

Return to My Trees: Notes from the Welsh Woodlands

Matthew Yeomans

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In *Return to My Trees*, Matthew Yeomans contemplates what can be done about the separation between humans and nature during a 300-mile hike through the woodlands of Wales.

To benefit its citizens and the environment, the Welsh government made plans to create a path that linked existing forests to one another. Upon learning this, Yeomans was inspired to plot his own path through the woods. In preparation for his trek, he learned startling facts about the four-hundred-million-year planetary history of trees. He reports that, two thousand years ago, Earth was covered with six trillion trees; today, only half that number remain.

Yeoman's trek was a "walk through the history of the nation," rife with folklore, myths, and legends. Herein, place names are recorded in Welsh, honoring the struggle to revive and maintain the language. Some, like "Pontrhydfendigaid," are real tongue-twisters.

"When I was out in the woods there were no waves of anxiety," Yeomans says. "I felt at peace and content." While there are predictions that the next hundred years will see the destruction of all of Earth's rain forests, his book contains reasons to feel hope—including the fact that Wales enacted a Well-being of Future Generations Act, making it the first country in the world to ensure that all public bodies have to account for the effect of their actions on future generations and on the well-being of the planet.

Return to My Trees is an enthusiastic, witty, and sobering travel account. It gives voice to the dying souls of abused forests and vivifies lands that are untouched by human hands; it warns that a choice must be made regarding what will be left for future generations.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2023)

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