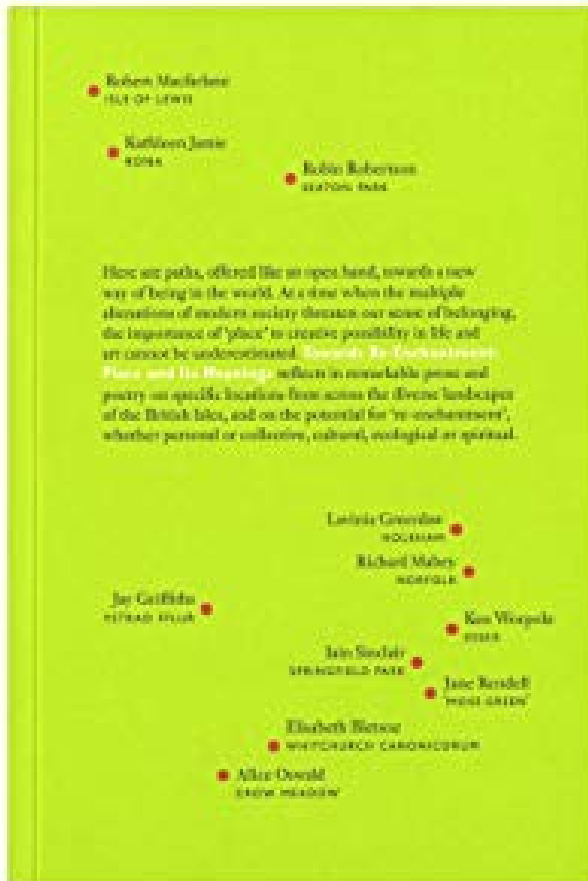


Towards Re-Enchantment: Place and Its Meaning

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For much of the 20th century the view of mainland Britain was the view from the car. The early culture of motoring came wrapped in visions of distant hills, old inns, country houses and silver-fork picnics on the downs, as Mark Liniado once pictured in his brief history, *Car Culture & Countryside Change* (National Trust 1996). Even today, when the number of cars vastly outnumbers the number of children in Britain, advertising for the many varieties of heavyweight SUVs or 4WDs still lean heavily on this romantic dream of driving the sole vehicle on empty moorland roads or across vacant beaches. It's all nonsense, of course. For the past 20 years or more there has been a revival of interest in those places and settings that can only be explored on foot, or possibly on a bike (though Roger Deakin famously swam his way across Britain for his 1999 book *Waterlog*). Early examples of this new exploratory writing certainly include John Hillaby's 1968 classic, *Journey Through Britain*. This book inspired many others to attempt the Land's End to John O'Groats trek as a kind of secular pilgrimage (I finally got round to doing it by bike in 1986), and from the 1970s onwards the books of Richard Mabey – especially *Flora Britannica* – captivated and inspired many people to wander abroad in the spirit of observation and delight. Delight at the variety of the natural world – as well as its edibility – but also noting the danger signals evident in species decline and poor land management.