

Foraging - 3rd April prompt

Whenever anyone mentions foraging or wild garlic I am transported back to a stream near Bath and home schooling. I had organised and advertised the event on our home ed platform, but the activity itself was run by Wessex Water's Education department.

As always a haphazard selection of people attended. Free events always attracted random group of families. All they needed was the time and a car to get there. It also meant some of the children were not as into learning about wild life as their parents were.

The weather was great. The sun shone but not too much, meaning it was fine for the kids to get wet but not too hot for romping up a climbing stream. The area was a mass of green and white. Green garlic leaves and white garlic flowers with the dark line of the stream only seen because that was where the children were lined along it with nets in hand – some listening, some already dipping, some looking upwards at the sky, some poking others with their nets. But at least all were on the edge of the stream at the moment and not within it. Though that came later.

One bold brave rare newt allowed itself to be caught just as everyone was packing up to go home but that was all the wildlife that risked the paddling wellies and the shrieks of delight and fear. Though many other things about water, streams and wildlife was learned by some that day.

But what I remember most of all, which still stays with me twenty years later, is that when my children climbed into the car at the end of the day, sleepy and ready to unwind, the car was infused with garlic like a good Italian meal. The smell had rubbed on to their clothes, their feet, their hands. The wellies that were in the boot were similarly covered with the invisible aroma. Even as I write this my nostrils are filled with that pungent smell and I can see my children's tired, sleepy, content faces resting on the back on the car.

No meal I have ever cook since, no matter how much garlic I fill it with, will ever replicate that smell. Although my son came very close to it one day when someone dared him to eat a whole garlic bulb, which of course he did. At that time the three of us slept in one room and for two to three days each night as I slept I was transported back to the Bath hillside and that sunny, home schooled day.