

# Voices Of The Park

*Creative Writing Inspired by  
Southwark Park  
Compiled by Alison Clayburn*



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*“One touch of nature makes  
the whole world kin”*

*William Shakespeare*

This booklet is a celebration of Southwark Park, to mark 20 years since the Friends of Southwark Park came into being around the issue of much needed improvements.

Much has changed, and we now have a park to be proud of, with more improvements to come. It is a real community resource and hub, as reflected in this collection of writing about our park.

Most of the writing was done in July 2016, at three writing workshops - weekday, evening, weekend.

Some is independent writing from park habitués.

Some illustrations are the writers' own.

All the writers are park lovers, as you can see!

The writing is mostly poetry, and falls loosely into five sections; some background, a focus on the central and beautiful Ada Salter garden, exploration of the 'hidden' Old Nursery Site (soon to be upgraded into a community resource) and Nature Area, lively inhabitants (people and animals) and evening.

Our thanks to the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Neighbourhood Fund for their support.

Enjoy!

Alison Clayburn (CreativeWritingInRotherhithe)  
The Friends of Southwark Park

September 2016

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## Southwark Park

1936, and Superintendent Sexby  
built a rose garden  
to give the fresh air wanted  
by Ada Salter, mothers and elderly alike.  
After long hard working days  
it enabled them to repair  
amongst the red hot pokers, lemon yellow lilies  
flaming crimson crocosmia and sun drenched marigolds.

Before then, the Victorians used  
well built nurseries to grow plants  
that enabled recovery from cholera.  
Hints of that former world remain  
in velvety moss covered stone pathways.  
Purple, pink, blue and white wild flowers  
reach out above buttercups and daises.  
Bear's Breeches stand tall.

The nature trail provides  
bug hotels, beehives and birds' nests  
for all to enjoy. No longer in decline,  
well cared for treasures of the natural world  
are wandered through by 2016 urbanites.

**Daisy Moone**

## All Changed Since The Eighties

There's a nature garden  
where the swings used to be.  
Busy bees make honey,  
while humans swarm  
at Canada Water  
off to work to make money.

There's swings where  
the lido was,  
its cafe now a gallery  
where artists make  
a bigger splash with colour;  
manifestations of  
the inner eye.

'Bermondsey' comes from 'Beormund's eye'.  
He was a Saxon king, his 'eye'  
our bend in the river

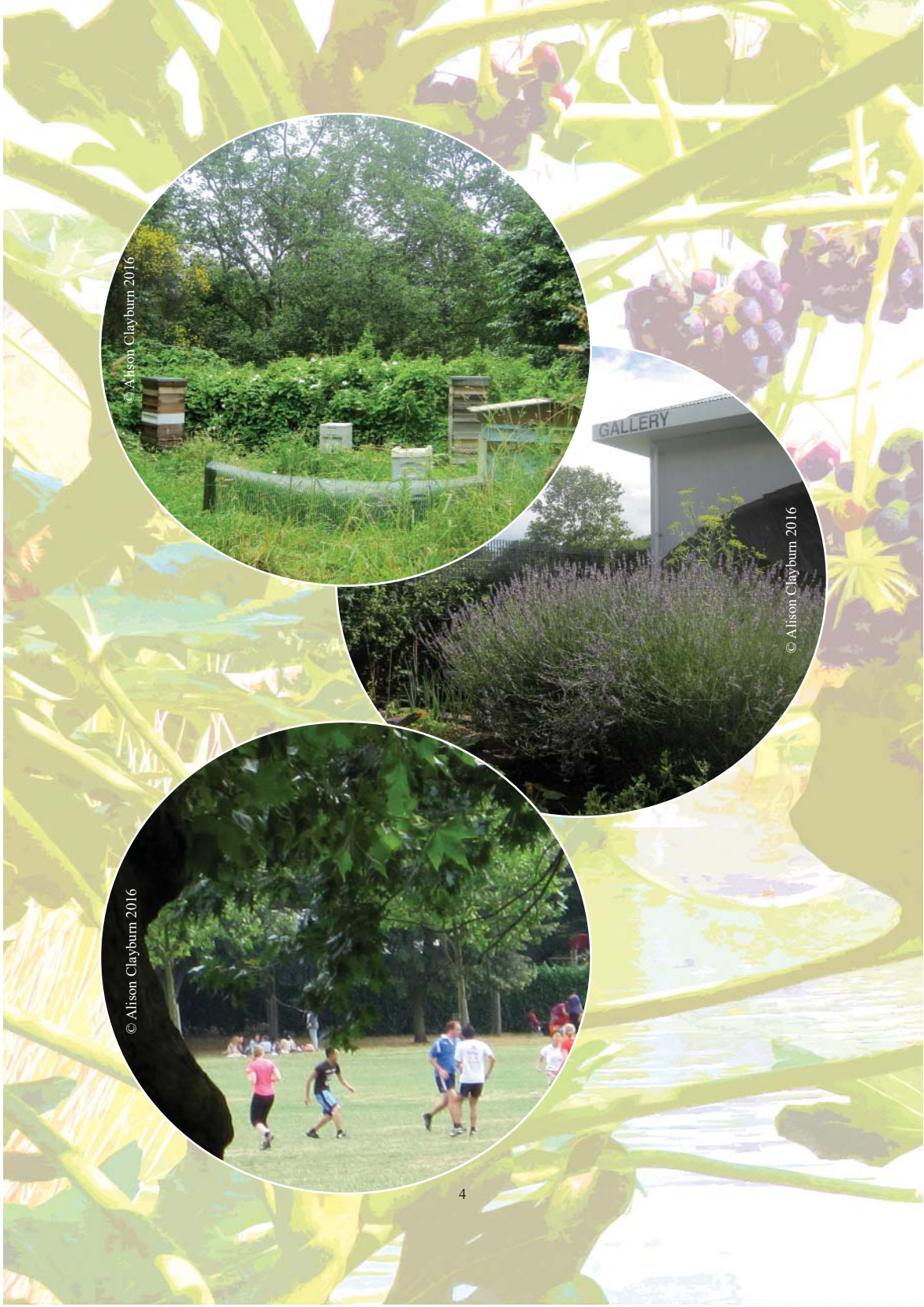
The Caryatides, with upheld arms,  
stood at the entrance to power.  
Now they guard a garden.  
We have a female head of state,  
there may be a US one too...  
will they hold up the arch of truth?

Across the way fit young bodies  
exercise. Brain and brawn can  
come together, as they did  
in Muhammed Ali.

Memories and future hope  
come together  
in this oasis in the city.

**Sylvia Green**





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## The Lottery Winner

1861 / 438 / 80

How grand  
the reconstructed  
bandstand

the roof like an ornate  
wartime helmet  
complete with spiked top  
protecting performers  
from the summer rain.

I look again  
and it resembles  
a Victorian metal jelly mould.

Wrought iron supports  
as pretty as butterfly wings  
sit on 8 sets of black columns  
baskets of pink blooms  
sway below.

At the base further flowers  
Pressed into white iron lace  
Form a pretty picket fence.

There are no tunes today

The only performers

Are 2 youths  
who skateboard  
down the side plinths  
of the steps,  
while a proud father  
takes a photo  
of his wife and child.

**Helen Frederick**

## Our Park

Beyond red busses, and sluggish traffic,  
through Paradise sturdy iron gates,  
all seasons may pass in a single day.  
Planes thunder above ageworn trees,  
while vivid parakeets rapid fire screech.  
Squirrels dart away from wayward dogs,  
determined cyclists and runners race,  
distracted children, please beware.

In dappled light where shadows play,  
neat poppies stand tall, counting idle hours.  
Duvets of flowers are tucked in tightly,  
amethyst Lupin snuggle in starry dreams,  
waking gladly to sunny yellow goldsturm.  
A sundial peacefully watches dolphins play,  
as ratty pigeons choose park not tube today,  
boldly puffing bodies to steal ducks' dinner.

A secret path is carpeted with soft moss,  
Where happy bees buzz and figs ripen.  
Birdsong neatly folds you into green leaves,  
hydrangea sets out lace doilies on leaf plates,  
a flirty red admiral flutters its eyes at you.  
Fingerlike branches cradle timid wrens,  
Goose grass catches hold of your clothes,  
begging you to stay a little longer.

**Natalie Webb**



*Beyond red busses,  
and sluggish  
traffic...*

*...neat poppies stand  
tall, counting  
idle hours*



*...a flirty red  
admiral flutters its  
eyes at you...*



## **Ada Salter Garden**

Open beautiful Ada Salter Garden  
Dolphin statues over a delightful pool  
Covered vine to protect from sun and rain  
Roses, honeysuckle and other lovely scents  
Remembering 150 years of beauty

**Sue Stewart**

## **In the Ada Salter Garden**

We came for a walk in the park,  
It rained and we sheltered under vines.  
The birds sang and before the rain stopped,  
They increased their clamour  
And then were still.

**Jane Deakin**





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© Rose Ades, 2016

## **At the Lake**

coincident —  
the Yellow Bellied Slider  
walks away

**Rose Ades**

## Traces

We have permission  
to enter the old nursery.  
Through the gate  
and into a corridor  
of green we go  
our senses primed  
looking for poetic detail.  
The smell is earthy  
and pleasant  
as we enter Nature's  
domain  
reclaimed and tamed  
again and again  
over many years  
in the battle with man.  
A silver snail trail  
on the velvet carpet  
catches my eye  
and I realise there are  
many traces here  
of man and nature.  
Fox scat tells of another  
recent visitor, or resident.  
Roots push up the tarmac;  
railway sleepers  
lie hidden under creepers.  
Giant hog weed  
once thought ornamental  
now highly detrimental  
dies defeated by the path;  
the fight continues on  
neither side has won.  
Bees outside their hive  
retrace the path to nectar  
in descriptive dance  
using height, compass  
and the sun  
dancing quicker

if the nectar's near  
unaware they are working  
not just for their queen  
but for a human master  
who plunders at liberty  
from their sugar store.  
Eucalyptus, fig, rose  
and cherry trees  
tell of more ordered times.  
Sweet scented  
Honeysuckle  
entwines with common  
vine  
whose leaves are  
stripped to skeletal lace  
by a hidden  
precision eater.  
A silver disc 0054  
gives a number  
to a sycamore;  
a squirrel performs  
acrobatics games  
near the remains  
of cold frames  
and disused drains.  
There are traces  
everywhere of activity  
old and new.  
As we leave  
I realise we too  
have left our mark;  
heel scuffs  
to cement below  
on the green carpet  
now clearly show.

**Helen Frederick**



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## Secret Gardens

Entrance to the secret gardens is gradually happening. Open gates are not enough for an immediate access. When the senses are awakened, other doors open to the life of the place.

We step into humid soft greenish-brownish pathways. Trunks of trees are all dressed up. We find jasmine branches but also poisoning plants in our way.

Near the honeysuckles are little wooden boxes where bees are peacefully active.

Further on we discover forgotten little store-rooms

In the wild area, Stonehenge with wooden pieces for stones under a tree, a mystically arranged circle where the invisible guardians wait for us. Singing birds give the right tone to align ourselves with the harmonious freedom of Nature.

**Ariadne Pascaladini**

## 'Rooms Available'

The birdhouse sits low on the tree  
Waiting like a bedsit with vacancies  
For an occupant to ring its bell

Its solitary hole looks out, scanning the area for guests  
But no one comes, not even to enquire  
The birds are restless tonight

The wooden roof has been pecked at  
A large hole has appeared at its corner  
But were they trying to get in, or out, I wonder?

**Simon Rutter**

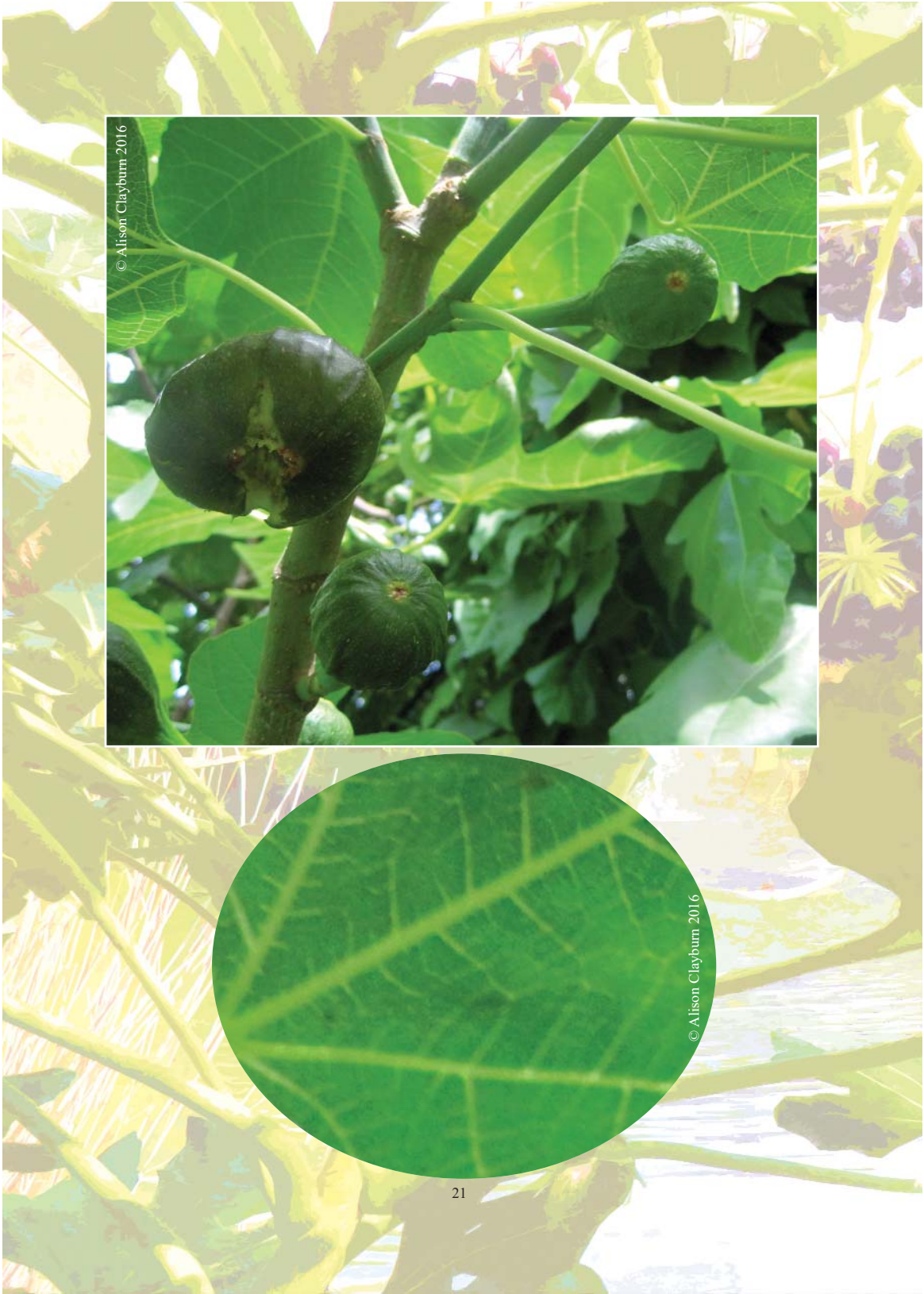




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## The Hidden Lane

Lovely green lane  
It's a special place for these treasured minutes  
Willow trees around  
Nettles are ready for soup making  
Wild flowers, jasmine and honeysuckle abound  
There's bird noise from parakeets, a sound of a jet from City Airport  
Hog weed - it causes blisters from the sun  
Gorgeous smell after rain  
Bee hives for bees to pollinate flowers and produce precious honey  
A grey squirrel scampers up and down a tree, pausing and then disappearing  
Bamboo Canes are multiplying  
An old Nursing Home has gone  
White painted bricks remain  
A fig tree with plentiful, unripe green figs will soon to be ready for eating  
Butterflies hide in this secret reserved section of Southwark Park

Sue Stewart

## Hideaways

The first thing I noticed was the woody, musky sort of smell; then the softness of the combined grass and moss under my feet. With each step I made, I thought “No Persian carpet can be softer.”

Then, a tangy smell I’ve noticed many times around Rotherhithe appeared. I can’t put my finger on it. I really wonder what it is. Is it from an animal or a plant?

I walked on and was surprised to find myself under a big cherry tree with lots of tiny pretty cherries. They were so many and so close, yet not close enough for me to reach them. I jumped and jumped but to no avail. So, I continued on the path, wandering and thinking how even when we’ve been to places hundreds of times there are always hidden treasures to discover. And - what was that smell?

**Mira Rutter**



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## Wilderness Escape In Southwark Park

Third degree burns, the hog weed will give you,  
looping over log, like a croc on attack.  
Making mischief, the mossy path awaits our slips  
and snakes of bindweed curl the strangled branch.

Brambles tug and scratch, nestling nettles sting,  
and different shades of ivy vie for light.  
Smooth algaed covered pond tempts you to walk,  
then drown, whilst the khaki lichen bark looks on.

Alas, from this urban growth of danger, but,  
oh so peaceful, we are called back to safety too soon.

**Cindy Glover**

## Park Life

My hands are greasy  
and gritty from  
stroking Autumn's coat;  
he's the Shiba Inu  
I met this summer's day  
in Southwark Park,  
a sturdy Japanese hunting dog  
afraid of the excited  
toddler who raced  
towards him arms wide  
hands grasping in delight.  
I am in the cultivated side  
of the park now  
pedalos and trees  
in neat ordered rows,  
grass trimmed  
paths pristine.  
A maverick Kingsmill  
bread wrapper whose  
contents were probably used  
to unwisely feed ducks  
tumbles over the perfect path.  
What a contrast here  
to the nature reserve earlier.  
A youth walks gingerly  
on a slack rope

tied between 2 trees  
showing none of the ease  
of the squirrel I spotted  
performing earlier.  
Children chase  
bubbles and pigeons  
in equal measure  
as parents  
take their pleasure  
In popping Prosecco.  
Balls bounce  
and fly through the sky;  
children crawl  
scream, yell or loll.  
2 litre bottles of pop  
in pink, orange and green  
line a bench,  
the children's thirst  
to quench  
after their charging's done.  
All this fun is park life.

**Helen Frederick**







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## Crows Around The Fairy Tree

There are crows in Southwark Park,  
Many crows.  
Sometimes they flock  
Like a dark cloud.  
They enjoy the shade of the  
Fairy tree.  
The children love  
To climb the fairy Tree.  
They watch me draw.  
Over three seasons  
I draw and paint  
The tree.  
I get to know her lovely knarley bits.  
If you are very quiet and listen at dusk,  
The shy fairy spirits  
will reveal themselves to you,  
from deep inside her lovely branches,  
And the full moon  
Will light your way.

**Jane Deakin**

## My Park Stalker

A red-footed pigeon  
with dark breast  
amid glistening glimpses  
of metallic green  
and purple plumage  
is patiently waiting at my feet,  
convinced I will eat soon  
and having staked me out  
he will be the beneficiary  
of such forward planning.

He looks at me  
with the certainty  
I will crack soon  
no human  
can sit on a bench  
for long without  
consuming something.  
Neither of us will budge  
on our differing opinions  
on this matter.

I am here to write  
and have no further appetite  
He folds his legs away  
and takes in some sun  
he's in for the long run  
in this stake out.  
Another pigeon struts by  
clocks the situation  
and is out of here.

Suddenly my stalker  
sensing his futile folly  
is on the wing too,  
off into the distance  
just as I was getting  
to like his tenacity  
thinking I may succumb  
to his persistence  
and offer up a crumb  
of luncheon.

**Helen Frederick**





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## Summer Evening in Southwark Park

There are secret places  
Strips of wild countryside  
Bounded by houses  
With weeds head high  
And giant trees

So still at the end of the day  
Warm and damp  
The endless splash of a fountain  
And through the mist of the spray  
A quiet game of ball

This place is as lovely  
As any London park

**Katherine Evans**

## Caryatides in Autumn

The caryatides were divine,  
In the soft glow of autumn.  
Green leaves shimmered  
All around,  
As in a heat haze.  
Gentle dusky glow.  
We walked across the park,  
The stones at twilight  
Were violet.

**Jane Deakin**





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**\*NO MEMBERSHIP FEE\***

We are an inclusive group open to all. We believe that the more members we have, the more our voice is heard and listened to.

You can join us through our website: [www.friendsofsouthwarkpark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofsouthwarkpark.co.uk) or by completing the application form below.

Membership Application (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

I wish to join The Friends of Southwark Park. I agree to my details being held and used for FoSP business only.

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Phone.....Email.....

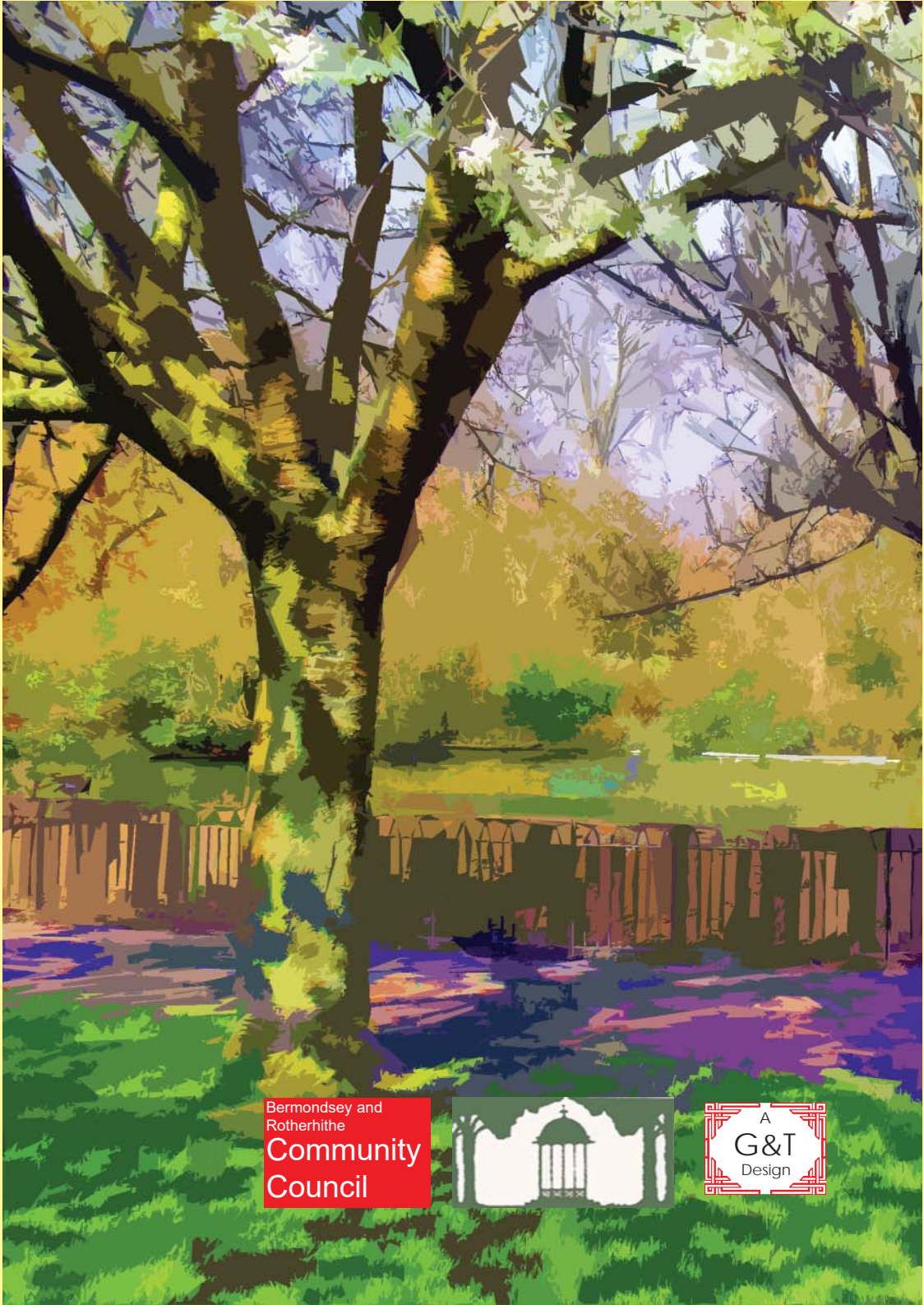
Signature.....Date.....

Please send completed form to:

The Friends of Southwark Park, c/o 3, Fairoak Drive, London, SE9 2QG

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Bermondsey and  
Rotherhithe  
**Community  
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A  
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