



Charabanc Ride

A charabanc ride to Blackpool, the 1920s.
Trilby hats and flatcaps de rigueur,
Sunday best fused with the smoke
of Woodbines. Four hours at 12 mph.
Time for a singalong and a story or two.
Unfurl the large canvas hood if it rained.

Twenty cases of pale ale sanctioned
by Mr Arkwright from the outing funds,
divine ambrosia for spiritual fulfilment on the journey
and a handy suspension to alleviate the bumpy ride from
the boneshaker automobile and the beggared womenfolk,
arms folded in resignation as the party crashbanged down the road.

Dai Jones led the singing, the deepest voice and
the deepest pockets by far. Bill Young Snr tapped his spoons,
'Lucky Jim' Barnet cracked old jokes they'd all heard
but no-one minded. Frank the Fiddle (not because of
any musical ability) hid a bottle under his seat. Young Bill
stole a swig. Uncle Albert chewed contentedly on his clay pipe.

A stop halfway for scientific research at the Royal Oak.
'Colonel' Ken regaled them all with how he'd won his medal
in the war (some scoffed unkindly). Tommy Thomas tried
a line on the barmaid until her barman husband called time.
And on they rolled into the sepia mist of seaside days out.
The wheels turned slowly but the songs flew like a Bugatti Royale.

A hearse ride in Oldham, January 1980.
Black hats and ties de rigueur. The womenfolk
in their Sunday best. Slow wheels turning, a cold day.
Old favourite hymns and warm recollections. The coffin
graced with the photo. The rain poured like pale ale.
Grandad would have smiled and grabbed a bucket.