

The Wilderness

“All places and landscapes are individually experienced, for we alone see them through the lens of our attitudes, experiences and intentions, and from our own unique circumstances.”

– David Lowenthal, 1961

‘The Wilderness’ is a small area of land, cut off by a river, on the southern side of Cot Valley, West Cornwall. Although the land is owned by my family, and has been since they bought the property in 1987, it has remained completely un-tended, left to nature to shape its vegetation and its atmosphere.

Throughout my life, the land has never really had a purpose, it is simply a place for my dog to dig holes, childrens dens to be created, wood to be chopped and trees to be climbed. The past few years have seen a decline. Family activities have diminished and The Wilderness is now just used as a dumping ground for cut grass and a place to have bonfires.

Despite all these things, the area retains some of its magic, and for me still represents the ultimate children’s playground, a *Secret Garden* or a *Narnia* always newly discovered. The river and high walls create an enclosed area, only accessible by a small plank and a bridge at the far end.

As I am no longer a child and no longer interested in the games we used to play, The Wilderness has become purely a symbol of an idealistic childhood. Memories are deeply rooted here and liable to be unearthed whenever I take a walk.

I hope that I will never lose my attachment to The Wilderness, but as I get older and move more permanently away from home, this is looking more likely. What I do know is that wherever I am, The Wilderness will always exist for me as a place of powerful memories. Edward Relph suggests that “A deep relationship with places is as necessary, and perhaps as unavoidable, as close relationships with people; without such relationships human existence, while possible, is bereft of much of its significance.”