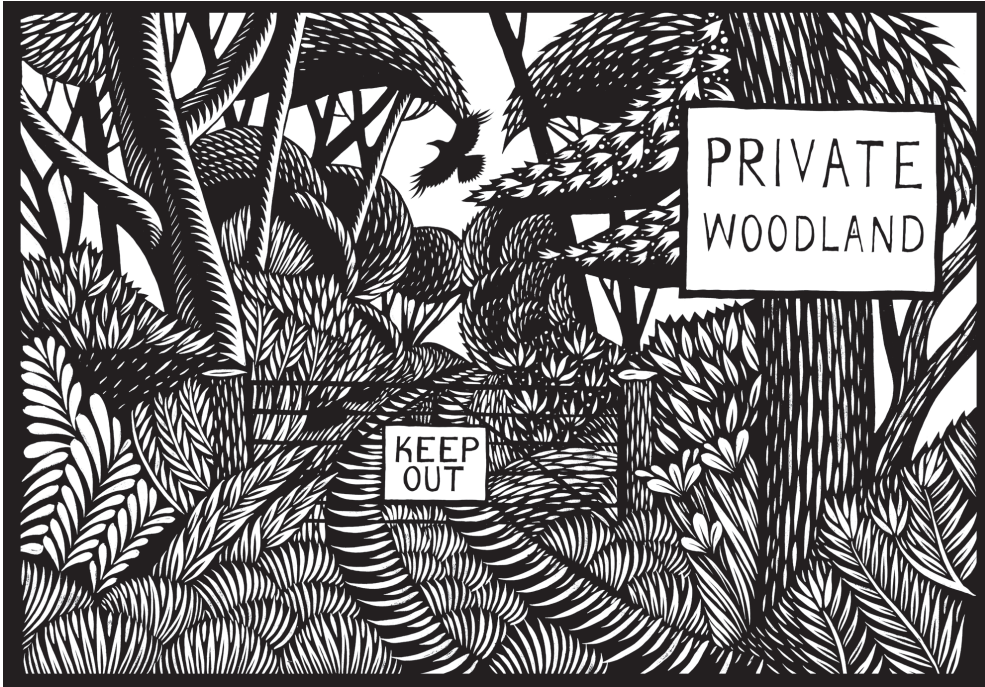




TRESPASSER'S GUIDE



Trespass is just a loaded, biased word for a walk, swim or a paddle in the countryside. Behind it lies almost a thousand years of prejudiced law making, precedents created by an unreformed parliament to buttress their own interests - the exclusive ownership of nature. So remember: you're not doing anything wrong. As long as you put nature first, be considerate to the workings of the countryside, and leave only a positive trace of your presence on the land, don't believe the hype: you're exercising your human right to connect with nature.

However beyond the barbed wire lies a mindset that describes your walk in the woods as tantamount to a direct assault on the landowner. The law is to blame for this, not the landowner or their representatives. If the law treats your walk as the first act of aggression it's no wonder that landowners respond accordingly. This can be frustrating, and sometimes lead to an atmosphere of machismo, threatening and totally incongruous with the harmony of the environment. So we've compiled a quick guide to help.

Scotland's got it right

Before you trespass, check out the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/) and abide by it. Its guidelines are egalitarian, they are reasonable, and they put nature first. It's worth checking out anyway, because it's where we want to be heading - a connection with nature that foregrounds respect for the ecology and community of the countryside, human and non-human. To summarise:

- respect people's privacy - don't go anywhere near their homes or gardens. Pick an estate of such magnitude that this really won't be an issue.
- avoid damaging nature or the property of the landowner - don't break anything and in particular, in this season, avoid ground nesting birds. Look out for them and give them wide berth. It's their home more than ours.

We strongly suggest you leave your dog at home for this trespass - for one thing, dogs are useless at climbing walls, and second, they can cause livestock to panic and can therefore cause those who work on the land to be more defensive.

Positive Trace

The 'leave-no-trace' mantra of the seventies is boring. We prefer the phrase coined by Lawyers for Nature, 'positive trace'. Bring a rubbish bag with you, and if you see some litter, pick it up and remove it from the land. This trespass is part of a wider movement that wants to see the public more actively involved with caring for nature, so let's start as we mean to go on.

Solidarity with Farmers and Landworkers

By and large, if you meet anyone on your trespass, it's most likely not going to be the landowner. It will be someone whose life and career are dedicated to working the land, who since the 1800's have also had private security added to their job description. Their jobs are on the line, and so they will do their best to represent their employer.

We respect farmers and the essential work they do for our nation. They have had decades of being squeezed from either side, supermarket pressure and a distinct lack of support from government. We trespass in solidarity with farmers, and not against them. Many land workers report abuse from ramblers, people who are expressing frustration at the

iniquity of the landownership system towards the people who also labour under it. This is not a useful approach, and further entrenches the binary tribalism of exclusive ownership.

Take the higher ground

If confronted, be calm and polite, and comply. The landowner will ask you to leave (with a varying degree of paternalism and aggression) and our advice is that you do so. If you give out your name and address, they have the power to serve you with an injunction to their land, which means you could be fined for trespassing again. So (obvs) don't do that. If you stay, they will call the police, and you, not the landowner, will be accused of wasting police time. So, hand them the letter, and leave, job done.

Don't despair

Remember, this trespass is part of a much wider plan, so if you don't get very far on forbidden land, or get the signs and letters torn up in front of you, don't worry - the worst that has happened is you've had a nice walk.

Have a nice day

What really counts is the sign and the letter. We want to swarm twitter with photos of the Everyone Welcome sign and we want to send a direct communication, via the letter, to the landowners. So of primary importance is the photos you take of the new signs. Make the photo look gorgeous - let's have some of that forbidden scenery in the background, and let's be able to read the new sign.

Go with your mates, enjoy yourselves, you have a right to be there. Rather than rage against the injustice of our exclusion from the countryside, enjoy your day as if the Right to Roam already exists in England.