

Somerville

The View from the Hill

Four Seasons in a Walker's Britain

In Christopher Somerville's workroom is a case of shelves that holds 450 notebooks. Their pages are creased and stained with mud, blood, flattened insect corpses, beer glass rings, smears of plant juice and gallons of sweat. Everything Somerville has written about walking the British countryside has had its origin among these little black-and-red books. During the lockdowns and enforced idleness of the Covid-19 pandemic, Somerville began to revisit this rough treasury of notes, spanning forty years of exploring these islands on foot. The View from the Hill pulls together the cream of this unique crop, following the cycle of the seasons from a freezing January on the Severn Estuary to the sight of sunrise on Christmas morning from inside a prehistoric burial mound. In between are hundreds of walks to discover randy natterjack toads in a Cumbrian spring, trout in a Hampshire chalk stream in lazy midsummer, a lordly red stag at the autumn rut on the Isle of Mull, and three thousand geese at full gabble in the wintry Norfolk sky. Best of all, you don't have to stir out of your chair to enjoy these walks. Just stir up the fire, fill your glass, and let Christopher Somerville take you out of here and far away.

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