

The Unseen on Princes Parade

These photographs were taken along the stretch of land known as Princes Parade, Hythe during the summer of 2021 and depict the local flora and fauna.

From 1946 to 1974, the site at the eastern end of Princes Parade was used as a landfill refuse tip for household and commercial waste. Since then, it has been allowed to return to a more natural state and is now a haven for wildlife. Princes Parade is home to badgers, bats, toads, grass snakes and abundant insect life, including pollinators. Over the years, this tranquil spot has become popular with locals and visitors alike.

The land is now scheduled for new housing and amenities, including a leisure centre. However, recent environmental investigations show that the land is contaminated with a range of materials and pollutants, including arsenic, asbestos, boron, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, and zinc. Some of these heavy metals have been 'taken up' by plants growing on the site.

This photographic project seeks to highlight this 'unseen' element in the plant life that recolonises former industrial and urban landscapes.

The floral photographs have been superimposed upon extracts of published scientific papers which examine the impact and effect of heavy metals in the soil and the ways in which plants deal with this pollution, either through accumulation or exclusion.

However, the viewer is deliberately prevented from reading the texts in their entirety, thus preserving the 'unseen' and unknown implications of pollution on plant life (and on the insect and other animal life that feeds upon it). They are hinted at, but not fully revealed.

The work is deliberately left open to interpretation -

- Does it sadden us that plants of such beauty harbour the toxic legacy of human activity? Can such a site ever fully return to nature?
- Or is it a good thing that plants are able to regenerate contaminated ground? Should we now just leave nature to continue her healing?

About the Photographer

Kathy Roddy is a local photographer with a particular interest in conceptual and environmental photography. She is studying for a degree in photography with the Open College of the Arts and is an active member of Folkestone Camera Club.

If you are interested in purchasing mounted prints, fresh copies can be prepared for you for £25 each.

Please contact Kathy at kreativekathyart@gmail.com if you are interested in purchasing a print.

You can follow Kathy Roddy on Instagram (kathyrodgy)