

Hello!

For my next story I have continued the idea of finding magic right on our doorsteps.

I grew up surrounded by fields and orchards and there were probably more trees than people to hang out with, so I found it quite normal to talk to them and it wasn't a huge leap to discover different characters!

Even when I moved to cities, I'd always be very aware of the trees, a regal old oak standing alone in a park, adolescent silver birches loitering on corners or plane trees standing elegantly in rows.

There are very few places where there are simply no trees at all. They live alongside us, watching, nodding, sheltering. Never judging.

When my son was born and we were looking for a place to settle, we drove out of the city to a village with a park. It was lined by poplars, with an old apple orchard in one corner. Trees gathered round us from all directions and it was like coming home again. I suddenly realised how much I'd missed being in the company of trees and living in a place where I was outnumbered by them!

I wanted to write a story that encourages children to see the magic that is growing all around us. To look for faces in trees and whisper secrets to them. To rally to protect these green guardians that we walk among.

In my story Iggy, Mae and Cal discover the wild green magic of Wildtop Wood, where a driftwood horse roams, living treehouses burst from the canopy and petal birds take flight. But the wooden animals that scamper into their games know there is much more at stake and soon the Treetoppers must find their way to the woods' ancient grandmother tree who desperately needs their help.

I hope that wherever *The Wood Where Magic Grows* is read, magic and imagination blooms.

With my thanks and very best wishes,

Andy Shepherd

P.S.

I really hope you enjoy venturing into Wildtop Wood with the Treetoppers – just remember to bring your wellies for the inevitable muddy mayhem!

And next time you see a face in a tree, stop and say hello – after all, who knows what adventures might grow with a bit of imagination!

