

## ***An interview in Truro town clock tower***

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We climb safe ladders into the cranium of time  
To speak of things long completed,  
Of resolutions to end its measure  
By the risen sun, to enter a standard structure

Imposing system upon Nature's drum  
To get things rolling under punctual thumb,  
To set and keep the beat,  
The perfect mechanism delivering brides

To churches, felons to freedom,  
Spies to benches, patient to doctor,  
Bus to village stop, to sprightly hop  
And drop on Market Day to shop!

A day in Fifty-Nine – Barham  
Lifting his microscope eye,  
Staring across the chamber  
From canvas to marble behind the chair –

O! Altar of democracy! – to Clement there,  
Blinking bust in medicinal pact with God –  
The river-bound bridged,  
Great spans to open Kernow's lands,

And her worldly dissatisfaction at demands  
For formal subjection, her escape  
To canyon, desert, city, mountain,  
To freedom to speak direct to Heaven –

Cap set to shade a worthy eye,  
To defy the absolute cry of priests,  
To lie upon a self-made bed of prayer!  
In the Museum, handbills present

Latimer, emigrant agent, offering fare,  
And Isambard's final work making way  
For pilgrims to bear Home Sweet Home  
Away from coombe and tor,

From mowhay and moor, from Kennall stream,  
Shore to shore, to klondike  
To Flint and Buick, Olds, Chevrolet lines,  
To singing deep in Mesabi mines,

Riding shotgun, crafting verses –  
A Chamber *dejeuner* for Director  
Holding share and Mayor, and gauges joined  
Between west and east

On Bosvigo land and away to Penwethers,  
Hugus, through Kenwyn, Killifreth, Carn Brea –  
A day when everything changed  
While everything seemed the same.

We stand precarious at command  
Of Taylor's great brass chime striking  
All that must pass, jerking the hand  
From a-quarter-to into arms of the hour.

We declaim our knowledge  
Gleaned and cleaned, machined  
And packaged, and cogs tease levers,  
The mechanism created

To translate abstraction into faces,  
Hands chew numerals – and plans  
Reliant upon synchronised watches,  
Spans of cycles, patrolling passes,

Contractions and marks on charts  
Rooting birth in date for card and cake –  
History pulls and pushes its rake  
To make a tilth, receiving seed to feed

Bunting, Dormouse and Combine's need –  
A day in Fifty-Nine!  
And we climb beyond the bells  
Into the void behind four faces,

We look into all the town's places  
Where hour is power, where creases  
Indent sweet innocent brows  
And shade the deathly bower

And catch the final snorts  
Of auction's hammered cows  
Skinned to fashion saddles, shoes,  
And to buckle decency's belt –

Time's clout strikes the jaw of doubt,  
The excited crowd arouses  
A collective shout of disbelief –  
It abandons ascendant Apollo

And leaves all hearts in grief,  
Silent, damp and after every echo's settled,  
Ticking relentlessly in its chamber  
High above the street, simply hollow –

Each second tocked must follow  
And be, in turn, pursued – and we  
Reciting lessons of history,  
Stand for a moment above it all

And catch infinity entrapped  
In the curlew's call out of the mist,  
In the pause for breath  
Between bidding and benedict,

Between that which lies unknown, ticked  
And passed, flicked and flown! Finding floor,  
Hi-Viz shed, we gather goods, humming  
Phone – *'Fire in the woods! Go! Go! Go!'*