

On the Bole Hills

Friday 30 December 2016

Winter sun brings steel-grey shimmer to worn arms of a park bench,
memorial to a local lover of the place, which peers silently towards Rivelin,
towards thick woods in the valley's dip, towards folded hills and wide sky.

Along the path to Crookes, trees naked and branched against the sky,
wait till Spring to be dressed again.

Two runners breathe past me, their busy legs rhythmical
like mine were years ago. Dogs bound,
race the large expanse of grass that hosted Sunday football matches,
and now soaks up the sweat and discipline of rugby.

Playground murmurs float down the winding paths to lower Walkley,
out over Stannington. Small bodies weave through climbing frames,
sit in square swings, avoid prams and tricycles steered by adults.
A lone explorer climbs the grassy slope right up to the railings,
out of her mother's sight against the low bright glare.

The zip wire below shakes a rag-doll shape along its tautness with a whoosh.
The banked slide, safe and gleaming, spews out bundles on to soft ground,
not the hard tarmac my children's bones knew.

Further on, rocks of old quarry works, solid, jagged, shining now,
much-used as ships' bows, and jump-off points *to infinity and beyond*,
locations of crash landings, limbs cracked in icy snow of colder times,
when trays and sledges lost control, scattered bodies, shrieks and screams.

Today all sounds seem muted by the sun, the hillside
in a tranquil mood until the wind comes

It's part of Sheffield's green belt
safe-guarded from television masts
from much-needed houses, the current threat
a Rugby club to sprawl and cover grassy space

a threat, a treat, who knows. Crown green bowls
and even croquet now still dominate a section
of the park where back then I pushed my pram
held small hands as we watched the click of bowls

in summer months. I don't remember winter days
like this. I'm sure the weather was more hostile then.

Paths trail up and down the hills, trees and bushes, more abundant, birds too, those waxwings
eating berries below our window