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*B.B. , Denys Watkins-Pitchford (Illustrator) , Philip Pullman (Foreword)*

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Three runaway brothers live like Robin Hood and his merry men, deep in the forest. A classic story of survival and adventure from the author of *The Little Grey Men*.

## Brendon Chase Details

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Author : B.B. , Denys Watkins-Pitchford (Illustrator) , Philip Pullman (Foreword)

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## From Reader Review Brendon Chase for online ebook

### Amber Scaife says

Three brothers, staying with their aunt over school holidays, get fed up with her strict rules and decide to run away to the eponymous woods. With the help of an old hermit also living in Brendon Chase, they manage spectacularly well and stay on for several months.

Think My Side of the Mountain (the boys' part of the story) meets the country-living characters in Jeeves & Wooster (as an example, there's a particularly funny scene in which the local constable goes for a swim and the boys hide his clothing in the vicar's car while the vicar, all unwitting, chases butterflies with his net).

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### Kharis says

Exquisite!

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### Mireille Bregman says

Leuk boek voor jongens op de basisschool vanaf 10 jaar. Drie jongens besluiten aan kostschool en hun tante te ontsnappen en een jaar lang in een bos te overleven d.m.v. de jacht en visserij. De voorliefde voor natuur komt in dit verhaal duidelijk naar voren. Blijkbaar is er in de jaren 1980 een tv-serie van gemaakt. Doet enigszins denken aan Tonke Dragt en Pippi Langkous.

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### Catherine says

As a child I read some of the Bill Badger series of books that 'BB' had written and loved them. Now, quite a few years later, I have been attempting to re-read some of his books and see if they stand up to the test of time. I then decided to branch out with some of his others that I never came across as a child, including Brendon Chase, which is for children slightly older than those aimed at by the Bill Badger books.

Even through the eyes of an adult, this is a rip-roaring story in which three brothers, tired of being dominated by adults, run away to the woods and live as 'outlaws', hunting, trapping and fishing. Denys Watkins-Pitchford's love of nature shines throughout the narrative but there are some passages in particular that stand out, such as when Robin comes across a dead fox. There is no sentimentality in BB's books, which is all too over-syrupily present now in many books or films even including those aimed at adults. In Brendon Chase nature and life is just as it is, people and animals die and live and the world carries on. In addition although the children want to escape the over-protection of their aunt there is here in general, none of the over-exaggerated denseness of adults, where they are shown not to understand children and don't seem to know or notice as much as children and thus are all foolish. As a child I disliked such overdone ploys in books as it made the story less believable. BB makes his adults more realistic, some are inevitably foolish but only as may be expected.

If I had read this book as a child I would now be looking back fondly on Brendon Chase as one of my treasured favourites. Reading for the first time as an adult though, I am less enthused about some of the colloquialisms that date the book slightly and the outmoded notions of women, however they are few and far between.

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### **Peter Jones says**

It is a beautiful book: very, very good even for BB who is always good. It delightfully and slightly achingly conjured small rafts of nostalgia within me both for the life I still love and as Robin the hero loved and the life pace that was then, within the book, which was trickling to an end as I commenced to grow into boyhood. It evoked this with the story, characterisation and description of the time. It was old fashioned. It was in the 1950's that we as children first learned the words 'old fashioned' and as children secretly despised that concept quite unaware then that it was really a precise epoch that started when Queen Victoria died and ended just after the Second World War: a terrible time and a rich, rich time. It was a lovely time.....

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### **Lincoln Green says**

Goodness, how times have changed! This boyhood adventure would be over in hours today, tracked down by helicopter-mounted heat sealing cameras. It's a tale I recall reading as a child and as a classic, thought it worthy of a read once again.

It was.

A tale of murder and survival, near capture and evasion from cover to cover, all based from the comfort of a hollow oak tree.

Loved it.

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### **Graham Scott says**

Once you're past the rather dated style - it was written before the end of WWII - you're in for a fabulous adventure as three boys go to live in the wildwood for months. I loved this book partly because the author so obviously loves Nature in all its forms, and is so very knowledgable.

Some might balk these days at the description of animals being killed, skinned and eaten but it's obvious the author is talking from experience and it fits perfectly with the story. And his descriptive passages, whether of a boy walking through the woods to a pond, or simply of a dead fox, are utterly beguiling and involving. A man who had thought deeply about trees too, and how they talk to each other.

I was a bit taken aback to find the boys living in a hollow, ancient oak since that's very much an element in my book 'Banished to the Forest', but I guess no idea is totally original! I read the author's 'Little Grey Men' book when I was a child and adored every line of it, and even though I'm now well into middle age I felt the same sensation when finding this book by him. Five stars.

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## Joaquin Garza says

Estoy leyendo estas novelas británicas al revés.

Si son seguidores de esta cuenta (o del contenido que genero) probablemente sepan que uno de los libros que más amo en la vida es *El Señor de las Moscas*. Supongo que es un libro súper "edgy" y de las pocas novelas clásicas (o clásicos contemporáneos, más bien) que alguien puede ser obligado a leer en la escuela y disfrutar enormemente. Para mí, lo que siempre he disfrutado de la obra maestra de Golding ha sido la negación de la idea del buen salvaje y en cambio, la afirmación de que la violencia y la agresión son naturales en el ser humano y que nuestras instituciones resultan una salvaguarda muy frágil para nuestros bajos instintos.

Golding escribió *El Señor de las Moscas* como una antítesis de una novela llamada "La Isla de Coral" donde tres muchachos terminan en una isla desierta y se las arreglan bastante bien. Tal novela es tan pasada que no vale mucho la pena mencionarla. Pero estoy divagando. El infame prolegómeno sólo era para mencionar que *Brendon Chase*, una novela muy posterior a *La Isla de Coral*, posee en aspectos algo de la moralidad subyacente a ésta, que Golding encontró tan chocante. Y que leer la antítesis a los dieciséis años para leer luego algo parecido al original al doble de esa edad es algo curioso.

*Brendon Chase* grita a los cuatro vientos ser muy chapada a la antigua. Pero antigua en serio. Tres hermanos, para "dejar ser gobernados por mujeres" durante las vacaciones de Semana Santa que pasan en casa de su tía solterona, deciden escaparse a vivir al bosque. Y les va bien. Vivir de la tierra sin mayores complicaciones estilo McCandless salvo algunas que el autor pone por aquí y por allá con una mezcla de humor y aventura. Eso incluye vivir de la caza y la pesca. Hay tabaco y alcohol. y buen espíritu y gentileza. Los hermanos se hablan entre ellos de "dear old boy" o similares. Inocencia.

Debatir sobre qué sobrevive o qué vale la pena de la moralidad subyacente es un debate cansino y odioso en los tiempos que corren. Ponerse a pensar qué va a decir la gente de una novela donde tres muchachos británicos de familia acomodada se escapan a vivir deliberadamente en 1910 me amarga un poquito. Porque creo que si alguien le pone peros por eso se va a perder de una novela muy bonita (aunque de trama calculada, lenta y a veces melosa).

Yo me voy a quedar con dos cosas: y las dos tienen que ver con Denys Watkins-Pitchford, el autor. La primera es la melancolía con la que describe al mayor de los hermanos, Robin. Robin es un muchacho meditabundo e introvertido, embelesado por la belleza del mundo natural y un gran lector de *Walden*. Aquí es donde encontré algo de lo más interesante: este espíritu es neta y flagrantemente estadounidense y se entremezcla con los aspectos normales de una novela juvenil británica escrita al estilo victoriano-eduardiano. Si uno está acostumbrado a conocer de ambas culturas "outdoors" (en América Thoreau, John Muir, el primer Roosevelt, Yosemite, el Club Sierra y la Revista *Outside*. En Europa Kipling, Baden-Powell, el Bosque Nuevo, Milne, la revista *Boy's Own* y *El Libro Peligroso para los Chicos*) puede entretenerte y hasta maravillarse de cómo el autor las unió para hacer algo nuevo e interesante. Es un mash-up que nunca había visto.

Por otro lado tenemos algo que uno sólo va a entender si lee de la vida del autor. Watkins-Pitchford (o BB como es su pseudónimo) fue un ávido outdoorsman que creció como un niño enfermizo. Tanto como para ser aislado de otros niños y ser educado en casa. Su único escape en la vida era salir a la naturaleza en largos paseos solitarios. Amante de la caza, la pesca y el dibujo. Profesor de arte en una prestigiosa Escuela Pública (en el Reino Unido, "escuela pública" significa escuela de paga de élite como Eton o Hogwarts y "escuela estatal" lo que en cualquier otro lado significa escuela pública). Cuando escribió *Brendon Chase*, Watkins-

Pitchford decidió llamar al protagonista, Robin, igual que su primogénito, otro niño enfermizo que moriría de un mal renal a los siete años. Aquí es cuando se me atora la garganta. Un aspecto clave a la hora de medir lo que leo es el "intento del autor". Cuando entiendo cómo un autor vierte sus añoranzas en palabras y las ejecuta con gracia es cuando aplaudo.

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### **Grant Stevens says**

Very enjoyable read. Narrative could've been tightened a little, but overall a very good book.

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### **Marianne Brouwer says**

Wat een prachtig avonturenboek is dit.

De setting van het verhaal is een ongerekpt stuk loofbos, Brendon Chase in Engeland, waar 3 broers in overleven, nadat ze zijn weggelopen bij hun weinig sympathieke tante.

De natuurbeschrijvingen zijn zo gedetailleerd en mooi dat ik echt een paar dagen op vakantie ben geweest. Je kan merken dat de schrijver heel veel affiniteit met de natuur heeft. De interactie tussen de broers maakt het verhaal levendig en het contrast van de gekozen vrijheid van de broers en de betuttelende en bemoeizuchtige personages uit het dorp maakt het verhaal amusant. Er loopt nog een heel authentiek persoon in het bos, Smoko Joe, die hun grote vriend wordt en de jongens helpt de winter door te komen. Naast het boek heb ik ook 6 uur naar de televisieserie gekeken op you-tube en dat was ook hartstikke leuk. Het bijzondere is dat het boek al in 1945 is geschreven en nu voor het eerst is vertaald in het Nederlands. Die vertaling is m.i. erg goed gelukt!

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### **Dan says**

It's been described by a fair few reviewers as a book 'every boy should read' - as if girls are a separate species. This was my mother's favourite book as a child when first published towards the end of WWII. She recommended it to me and it's probably my favourite older child's book.

Set between the wars in England three boys run away and live in the extensive forest Brendan Chase for a year. It's nostalgic, both for a social period before the car completely took over: of horse and carts, dusty lanes, vicars with picnic basket and butterfly nets - but also a time when wildlife was more prolific and children were used to roaming.

BB describes the nitty gritty of hunting rabbits and birds and fishing to survive and the seasons with the forest with such beauty it's one for those books I return to each year.

Dated? Perhaps. These days an adult committee would re-write to tick all the boxes of non-exclusion: no hunting, one of the children as a girl and one of them would have a different social class.

Most children reading this will see it's intended message: the loss of nature and our intimacy with it, the freedom of youth and the shortness of childhood. That makes it sound worthy. It isn't. It's just a beautiful story.

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### **David Evans says**

Reading while I should have been studying for medical pathology finals! This book belonged to the daughter of my flatmate's pharmacology professor so naturally I borrowed it and still have it. Excellent escapist stuff about children running away to live in the woods and survive through their own knowledge of nature like so many junior Ray Meers. Reminded me of Enid Blyton's "The Secret Island". Being a keen bird watcher myself I especially enjoyed the Honey Buzzard chapter. I was reminded of this book while listening to a Radio 4 programme about the author, who simply lived for shootin' and fishing. He wrote books about carp fishing and "The autumn road to the isles", which I'd like to read, as well as doubling as a French sex symbol and film star in the 1950s and 60s (probably a different BB - Ed.). Scrapped through the exam so that was ok too.

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### **Jane says**

I recently discovered the wonderful publisher Jane Nissen Books when hunting for reprints of hard-to-find children's books (notably books by Cynthia Hartnett). Nissen has also reprinted a couple of Penelope Lively's best works, *\_The House at Norham Gardens\_* and *\_The Voyage of QV66\_* (two of my favourites). I chose *\_Brendon Chase\_* having read *\_The Little Grey Men\_* and its sequel *\_Down the Bright Stream\_* last year (both reprinted by Oxford).

*\_Brendon Chase\_* tells the story of three brothers who run away from an elderly aunt during the holidays (their guardian while parents are in India) and live in the woods for 3 seasons, hunting rabbits with snares and shooting game with a rifle they'd taken with them. Although the book was originally published in 1944, it's clear that it's set in pre-war times (1929, I read somewhere). When I read this book last week I was reminded of my father and his generation, in a time when a boy's proper study outside school was nature and survival (back when a boy scout earned a Poultry Badge -- now they've got one in Agribusiness).

I have read very little on the life and writing career of B.B. (Denys Watkins-Pitchford) but will keep my eyes open for them in the future. There's a certain Englishness in his love for the natural world that reminds me of writers like Ivor Gurney, Izaak Walton, and maybe even Thomas Traherne (this may just be my imagination).

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### **Pete F says**

Last year I discovered a book called *Brendon Chase*, written by an author who used the pseudonym, B.B., real name Denys Watkins-Pitchford. B.B. had a deep love and knowledge of nature and forest lore. But, and this may seem like a contradiction nowadays, he was also a hunter. He shot animals but not for pleasure or so-called sport, but for food and pelts. This love and knowledge of nature and hunting comes out in this novel. Written ostensibly for children, it is one of those timeless classics, like *The Wind in the Willows* and *Swallows and Amazons*, that adults can enjoy.

The book was published in 1944 but the action was set in an unspecified time, before the war, probably in the 1920s. Three brothers of school age run away from their humdrum life split between their aunt and

boarding school, to live as outlaws in a large forest called Brendon Chase, a few miles away, while their parents are away in India. Initially relying on some stores of food they brought from the house and a gun with which to shoot animals for food, they eventually run out of their stores of food and have to survive entirely on the harvest of the forest.

They become hunter-gatherers. They live by fishing, shooting and trapping rabbits and birds and even an escaped pig, foraging and gathering honey from wild bees. They learn to butcher, skin and preserve meat. They learn to make clothes out of skins. They come to love the forest on which they depend. But they know it can't last forever and that eventually they will have to return to civilisation and face the music. They spend about eight months in the forest.

The adults in the story play a minor role and mostly of a comic nature, especially the bumbling policeman who loses his trousers while taking a dip in a pond. But the boys become friends with a woodsman, a charcoal burner known as Smokoe, who lives in a shack in the forest, who grows and hunts all his own food. Apart from Smokoe and a sympathetic doctor, the adults represent boring civilisation, almost totally divorced from nature, and the boys represent the wild. Unlike the boys in Lord of the Flies, they do not revert to savagery but are very responsible, and mostly kill only to feed and clothe themselves.

This is a marvellous novel about wildlife and humans living a wild life in nature, but written as it was in the 1940s, many modern readers will dislike the scenes in which birds' nests are raided for eggs, or when butterflies are hunted or an animal is skinned. But in that respect it is a book of its time before the age of animal rights and environmentalism. Reading books from another age can often challenge our more enlightened attitudes, for example on racial stereotypes, although in this book there are barely any references to race, the main challenges being on the hunting issue. For all this, it is an enjoyable book and I loved the artwork, produced by the author himself, and for this reason, it is a book to keep on one's shelf long after one has read it.

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### **Charlie - A Reading Machine says**

A book all boys should read and all brothers should read and probably all girls should read so they know what might make boys tick. Reminded me off the lovely movie Beau Jest about three brothers joining the foreign legion to protect their mother.

Three brothers run away to the forest and live there for a season or two (if memory serves) whilst their father is away. The transition from reliance on everything they are used to ,to adapting to living in nature and using what is provided by the forest is organic and enjoyable to watch unfold. They hunt, make friends, hide out, explore, discover....it is a real journey for the boys despite them hiding in a giant forest the whole time.

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