

## ***Bournemouth***

I wandered back through centuries with the Mayor.  
The beach was empty. There was nothing there  
except towards the east those Double Dykes -  
the forts where Romans once would trade the likes  
of clay and salt - all left to fall to ruin  
when Caesar called them home. The sea breathed in

then out again, breathed in, along a shore  
“scarce worth seeing,”\* Defoe said, on his tour;  
and yet in time created something beautiful.  
The Bourne’s Mouth spoke to Lewis Tregonwell,  
the peaceful bay, the coves and caves, a haven  
for smugglers and a tourist’s piece of Heaven.

I wandered through the gardens with the Mayor,  
flowers famed throughout the country. Here and there  
the children ran and shrieked in play and sport  
right here where bloody battles once were fought  
between the Wrecking gangs and Customs men  
(fool’s gold, tea and taxes, now as then).

Later, on sunny days like this, soldiers  
strolled with girls away from two world wars,  
pausing amongst the pines, beneath some bough,  
to close their eyes and kiss. Great-grandchildren now  
join us at the cenotaph. They are free,  
delighted by the sleeping lions and happy,

bringing back to life the stone memorial.  
A white wedding today at the Town Hall.  
I leave my guide returning to his Parlour  
and wonder what it takes to be a Bournemouth Mayor,  
custodian of past and future years:  
a goodwill smuggler with a pioneer’s

imagination and a soldier's bravery.  
A lion's heart. A child's humility.

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*A poem commissioned for the 'Mayor-Making' ceremony, 2014.*

*\*from Daniel Defoe's, 'Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain' (1724-1727). His description here comes from a visit to Christchurch and the surrounding area undertaken during the 1720s. Daniel Defoe (1660 - 1731) is best known to us now, of course, for his novel, 'Robinson Crusoe' (1719).*

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