
VERGE: conversations - Caroline Dear 2020

These poem/text pieces were written by Caroline Dear to give a flavour of the wide range of topics covered during these verge walks, giving equal weight to the ideas raised. These were edited from field notes and recordings taken on the walks and from subsequent notes and feedback from participants. These pieces show selections from some of the topics discussed along the verge during these walks.

Verge: conversation 1 -1 walks

seeing this well known place with new eyes
the joy in finding a flower, the sorrow in finding them strimmed

plants as cultural historical markers in the landscape
how remnant hawthorns edge the old road

climate change now and in the past, it forms a continuous linear cycle
the greenland ice sheet formed 14000 years ago, evidence still seen in this verge cutting

our individual imprint on the land versus our dramatic impact as a species
observing small changes in a place we know well - over the year, within a few feet

changing management, how sheep used to graze this verge in winter
questioning the need people have for control and ownership over nature - the neatness infection

enjoying the rich intermingling of plants
the verge, a dumping place for garden waste

being custodians of the land - healthy nature is a healthy farm
habitat loss, shifting baselines and plant blindness

salt gritting giving new niches for plants, such as silverweed
whose roots were previously used for coffee and as flour substitute

the cumulative effect of ragwort in poisoning horses
meadowsweet, cuchullin's belt, the oil easing muscles, joints and arthritis

wondering about the need people have to leave a mark in the landscape
geocaches and the process of geocaching, real and virtual landscapes

recalling the pleasure of the verge as a rich source of wonder
the healing nature of green and how each person notices specific things

st.john's wort found by chance, good luck for the traveller
how did this look 100, 200 years ago when people moved around in the land more?

Verge: conversation group walks

the wonder of being taken as child to witness a multitude of globe flowers
the connections with being young and experiencing nature

the way golden rod has less flowers the higher it grows, how plants adapt
tormentil, used for tanning leather on Skye, good for settling stomach ache

yellow rattle roots feeding off the verge grass
dandelion, beàrnan brìde in gaelic, the stories behind the name

orchids abundant on verges, recalled with rapture
bog asphodel, the most common flowering plant in upland habitat

self heal, reviled by ruskin as being a plant with no aesthetic value
bracken an indicator of good land but a troublesome nature now

fairy cattle coming ashore and mating with the land cattle
place names changing between gaelic and english

viewing the verge from a car, from a bicycle or when walking
how plants move around on lorry tyres - invasive species

on skye, rainfall increased in the 70's / 80's causing the change from hay to silage
past climate change causing peat to form and people then moving down to the coast

land use changes through time, empty unused crofts
tourism is the new agriculture

One verge walk conversation

on skye
chatting to my neighbour
about growing food
fifty years ago
climate change
peat formation
evidenced on Skye
1815 year of no summer

collapse of the roman empire
5 years of no crops
4 horsemen of the apocalypse
saxons, angles as refugees
squatters in roman villas
1385 black death
skills loss
evidenced in cathedrals
contemporary refugees
aware of our own precarity
we are not growing enough
on skye