

TO NORTHGATE, BACK TO KALEYARD, FROM THERE TO EASTGATE CLOCK AND BACK TO ABBEY SQUARE
TWENTY-SECOND JULY 2018

Pigeons are circling
as shadow spikes and grids
from fences are thrown
across the path
in the sun.
Bells are tumbling and shifting
the air with their carillons.
Moss and lichen spot stones
scarred with chisel marks,
made by hands of those
dead long ago.
Warmth bounces from
the flags as sunflowers
nod in Deans Field
where people wait for falcons.
I think of boys in
cricket whites killed during
the Great War.
Cornflowers and marigolds
bright by King Charles Tower.
The canal, turgid brown,
bends round the wall.
There are no reflections.
Voices around me belong
to those who are
not from here.
I walk in others' steps
from years before.
The Bluecoat bell strikes.
In the distance,
Welsh hills shimmer.
Northgate is bustling today,
no hangings or heads on pikes.
I meet a Venetian lady
looking for the river
and I think of Romans.
A man and his falcon cross
Deans Field, the bird hooded.
Light and shade, dark leaves
dancing. I can see in to and
out of the city from here.
The Shot Tower tops the roofs,
home to peregrines.
A huge tree by the wall
hung with apples of
deep maroon.

Back to Kaleyard Gate,
towards the cathedral, I see
its square tower, gothic spires
and frieze of clover leaves in stone.
Snail trails
graffiti the walls with silver.
The bells are loud, chasing,
filling the ears.
Many people are walking
between red brick buildings
with tall chimneys
and a slate-roofed turret.
Litter lines the path
as people pose for selfies
under Eastgate Clock.
Its red, blue and gold
shining against Wales
smudged in haze.
In a quiet corner, an artist
works in shade,
his back to the path.
I hear voices – German,
Japanese, Italian. The Bell Tower's
now silent. I imagine
it's like a Roman watch tower
but do not know. I feel people
walking beside me,
not all in my sight.
A lady in pale rose reads
a history board. Her ashen chignon shines
with pink rhinestones, pricked
by flowered sticks
like those of Geisha in Japan.
Leaving the walls for Abbey Square
houses press close to the street.
I think of the Bishop behind
the high walls of his palace.
The cobbles are smooth from
many feet, almost polished.
I reach the Square and turn to
the Retreat House.

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