

The Levelling

Here lie a throng who lived their vanished lives diverse , all talent gone,
A toothsome crowd, massed one on one , no longer ranked by life 's mischance ;
And , down beneath , whole matching rows now quite forgot , their monuments ,
Their deeds alike , entombed , repose.

Myriad Bramham folk , recalled a while in flower , or sculptur 'd urn ,
But fated soon to be erased as mindful generations pass.

Among those still remembered ones, young Thomas Wilks whose quest for wealth
In Queensland 's gold rush came to nought , and left a mother grieving here.
Our College founder, Dr. Haigh , interred by wish beside his pupils , all
Diseased from fever 's deadly sweep. The Whartons too , of lychgate fame ,
Member for Ripon , Speaker no less , but sorrowing husband at the last.

Yet annals unrecorded hide the village blood lines , borne today
Unknowingly by a thousand folk whose forebears spanned millennia ,
And settled here from every land . True multi - ethnic conquerors ,
Arrived in name of Rome , who stayed to live and breed as Yorkshiremen .
The Viking hordes pillaged this far , and Saxon warlords with their tribes
Who raped , then paused to colonise. And bounty - hunting French whose claims,
Enshrined in Magna Carta by a dynasty of Norman kings, anonymous lie here.

What of the great , the noble ones whom generations held in awe ?
Shrewd Benson who a line of Bingley , Lane and Fox begat , to rule ,
Then lie in barrier ' d splendour here . And earlier , the Oglethorpes
Whose favoured son crowned first Elizabeth , and rests in pomp at Westminster.

Each claims exclusive resting place , unlike the fallen from a brace
Of battles hereabouts ; pursued .. then caught .. perhaps betrayed , who knows ,
And flung in shallow , common grave , marked now by mound and cherry tree.
Their bones come easily to light , as modern corpse is planted over them ;
Companiable death , though indistinct , like later neighbours , fresh arrived
From London Plague , a fleeting time before relief turned sour , and died.

Their bones remain in humble plot , with many a figure passing great ,
No longer fit to out - rank any other man whose light shone brief ,
To be extinguished here , perhaps recalled by name or date in stone
Though likely quite forgot , consigned to dust , or dusty book ' s neglect.

Row on row , crammed wall - top full , embroiled in silent , teeming scum
Beneath a tranquil ground they lie. From races far , with native born
Combined ; age , tongue and colour , dress and stature all subsumed to bone,
Each interchangeable with each in this , at last , their levelling place.