

Marion Shoard

Writer | Broadcaster | Lecturer

www.marionshoard.co.uk

This Land Is Our Land

By Marion Shoard

**(First published by Paladin, 1987
reissued by Gaia Books as a Gaia Classic, 1997)**

Preface

This Land is Our Land was written in 1987 to map the battleground and explore the prospects for what then looked likely to be a growing conflict between Britain's rural landowners and the landless majority. It went out of print in 1996. Yet as I explain in the Introduction to this new edition, the conflict it described has swollen in the intervening decade to become an ever more prominent feature of life in Britain. The re-issue of this book is hopefully timed to aid those anxious to know what lies beneath emerging debates such as those on hunting, access to the countryside, absentee ownership and the conservation of disappearing landscape and wildlife habitat. I believe it still provides a context for the growing land struggle in Britain and a sense of its past, present and possible future.

There have of course been changes since 1987, and I contemplated a page by page revision. I soon found however that changing facts and figures here and there would unravel the coherence of the picture I had painted more than it would help the reader today. So instead, as well as an extensive Introduction describing the new circumstances in which the book reappears, I have added a substantial Update summarising the key changes that have occurred to the material set out in the book, and re-prioritising my proposals in the light of current realities. Otherwise the book is offered as originally conceived. Thus, the reader can now see clearly both the picture in 1987 and the changes that a decade has achieved.

All in all, I am surprised by how little its story has been affected by the passage of a decade. The pattern of land ownership remains very much as I described it then, bizarrely feudal though it seemed at the time. The mentality of landowners and the abuses they perpetrate are fundamentally unchanged. Even the estates I identified as unreasonably barred to the public remain in almost all cases in exactly the same condition today. The philosophical arguments remain unchanged. The needs of the landless have however grown more acute, and at last they are beginning to be recognised. I hope the re-issue of this book will help that process.

§ - Ends -- §