG POEMs was a community poetry initiative launched as part of Bournemouth Arts by the Sea Fringe festival. Poems were written collectively by residents - children and adults - who posted their lines online or added them to physical BIG POEMs at venues in Bournemouth Triangle, Southbourne and Boscombe. Special thanks to The Mad Cucumber Lounge, the Shelley Theatre and NumberWorks 'nWords, and to everyone who participated - thanks for joining me on this adventure, and congratulations on penning these real community poems! –
James Manlow, Poet Laureate for Bournemouth*