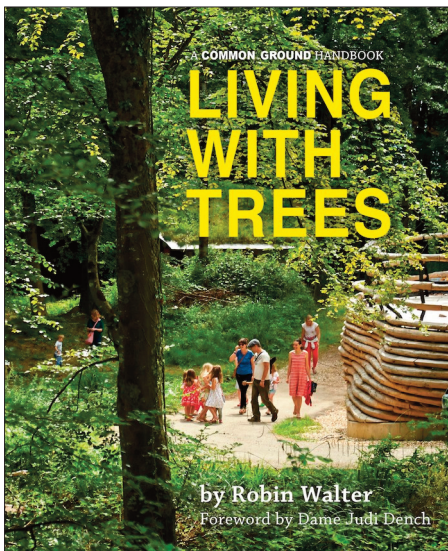


BOOKS



Living with Trees

by Robin Walter

Little Toller Books, 2020

Price: £25

ISBN: 978 1 908213 73 0

At first glance this appears to be yet another book about trees, of which there have been hundreds in recent years. But as soon as the pages are turned one realises that this is something different.

I suspect its audience probably comprises people who love trees, nature and the countryside, are perhaps not directly involved in the management of such, but are keen to learn more about their 'natural' surroundings.

The book is richly illustrated with

photographs, drawings and diagrams on most pages which aptly enhance the text.

One would be hard pushed to think of a subject to do with trees that is not included in the two hundred odd pages. It is well written, and to the point and does not mince words.

This is the type of book one can dip into easily and not necessary to be read cover to cover. My only slight niggle is many interesting facts are listed in a different and small font in the margins. This was difficult to read and rather distracting.

However it is right up to date with the current social, political and philosophical thinking. It should inspire people to get involved with trees in their locality, and educate them in the wider picture of managing trees for society's benefit. So rather than try to comment on the multitude of information included I have selected a few, possibly controversial, statements from the book to hopefully whet potential reader's appetites:

"Too often we think of what benefits trees offer us. Instead, it's high time we asked what we can offer trees."

In a chapter subtitled the F-Word; "Forestry is often overlooked and misunderstood...People love forests but hate forestry."

"Our culture seems to have a love-

hate relationship with trees. We romanticise them...but are also disappointed when they don't behave as we wish."

"Planting is not conservation, but an admission that conservation has failed."

"Humans have been reducing tree cover for thousands of years, and we are now beginning to pay the price."

"Our leaders have failed us, leaving children to make the case for urgent change."

"In 2018-19 our government spent less than 1% of its annual budget on agriculture, fisheries, forestry, environmental protection and biodiversity. Why is our natural home of such a low priority? Why do we take it for granted?"

"Ancient woods are too important... for their fate to be left to market forces or cost benefit analysis."

The book's great strength is that it is written by a forester, whose pragmatic, honest, insightful approach says it as it is.

The royalties from sales are being donated to the environmental charity Common Ground who's Manifesto for Trees listed at the beginning of the book should be carefully considered by all those who care about trees and the survival of our planet.

Rik Pakenham