

Ode to Bournemouth

Borough of pines and sea blown peacefulness,
Safe haven for the traveller to take ease;
This readymade release for restlessness
Was nurtured for renewal, raised to please
The genuine fresh start, the well earned end;
And all the inbetween who sojourn here,
Who settle or move on, what soft surprise
Awaits you - family, colleague, lover, friend?
Walk by these waters and all becomes clear
Where nature spreads her wares and God feels near,
Amongst these gardens, streets of enterprise.

Old Bournes of blood and hidden histories,
Your treasures brought at last into the light;
Famed bathing town of deep springed mysteries
That whispers to my searching soul at night,
And by day soothes with the assurance of
A past homegrown, one built up bit by bit
From years ago when all the Captain's eye
Could see was raw potential, and a love
Of splendor; then the rush to bottle it:
The officer's fairplay, the smuggler's spirit,
Inherent in us still, this land and sky

Turning like thoughts to action through the seasons;
From beachfront and on heathland I have seen
The pleasures weather makes for its own reasons,
Sun, or rain dappled with a misty sheen,
As years play out on that horizon's stage
Of light - of airshows, festivals and praise,
Infamous now, renowned throughout the south;
And when this ink has vanished from the page,
Still the river will be speaking to us,
The sea inspire, and calm, and comfort, thus.
Belovèd town. Our home. This Bournemouth.

James Manlow

Poet Laureate for Bournemouth

*Written and presented to the Mayor of Bournemouth in celebration of National Poetry Day
2015.*