

Stephen Robertson

Troubled waters

The good Lady Lumley is pondering glumly. “I
need a new project to keep me in trim—
now the Gurkhas are happy—some shiny erection to
burnish my halo. Ah, I have a whim

to build a fine bridge clear across a great river, where
trees, grass and flowers can stretch shore to shore.
Of bridges traversing the Thames here in London, we’ve
just thirty three—surely room for one more.

Now it happens my old friend is crowned mayor of London, he
goes by the rubrik of Boris the Mad.
He’d adore such a grand and flamboyant adventure—to
jump on the bandwagon he’ll be glad.”

The Boris is happy. “We need a designer with
boldness and vision—I know just the man.
He has built me some buses which boosted my ego—the
Heatherwick’s sure to produce a fine plan.

We also need money—of course private finance will
jump to join in, but needs time to come through.
I’ll give it some taxpayer funding, and get old saint
George of the Chancel to throw in some too.”

So the project proceeds with a little more priming (the
buy-in from business is not keeping pace)
—but Sadiq the Most Evil deposes poor Boris, and
gets the Red Margaret to look at the case.

“It’s been a fiasco, a drain on our taxes. The
tendering process was not at all fair.
The pledges from business are far from what’s needed. The
real public benefit’s not even there.”

Sadiq says “The Boris’s vanity project has
gone off the rails. I’m not such a mug.
I’ve cancelled his buses, no more will I pay for—and
now on the bridge I am pulling the plug.”