

GILBERT WHITE

The Natural History of Selborne



A specimen of the Press's typography and page design

The Natural History of Selborne

*This volume is a specimen. It shows the page size, type,
spacing and general design in which Bassi Foundation Press
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GILBERT WHITE

The Natural History of Selborne

*in a selection of letters addressed to
Thomas Pennant, Esquire*

A SPECIMEN SETTING

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On this specimen

This volume exists so that an author proposing a book to the Press can see, at full size, how that book would be made: the trim, the measure, the type and its leading, the running heads, the footnotes, and the cover. The words are Gilbert White's, chosen because prose of 1789 tests a page harder than filler text does, and because a specimen should be a pleasure to read.

The same setting produces the open-access edition and the printed copy. What a reader downloads without charge and what a reader orders as a paperback are the same pages.

The parish and its situation

To Thomas Pennant, Esquire

The parish of Selborne lies in the extreme eastern corner of the county of Southampton, bordering on the county of Sussex, and not far from the county of Surrey; is about fifty miles south-west of London, in latitude fifty-one, and near midway between the towns of Alton and Petersfield.¹ Being very large and extensive, it abuts on twelve parishes, two of which are in Sussex, viz. Trotton and Rogate. If you begin from the south and proceed westward, the adjacent parishes are Emshot, Newton Valence, Faringdon, Harteley Mauduit, Great Ward le Ham, Kingsley, Hedleigh, Bramshot, Trotton, Rogate, Lysse, and Greatham.

The soils of this district are almost as various and diversified as the views and aspects. The high part of the south-west consists of a vast hill of chalk, rising three hundred feet above the village; and is divided into a sheep down, the high wood, and a long hanging wood called The Hanger. The covert of this eminence is altogether beech, the most lovely of all forest trees, whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs.² The down, or sheep-walk, is a pleasing park-like spot, of about one mile by half that space, jutting out on the verge of the hill-country, where it begins to break down into the plains, and commanding a very engaging view, being an assemblage of hill, dale, wood-lands, heath, and water.

At the foot of this hill, one stage or step from the uplands, lies the village, which consists of one single straggling street, three-quarters of a mile in length, in a sheltered vale, and running parallel with The Hanger. The houses are divided from the hill by a vein of stiff clay, and generally look upon a fine meadow, through which runs a small stream.

¹ In a published volume the notes sit here, at the foot of the page, in the same face two sizes down, and are numbered by chapter. Bibliographical references follow the style agreed for the book.

² White's affection for the beech is repaid: the Hanger stands, and is managed today by the National Trust.

Nature is such an economist, that the most incongruous animals can avail themselves of each other. Interest makes strange friendships: and so it proves with the men of a parish, whose divisions of soil and of labour knit them, whether they will or no, into one body. The parish I speak of, though it lies in so retired a district, has long been remarkable for the industry of its inhabitants, and for a certain curiosity concerning the natural productions of the place, which it is the purpose of these letters to describe.

The village is in a sheltered situation, and the air, though sharp on the down above, is soft in the street below; so that the earliest spring flowers appear here sooner than in the neighbouring parishes, a matter which the gardeners of the place observe with some pride. Our fields produce good crops of wheat and barley; our gardens, beside the common esculents, abound in wall-fruit; and the hop, of late years, has been cultivated with success.

It is not my intention to trouble you with a formal natural history, digested under the heads of the learned; but rather to communicate, from time to time, such observations as have occurred to me on the spot, made with no other instrument than an attentive eye, and set down with no other ambition than exactness. If the particulars prove acceptable, the manner of their delivery may be forgiven; for the outdoor naturalist writes as the weather lets him, and the reader of such letters must take the seasons as they come.

I am, with great esteem, your most obedient servant.

A note on the setting

The trim is Royal octavo, 234 × 156 mm, the standard format of the British academic monograph. The text is set in TeX Gyre Pagella, a Palatino, at 10.5 point on a 14 point line, to a measure of about sixty-five characters; notes are set two sizes down at the foot of the page. Running heads carry the book title on the verso and the chapter on the recto, with folios centred at the foot.

Chapter openings drop eleven lines, with the chapter number in the Press's crimson and the title in the display size of the text face. The cover sets the author and title on the Press's parchment against a plate from its own image archive, with its crimson as the single accent.

Each published book receives the same attention to its particulars: the measure adjusts to the book's extent and apparatus, and mathematics, tables, plates and critical apparatus are set to the standards of the field the book belongs to.

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