# Patrick Galbraith challenges Right To Roam views in new book on rural Britain



Patrick Galbraith’s new book, "Uncommon Ground: Rethinking Our Relationship with the Countryside," offers an insightful and multifaceted examination of rural Britain's realities and the contemporary debates surrounding public access to land. The book is a blend of personal experience, nuanced observation, and a critical look at the tensions between land ownership, conservation, and recreational use.

Galbraith, a 32-year-old writer and qualified deerstalker from Dunscore, Dumfries, brings to the subject a combination of deep rural knowledge and urbane sophistication. Having previously edited Shooting Times for seven years, he is avidly involved in country life, engaging with diverse groups including poachers, gamekeepers, activists, gipsies, and naturists. His hands-on approach allows him to navigate and document the complexities of countryside life with authenticity and humour.

"Uncommon Ground" spans a broad geographical canvas across Britain and embraces a variety of activities and experiences: from visiting cheesemakers and egg farmers to attending illegal raves, joining foxhunts, and foraging for wild mushrooms. Galbraith’s descriptive style captures the bucolic charm and often harsh truths of rural environments, depicting scenes such as the dwindling riverbeds or the rich wildlife found in these areas.

One focus of the book is the contemporary critique surrounding land ownership and the public's right of access, often championed by the Right To Roam movement. Galbraith challenges some of these ideas, particularly what he describes as the left-wing fixation on land ownership. He argues that questions about ownership are often less relevant than who lives on the land, how it is managed, and the extent to which the public can engage responsibly with it.

The book also addresses devolved Scotland’s emphasis on "community ownership," using the example of North Harris, where community acquisition from a cider magnate two decades ago has struggled financially. Galbraith suggests that such initiatives may not always deliver on their promises of sustainability.

A second key theme Galbraith emphasises is the importance of limiting human disturbance in fragile environments to protect endangered species. He notes the dramatic declines in bird populations such as lapwings and curlews, and the precarious status of the Scottish wildcat. He questions some recreational activities, including mountain biking and birdwatching, for their potential to damage habitats or disrupt wildlife.

Galbraith’s narrative also includes critical observations of campaigners from the Right To Roam movement. For example, he recounts a Right To Roam gathering in London that he characterises as largely composed of Oxbridge-educated individuals, detached from practical countryside realities, and describes the movement's leader Guy Shrubsole actively interfering with practical conservation efforts on the Arundel estate. Charlie, the estate gamekeeper, is portrayed managing local bird species with care and conservation-minded trapping of predators, only to have his work undermined by activists who release trapped crows and organise protests alleging ecological damage.

While his book occasionally suffers from minor editorial oversights, Galbraith’s work is praised for being an engaging and informed contribution to ongoing debates about rural land use and access. He highlights a growing disconnect between an urban population and the realities of countryside management, lamenting the lack of rural skills among young people and referencing a stalled government initiative to introduce a Natural History GCSE in schools.

Galbraith’s "Uncommon Ground" is published by William Collins and is priced at £22. The Daily Mail reports on the book’s publication and its exploration of these key issues affecting countryside stewardship and public interaction with rural Britain.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/uncommon-ground-patrick-galbraith/1146658690> - This page provides details about Patrick Galbraith's book 'Uncommon Ground: Rethinking Our Relationship with the Countryside,' including its publication date, ISBN, and dimensions, confirming the book's release and its content focus.
2. <https://www.harpercollins.ca/9780008644406/uncommon-ground-rethinking-our-relationship-with-the-countryside/> - This HarperCollins page offers critical praise for 'Uncommon Ground,' highlighting its exploration of the English countryside and the land-access debate, aligning with the article's mention of the book's examination of rural Britain's realities and public access to land.
3. <https://www.datathistle.com/event/2636062-in-conversation-with-patrick-galbraith/> - This event listing details a conversation with Patrick Galbraith at The Grosvenor Arms in Shaftesbury, discussing themes from 'Uncommon Ground,' including the complexities of countryside life and the Right To Roam movement, supporting the article's mention of Galbraith's engagement with diverse groups and his critical look at land ownership and public access.
4. <https://www.scispirit.com/uncommon_ground.htm> - This review discusses the book's approach to environmental issues and the need for a new society of the earth, corroborating the article's mention of Galbraith's critical observations and the book's contribution to debates about rural land use and access.
5. <https://www.amazon.com/Uncommon-Ground-Living-Faithfully-Difference/dp/1400221455> - This Amazon page features customer reviews of 'Uncommon Ground,' highlighting its exploration of various beliefs and opinions, which aligns with the article's description of the book as a blend of personal experience and critical examination of rural Britain's realities.
6. <https://goodreadingmagazine.com.au/titlepage/uncommon-ground-3/> - This review discusses the book's argument for more opportunities to engage with the land and the balance between human access and nature conservation, supporting the article's mention of Galbraith's emphasis on responsible public engagement with the countryside.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14665641/JOHN-MACLEOD-Skewering-urban-radicals-countryman-knows-loves-rural-Britain.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data