

Retreat to Forest Hill, 2018

The Company has privatised our Sheffield streets,
the suburbs planned and lined with limes a century ago
at careful equal spacing. Too much, the stake-outs

under trees to save them from the felling men,
and so I hide a week or so in parakeeted Forest Hill,
once taken out from commons and the Great North Wood

which stretched from Croydon to the curving Thames
and where the owners through enclosure laws forced
hermits, gypsies, charcoal men off to God knows where

though names still speak at Norwood, Honor Oak.
Now this London Borough prunes and pollards planes,
grown on streets, like Sheffield's, for the smoky city

and mends paths without axing. A text arrives from home:
the chainsaw crews are out. I close my mobile phone.

Sally Goldsmith