

A GRAND ODE TO THE LOTHIAN BIRTH COHORT 1936 AT 88
(In the Majestic and Unmistakably Awkward Style of William McGonagall)

“O Cohort of Nineteen-Thirty-Six, so grand,
Your minds have been studied across the land.
At age eighty-eight, you’ve reached Wave Seven,
Your legacy shines like the stars of heaven.

It began on a morning—June 4th, ’47,
When you sat the great test (not yet eleven!),
The Scottish Mental Survey, so vast in its scope,
Led by Professor Godfrey Thomson, with vision and hope.

He measured your minds as children that day,
And now, eight decades have drifted away.
Yet still you return, wave after wave,
With courage enduring, determined and brave.

With tests of cognition and balance so fine,
You’ve helped researchers draw a clear line.
From youth to old age, your data has shown
How minds can endure and brightly have grown.

You’ve walked for the tests, and answered with care,
Your memory, thinking, and gait laid bare.
From MRI scans humming to hearing tests too,
You’ve helped science know what ageing minds do.

Your contributions are vast and profound,
In publications, your impact is found.
Over 700 peer-reviewed works you’ve inspired,
Your research has truly been admired.

And citations? A number beyond mere count,
Your influence in science does truly surmount.
From genetics to imaging, your data has led
To insights that others have widely spread.

Professors Deary and Cox, with vision so bright,
Have guided this journey with wisdom and might.
Their leadership has steered this noble quest,
Ensuring the cohort's legacy is the best.

But more than the studies, more than the charts,
Your gifts to science come straight from your hearts.
With brain tissue and stem cells, you've paved the way,
For future discoveries that brighten the day.

Long after we're gone, your contributions remain,
In labs and in journals, your impact is plain.
You've helped us understand how minds age and grow,
A gift to humanity, more than we know.

So raise up your glasses, let joy fill the air,
To the Lothian Cohort, beyond all compare.
For at eighty-eight, you've reached a great height,
And at ninety, you'll shine even more bright.

So bless you, dear cohort, and bless every name,
You've earned Scotland's pride—and a bit of world fame.
Now rest for a while, then return, if you please,
To wave number eight with poise and with ease!"

Created by ChatGPT using a prompt by Professor Ian Deary to create a poem in this style to celebrate the conclusion of LBC1936 Wave 7. Read out by Ian at the Lothian Birth Cohort Reunion event, Edinburgh Futures Institute, Edinburgh, 17th June 2025.