

We English

photographs and text by
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I was born in Croydon, South London, in 1974. My mother is a Northerner, hailing from Cleator Moor in Cumbria, who met my London-born father when they were both working in the capital. My formative years were spent in Oxted, a provincial town in Surrey's commuter belt, while holidays were often spent walking in the Lake District (usually in the rain) or visiting my grandparents in Angmering, a retirement town on the South Coast.

Unremarkable beginnings, you might think, and for many people, they are merely typical childhood memories. Yet they spark off a range of associations and images, of feelings and senses, which all helped begin the process of making *We English*.

Initially, I was simply thinking about Englishness and how my upbringing had been quintessentially English. How much of this was an intrinsic part of my identity? In what ways was my idea of what constitutes an "English life" or English pastimes (if there are such things) different to those of others'? My own memories of holidays, for example, were infused with very particular landscapes; the lush green-ness around Derwent Water or the flinty grey skies — and pebbles — of Angmering's beaches. It seemed to me that these landscapes formed an important part of my consciousness of who I am and how I "remember" England.



Derby Day, Epsom Downs Racecourse, Surrey, 7 June 2008



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