

## The winding road.

Throughout history there have been many roads, the road less travelled, the road to Damascus, the road to Emmaus, the old bog road, the winding road, the windy gap. I never knew if this was about the road or the wind.

Life was very confusing when I was little, my windy road was where I grew up, and as a small child walked alongside it many times. One day in spring when I was about four years old, my brother and I, were going with Daddy on a very important expedition. Only the two older children were fit for this journey, we were brought along to help. Looking back I can't remember what the job was, but on this day we were walking up to the owl house. I've discovered since, that I always think in pictures, so this day I was looking forward to seeing this owl, who lived in this house, such a long way up the fields from where we lived.

Although when I got there I was very confused. Because I was told it wasn't where an owl lived at all, it was in fact the "old house". This too was confusing for me, because try as I might, and although I walked around it a few times, there was no sight of a house. All I could see was an old stone shed. That had once been a barn for the old house that wasn't there. This barn was no more than stone walls and a few sheets of rusty galvanise for a roof, and was no longer used as a barn, it was now used to pen the cattle in order to separate them. At the back of this barn, in a different town-land, Gurteen, was the non-existent old house. All that was left was of this was lumps in the ground where supposedly once stood this old house. There was also the end of an old wrought iron bed. This was now used as a gate, well not really a gate, because you could never open it. It just stood there covered in briars, and blocked the opening in the wall that I was told was once the gate into the far field.

All the fields had names. The field below the house, the field behind the house, that wasn't there, The Bull Paddock, with no bulls. We never had a bull. The far field, the tail of the hill, where my grandma was shot at by the Black and Tans, because she tried to rescue one of her calves they had taken. Maybe that was the Tale of the hill, because how could a hill have a tail? The point, that in circled the lake, the furthest thing from a point I could ever imagine. The Hilleen at the shed, no shed, only stones that once was a Buck Shed, whatever that was. Although I was told that where we lived was once where the local landlord kept deer for hunting. And this shed housed the "bucks". We lived in the Deerpark. It had this very high wall that ran the whole way from the road to the owl house.

Then there was Judy's Hilleen, who was Judy? I was told it was called after our neighbour's grandmother who had a hill of her own, just as high as ours, but somehow she had a hill in the middle of our land.

Kettericks House, that was the quarry. The wood, which luckily enough, had trees in it. Then there was the Blue House Gap, not a gap, but a field. One of the few green ones we had. And yes you've probably guessed, Again, not a house to be seen never mind a blue house. Although I have been reliably informed that there once was a house there and it had blue Bangor slates. (Which mind you are purple). That was why it was called the blue house. Now my brother has built a fine house in the field next to this field, and called his house "The Blue House". Although every wall in it, both inside and out, are painted white. He should have called it the "White House". Oh! Wait a minute, there already is one of them, and maybe the postman might get mixed up when delivering his letters. Now anyway, to save the confusion, he has painted his front door blue. Now finally, something blue in the blue house, that is white, in the field next to the blue house gap.

And now that we've travelled this long and winding road, this road to the owl house that had no owls, this road wasn't windy, it was pure straight. It wasn't a road either, because nobody could walk it anymore. It was now completely overgrown with briars and bushes. It was now the road no longer travelled. Except in memories and imagination.