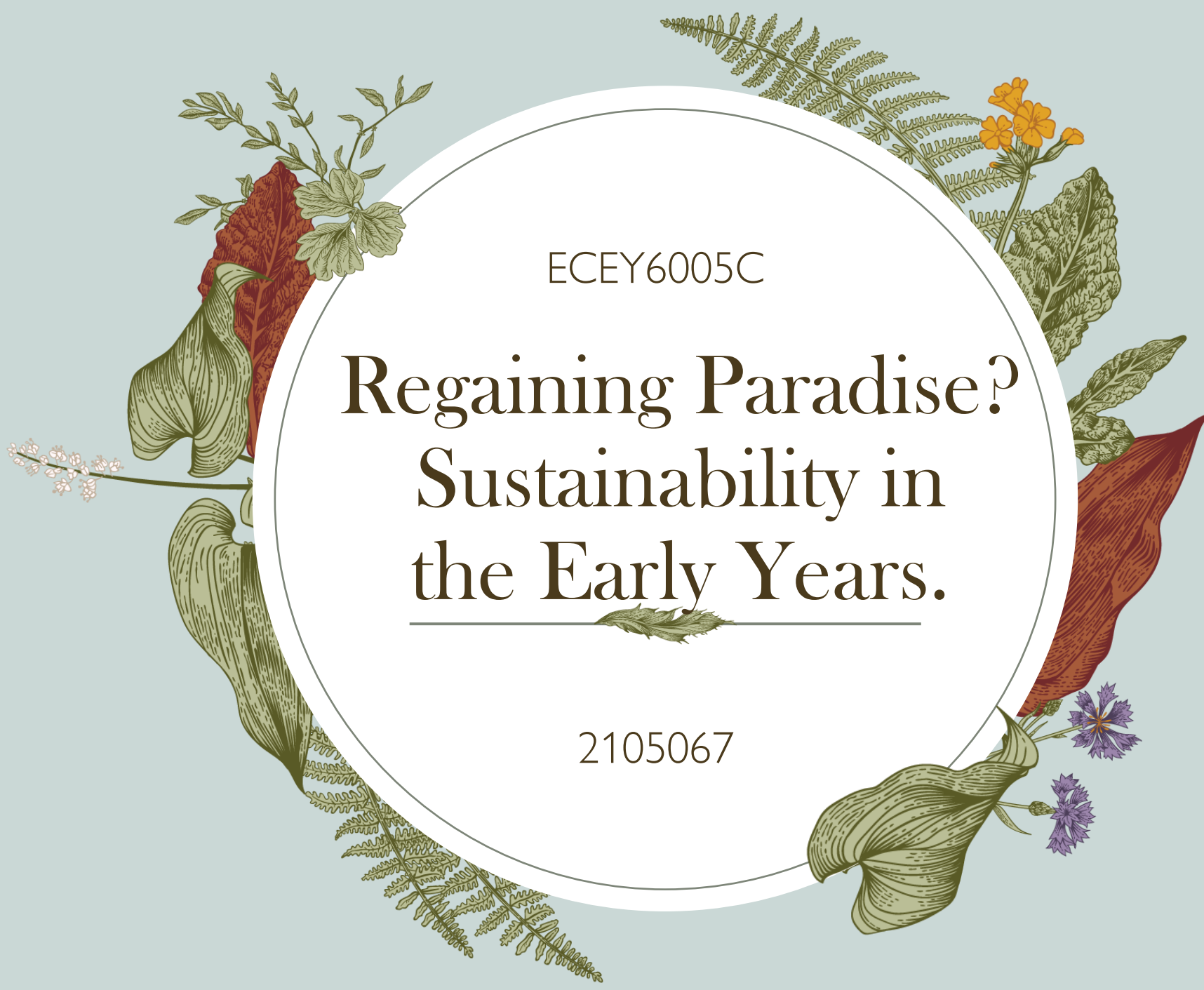


A circular wreath of various botanical illustrations surrounds a central white circle. The wreath includes green ferns, red maple leaves, yellow marigolds, purple cornflowers, and green bell-shaped flowers. The background is a solid light blue.

ECEY6005C

Regaining Paradise? Sustainability in the Early Years.

2105067



I was fortunate enough to grow up in such a beautiful part of the world. From the rugged mountains, ancient woodlands, to the beautiful beaches, I was spoilt for choice of areas to discover and explore whilst growing up. Learning about the John Muir Award has encouraged me to explore new aspects of places that I have already discovered, whilst challenging me to further explore these areas with a fresh pair of eyes.

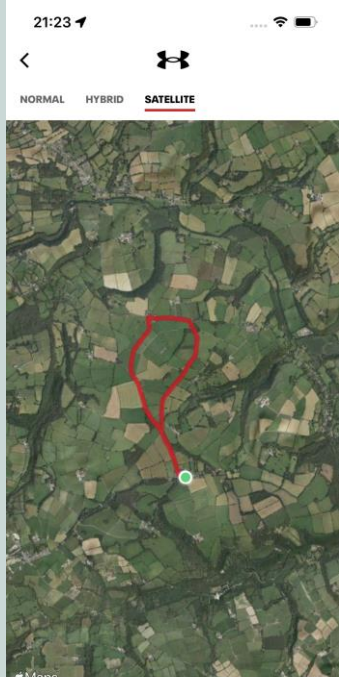
Discover....



Discover....



A visit to the coast awake so many senses; the salty sea air, the soft sand underfoot, the cool waters brush against you as the waves brush against your skin, children playing in the water or building sandcastles or exploring rockpools, seagulls chatting to one another, the amazing blue water as the sun glistens on the surface.

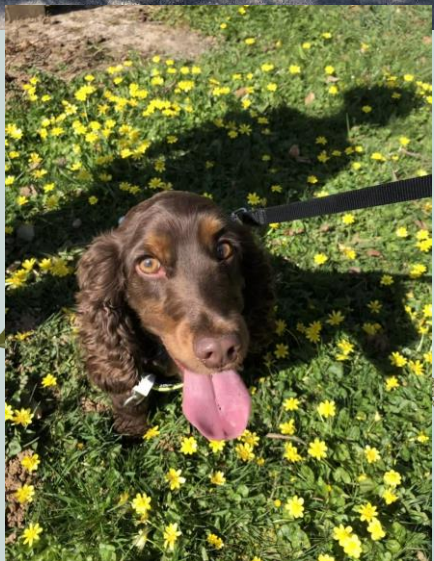


Discover.



I have lived in my home since 2011 but I only discovered this walk in 2020, when the pandemic hit, and we were told we were no longer able to go outside to discover new adventures. As my husband was a keyworker, I was left at home with our two children to entertain and attempt to do some schoolwork. As I juggled this and working from home, I soon realised that I needed to leave the house and explore and discover once more, for mine and my children's mental health more than anything.

I have chosen to make a digital scrapbook on a beautiful 4 mile walk that I am lucky enough to be able to access directly from my front door, that my children and I did every weekday for months. In total we walked over 200 miles over the various lockdowns. Lockdown allowed us the time to discover and reconnect with the beauty that is quite literally on our doorstep. And this is still a walk we regularly do, each time discovering something new, new wildlife, different plants, or bird song.



The walk stimulates different senses depending on the time of year, time of day and what the weather has been like, these can leave you feeling like you're discovering a completely new area each time. My youngest son helped me discover all the new smells. He has Sensory Processing Disorder which means that his sense of smell is heightened. He would be the one leading the way with his nose when he caught the sweet smell of Bluebells in May along the walk. Which lead to us exploring what grows in the hedgerows. And on one particular walk we discovered a White Bluebell, which I had never seen before. The children began asking questions like "Why is it white? And why is there only the one plant amongst all the other Bluebells?". This led us to begin searching on the internet to try and find out about this seemingly rare and odd find. After a quick search, we discovered that it is in fact a very rare find and that it happens due to the Bluebell losing its blue pigment, one in 10,000 bluebells will develop without their blue pigmentation. They are also known as 'albino' bluebells. You are able to buy white bluebells but they are not the same as these wild white Bluebells. We also discovered that almost half of the world's Bluebells grow in the UK. In the UK Bluebells are a protected wildflower and it is illegal to pick them or dig the roots up to sell.

Explore...



Sustainable Flowers and Hedgerows.

Sustainable flowers and plants are what line our hedgerows, they provide food and shelter for animals and insects without the need for humans to intervene in their biodiverse environment.

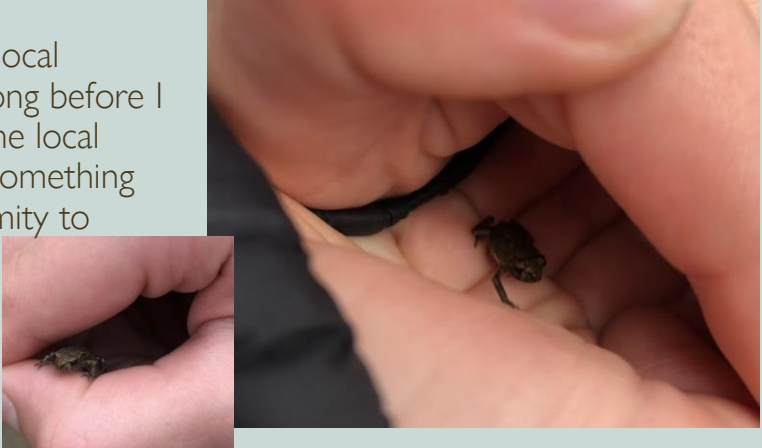
As well as Bluebells, there are so many different types of flowers to see throughout the year, some changing dramatically. For example, here is a Rosebay Willowherb which is a common flower in the UK. They grow as tall as 1.5m and display pretty, pink flowers full of nectar that are great for pollinators, and provides plenty of food for moths and butterflies. They flower from June through to September, and at the end of this period they turn into white fluff with seeds attached, ready for the wind to take hold and spread its seeds.



My husband grew up farming and would walk miles from field to field with the animals. On one of our walks he suddenly stopped and said he had suddenly smelt a smell that he hasn't smelt since his childhood. Unbeknown to him he had stepped on a plant called 'Pineapple Weed'. He showed it to the children who both crushed a piece of Pineapple Weed between their hands. Crushing this plant releases a smell of warm pineapple. We then noticed how much of it was growing in each gateway that we passed. After arriving home, we also noticed a small area of our driveway where there was some pineapple weed growing. Despite the lack of vegetation growing in this area, being a heavily walked area and lack of soil on our driveway, this weed is able to grow and even thrive in these areas.



Along the walk there are not only a variety of insects but other living creatures too. As the fields are all owned by local farmers, they either contain grains or animals. Below is a video I took on an evening stroll. I could hear the lambs long before I saw them. They seem to rotate the lambs and their mothers in various fields. They also do this with the cows of the local organic farmer who owns Daioni which produce Organic dairy products, they're milkshakes are the best! There's something so deliciously satisfying about enjoying a food or drink that you know was made and produced in such close proximity to where you live.



We discovered hundreds of baby frogs crossing the road one day, almost stepping on them as they were so small. The other side of the road was a large water trough where we assumed they were heading as it had been very dry with not much rainfall in a long time. After the walk we decided to search for some in our garden, but not having a pond I didn't hold up much hope for there being any. However, we found a big toad under a pile of rubble where it was nice and cold and moist, so we carefully rebuilt i for him where he remained. The next day as we gardened, we found a slow worm living happily in our compost heap.

Below is a video of lambs enjoying a warm spring evening.



Animals.





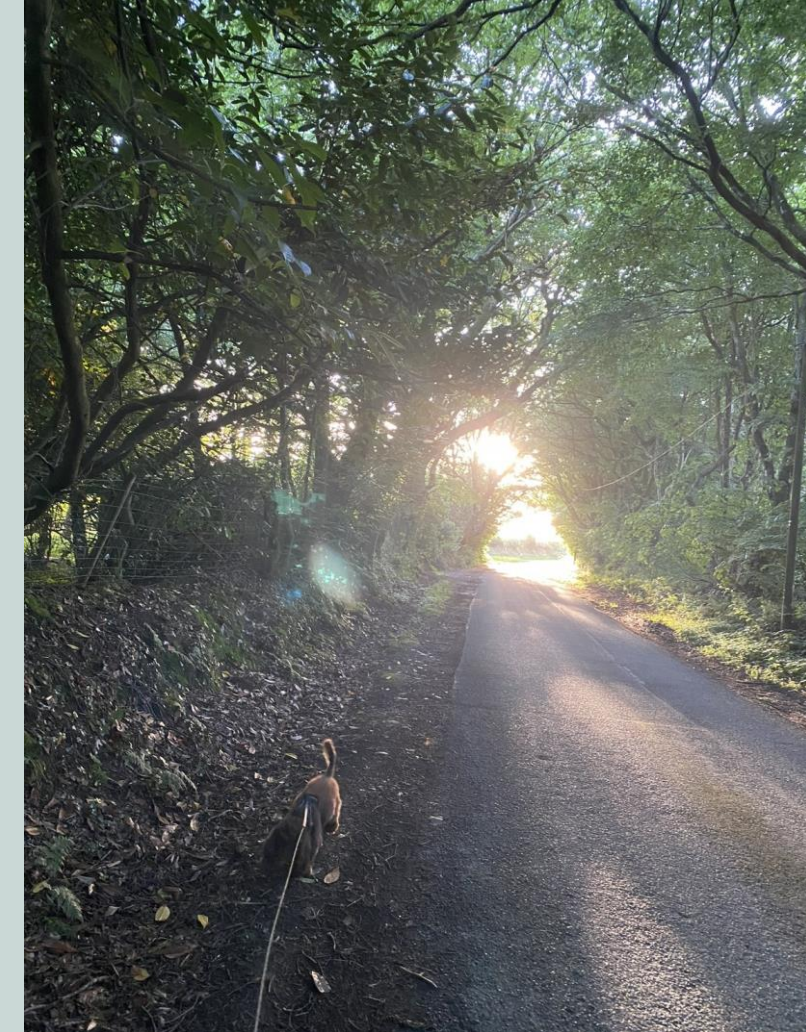
Trees.



There's something I find very calming about trees. Something almost human like about them. They grow in an area where they grow deep roots to help sustain them, on the surface they may seem ok, but no one knows if they are ok and healthy on the inside, they are adaptable and change throughout the seasons.

Is there a better sound in the Autumn than crunchy leaves underfoot? One of the children's all-time favourite Autumn activities has always been walking through dry, crunchy, fallen leaves and looking at all the different types of leaves on the trees.

We have watched the trees grow over the years and always go notice any changes in the trees. There was a row of three trees, growing in a very open area, making them vulnerable to the elements. Over the many, many walks we did during Lockdown we noticed one of the trees developed a crack in it. We watched it grow and grow over time. Until eventually, last year the tree fell down. The farmer planted a sapling nearby but left the now hollow tree trunk there. Which appears to be home to many mini beasts and even slightly larger ones, either badgers or rabbits.





Our favourite stop on this walk is this one area where the children have discovered where we sit behind a tree, invisible to any other passerby, and take in the beautiful views of the woodland, gloriously green fields and an old mansion. In the summer we will imply lay here and take it all in, in the winter we'll bring a flask of hot chocolate to keep us warm whilst we gaze at the changed landscape.





Stop for a minute...

Ground yourself, take a deep breath and feel your feet.
Close your eyes, take a moment, and feel your heartbeat.

There's no use in rushing, in taking no time to see,
For tomorrow is never promised, so stop and let today be.

Please stop and take it all in, look at what's around you,
The luscious green leaves and grass, the sky a magnificent blue.

Life can get so busy, it can carry you away,
But remember that you will only have one today.

So let's protect Earth's nature, learn to respect in every sense,
Let us all gather to be this Earth's biggest carer and defence.



Conserve and Share

There is no wonder we saw and heard so many bees along our walks, there were so many different types of flowers for them to enjoy. Which made me think about my own garden, and although we moved in in 2011 we have been so busy that we have barely planted any flowers and as a result we have barely any bees or insects. So as a family we set off to the garden centre to see if we could find some plants to encourage bees and other insects. We have since planted a variety of flowers and bushes that have already encouraged a variety of insects into our garden.

Being able to share this experience with my family was wonderful and hopefully will encourage them to develop their own interest in how they can sustain and welcome wildlife into their own gardens when they are older. I hope to further develop my garden over the years to provide an enabling environment to sustain life.



Conserve and Share

Being able to share this experience with my family was wonderful and hopefully will encourage them to develop their own interest in how they can sustain and welcome wildlife into their own gardens when they are older. I hope to further develop my garden over the years to provide an enabling environment to sustain life.





Thank you



**"AND INTO THE
FOREST I GO,
TO LOSE MY MIND
AND FIND MY
SOUL."
~ JOHN MUIR ~**

