



Meetings with Remarkable Trees

Thomas Pakenham

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Thomas Pakenham's bestselling book of tree portraits. With this astonishing collection of tree portraits, Thomas Pakenham produced a new kind of tree book. The arrangement owed little to conventional botany. The sixty trees were grouped according to their own strong personalities: Natives, Travellers, Shrines, Fantasies and Survivors. From the ancient native trees, many of which are huge and immeasurably old, to the exotic newcomers from Europe, the East and North America, MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE TREES captures the history and beauty of these entrancing living structures. Common to all these trees is their power to inspire awe and wonder. This is a lovingly researched book, beautifully illustrated with colour photographs, engravings and maps - a moving testimonial to the Earth's largest and oldest living structures.

Meetings with Remarkable Trees Details

Date : Published November 10th 1998 by Random House (first published September 23rd 1997)

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Author : Thomas Pakenham

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From Reader Review Meetings with Remarkable Trees for online ebook

Eva Falconer says

Lovely book . Well illustrated with often odd and strange trees in the British Isles.. a book to dip into and share with others. I feel like visiting some of those I have not already seen..

Susan says

I went out and bought the book, I loved it so much (I was reading a library copy). Marvelous photos of stunning trees.

Marmot says

The thing I found fascinating about this book, is that nearly all the trees discussed (growing in England, Ireland and Scotland) were PLANTED!!!! This is in contrast to my own experience living in BC, Canada, where almost all of the remarkable trees are naturals. So that was a bit of an eye opener for me (having never been to Europe; now I want to go to see some of these trees). Also a bit sad that they don't have many old large natural trees left at all. I enjoyed reading this book, which was really filled with lovely photos, quotes and my favourite was the reproduced etchings from Jacob Strutt's 1826 book *Sylva Britannica* - especially when there was the modern photo of the same tree as the 1826 art, and they were recognizable! It was neat to imagine some of these old arboretums on old estates when people planted trees to boast of all the types they had - I wish there were more arboretums near me! The only thing o didn't like was that the author felt the need to put some sort of witty quip at the end of every description of the trees - ok at first, but got old after awhile, and unnecessary.

Renay says

stunning photography, and actual genuine histories or stories of mad trees in some country that's not australia hmmph!

ah well, i am glad someone thought to make a book so i can see such remarkable trees and read the stories attatched, i may never get to travel there - this is the next best thing.

some of these trees are humungous, amazing, stunning and awe inspiring. a lovely whimsical informative read, and pictures that'd make your green thumb twitch....

lovely! well worth a flick through just for the pictures if nothing else.

Rebecca says

Pakenham takes stunning pictures of many different ancient trees all over England, Scotland, and Ireland, accompanied by essays both on the specific tree and the type of tree. If it's a tree not native to England, the essay will describe how it got there (or the best theory, as some came hundreds of years ago). The trees are wonderful and old, with twisty complex roots and branches, and some with rooms inside them. I did think that it was cheating a little to use just trees found in the UK to represent various species; I think photos of them in their original setting would often be more compelling. I mean, "Wellingtonias" are beautiful and tall in England, but if you want to see what they really look like, go to California and photograph the giant sequoias--there's nothing like them. Overall, though, an interesting book with gorgeous photos.

Sylvester says

"There is a tree, the pride of Lorton's vale,
Which to this day stands single in the midst
Of its own darkness as it stood of yore...
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary tree! - a living thing
Produced too slowly to ever decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed."

Wordsworth "Yew Trees"

That very tree still stands at Lorton, incredibly. In a farmers' field, chewed by sheep, but still magnificent.

Loved this book. So many stories these trees hold. The things they have seen and endured! This is the first British book of tree portraits since Jacob Strutt's "Sylva Britannica" of 1826. Pakenham includes pictures from that book alongside photos of those same trees at present-day. Lovely. These trees are characters, not just silent witnesses, they have their own quirks and attitudes - I found them endlessly interesting.

Hollie Rose says

(Review written in 2002)

Fascinating! I love this book. It's not just about big or old trees, it's about interesting trees. Trees with stories, or histories. Trees noted in past botanical books or by ancient poets, looked for today - some found alive, some are found 'dead on their feet' as he puts it. He groups the trees by personalities - such as the natives, travelers, mothers, survivors, shrines. Filled with tree lore, fact and legend both. Gorgeous photography interspersed throughout the whole book. Enchanting.

Jim says

He certainly picked some remarkable trees, although he was a bit too enamored of barely surviving or dead stumps. I don't consider those remarkable trees. Still, I probably hadn't heard of over 1/3 of the examples he wrote about - a good percentage. I don't think there was a case where he didn't add some information I hadn't

known, though. That's awesome. He found new trivia on even the really well known ones.

This wasn't a book for me to just sit down & read, it was more like a scavenger hunt. It's a condiment book. (No one wants just ketchup or mayo on their sandwich.) Pakenham packed this book with interesting trivia & marvelous reflections along with some decent pictures, but each entry was too short. It made me want more & some left me a bit bewildered until I looked an English term up in another book. Thankfully I found the map in the back of the book early on. I am not well versed in the geography of the British Isles so would have been completely lost, however the map is well marked.

If you're not a tree nut, this isn't for you. My wife likes trees & still lost interest, although she is still occasionally picking at it & we did have some interesting discussions. There are a lot of really neat trees in the isles & around the world. I have several books on them & have read more, so the book worked for me with reservations. It was kind of a pain to have to dig out another book or google images for a better look at a tree or area rather than just the closeup Pakenham provided. I liked the way he wrote & wish he'd expanded this book into several.

What was there was good & this is a fine addition to my growing library of all things wood related. I'll keep it & probably browse through it occasionally. I'll certainly pull it out & look things up in it.

Juliet Wilson says

This is a beautiful book, made up of portraits in prose and photos of 60 individual trees (or groups of trees) from around the UK, selected by the author for their strong personalities. Most of these trees are very old and very large, all of them have interesting histories.

The trees include:

Kett's Oak at Wymondham, Norfolk under which rebel peasants, under the leadership of Robert Kett, gathered in 1549 to demand an end to the enclosure of common land.

The gingko at Kew Gardens. This individual tree dates to 1762 but gingkos have been around for 60 million years.

A yew tree in Crowhurst, Surrey which has a door built into it and which early in the 19th Century was fitted out as a room with table and chairs!

And many other fascinating individuals, showing just how fascinating trees can be!

Benjamin Richards says

I enjoyed spending time with Thomas Pakenham and his dendrological journey. I have bookmarked most of

these trees on the map and intend to visit them in the years to come, hopefully discovering new old trees along the way.

Caroline says

I loved this book and as a result of reading have added one or two, to my 'places to visit' bucket list. I have always loved trees and confess to having hugged the odd one. Thomas Pakenham has pitched the text perfectly with the photos. A little history, a few stories, some true some not, but all interesting. This book will not be filed away in a bookshelf never to be looked at again, but will remain close at hand to glance through and all the beautiful, well mostly beautiful, trees in a multitude of forms.

GoldGato says

There are trees in the book that seem to reach to the sky. Trees that are so large, they act as living rooms to humans. Trees that could only have been brought to us by the mythological giants of old, for who else would have been able to tend to these fascinating ancients.

This book focuses upon trees both native to Britain and those brought from abroad and planted for the citizens to revere. My favorite is the Xerxes tree, a Plane Tree at Cambridge. The story goes that Persia's greatest king saw such a tree while marching to conquer Greece and attached golden ornaments to its boughs, much as a man gives gifts to a woman. The king also assigned a guardian to forever live under the tree. Amazingly enough, the tree that lives at Cambridge came from seeds taken from Thermopylae, Greece...where Xerxes met defeat against Athens.

You don't need to be a tree hugger to really enjoy this volume of photographs and musings. But you will certainly admire and respect trees more...and if that means one more tree planted in a garden, then so be it.

Book Season = Spring

Forrest says

I consider myself a semi-outdoorsman. I'm not as hardcore as many of my friends. I've had friends who have kayaked the Aleutian Islands looking for (and finding) mummies. I've had others who have hiked the Appalachian Trail in its entirety. Still others friends have spent a Winter (well, their Summer) in Antarctica.

Me? I've been on a few week-long canoeing trips. I love to hike the hills and walk up mountains. I've done more than my share of camping, whether in the true wilds or in State Parks.

But, in all honesty, while I love to be outdoors, I'm not hardcore. About the most hardcore thing I've done is winter paddling in Wisconsin (which can kill you rather easily, I must note), but I just don't have the time or money for a bunch of wild adventures into the hinterlands.

Still, I'm a nature lover. And one thing I really, truly love is a good tree. Yeah, I've hugged a tree or two in my day. But not nearly as many as Thomas Pakenham.

Meetings with Remarkable Trees is a remarkable book. In it, Pakenham explores Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall, and England searching for the largest, oldest, and most storied trees in the UK. The book is illustrated throughout with Pakenham's outstanding photographs, each accompanied by anecdotes about the trees themselves, those who loved and cared for them, and those for whom a certain tree stood as a significant landmark or a marker of historical significance. Within the book's pages, you'll meet the Fredville and Bowthorpe oaks (the largest common oaks in Britain and Ireland), the strawberry tree at Kew Gardens, The Martyrs' sycamore at Tolpuddle (under which The Tolpuddle Affair commenced). Here also, one can see The Dead Walk of yews at Murthly, where tradition dictates that the laird of Murthly can only pass from the chapel to the house, never traveling from the house to the chapel . . . in this life. Even murder plots find their way into the book, through a 16th-Century plot to assassinate the husband of Mary Queen of Scots, which was hatched under The Whittingham Yew.

These are only a few of the 65 trees or groups of trees that Pakenham so lovingly documents. This is the ultimate tree-lover's book. And if you're not a tree lover before you open its (ironically) glossy pages, you will be by the end of the book.

Kathryn says

I didn't read much of this book, but looked at all of the extraordinary pictures. The trees are all outside of the US, but there are some wonderful specimens. Many I would love to sit in or on. This would make a wonderful coffee table book.

Benjamin says

In a refreshing yet novel method of writing, Thomas Pakenham's *Meetings with Remarkable Trees* tells the stories of some of the British Isles' most awe-inspiring trees, and does so by delightfully grouping the trees into categories that evoke their personalities and aesthetic qualities, such as 'Natives', 'Travellers', 'Shrines', 'fantasies' and 'survivors'.

Each tree has a short, yet well-researched, history etched out for readers to explore, often with a poetic epithet from great authors, playwrights and poets of the past. This text is then accompanied with high quality photographs; the entirety of which have been provided by Pakenham himself. It's evident that the author has spent much time on amassing this collection.

However, despite the effort that has gone into this glossy gathering of groves, it somewhat disappoints when it comes to the sampling of trees included (not that any trees that have been featured aren't remarkable, ALL most certainly are). Although using the phrase: "In Britain and Ireland" a few times, it's bizarre that Pakenham hasn't included a single tree in this collection from the entire country of Wales. Not one. In fact, there's a strong bias towards Southern England and the Lake District, with a clumping in Scotland.

Pakenham states he had more trees he wished he could have shared in the final manuscript - choosing just 60-odd for the final edition. It kind of seems absurd that not ONE Welsh tree was 'remarkable' enough for a meeting. Personally, I would recommend Redwood grove in Leighton, Powys (which is the largest and oldest grove of coast redwoods in Europe), and would have made a fantastic addition to this book. Perhaps this gap in Pakenham's documentation is what spurred Archie Miles to produce: "Heritage Trees Wales"?

Bias aside, there are some words of wisdom in Pakenham's introduction that deserve to be noted. His view that many of us take old trees for granted is strikingly true. He writes: "the indifference towards old trees makes a mockery of our supposed new respect for the environment."

In sum, a highly recommended collection of remarkable trees that botanists and non-botanists alike will surely enjoy. 3.5/5
