



Breathing Spaces

**a social history of Nottingham Parks
in the form of a five act afternoon
stroll**

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Act / Space One

The audience congregate at a position which is obvious because of the fact that some of the Performance Troupe are gathered, as are the Musicians. As people arrive they are greeted and are told how the show will work; that it will last around an hour and fifteen minutes; that we will walk around etc. There are various props littered around this opening space such as a wheelbarrow and a couple of handcarts.

Music is playing.

Once we are ready to start the music changes and maybe everyone begins to sing a short opening and welcoming song. A small platform is taken out from one of the carts and placed on the ground as Emily enters – this is the first time we have seen her – and stands on top of this platform. She is a local Nottingham girl. She has a small rucksack on her back.

Emily: I wasn't born in a park; you know actually born with my mother lying there on a bench, her legs in the air and me peeking out wondering what kind of lovely world this was, full of trees and people running and empty cans of beer and all that. But I am a park child. That's what my Gran told me. That I'm only here because of parks, these parks, the Nottingham parks. That the parks and me, of us, my family, go side by side. And that to understand who I am I need to understand what these things are. These parks. These green spaces that are dotted around our city. And I do. I do understand. Because she told me.

And now a woman appears through the audience. This is Emily's Grandmother.

Gran: And that's it Emily; everything thing that I know.

Emily: And after she told me she asked me to promise her something.

Gran: You won't forget will you?

Emily: No; I won't.

Gran: And you make sure that you let other people know; because it's important.

Emily: I will.

Gran: Promise.

Emily: Promise.

Gran: Parks promise.

Emily: Parks promise.

Emily opens her rucksack and takes out an item of clothing with which she dresses one of the performers who, through this, becomes Alice.

Emily: So we should start. At the beginning. That's what my teacher always told me to do. And just see where it goes from there.

Music. We see a Victorian gentleman stride into view. This is Thomas Hawksley. A woman – Alice – calls out to him.

Alice: Mr Hawksley sir!

Hawksley: Yes madam.

Alice: I'm no madam but a widow and a mother.

Hawksley: Then I am sorry to hear that.

Alice: Is it true what they say? About the air? That it's full of disease.

Hawksley: No madam it is not.

Alice: They say it is. That the air is foul and that is why we drop like flies.

Hawksley: Madam; the air may be foul; but that is a result of the conditions in which you are forced to live. Overcrowding and poor sanitation is killing you. Not the air. Not miasma.

That is an old theory based on superstition. Do you have any other family living here with you?

Alice: There's just me and my daughter left sir. Two sons dead too. They said that Nottingham was the place to come to make your fortune but I wish we'd never set foot in the place.

Hawksley: It is not fortune you need but action. May I ask your name?

Alice: Alice sir. Alice Godwin.

Hawksley: And the child?

Alice: We're all called Alice sir, every mother and child in our line.

Hawksley: Then good day to you Alice. And let us hope that our town will change for the benefit of all the Alice's to come.

Alice: If there are any more to come sir.

Hawksley exits and Alice leaves.

Emily: There were those who believed that bad air was the cause of disease. So the more fields you had surrounding a town, the better the air. And the better the air, the healthier the town. And Thomas Hawksley was one of those who understood this. That the fields that surrounded Nottingham ...

Members of the cast call out the names of the fields:

- The Sand Field ...
- The Clay Field ...
- The Mapperley hills ...

- The Forest ...
- ... and the meadows ...

Emily: Were actually not part of the solution ...

Hawksley: But part of the problem.

Emily: And luckily there were others too who were beginning to understand that it was time for new thinking.

And now William Felkin appears; he is totting up figures from a ledger as he walks.

Emily: Such as this man William Felkin. A lace man and lover of numbers.

Felkin enters in what becomes Hawksley's office. A table appears with a decanter and glasses. Hawksley pours out two drinks.

Hawksley: And what are you studying now?

Felkin: I am preparing a sample of household budgets to present at the inquiry into the condition of the Framework Knitters.

Hawksley: I'm sure we can all work out what half of nothing is William.

Felkin: It is scientific enquiry and hard facts that will change minds.

Hawksley: Then why is there so much protest against the recommendations in our report? What is the point in the government setting up a royal commission if nothing is to be done about it?

Felkin: Progress takes time.

Hawksley: These people do not have time. Twenty William! The average duration of life among the men who live here. And nothing will change as long as we are hemmed in by

these useless fields! How many more outbreaks of cholera does this town need before it will enclose the land and begin to build upon it? We are all suffocating!

Felkin: Nottingham has always been known as a garden town Thomas.

Hawksley: There are no gardens for the working classes, there's hardly a yard of space for them at all. Clustered upon each other; court within court, yard within yard, lane within lane, in a manner to defy description. I have travelled widely ...

Felkin: Please do not rehearse your arguments on me.

Hawksley: ... and there are parts of this town that surpass in misery anything to be found within the entire range of our manufacturing cities.

Felkin: You must understand that the fields that surround us mean a lot to people. The town will not give them up without a fight.

Hawksley: And so we must coop up the working classes in confined dwellings, and deprive them all of the pure air of heaven, in order that a few, and only a few, may gambol in the fields at meal times?

Felkin: Your report is beginning to change minds. Even the papers are agreeing with you. With us.

Hawksley: Only the radical ones.

Felkin: This is a radical town.

Hawksley: And yet still we drag our feet.

Felkin: It will happen. At every meeting that we hold in support of our ambitions there are larger crowds gathering. Enclosure now is only a matter of time. We will get our better town William. A town with good lungs; good strong lungs; good green lungs.

Hawksley: Then let us drink to that.

Which they do as, from elsewhere, we see a Commissioner unfurl a scroll.

C'ssioner: This Inclosure Act of 1845 decrees that one hundred and thirty acres of land shall be allotted and appropriated as places of public recreation and shall for ever hereafter be held by the Mayor, Alderman, and Burgesses for the purposes aforesaid.

Alice has come up to the commissioner.

Alice: Forever?

C'ssioner: That's right woman.

Alice: I was called a madam before. But I'd rather have a breathing space than a fancy title.

Emily: And that's how it all began. In that scroll. The common land taken away to be built upon and in return space to be given; to make something else; something new. And the arguments began, over who the land belonged to, what compensation they should get, and what these green lungs could be ...

At which point we create a scene of a busy meeting, with arguments and plans and scrolls of paper being unfurled. There should be an atmosphere of energy and excitement; amplified by music. In amongst the chaos the following should burst out (almost as a song):

- Public parks!
- Public parks?
- Hear, hear! to public parks!
- Cricket grounds!
- Cricket grounds?

- We have to have some cricket grounds!
- Then there's the race course on the Forest!
- Should we close that?
- Of course we cannot!
- We need some cemeteries, some brand new cemeteries.
- What about dissenters?
- We'll give them a plot!
- Public baths!
- Allotments!
- And of course an arboretum! Derby has one of those so we must too!
- Public parks!
- More public parks!
- We'll flood the place with public parks!
- And great long wide walks, all around the town!
- All around the town?
- All around the town!
- Great long wide walks, all around the town!

And now the following builds up, with more people joining in each line so that it builds to a crescendo with Hawksley and Felkin in the midst of this:

- Grass!

- Plants!

- Trees!

- Air!

All: Space!

Gran: And so, after years and years of arguments and planning, an army of men finally set to work Emily ...

The Troupe now appear across the space with shovels and maps and plumb lines and other measuring and digging implements.

- To level

- ... and shovel

- ... and gravel

- ... and dig.

C'ssioner: One hundred and thirty acres.

Felkin: More than any other city and town in England.

Hawksley: Space to move in! For limbs to be stretched! Chests to be expanded! Health to be returned!

Alice: To everyone.

Gran: For always.

As this is happening Felkin has been given a mayoral chain. He stands up again on a block. We have a sign giving the date: 1852

Felkin: I open this arboretum today as the centrepiece of the enclosure campaign; our ambitious response to the development of our town, and the changes thrust upon all ranks of society. With workers being removed from the domestic family circle to the factories and warehouses there is a real threat to family life and we hope that this arboretum will counteract and remedy this by bringing together husbands, wives and children in the midst of the open air and the light of heaven where they can socialize in harmony, good feeling, self-respect, and respect to others. I am certain that the youth will investigate the sciences which might be learnt amongst these arboreal delights; that the humbler classes will be weaned from brutal and degrading amusements; and that the masses will experience moral and intellectual elevation amongst the many trees and shrubs. And it's better than the one at Derby.

Emily: What did he mean Gran?

Gran: That these parks haven't been put here just for our physical health but for our moral health as well. And they do like to remind us how awful we are Emily, especially when they feel that they have given us something we may not really deserve.

A number of people appear with newspapers ...

Reader 1: The crowds at the opening were replete with knowing dodgers up to a thing or two ...

Reader 2: Many of the unwashed helped themselves to refreshments without paying...

Reader 3: Knocking crockery, eatables, and drinkables into one vast irretrievable chaos.

Reader 1: This simply will not work ...

Readers: Hear, hear!

Reader 1: If we continue to have loud talking ...

Reader 2: Youths fighting over a ball ...

Reader 3: And crowds of people roaming about at their own sweet will, regardless of shrubs or flowers, or the preservation of the peace.

Reader 1: Thankfully the entrance charges that will be levied for part of the week may allow the more respectable members of our community to enjoy the arboretum as nature intended at those times.

Gran: So right from the very beginning Emily; the battle lines were drawn.

Alice now goes across to the Mayor.

Alice: But why do we have to pay?

Felkin: There are three free days available. And you can of course pay a subscription so that you have access at all times.

Alice: It should be free every day! That's what the act says.

Felkin: They charge in Derby.

Alice: We're not in Derby! We're in Nottingham. And this arboretum has been built on common land. The wealthy of this town have plenty of opportunities of enjoying themselves without taking over a public recreation ground made at the expense of everyone in the town.

Felkin: This is not just a recreation ground. It is an institution of a higher class, serving as a people's garden, a source of health and pleasure ...

Alice: ... designed to promote middle-class values.

Felkin: And what is wrong with that?

Alice: They won't let us in there for starters. What kind of values are those?

The Readers now comes forward.

Reader 1: She has a point.

Reader 2: And perhaps the lower classes ...

Reader 3: Under proper police and other necessary regulations ...

Reader 2: By being from time to time brought into more immediate contact with their superiors ...

Reader 1: Will through the influence of example be elevated in the tone of their moral and intellectual conduct and condition.

Readers: Hear, hear!

Alice: That's very kind of you all. But the spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual. We do not need your permission! Now excuse me if instead of listening to your nonsense we start campaigning to ensure that this park is open to all as the enclosure act demands. Come on everyone!

The Troupe now become protesters, handing out leaflets, carrying banners, setting up petitions. This is accompanied by music. There should be a real sense of energy.

Gran: And Alice, your great great great great great Grandmother, threw herself into the fight, along with many others.

- Turning up at the gates without a ticket ...
- ... day after day,
- ... and being turned away.

- Petitions!
- Banners!
- Meetings.

Gran: It was just like an election campaign.

Felkin: The subscription income is vital.

All: This is common land!

Felkin: The arboretum is a place that we hope will attract genteel residents who are likely to erect dwellings of the best class, and in doing so encourage settlement by businesses.

All: This is common land!

Felkin: It is a civic symbol! And its formation helps to propel the town towards the status of the regional capital. Derby has one and so Nottingham must to!

All: This is common land!

Emily: They're right!

Everyone stop and looks at Emily.

Emily: It belongs to everyone. For ever.

Alice: So you cannot lock us out of it.

Gran: And don't you ever forget that my girl.

Emily: And in the end, after much toing and froing and legal judgements and threats and arguments for and arguments against and water fowls being taken away and water fowls

being brought back it was decided that the charges would be dropped. And the arboretum would be open to everyone. So; that's the first part of my story. There's lots more to tell. So follow me.

Music as we move to the next area – something that makes sense as an underscoring of the following scene:

(As we do so we see in the near distance a number of people wearing a cap and a waistcoat and carrying a rose. They stand in a line. We hear an announcement, as though on an old tannoy: 'and this years winner of the annual exhibition of the Nottingham and Midland Counties Rose Show is Mr William Bottomley from The Meadows, Nottingham'. At which point we see someone with a bowler hat shaking their hand and handing them over a trophy. The group then all shake each other's hands and disperse).

Act / Space Two

As the audience arrive they are met with members of the Troupe who hand out drinks on a tray. They are told to wait for the toast.

Emily: Have you ever heard of Toad Hole Hill? It's one of those names, those old names, that's vanished. I never knew about it; until my Gran told me.

Gran: Where do you get your water from?

Emily: The tap.

Gran: No! From a reservoir on top of Toad Hole Hill. Built by that man ...

Hawksley walks through the crowd ...

Emily: Mr Hawksley?

Gran: Oh yes, the greatest water engineer of his day.

Hawksley: It's always good to know why things are called what they are called. Look! There he is, Mr Luke Hardy, writing in his diary...

The date sign now reads 1850. Hardy is sitting at a table writing his diary.

Hardy: And so Toad Hole Hill is no more; now renamed St. Anne's Hill, and, there, on the very top of this hill, the most beautiful view in Nottingham we have Mr Hawksley busy planning a new reservoir that will be at the centre of the fine circular walk that has been created, one of many across the city, like a chain linking together the new public parks. Equally impressive, are the two new walkways; the eastern one having been planted with young elms, and the southerly side, being now similarly dressed, following yesterday's ceremony in which members of the corporation planted oaks each of which, on being planted, was assigned a name.

Members of the Troupe hang name tags on trees next to Hardy (or on branches of the same tree) as the names of the trees are called out by everyone:

- Mayors oak.
- Sheriff's oak.
- John Milton's oak.
- Lord Byron's oak.
- Parson's oak.

Hardy: Unfortunately the nomenclature of many of them appeared very ridiculous.

- You can't call it that!
- I just have!
- Ha ha!

Hardy: We all proceeded down the Walk towards St. Ann's Wells road where cabs were awaiting, it being a rainy windy day; and took us to the George the Fourth for a most capital dinner and an evening of unalloyed enjoyment was had by all!

- To the trees!

All: Hurrah!

They all drink.

- And the branches!

All: Hurrah!

They all drink.

- And the acorns!

All: Hurrah!

- More wine!

Which is served.

Hardy: And we averaged a bottle and a half a man.

- Hardy! You have had the honour of naming one of our new walkways.

- Which one was that?

- Waterloo Promenade.

- He fought in that victorious battle.

- Jolly good show!

Hardy: I was a much younger man.

- So what should we call these then? These two avenues? The one lined with elms; and the other with oaks planted by members of the corporation.

- Yes Hardy! What should we call them?

They all look at him; waiting; expectant.

Hardy: Gentlemen!

- Yes man!

- Does he have it?

- He's very good at names.

Hardy: And I regret to tell you; that I have no idea at all.

- Cheers!

All: Cheers!

All go to drink; but Emily stops them.

Emily: Wait! You should toast the reservoir too!

Sign: 1864.

Hawksley: Ladies and gentlemen thank you all for attending the opening of Belle Vue reservoir. In a moment we will all climb down into the reservoir itself for some refreshments and to see the first stream of water emerge from the pipe which I anticipate will be met by a very English cheer of ...

All: Hurrah!

Hawksley: And down we all went. Into the heart of the reservoir. The vaults illuminated by candles with tables as everyone partook of a glass of sherry and the glorious toasts were made.

Emily: Not again.

Gran: It's the council Emily; what do you expect?

Felkin: To Mr Hawksley!

All: Hurrah!

Felkin: To Nottingham!

All: Hurrah!

Felkin: To the King!

All: Hurrah!

Felkin: Half a million bricks have been used in the construction of this temple to good health. It is capable of holding two and a half million tonnes of water and will ensure a pure and plentiful supply of the liquid element for a great number of years to the many new residences in the Sand and Clay Fields, as well as the inhabitants of the Forest, Carrington, Hyson Green, Radford, Lenton, Basford, and Sneinton. Now before we all sing the National Anthem, may I present Mr. Pickering with one of his clever comic songs.

Mr Pickering appears and sings:

The Ode to Mr Hawksley

If you want to have good water
Like every good town oughta
Then Mister Thomas Hawksley is your man
This reservoir's a beauty
Surely no-one can be snooty
Of what this fellow's done for Nottingham

He was one of those bright sparks
Who helped set up the parks
This town has more than any in the nation
Water, walks and avenues
It's just endlessly good news
A miracle of circumnavigation

His reservoir is on a hill
Where the walkers can stand still
Up high above the city's smoke and fog
Now we've got the townsfolk strolling
It's much better than dice rolling
Or downing double whisky's in the snug

The sound of gurgling water.

Hawksley: And here comes the water!

All: Hurrah! Hurrah!

Felkin: How do you turn it off?

Hawksley: You can't; we need to get out.

Felkin: But we still need to sing the National Anthem!

Hawksley: Come on man! We can't dawdle!

Hawksley, Felkin and the others disperse.

Gran: Ah those philanthropic, industrious Victorians! Where are they when you need them? Now then I think it's time that you met the next Alice in our story.

Music begins again – it should have a Victorian religious bent. A collection of nine speakers, including Alice, come forward with some kind of soapbox that they stand on. One of them is wearing boxing gloves. Once everyone is in place they all start talking at once and are very demonstrative.

Congr'ist: The highest patriotism and philanthropy consists not in altering laws and modifying institutions but in helping and stimulating men to elevate and improve themselves by their own free and independent individual action. It may be of comparatively little

consequence how a man is governed from without, whilst everything depends upon how he governs himself from within.

Unitarian: Human nature in its present condition is neither inherently corrupt or depraved but capable of both good and evil as God intended. As are these parks that you parade in; spaces created with good intention but used by many for pastimes which must bring no good upon the souls or the material condition of those who use them.

Primitive M: Our founder Mr Clowes was once a fine dancer; but he learnt the error of his ways! And renounced his desire to be the finest in England! For he understood that once the feet are engaged in idle work, the rest of the body may follow. And what use is an idle man in this world my friends! In what way can such a man find true happiness?

Wesleyan: Those believers who do not fulfill all righteousness deserve the hottest place in the lake of fire. We have been made in God's own perfect image, and he demands that this image is now restored. That we return to a full and perfect obedience through the process of sanctification. And yet how can such a thing be possible with the immorality that abounds in these green lungs of Nottingham.

Baptist: As Baptists we believe in the immersion of the body in the moment of the welcoming in of Christ. And it is that immersion that I see here, in these parks and these walkways of Nottingham, an immersion that is not one that welcomes in the Lord. But one, that through the encouragement of lustful acts and of immoral pastimes, immerses the partaker in the temptations of the devil.

S'Army: It is time to join the General as a soldier of the Lord; to turn away from these glib pastimes; these cacophonous entertainments which do nothing to help those for whom their greatest need is soup, soap and salvation. Look at the energy that is wasted in providing these entertainments which have nothing of the Lord, nothing of salvation, within them.

PSA: You know that we believe that any meeting that tends to self-improvement and to the good works of the soul must be bright, brief and brotherly; and that these parks are to be seen as one of the greatest additions to Nottingham that has yet been recorded in history. And yet there are dangers here; dangers which can be prevented and which we will work ceaselessly to put a stop to! We must believe in brotherhood, and work together.

Bendigo: It is the story of David and Goliath that has helped me through my troubles. The little 'un licking the big 'un. And I don't want to tell no man or woman that they should not be out in the air, walking through these parks when I know what they have brought to this town that I call home. But I am better off going after the devil now as I have no man left to fight; and there is some devilment here that we must attend to,

Alice: The flow of liquor that pours from the Refreshment Rooms and is imbibed by men and women of all ages, so no more than children, as a result of these energetic activities which takes them away from the houses of the Lord where they can be taught of more beneficial pastimes; or from other activity which is beneficial to mind and body, is one of the great dangers of the age.

Gran: Alice. Alice!

They all stop mid flow and freeze.

Alice: Yes.

Gran: Tell my Granddaughter Emily what you're all doing. She looks a little confused.

Alice: They're preaching Emily. Out in the open rather than being cooped up in church where their words get tangled up in the beams or crash against the stone.

Emily: Who are they?

Alice: Congregationalists, Unitarians, Primitive Methodists, Wesleyans, Baptists, the Salvation Army ... and not forgetting the movement of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon!

PSA: To get more working men into the churches we need to be bright, brief and brotherly! And we don't want any of these cycle races on the Forest. It's not safe!

Emily: Why is that one wearing boxing gloves?

Alice: That's Bendigo! The champion boxer who joined the Ebenezer Lodge of Good Templars and was buried at St. Ann's cemetery right next to Victoria Park.

Bendigo: See them belts? See them cups? I used to fight for those, but now I fight for Christ.

At which point everyone starts declaiming once again. (The same text as before).

Emily: Stop it. Stop it!

Everyone freezes again.

Emily: You said 'they'. Why are you preaching as well?

Alice: I'm with the Band of Hope. Abstain from all intoxicating liquors!

All: Take the pledge!

And again they begin – again saying the same things as before.

Emily: Ssshhhh!

And they stop.

Emily: I can't understand a word you're saying.

Baptist: We believe that we can all be better.

Unitarian: That poverty is no excuse.

Wesleyan: That nobility of the spirit and of the mind is free for all of us if we only seek it in the right places.

S'Army: And don't get us started on the Goose Fair.

All: It's evil!

Unitarian: It destroys business.

Primitive M: Spreads venereal disease, small pox, scarlet fever and measles.

Wesleyan: Whole families go to get tipsy.

Congr'ist: Sixty women with children, besides hundreds of young men and women hardly out of their teens' were seen in one drinking saloon.

S'Army: Twenty out of twenty five men who completed a questionnaire set out by the Nottingham Town and County Social Guild thought the Fair was not beneficial to the working classes.

Emily: But there's nothing wrong with the parks is there?

All: Oh yes there is!

Baptist: For if these parks are full of bands who play every Sunday then they will take our children away from our Sunday schools.

Emily: What bands?

Bendigo: Can't you hear them? Open air music has been with us as long as these parks have.

The sound of light opera slowly fades up – but underscores this gently.

Wesleyan: There are thousands of people who are drawn to this so called entertainment.

Congr'ist: What good can possibly come from people being kept constantly in a state of excitement by hearing these bands of music?

The music turns into a waltz.

Gran: Who wouldn't want to dance Emily? And you could. You could go from park to park depending on what day of the week it was to hear music being played. Come on!

Emily: What?

Gran: Dance with me. And imagine what it would be like to be amongst hundreds of other couples, waltzing amongst the trees and the blossom.

As Emily and Gran begin to dance the Troupe join them, waltzing across the park. As they do so blossom is shaken onto them. This moment should take its time; and we may even encourage some of the audience to dance!

The music fades down as a man, Howitt, appears holding a windmill.

Emily: Who's that?

Gran: William Howitt ...

- One of the Sherwood Forest poets ...

- A group that had campaigned for the enclosure of the fields and the building of the parks ...

Howitt: The calculating spirit of trade; the sordid narrowness of soul. We have become engulfed in the noise, and confusion of great towns and now must breathe into the depths of every street, court, and alley, the natural aliment of human hearts – the love of Nature.

Gran: And he wrote a lovely description of the Forest back then, as it was ...

Howitt: A long furzy common, crowned at the top with about twenty windmills and descending in a steep slope to a fine level, round which the race course runs.

Emily: A race course?

Howitt: That's right young lady. And it was another thing that those preachers didn't like.

At which point members of the Troupe begin to play coconuts as what were the preachers now have broomstick horses and jockey caps (maybe the jockeys can also animate some of the commentators text):

C'tator 1: And they're off ...

C'tator 2: In the opening race of the second and final meeting of the year on this beautiful October afternoon.

C'tator 1: The Grandstand is full is paying customers.

C'tator 2: The bank is crowded with those who have come to watch for free.

C'tator 1: And the police are out in force keeping an eye on the booths that are dotted around the Forest and full of all kinds of activity.

C'tator 2: Bare knuckle fighting.

C'tator 1: Roulette.

C'tator 2: Shooting galleries.

C'tator 1: And lung testers.

C'tator 2: There's lots of activity going on in the betting ring.

C'tator 1: And even more outside of it.

C'tator 2: Sadly we have been informed that this will be the very last meeting to be held here after two hundred years.

C'tator 1: And so next year ...

C'tator 2: 1891

C'tator 1: The races will be held at Colwick.

C'tator 2: Ending a very long association between the Forest and horses.

C'tator 1: Which even before the enclosure act was a training ground for the cavalry.

C'tator 2: But let's enjoy this special occasion.

C'tator 1: The hotels are overflowing.

C'tator 2: The Forest is bustling.

C'tator 1: And there's sure to be another large crowd over the course of this meeting.

C'tator 2: Around thirty thousand people in all.

Accelerated coconutting. Choreography.

Emily: I can't imagine horse racing on the Forest. Why didn't the preachers like that?

A member of the Troupe jumps up on a box as a Bookie.

Bookie 1: Six to one on Buffalo Bill; three to one Mr Zululand and evens on Besant's Beauty.

Gran: Gambling.

At which point another Bookie jumps up on another box

Bookie 2: Which was only meant to take place inside the silver ring near the Grandstand; but which happened everywhere.

The jockeys run up to the bookies waving money in the air and shouting out: 'I'll take a shilling on Besant's Beauty!' 'Two pounds on Buffalo Bill!' etc.

Bookie 1: And then there was all the drunkenness.

Bookie 2: And all the people in all the posh houses didn't want to look out of their windows and see that.

Emily: I can't imagine it being posh round there.

Bookie 1: Before enclosure it was surrounded by fields.

Emily: Was there anything the preachers and the rich didn't complain about? It just seems like they don't want anyone to enjoy themselves.

Bookie 2: They liked people walking on the walks, because they thought it was good for them.

Bookie 1: But it wasn't so strenuous that they couldn't go back to work first thing Monday morning.

Bookie 2: And they didn't mind sport. In fact they encouraged it.

Bookie 1: Muscular Christianity I think they called it.

Bookie 2: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.

Bookie 1: Paul the Apostle.

Bookie 2: But you should let the Sportsmen ...

Emily: And women!

Bookie 2: Have a go at telling their own story.

Emily: As long as it's not about cricket!

Gran: Well Emily; I'm afraid that cricket plays a large part in the history of these parks.

- In the fine town of Nottingham almost every other man is a cricket player. At 5am on a summer morning innumerable parties play cricket in the beautiful meadows surrounding the town.

Gran: And so when they made the walks and the parks they had to make sure there was room for cricket grounds as well.

At which point a cricketer with a long beard has appeared.

Grace: William Gilbert Grace; at your service.

Emily: Who are you?

Grace: Somebody get her a Wisden!

Emily is handed a copy of Wisden by one of the Performance Troupe. She begins looking at it.

Grace: Page 36. And, as your Grandmother was trying to explain to you; these parks and cricket are inextricably linked. In fact two of them – Victoria Park and Queens Walk rec – were cricket grounds before they were handed over for more general use. And the latter of these was graced of course by this man!

And now we hear, as though from an old tannoy announcer:

Tannoy: And accompanying Mr Grace to the wicket is Mr Arthur Shrewsbury.

Another cricketer appears – Arthur Shrewsbury – and stands on some kind of platform. As he does so a number of bowlers, one after the other, mime bowling at him (perhaps running towards him through the audience) with each ball being dispatched with aplomb and a suitable – and highly visual – sound effect.

Grace: The first man – the very first mind you – to hit one thousand runs for England. Which was why whenever I was asked ...

A journalist runs up to Grace.

Journalist: Who would you like to stand opposite you at the crease Mr Grace?

Grace: *(To Emily)* I would say ... *(To journalist)* Give me Arthur. Arthur Shrewsbury.

A huge cheer goes up.

Grace: Ran a workshop, just off of Queens Walk, making bats. Very fine things too; that's one he's using now. And Arthur understood. That the game is not just a game. That it is a ritual as well as recreation, a spiritual as well as a sporting experience. *(To journalist)* Where's your paper son?

The journalist hands over a copy of the Nottingham Evening Post 1881.

Grace: Eight matches played on the Forest on one Saturday and six on The Meadows. The New Basford Baptists; Messrs. Ward and Cope, 2nd Eleven; North Nottingham Institute; Forest Wanderers; St Ann's; Castle Imperial ... on and on it goes. All played on wonderfully cared for wickets.

- Bring out the rollers!
- Mow the outfield!
- Water the crease!

Grace: There are those who prefer football of course. Notts County used this cricket ground on Queens Walk for thirteen years from when I was a nipper. And then there's the other team, which decided to swap shinty – a kind of hockey to you and me – and have a go at association football on the Nottingham Forest. And don't get me started on Bath Street. Dear oh dear oh dear.

Some kind of off key music?

Gran: Victoria Park.

Emily: What was wrong with that?

Grace: Let's just say that it wasn't a place without incident. *(To the audience)*. And if you hear this word ...

- Duck!

All of the performers duck.

Grace: Then you really should.

A loud smash of glass.

Grace: What were they thinking of? Having a cricket ground in such a small space. So near to habitation.

- Duck!

Everyone ducks (hopefully including the audience). A scream. And immediately two members of the Troupe carry a stretcher which appears to have a body on under a blanket up to Grace. Grace pulls back the blanket and winces.

Grace: And to think he was just passing by minding his own business. Where's the secretary of the Public Parks committee! Surely they have something to say on the matter?

The Secretary appears; alongside him is someone holding a small bell (one of those which you press down upon rather than a hand bell). As they are appearing:

- Duck!

Again everyone ducks. Another smash of glass and a cry of 'it's landed in my soup Marge!'

Secretary: Complaint after complaint after complaint. Balls hit into adjoining streets. Balls hit into passers-by. Balls hit through windows. No! The Corporation does not pay for damage to property done by persons whilst playing cricket.

- Duck!

Again everyone ducks. Another smash of glass – louder still.

Secretary: Motion. To restrict cricket in Bath Street to under thirteens because of the 'rough and dangerous character' of some of the play.

The Secretary rings the bell.

Secretary: Passed. Motion. To send a letter of condolence to the family of the latest casualty of the so called game of cricket.

- Duck!

Again everyone ducks. Another smash of glass – louder still.

Secretary: Passed. Motion. Get rid of the cricket pitch altogether and lay it out with walks, lawns, shrubberies and swings for children. The Mayor will re-open it in May 1893 and we'll call it Victoria Park. They need a reminder of royalty around those parts.

He listens for the call of 'duck' which does not come. He rings the bell.

Secretary: Passed.

Grace: Thank goodness for that. Cheerio.

And off he walks, as does Shrewbury and the bowlers.

Emily: And what about Queens Walk rec? When did that stop being a cricket ground?

Secretary: Not until later; the thirties I think.

Gran: And not until my mother, your great Gran, played angels on rollers.

Emily: What's that?

A girl appears (Little Alice) and will do as is described with the help of some of the other performers, as a choreographed, dance like moment.

- You climb up on the roller ...

- This enormous thing that they used to flatten the wicket with, took four men to use it and it came up to their shoulders.

- You hold on to the edge of your coat and you pull it out as far as it can go, so that it looks like a pair of wings.

- And then you jump ...

- And as you jump you shout out ...

All: Angels on rollers!

Emily: That sounds much more fun than cricket.

Gran: It does, doesn't it? But we've skipped an Alice. We still need to meet number three.

Emily: So when does she come along?

Gran: There she is ...

We see Alice putting a bow in the hair of Little Alice.

Gran: With her mother ...

Emily: Alice number two; the Band of Hope one ...

Gran: Yes. And she's putting a bow in her daughter's hair ...

Alice: For Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Little A: Because when there was a royal celebration to mark, every child in the city was sent out to the parks, especially the Forest.

The Troupe now presents this in some way. We could have someone with a mayoral chain and someone with a drum.

Little A: Thousands and thousands of us as far as the eye could see.

Mayor: Over fifty three thousand children and nearly five thousand teachers that day. All presented with a medal ...

The Mayor presents a medal to Little Alice. As this happens a table is set up for her. The Mayor spins her round and sits her down. A performer places a cloth on the table; another a napkin from her collar; another places a fork in her hand; another a knife.

Little A: And given a tea.

- Here comes the spam!

A large tray of spam is placed on the table (maybe carried through the audience).

Mayor: And then ten years later it happened all over again with the coronation of George V.

- And here come the cakes!

A large tray of cakes is placed on the table (again maybe carried through the audience).

Mayor: And once again they came.

Little A: The children of Nottingham.

Mayor: Marching to the Forest to sing the National Anthem and hear the salute being fired.

All: Bang!

Mayor: And in the evening concerts were held in every single park in the city.

Emily: I don't think we'll do that when Charlie becomes King.

Gran: No; I don't think you will. But hopefully you won't have to do this either ...

Some kind of First World War music as we see a couple of men in military uniform now march through the audience ('excuse me!' 'coming through!' etc.) and hang a sand bag onto a tree. Once it is in place they turn round and shout 'charge!' at which point a soldier runs through the audience and bayonets the bag.

Emily: What's happening Gran?

Gran: Let her tell you.

Gran indicates Little Alice as music begins (or changes).

Gran: Although she's grown up now.

The older Alice goes up to Little Alice who leaves. As she does so the soldier who charged at the bayonet bag comes up to Alice and they embrace. He is carrying a kit bag. Members of the Troupe now move around the park space gathering holly. The soldier leaves (accompanied by the sound of a train?) and Alice turns to the audience.

Alice: We used to come to the Forest, my husband and I, just after war began, to see the parades and the inspections and to wave the Robin Hoods off to France. And then he was called up and I stood here, with all the wives and sweethearts and mothers and fathers

and brothers and sisters and watched him, standing tall and proud with the other men, some of whom looked like little boys really. And then off they went; off he went.

Sometimes I would see the men on leave, with their sweethearts or wives, arm in arm on Corporation Oaks or Robins Hood Chase and my heart would ache for the return of mine. Of my sweetheart. My husband. And he would come back too, for the shortest time you can imagine.

The cricket and the football carried on, but always with men in uniform or those who were recuperating from hospital and you would see some standing in the outfield either coughing or staring up into the sky. And then the seats started appearing. For wounded soldiers only. And some men appeared one day to build a ramp where a big set of steps had been. Which I thought would make it easier for any horses that they needed to get onto the Forest.

And my husband would write and ask me what was happening here in Nottingham and I would tell him of the parades; of the patriotic fair on Whit Monday with the Brownies showing off their skipping skills and one girl falling over and bursting into floods of tears; of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps taking over the refreshment rooms at the arboretum; and how the gardeners there had started to cut holly from the bushes to give to the local hospitals and how one of them, seeing me sitting quietly on a bench, had come up to me and handed me a sprig ...

A gardener hands Alice a sprig of holly.

Gardener: Here, maybe this will help.

Alice: Why?

Gardener: Long before we started decking our houses with it for Christmas people believed that it had the power to ward off ill-fortune.

The gardener exits.

Alice: And I went home and put it in a jar and would stare at the red red berries and pray that it would work.

Alice: And it did. And he came back.

The soldier wheels himself on in a wheelchair, holding a jar of holly with red berries.

Alice: And then I understood what that ramp was really for. And now every Christmas we go to the arboretum together and cut a sprig of holly.

Soldier: When you have seen nature so destroyed, these parks so neat and tidy and safe are like a heaven.

Alice: He has not, and he will not tell, me of what happened over there. And perhaps we will never gather again in such large numbers with others on these green spaces. But just keep ourselves to ourselves; happy in a normal, simple and small way.

Alice begins to push him through the audience.

Gran: They had a child not long after he returned. The next Alice in the story.

Emily: Alice number four.

Gran: My mother and your great Grandmother. Shall I tell you about her?

Emily: Yes!

Gran: Come on then.

Music as we move to the next area.

Act / Space Three

As we arrive at the next area we see a basic schoolroom – a desk and a stool. A child comes to sit down on it.

Emily: What's happening here?

Gran: School.

Emily: In the parks?

Gran: Open schools.

At which point we see a group of people coming to measure and analyse the child in various ways as the child and measurers explain:

Child: There was one at Victoria Park where the Jehovah's Witness Hall is now ...

Measurer 1: The scout hut on the Forest used to be one.

Measurer 2: And there was one on the arboretum as well.

Measurer 3: It's a bit of an experiment really. Set up by a German to provide open-air therapy to children who were recovering from tuberculosis or who came from poor areas

Measurer 1: Fresh air again you see. Contributing to improved health.

Emily: The green lungs.

Measurer 2: That's right. But then they discovered antibiotics, which was much easier and cheaper than things like this.

Emily: I wish I could have gone to school in a park.

Measurer 3: Alan Sillitoe is one of our pupils.

Emily: Who's Alan Sillitoe?

The Measurers all shake their head and pack up as Run Rabbit Run is played and sung by the Troupe as a group of workers come to work on the beds, including Alice. This should involve wheelbarrows and spades and shovels. The workers should use the audience in this short section as much as possible, handing them over carrots, potatoes etc. Perhaps they set up a row of bean canes.

The Journalist that we saw earlier in the cricket scene now appears.

Journalist: The Nottingham Corporation Parks Committee are to plough up another sixty acres of public parks in their dig for victory campaign and will buy a tractor to go with the job.

Gran: There she is! Alice number four!

Emily: Did they dig up all of the parks?

Gran: Oh no! They had a much more important part to play Emily.

A tannoy announcement (can this be done live through some form of voice transformer?)

Tannoy: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, once again the summer months are approaching and so we are doing everything in our power to ensure that your Holidays at Home will be as enjoyable as ever. Just remember what they are saying about this city of ours. That it's the Paris of Britain!

Accordion music. The Troupe turn from their work to quote, all at once (but differently) from Shakespeare whilst also going round to hand out small flags to wave (which will be used in a moment).

Tannoy: Open air plays and music and dancing. With Rube Sun-shine! The Rhythm Aces! Syd Wheatley and his Kings of Swing!

Gran: And my mother's favourite - Dick Rudd and his Accordion Band; twenty of them wheezing away.

Emily: Is this war time again?

Gran: Oh yes! The next big one!

- The railings are all getting taken away ...

- And every now and again large scale mock invasions appear out of nowhere ...

- The enemy advancing behind screens of civilians, guns popping and fighting breaking out perilously close to the bowling greens.

Gran: But our green spaces are stoical things.

- The swings still swing in Victoria Park.

- The view from Belle Vue reservoir is still beautiful.

- The elms on Elm Avenue ...

- ... and the oaks on Corporation Oaks ...

- ... are oblivious to world events.

- Blossoms still bloom in May.

- Leaves still drop in October.

Tannoy: And you have to keep your spirits up!

The Mayor now appears (played by the Felkin actor) ringing a bell.

Mayor: I hereby declare that this year's Goose Fair is open. In the face of war we will carry on this fine tradition. We will all enjoy ourselves like never before; even if there is no Grantham gingerbread to be found. But remember we must all go home when the night draws in!

And now the Troupe set up a coconut shy and/or hook a duck. Alice comes to play on one of these (encouraging one or two members of the audience to join her). As this is happening Gran and Emily continue to talk:

Gran: My mum told me that the place was ...

Alice: *(breaking out of her game)* Full of young children who had been evacuated here, wandering around with a look of absolute bewilderment on their faces. Of all the places in the country they could have been billeted to they had had the fortune to be sent where the Goose Fair was.

Emily: And was the goose there? On the roundabout?

Gran: I'm sure it was.

Emily: You used to tell me that you could see it flying in; do you remember?

Gran: Of course I do. Look Emily!

Emily: What Gran?

Gran: There she is, up there, circling above getting ready to come down. And can you feel it?

Emily: I can.

Both: Goose Fair weather.

Emily: What's the scariest thing you've been on Gran?

Gran: There wasn't much back then. The cakewalk and the helter skelter were about as lively as it got. Climbing up that spiral staircase holding your mat and hoping it would be a fast one.

Alice: And don't forget the Americans! Thousands of them based at Wollaton Park and every single one of them thinking they can win a girl a prize at the shooting range.

Emily: Did they win you a prize?

Alice: Ooooh that's a secret!

Gran: And then finally, it all came to an end once again.

Tannoy: News of Germany's surrender reached Nottingham on 7th May 1945, and formal celebrations of VE Day began the following afternoon. Schools were shut for both days; there was a heavy storm; the King's speech was broadcast in the evening; the street lights were switched on ...

Alice: Every single park was full of people celebrating and dancing ...

The audience are now encouraged to wave their flags. Hooters and whistles.

Gran: The trees in the Arboretum were lit up ...

Emily: And the fountain was all the colours of the rainbow.

A policeman appears, blowing his whistle.

Policeman: Hold on! Hold on! What's happening here?

Emily: We're telling a story; from across the ages; about these parks.

Policeman: Awful places.

Emily: What do you mean?

Policeman: Full of kids, little brats, being a nuisance.

Emily: They've got to play somewhere!

Policeman: Let me tell you something; all of you. Apparently when they first opened, these parks, they had no problem at all with kids; little brats. Parks were for adults. Not for kids. The middle class ones would come out with their hobby horses and their governesses and dander about. But the working class kids ... well a lot of them were working. It was when school became compulsory **(reading from his pocket book)** 'in 1870, when schools were provided although education was not compulsory until 1880, and then only until the age of ten' **(putting the book away)** when things changed; when the rot set in; when the swings started arriving and the kids became a flipping nuisance; little brats.

You've only got to see what they were writing about, in the council minutes, to realise that nothing's changed. **(reading from his pocket book, turning from page to page)** 'Tearing up flowers'; 'damaging trees'; 'being noisy and badly behaved'; 'gathering in big groups' **(putting the book away)**. The odd catapult of course which you don't get now. And the language on some of them. Shocking. They went to court though then though. Oh yes. You mess around with this shrubbery you little brats and you're going to be up in front of a judge. That'll teach you. And fines. Lots of fines.

And it used to be us coppers who ran them for a while, these parks; before the park keepers took over. And they were instructed that they **(reading from his pocket book)** 'should carry a bit of a stick with which they can frighten boys or girls misconducting themselves'. **(putting the book away)**. Those were the days. They even put plain clothes officers on the Walks at one point, a hundred years ago mind, to see which kids were having a go at the trees.

That lodge at the end of the Forest, on Mansfield Road; built for coppers. You wouldn't think so would you? Much too Grand looking. And their job was to ensure that the parks were used in a respectable fashion. Not just kids, little brats, but also keeping an eye on any potential outbreaks of hanky panky. 'Would you and your good lady mind moving on sir?' That kind of thing.

There was one incident I was told about that I'd have loved to have seen. In Victoria Park. always one of the rougher ones; little brats running onto the bandstand and pulling faces at

the bandsmen as they played; and whole gangs of them hanging around; effing and blinding. Anyway in 1905 a bullock got in. On its way to the slaughter house. And charged at a load of school kids. One of them had to climb up the frame of the swings whilst the bull just pawed the ground underneath him. By which time a crowd had gathered. And what did they do? They laughed. At this kid who spent two hours balancing on top of the swings. Brilliant.

Right then; you mind yourselves. And keep an eye on the kids. Little brats.

The Policeman exits.

Gran: I think he told me off when I was little. For trying to climb up a tree.

Emily: You didn't!

Gran: It's a tree! What are you supposed to do with it when you're little?

Emily: So when do you come into the story?

Gran: Very soon. Very, very soon. Come on; let's go and find me!

Music as we move to the next area.

Act / Space Four

As the audience arrive they see a tandem, with Cyril working on it with a spanner.

Emily: Who's that?

Gran: That is Cyril; your Grandfather.

Alice and members of the Troupe begin to string up washing on a washing line.

Gran: You never knew him. Worked at Raleigh all of his life.

Cyril: Awful job, like most round here; working in the press shop, couldn't hear yourself think. But this has always been a good town for factory fodder.

Gran: I was a Players Angel; the best jobs were at Boots.

Cyril: And hardly any gardens in the houses where we lived. Just little yards, and back streets, smothered in washing. So I loved the parks. Alice!

Gran: I looked a lot younger then.

Cyril: Shall we go for a ride? Just round the Forest or along Queens Walk?

Alice: Are you sure that thing's safe?

Cyril: Of course it is.

Alice: What happens if one of the bosses is out and sees you with it?

Cyril: He'll never realise it's been built with spare parts.

Alice: Not 'spare' Cyril.

Cyril: Acquired then. The odd bit of metal here and there won't go missing.

Alice: As long as we don't have to go to the ...

Cyril: We always go to the aviaries.

Alice: I'll be glad when that bird pops his clogs.

Cyril: Don't you say that Alice! That Cocky has been there since I were a nipper.

Alice: Can't we do something else!

Cyril: Why do we need to do something else?

Alice: Well don't think you're going to get me in the bushes.

Cyril: I'd never dream of such a thing.

Alice: When the sun's out you can't move for couples canoodling and popping into the bushes for a bit of how's your father.

Cyril: They're full of Spring fever love. And there's nowhere else for them to express their feelings. If it wasn't for the parks you'd have young folk like us bursting at the seams with unbridled desire.

Alice: Do you have to talk like that?

Cyril: Come on; climb aboard.

Alice and Cyril get on the tandem and begin to cycle.

Emily: Who was Cocky?

Gran: The most famous bird in Nottingham. I don't know why we always went to look at him. Every time we did Cyril would say:

Cyril: Us and them are very similar Alice. Cooped up. But at least we've got a chance to spend a few hours with our wings outstretched. I'd give anything to let them free, especially poor Cocky, just for a day or two; poor boggers.

Emily: Where did Cocky come from Gran?

At which point a man with a pith helmet appears. The sign reads 1933.

Fletcher: As Honorary Curator of the aviary, following in the footsteps of Mr. Charles Rothera with his original cohort of chaffinches, waxbills and a Rosella parakeet I, Captain John Fletcher, am delighted to present the new birds that have been offered to us as a gift from Australia. One hundred and twenty six in all including forty rare specimens of parrots. I would suggest that our tropical aviary is now superior to the one at the great London Zoo and for those who know their birds you will be delighted to find two macaws, six rosy cockatoos, and one sulphur crested cockatoo. We also have tropical finches which need rehousing as they cannot be safely associated with the Laughing Kingfishers. I intend to carry out a careful breeding programme, to expand the aviaries here, and already have offers of further donations including some British birds from Colonel Birkin, canaries from the Cliftons of Clifton Hall, and a rather special cockatoo from Mrs Smith of Sheffield.

Gran: That was the day he asked me to marry him you know. Out on that tandem. We went from park to park, from walk to walk. And when we got to the aviaries ...

Alice and Cyril get off the bike and we show all of the following in some way.

Gran: ... we went up to see Cocky and rather than that bird saying ...

All: Goodbye Cocky! Goodbye Cocky! Goodbye Cocky!

Gran: ... as he always did; somehow that bird looked at me, right in the eye, and said something rather peculiar Emily.

All: Marry me Alice! Marry me Alice! Marry me Alice!

Gran: And I turned round and Cyril was on his knee holding a dahlia with a ring on top of it.

Cyril: Well then?

Alice: How did you manage that you daft so and so?

Cyril: Manage what?

Alice: Getting Cocky to say that!

Cyril: Lots and lots of coaching. And late night visits when no-one was watching. At least I hope they weren't.

Alice: If they did they'll think it was ladies of the night you were visiting and not a cockatoo.

Cyril: And they've had more than that.

Alice: Stop it!

Cyril: Well? Will you then? Will do as Cocky asks?

Alice: As long as you save up for a flaming car.

Cyril: We don't need to drive anywhere. We've got the parks.

Alice: You are joking.

Cyril: Maybe.

Alice: Alright then. If I must. Yes. Yes I will marry you Cyril Bunce.

Gran: And everyone around those aviaries, and I'd forgotten they were there mind, they all started applauding.

Which they do – and hopefully the audience will join in.

Gran: I still dream about that day you know. Only in my dream we're not on our own when we cycle back, Cyril and me. There are birds with us, fluttering all around. All the birds that Cyril has set free.

Alice and Cyril get back on the tandem and begin to cycle as the Troupe appear with a selection of exotic birds on long thin sticks which 'travel' with the 'moving' tandem; accompanied by exotic bird sounds. As they do this they sing Daisy Daisy.

Emily: That's lovely.

Gran: One hundred and fourteen years old he was when he died.

Emily: Grandad?

Gran: No. Cocky! And it wasn't long after that that your mother was born.

Emily: Alice number six.

Gran: And I used to walk her through this park, every evening before I put her down for the night. And when she was older she climbed trees too.

Little Alice and Alice now appear.

Little A: And she took me to the circus on the Forest and had to arrange for the tooth fairy to visit after I'd had my first toffee apple.

Little Alice holds out a toffee apple which has a tooth embedded in it.

Little A: And she first took the stabilisers off of my bike on Queens Walk and ten minutes later I'd come a right cropper.

Alice is given a bandage by and begins to wrap it around Little Alice's head.

Little A: And we tried to fly a kite in the arboretum and somehow it managed to pull me into the lake.

A bucket of water is thrown (or not) over Little Alice. Alice wraps a towel around her.

Gran: And then in the flash of an eye she was grown up.

Emily: I bet she was glad to be out of your hands

Alice comes up to Emily.

Alice: And I met your father. Here. Right here in this park. I'd had my eye on him ever since I saw his band play at the Rock and Reggae festival on the Forest.

Dub reggae – as loud as we can.

Alice: And then we started working together, on the Veggies van. And we went to all of the festivals that they used to have here Emily; on the different parks, scruffy little things sometimes but always full of such energy. He asked me to move in with him at the Green Festival, after he'd managed to throw a plate of daal over my new blouse.

A man from the cast comes over with a lit sparkler which he gives to Alice

Alice: And it was at the bonfire night, in 1997, when I first really knew that you existed. When I felt your first kick.

The man places his hand on Alice's stomach. They watch the sparkler burn out together and then walk off, hand in hand.

Emily: It sounds magical Gran.

Gran: Maybe it was but things weren't quite like they had been up to now. It almost felt as though the parks had gone out of fashion.

Emily: Why?

Gran: I don't know.

- We've got gardens now; on the new estates.
- A nice bit of lawn to call your own.
- We don't really need these big public gardens as much.
- And there's the telly.
- Oh yes; the telly.

Members of the Troupe put out cones, tape, Out Of Order signs.

Gran: And the people that worked here ... they just kind of vanished ...

Two workmen have come up close to Gran and Emily. The Date Sign reads 1990.

Gran: Excuse me; what are you doing?

Workman 1: This is out of bounds until we've mended it.

Gran: And when will that be?

Workman 2: No idea.

Gran: And where have all the men and women that used to work here gone? I hardly see anyone here nowadays.

Workman 2: We've taken over love.

Gran: What are you on about?

Workman 2: We're running the parks now; looking after them.

Gran: Well look after that bench then! Look at the state of it.

Workman 1: We can't; we've got to get over to Victoria Park / Queens Walk to cut some grass.

Gran: Haven't they got their own people?

Workman 1: Not any more.

Workman 2: CCT love. Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

Workman 1: The company we work for bid the lowest. And whoever bids the lowest gets the contract.

Gran: For what?

Workman 1: Providing services to the park.

Gran: You're not providing services; you're keeping! You're park keepers. You keep things. Keep them tidy and nice. That's what keepers do; that's what keeping is.

Workman 2: We're not keepers; we're contractors.

Workman 1: That's the way it works now.

Workman 2: The cheaper the better.

Workman 1: No questions asked.

Gran: Well that bin near the entrance has been vandalised. And now there's rubbish everywhere.

Workman 1: We'll put it on the list.

Workman 2 takes out a list which he unfurls – it is very long.

Workman 2: Have you got a pencil George?

Workman 1: 'Fraid not.

Workman 2: Never mind.

And off they walk.

Gran: And so my dear I'm afraid that parks started to become a little bit tatty.

- And when things get tatty people don't come so much ...
- And when people don't come so much they get tattier still ...
- And it all becomes a little bit of a vicious circle.
- People did still come of course. They weren't totally empty.
- They walked their dogs and pushed their prams.
- And the arboretum was still rather lovely ...
- But the rest just became a bit seedy.

Gran: In some ways maybe it doesn't matter so much. Maybe all these stories about crowds gathering and horse racing and grand openings aren't important. And it was only when Cyril died that I realised that. That most people use parks on their own. Just wander through quietly and sit on the same bench year after year. Contemplation. That's perhaps their most important function. I mean look at that person over there

There is a person in the distance – a genuine passer-by or a cast member.

Gran: They may not look like they're doing anything but in their mind they could be having all sorts of adventures ...

We do something crazy here – to be invented!

Gran: And that person over there could be dreaming up an invention that is going to change the world ...

And again we do something marvellous! (A light bulb moment perhaps?)

Gran: Or planning a surprise party that they're going to hold next week for their sister.

We present a cake, balloons etc, to a member of the audience. And sing 'Happy Birthday to you', waiting for the recipient to tell us his/her name as we sing.

Gran: And so even if they are a little tatty they are always worth fighting for. And it's when they get tatty that the threat becomes the greatest.

Emily: Why?

Gran: That's how it works. Run things down so that people forget what these things were for ... the radical drive that led to their creation. And then move in when people aren't looking ...

A pair of Businessmen appear.

B'man 1: We'll build a leisure centre.

B'man 2: A car park.

B'man 1: We'll rip up the walks and put trams down instead.

B'man 2: The old Refreshment Rooms in the arboretum are burnt down so we may as well take the land over.

B'man 1: They're old hat aren't they? Parks!

B'man 2: How about some hot tubs! They're better than trees.

B'man 1: Who needs trees?

B'man 2: What can you do with trees?

B'man 1: Boring.

Gran: Go away! This is common land. Not land that can be bought to make money on. However beneficial it may be made to sound. Look around you. Can't you see it! It's all here. Little children running at the birds and the old men sitting together. The laughing of young lovers, and the clack of the woods on the bowling green. Listen! Listen!

A moment of silence as we create some kind of park soundscape!

B'man 1: I can't hear it; can you?

B'man 2: No.

Gran: Then get away with you! Go on!

Gran chases them off.

Emily: So; that just leaves me really. And my park story. Come on everyone; we're almost at the end. And we have a treat in store!

Music as we move on to the final act / space.

Act / Space Five

A picnic is being set up with the help of the Friends groups from the different parks.

Emily: So. This is the last part of my story. I've asked some members of the Friends group who keep an eye on this park and who care for it in whatever way they can to help us set up a bit of a picnic, and when we're finished I'm sure they can answer any questions you have about this place.

We've met a lot of women in this story, a lot of Alice's; and I'm the last in line. Only I'm Emily Alice. When my mother discovered that the Suffragettes had held a rally at the Forest she said that she would name me after Emiline Pankhurst. And that she would bring me on every rally and protest march that ever started and ended there. At the Forest. And a lot did. And on one of them, a couple of years ago, an anti-austerity march, I met a girl called Shenea, who came up to me ...

Shenea: What are you all doing?

Emily: Protesting. About the government cuts. We're going on a march in a minute. I'm starving though; should have had some breakfast.

Shenea: My family are having some food; come and join us.

Emily: I shouldn't really.

Shenea: I can just give you something to take with you.

Emily: Alright then; why not? I can always catch them up. (*Turning back to the audience*) And I went and joined them; Shenea and her family who had come here from Iraq.

Shenea: If it's sunny or even if it's just not cold we make some food and we come and sit. We used to live in the mountains and now we are in a small apartment with only a little yard. And so we come here and sometimes we meet friends and we share our food together. And I look at all the different families. With all the different foods and the different smells. And all the children running around. We are very lucky to have this. It is very good.

Shenea hands over an item of food to Emily.

Shenea: Will I see you here again?

Emily: You will.

Shenea exits.

Emily: Because I was there a lot then. You see I'd not been doing very well at school and my mum was a bit worried and then one of her friends became a Park Ranger, doing activities and stuff in these parks, and said I should come along. And I didn't want to; but my Gran came round and told me that she'd be very disappointed if I didn't, and so I did. I thought I'd be picking up litter and all the empty beer cans the drunks left all over the place with the kids who'd been sent from the referral unit. But we didn't.

A Park Ranger appears alongside Emily.

Ranger: Have you ever had a go at whittling?

Emily: Course I have. What are you on about? Everyone can whistle can't they?

Ranger: No; whittling! Shaving bits of wood with a knife, to make things.

Emily: What things?

Ranger: Anything.

Emily: Like what?

Ranger: Spoons; tent pegs ...

Emily: We've got loads of spoons and I hate camping. Who wants to go camping?

Ranger: Give it a go. We're making a shelter as well later if you want to help with that.

Emily: Who do you think you are then? Bear Grylls! And I did. Give it a go. Soft trees with a small grain are the easiest to whittle with. Like lime trees. And pines of course. Anything that keeps its leaves all year round. The hardwoods are ash, beech, birch, cherry, elm, oak. Oak's the hardest, but you know it's the one that you want to master ...

Emily takes something out of her pocket and asks the audience to pass it round.

Emily: I made this for my Gran. After she took me on the walk. And told me everything that I've told you today.

Gran: Hurry up!

Emily: All of them!

Gran: All of them. Because there's a ring of parks and walks Emily; carved out of the city just for us. And I think it's time you realised how important a part they've played in the life of our family.

Emily: And we did. We walked through them all. The Enclosure Walk it's called.

Gran: Through all the Recreation Grounds allotted to the townsfolk when their commonable Fields and Meadows were enclosed to give more space for desperately-needed housing. No other town in Britain has anything like it.

And once again – as at the start of the play – we see the Commissioner unfurl a scroll.

C'ssioner: This Inclosure Act of 1845 decrees that one hundred and thirty acres of land shall be allotted and appropriated as places of public recreation and shall for ever hereafter be held by the Mayor, Alderman, and Burgesses for the purposes aforesaid.

Emily: Forever?

C'ssioner: Forever.

Emily: And so off we went. We caught the tram to the Wilford Bridge end of Queen's Walk ...

Gran: Thousands used to promenade along here! St. Mary's Church off in the distance at one end, and the toll bridge at the other.

Emily: Then on to Queens Walk Recreation Ground and Victoria Park and along Robin Hood Chase to Corporation Oaks and Elm Avenue; to the Arboretum and the General Cemetery and ending up in front of these two oak trees at the Forest.

Gran: The Inclosure oaks Emily.

Emily: And it took all day, because she saw so many people that she knew; and asked so many questions to people that she didn't.

Gran now uses various members of the audience as passers-by.

Gran: Is this your Frisbee? What kind of tulip is that? It's outrageous that they've let the tram come right down the middle of Queens Walk; but they were complaining about the wholesale lopping down of trees back in 1887 you know. Is that T'ai chi you're doing? Does your samba band always practice here? Oh yes over twenty per cent of the city is made up of green and open space.

Emily: And as we walked from park to park, from cemetery to cemetery, walk to walk, she told me everything, that I've told you and I could imagine it; I could imagine it all.

At which point various characters from across the show re-appear and call out lines:

Hawksley: Nothing will change as long as we are hemmed in by these useless fields!

Felkin: I open this arboretum today as the summation and centrepiece of the enclosure campaign.

Hardy: Mr Hawksley is busy planning a new reservoir that will be at the centre of the fine circular walk that has been created, one of many across the city, like a chain linking together the new public parks.

Howitt: We must breathe into the depths of every street, court, and alley, the natural aliment of human hearts – the love of Nature.

Baptist: If these parks are full of bands who play every Sunday then they will take our children away from our Sunday schools.

Secretary: No! The Corporation does not pay for damage to property done by persons whilst playing cricket.

Alice: And now every Christmas we go to the arboretum together and cut a sprig of holly.

Tannoy: Just remember what they are saying about this city of ours. That it's the Paris of Britain!

Mayor: I hereby declare that this year's Goose Fair is open.

Fletcher: I, Captain John Fletcher, am delighted to present the new birds that have been offered to us as a gift from Australia.

Workman 2: CCT love. Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

Shenea: We are very lucky to have this. It is very good.

At which point everyone begins to talk at the same time – again saying lines from elsewhere in the play (it doesn't matter which).

And then suddenly it stops.

Emily: Breathing spaces. That's what they are. For Shenea and her family. For my Gran when her husband had died. For the families that came here to knit and found

themselves crushed together. Breathing spaces. For the people. For the city. For Nottingham.

Gran: And they didn't get here without a fight. And they won't last without a fight either. You'll tell everyone about this won't you? When I'm gone.

Emily: Yes Gran I will.

Gran: Promise.

Emily: Promise.

Gran: Parks Promise.

Emily: Parks Promise.

Music

Fin