

A party of students from West Oxfordshire College in Witney went on a visit to Bath, including the Roman Baths and a barge trip on the Kennet & Avon Canal.

WRITINGS IN THE BATH

Leaden skies
Reflect the golden sunshine of a field of rape.
Trees flash by in streaks of springtime green.
The motorway,
A never-ending strip of curving grey.
Travelled by a myriad metallic sheep.
Impersonal, never to be seen again.
May and wild parsley turn the hedge to snow.
Look back to winter, forward to the sun.

Why should the Romans claim the baths?
King Bladud and his faithful swine
First proved the water's efficacy.
And the sun shone on the writer's party.
Coins thrown into the Round Bath
Had pleased the god Minerva.
Water from the Mendip Hills.
Ten thousand years old
Ten thousand feet deep
Steam green.
Constant flow
Constant heat.
Healed a million souls and bodies
At 30 pence a glass.
Aquae Sulis –
Waters of the sun.
Random stones.
Imagination.
Feed a burgeoning tourist need.

Into the sun and a meal *a fresco*.
Watching the bargee's working holidays.

Two men in a boat
Not the 'Brummel'
But the 'Jubilee'.
Not Tom and Jerry
But Ron and Terry.

On either side the water
Lay, long banks of rushes
And of clay.
Clay for puddle proofing.
Clay for Plasticine.
'The Silver Swan,
Who living had no note,'
But many cygnets
Sailing near the boat.

'Tales of the Riverbank.'
Of Ratty and of Mole.
Mallard ducks
On a reed-masked hole.

A German folly of an English pub.
Missed 'Brown's Folly'
Ah there's the rub;
Couldn't see his wife a' shopping.

Back to the coach for the journey home.
(Old O Jones with a crate of ale
On a chara. from Porthcawl.)
Cirencester changed to Letchlade,
But the chippings taste the same.

'Oh stands the coach clock an hour slow,
And is there nowhere else to go?

"Heather's off dear."

Howard Brayton

June 1991