

## **Sit with us for a moment and remember: Spring**

Thank you for joining me on this bench today.  
We haven't got long.  
I'm sitting here with you now.  
I've always been here.  
Watching over this place.  
I've seen it change. Like the seasons.  
I've seen the water ebb and flow.  
I've seen the leaves come and go.  
Now make yourself comfortable.  
Enjoy the view. Across the lake.  
Past the lions. Past the park benches.  
Down the path. Through the gates.  
Past the statue of the man who built this.  
I've seen images of this place.  
I'd like to describe them to you.  
I'd like you to imagine them with me.  
Perhaps you can picture yourself there.  
When they were taken.  
Look to your left. Near the boat house.  
You can see a life-buoy.  
Now imagine 70 years ago.  
It is Spring in the late 1950s.  
April showers have fallen.  
He's alone by the boat house. It is dark.  
We can't see the clock face.  
But it looks like early evening.  
He wades through the water.  
Trousers legs tucked into his wellies.  
A tweed jacket. Hands in his pockets.  
Flat cap pulled firmly onto his head.  
Face down. He knows what he's doing.  
Walking away from the camera.  
The water gets deeper.  
The photographer stands on dry land.  
Documenting the scene.  
The man walks past the boat house.  
To where the life-buoy is now.  
Alongside the metal fence.  
That is half-submerged.  
The river has risen.  
The lake flooded.  
As storm water overflows.  
From the Tottle Brook.  
This man is a gardener.  
Assessing the damage. Protecting the landscape.  
He will return here years later.  
He will sit where we are sitting now.

Looking across the lake.  
And remember the time it flooded.  
There's another image in the archive.  
The same view. Spring in the late 1950s.  
Five men knee-deep in the water.  
Holding fishing lines. Casting nets.  
One in a hat and trench-coat.  
Another in an anorak.  
Wearing their waterproofs.  
One on the bank with his sleeves rolled-up.  
Hard at work. Assessing the catch. Taking stock.  
Two men talking in their waders. Hands on hips.  
Another looks down in the water. Willing fish into their net.  
More men wait by trucks. Engines revving. Ready to load-up.  
Their catch is transported across the country.  
To lakes and rivers. Signed off by the water board.  
A boat sits by the shore.  
Near where the life buoy is now.  
Waiting for summer to begin.  
Clouds gather above the building behind you.  
The sky is grey. The trees reflected in the dark water.  
The photographer stands on dry land.  
Documenting the scene.  
The water level rises and falls here.  
When the brook floods so does the lake.  
Which is why the road is raised.  
By the earth dug out to make it.  
Now we are back in the present day.  
Looking out across the water.  
Where the men once cast their nets.  
The boats are out, but no-one is fishing.  
The paths are dry now, the floods have gone.  
There is a bench dedicated to the gardener near here.  
The flowers he planted still grow.  
The trees he thinned still stand tall.  
The landscape he protected stays the same.  
The view remains. Though times have changed.  
The road is humming with cars today.  
Buzzing with trams and electric scooters.  
Through the gates. Down the path.  
Past the statue of the man who built this.  
Past the park benches. Past the lions.  
Across the lake. Which once was flooded.  
Thank you for joining me on this bench today.  
Sit with us for a moment and remember.