



'A Spirit of Place' – Wendy Mewes

'A Spirit of Place in Finistère' is the result of the last eighteen months work, where I've concentrated on landscape writing. I began with an exhibition of texts about landscape at the end of 2015 and this book has given me a chance to elaborate on those ideas from the exhibition.

The book is two things; Firstly, detailed descriptions of twelve places in Finistère from the point of view of the character and personality of the place. Place writing is very fashionable in Literature at the moment because it enables writers to do more with the character and personality of a place than you can do in photographs or videos. Using words, you can bring out the sensory aspects of landscape, of sound and smell and touch and, if you spend a lot of time in your chosen places you can really give a rounded sense of the personality of a particular place.

Also in the book are short essays connected to the theme of spirit of place, for example, such as our emotional connection with landscape, how it makes us feel, how we can connect beyond simply looking at landscape, connect on a deeper more emotional, spiritual level.

There are also topics like sacred geography from the beginnings of Brittany when the saints came over from Great Britain and the impact that had on ideas of landscape. Ruins, why are we so attracted to ruins? A sense of belonging to place and also a short essay on something I think's very important in Brittany; the question of scale because I feel that the reason people become so attached to the landscape in Brittany is that it is on a scale that we can relate to as human beings.

The book can be ordered from any bookshop. It's distributed by Co-op Breiz like my other books. It can be ordered online from any of the usual outlets or it's available from reddogbooks.com.

It is the culmination of my change in direction about eighteen months ago although I have written in the last few months a new book 'Walks in Finistère, which is also recently out but that walking has been related to looking at landscape, and thinking about landscape in a more emotional way perhaps.

I have been developing close relationships with places, certain places by spending a great deal of time and observing and feeling the place because although so much of the Breton landscape is very beautiful there are certain places that is a sense of the *genius loci*, the spirit of place, which is more like a personality.

This is not a book about beautiful cliff top views and stunning landscape. It's about an intimate connection with very specific places and I think in these days of people having a very superficial photo, a tweet, this is a, a sense that you have to go to very extreme parts of the world to see wonderful landscape. I think the wonderful landscape is the small, the local and the intimate. Yes, and perhaps instead of looking outwards at all these awful things to look inward and to feel what is a very basic connection with landscape that sometimes we forget.

In 2017 I'm doing two things. I'm doing, I'm researching a book on the 'Tro Breiz', the Mediæval Breton Pilgrimage around Brittany, connecting the seven cathedrals of the seven founding saints and I'm writing a futuristic dystopian novel as a way of relaxation.

