

Press release

New book aims to 'unpeel' the layers of the landscape

Understanding why our much-loved landscapes look the way they do – that's what outdoor writer Andrew Bibby says is the objective of his new book on Scottish and English borderlands, **The Borders: The Lands We Share**.

Andrew Bibby says: "It's always struck me as a little surprising that many people who enjoy going out walking in our beautiful countryside don't take more of an interest in the way that the land is being used. Surely our experiences are enhanced if we understand how the landscape is being shaped - who owns the land we're walking on, who's using that land, and what are the economic goals they're trying to meet."

Andrew Bibby's well-researched and lavishly illustrated book offers an accessible and enjoyable way towards a real understanding of the Border landscapes of southern Scotland and northern England. His themes include, among other things, what's happening with upland farming, with woodlands and commercial forestry, with peatland degradation and restoration, and with nature conservation and the loss of biodiversity. He also looks back in time to reveal how today's landscapes have been shaped by past human activity, including the devastating eighteenth-century Borders' land clearances and the development of droving roads.

Andrew Bibby also analyses how our national parks are faring and how the long and hard-fought campaign for the right to walk freely in the countryside has developed separately in Scotland and England.

Woven like a thread through **The Borders: The Lands We Share** is an account of the two-hundred mile backpacking walk which Andrew Bibby undertook. Starting out from Edinburgh Castle he headed initially cross-country for Peebles, Selkirk and Melrose and then took the atmospheric old Roman road Dere Street, now an almost deserted footpath, down to the English border. "And having reached England, I carried on through Northumberland and Co Durham until eventually after thirteen

days and two hundred miles or so I reached the old bridge on the Great North Road at Catterick, on the river Swale,” he adds.

“Walking has its own rhythm, a slow rhythm, one which allows you the time you need to absorb what you see. Although this isn’t intended as a book primarily about my walk, I don’t think I’d have been able to write it if I hadn’t first explored the land on foot,” he says. “Mind you, it was once I’d safely got home that the period of research really got started.”

Running through the book is an analysis of the effects that climate change is already having on our landscapes. “The last few years have seen a massive growth in the market for carbon offsetting by companies who are buying future credits in the carbon which – it’s hoped - will be captured in due course in newly planted forests. This is having the effect of driving up land values and changing the use of our land,” Andrew Bibby says. “We certainly need to need to get carbon out of the atmosphere, but many people argue that companies are taking an easy way out by buying carbon credits when first they should be focusing on reducing their emissions.”

So why has the book been given the title ‘The Lands We Share’? Andrew Bibby says that he is not trying to gainsay the significance which the Scottish/English border plays both economically and politically. What he does claim, however, is that the responsibility of tackling the two great global challenges we currently face – that of combating global warming and reversing the decline in biodiversity – is one that we all share, whichever side of the border we live on.

He argues too that our landscapes are something shared through time. “We share this countryside with all those past generations who also made their mark on the land, back to the days of the Romans and even earlier times. They changed the look of the land in their efforts to survive and prosper. We need to cherish the landscapes we have inherited from them, and pass them on to future generations in as healthy a state as possible,” he says.

The book **The Borders: The Lands We Share** is published on March 1st by Gritstone Publishing and will be available from bookshops and other outlets (£15).

Andrew Bibby's previous books on landscape issues include the very well-reviewed **The Backbone of England: Landscape and Life on the Pennine Watershed** and **Back Roads through Middle England**, winner of the Outdoor Book of the Year for 2018.

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Editor's notes:

Review copies can be requested at gritstonecoop@gmail.com. Images and other material (including a PDF of the book) are available from www.gritstonecoop.co.uk/media-resources/ using the password 'media'. Andrew Bibby can be contacted on 07989 965315, andrew@andrewbibby.com.