

The three and true colours of Gilroyd

What is distinctive about Gilroyd? Is it the depth of the daytime quiet? The unique scattering of communal laundries? The unusual variety of bird tables? Of course, but it's more, something much bigger, much more usual and unusual. It's the in your face, up front, inevitability of the three blocks of colour which fill the camera shot of your gaze wherever it falls: the blue of sky, the red of bricks and the green of grass. Always the same and always changing but always somehow the right blue, always a desirable green and for ever and ever an appropriate red. You get an eyeful of these three strong personalities from the bus shelter, peeping through the birches, at the end of avenues, opposite the climbing equipment; up above, down below, to the side, near and far, wherever you look. Sometimes they are interrupted; a disrupted blue becomes an aeroplane blue or a smoky blue. Occasionally you spot a graffitied red or a trodden green. But mostly, and seemingly perpetually, they are the constant three and true colours of Gilroyd.

A splash of winter sunshine throws its light on a wall and a small patch of brickwork becomes no longer part of an endless, uniform colour but an individual shrine of heart-warming red. Grass shorn to within less than an inch of its life by a proud bungalow owner is no longer manicured but serene; a contented, cherished green that calms the owner as he sits on his bench, looking out towards the tangles of winter trees below Wentworth Castle. And as he gets up, prunes tatty buds from a February rose and then leans his tools against his front wall, the lawn takes on the character of a prepared green, waiting for a dash of purple pansies and a yellow sprig of forsythia to show off its true nature. Above him, over the course of a pootling morning, the sky wanders from reluctant blue to a pale, uninterrupted, cornflower dome. Take away any one of these three colours and the meaning of the scene somehow disappears.

Hone in on the lady in slippers over at Brough Green who's doing that rare thing, pegging her washing out. She knows there's a breezy blue above her as she tugs a towel into place. It's one of those rare, brisk winter afternoons when she's brave enough to reject the beckoning red of her communal laundry for the giant dryer of the great outdoors. It feels almost warm enough for her to lie down on the shorn green before her front door and breathe in the sun, if she were forty years younger and didn't creak so much in the night.

The sun stays till after school and, tempted away from their consoles and screens, a posse of lads and one lass kick a ball backwards and forwards on a maintained but muddy green. The blue of the sky's looking a bit battered and the red of the bricks is still committed but darkening fast. On her own behind the shops, a five year old no mates throws and catches her rubber ball in the fading light: bounce against red, bounce against red, bounce against red...

Night falls quickly. Red dissolves into a wash of unmortared murk. Toned green squares and rectangles meld into a shadowy flatness which does not distinguish manhole covers from doted on turf. Blue fades to black and comes out in stars. The three true colours of Gilroyd sleep, waiting for the routine and the surprise of the next day.