JOURNEY THROUGH THE BRITISH ISLES

HARRY CORY WRIGHT

PROPOSAL
I am a photographer working in the landscape of the British Isles

I use a 10 x 8 inch Gandolfi plate camera and produce large format colour prints

I am going to travel through the British Isles for six months with my family

We will produce a book and an exhibition of large format photographs
BEING IN THE LANDSCAPE

What is it like to be standing on the cliff tops on the west coast of Scotland in a fierce south westerly gale?

What is it like to be part of a group of people swimming before lunch in the warm silky waters of the Waveney river in July?

When the evening sun shines through a hedgerow that’s in full blossom in May, the double delight is as uplifting as any experience in landscape. What does it look like? Skiddaw in a raw wind. Solitary and powerful with a dusting of April snow. How cold is it?

A walk at sunrise on the Downs with heavy dew and damp buttercup petals on my walking boots; in Sherwood forest; the Gower Peninsular; reedbeds in May on the upper reaches of the Thames.

Junction pool on the Tweed; Rock pool on the Tay just above Dunkeld; a picnic on the benches beside Loch Lomond with the light streaming through the dust amongst the pine trees.

The Isle of Coll, Mingulay, Anglesey, Scolt. Jura and the whirlpool to the north; the Gulf of Corryvreckan. Powerful forces of nature. Cape Wrath and the small path that passes by Mr. Calver’s house where he keeps the ponies.


Pathways, tracks; the geography, the geology, the weather, the times of day; low tides, high tides, the Beaufort scale.

Temperature, erosion, nature, the moon; the great swirl of nature where sometimes the camera seems to sit quietly at the centre. I want to feel again the warmth of that soil in our fingers beside the river Test as we dug for worms. I want to walk through the chalk streams; barefoot on gravel.

The slips of creeks on the Medway at dawn in August; us on the thin ancient pathway through the Cotswolds; the sunshine through the beech trees; thin ice; temperature inversions; mist and fog, sleet, snow, hail and rain.

John, Natasha and Stevie standing in the rain; great weather systems rolling in off the Atlantic; the spot where the small trout swim on the big bend in the river Eden before the sun comes up.

Redmire Pond where the largest carp ever has been caught; the first frosty morning in autumn where the mist clears to a rising sun. A tench, beautiful gold belly on the grassy bank before going back into the water. Grayling, perch, chub, silver delight.

Campfires. Under bridges, in the streams; the burns of Southerland; the basalt of Staffa; puffins on Skomer; cumulus fading as it comes into contact with the colder air over the sea.

Moonlight on the white cliffs of Dover, six of us this time; Jim’s garden beside his shed with the light across the water at dusk; frost on the dunes; the Milky Way from Pencarrow Head and the dusty look of tall hollyhocks under a midday sun.

We will do all this.
Brow Head. County Cork

Cold start this morning, and the wind has moved round to the east. The tent is pitched on the south east side of Brow Head and so its fairly exposed to this force six wind that has buffeted the canvas all through the night and laid flat all the grasses around the entrance.
Still waiting for the cloud to clear and get this picture I need of Atlantic weather system rolling in from the south West.
I had to change film yesterday and the only place I could find that was dark enough was a damp room attached to the back of O'Sullivan's bar. Dermot opened the door with a fat rusty key and I had to tell him not to move any of the old furniture for fear of dust. Dust on these big sheets of film is a nightmare. I spent the next hour blocking off small shafts off light around the doorframe with bits of rag I found in a yellow bucket.
The weather has been so abysmal for the last 4 days that I have had to spend my time in the bar. I am sick of Murphy's and seafood chowder and want to move on from here. There's the Ryder Cup on Sky which is exciting but still doesn't stop this overwhelming atlantic mist, cold drizzle and inescapable grey.

The River Wey. Thames Valley.

We arrived this morning and managed to set up camp before it got too warm. The tents go up fairly quickly now and the children seem to know where their help is most needed. The kitchen trestle table is set nicely beside the river bank under the poplar trees so K and I had a fine half hour watching the trout rise for the mayfly as we peeled potatoes and cut up carrots. J is itching to go fishing but we have lost the fishing rod. I am sure I put it in the trailer under the bedding but it’s not to be found. I have promised to make a rod out of hazel which abounds here, and will have to get on with that in the morning.
At dusk the moon came up over the meadows behind the oak trees. It’s nearly full and carries with it so much presence at this time of year; its as if it is controlling us all. Was it really a month ago that we were in Wales thinking exactly this?
I lined up all the children this morning and warned them about the snakes in the bracken. I kind of had to do it but the result is that they aren’t playing anywhere near that part of the field, and there are a lot of good paths and hiding places. Tomorrow perhaps.
Cape Wrath

I’m staying beside the lighthouse at Cape Wrath. There is no one around for at least six miles but that seems to accentuate the possibilities of the night and I am writing this quite frightened. The deer are rutting in a dip of the land behind the dry stone wall to the east and the sounds coming through the gusts of wind are alarming. They are deep sounds, low, resonant and full of darkness. I have tried listening to the radio in the van but it somehow makes the outdoors a more separate place.

An awful day. I have just about finished photographing from this wonderful vantage point that looks out to the North and west and I had moved round to the other side of the cove to get a view of where I had been taking the pictures over the last few days. The light wasn’t right and, I had some time to kill so I went round to the east side to watch some bombing practice on Garvey Island. For half and hour I sat watching the fighters swoop out of the deep shadows of the valley, drop their load and then power up into the sky. As I walked back to the camera I heard a noise half hiss and half like someone climbing over a wire fence; metal under stress; an uncomfortable sound. I knew what it was and the finality of it was shocking. A gust of wind had blown the whole 70 lbs of camera and tripod over the cliffs. The sound was the clatter of metal, timber and glass against the granite walls of these terrifying cliffs.

I heard the bulk of the remains hit the bottom about 300 ft below and then an extraordinary thing happened; the 10 x 8 inch ground glass screen, which sits at the back of the Gandolfi camera, and is unquestionably its most fragile component, came up out of the cove in the wind. It rose gently, spinning like a Chinese kite, dancing in the air for about 15 seconds before coming to rest on windblown grasses about 60yds from where the camera had been.

I am terrified. The very reason for being here has suddenly gone. I have no place here any more and I no longer trust this wretched part of the coast. I have bitten off to much.

South Downs

It’s just before 5 in the morning and I have come back from photographing a gentle and pale sunrise looking east across the Ridgeway. Soft greens and threads of hedgrows.

Now I’m sitting at the camp trestle table with the remains of last night around me. Its cool still and everything on the table is cloaked in a heavy dew; the mugs and glasses have a beautiful matt sheen, the candles are wet, everything somehow looks wonderful, full of promise; held together before the sun warms it all up again.

My jeans and walking boots are wet from walking through the long grass and petals and seeds are stuck to the leather. Sky larks are above me against the blue and down the hill below there’s mist in the valley where the stream is. I want to get everyone up, shake them awake and share this quite extraordinary moment, but it’s too early and last night they were all late to bed.
I am going to travel through these landscapes and make a book of pictures of a depth and richness that has not been seen in this country. Through the book I can share these experiences in the best way I know.

I am deeply serious about this trip; I love being in the landscape more than I can put into words. I have been to so many places to photograph with this beautiful camera and now I want, in one great swoop, to do all the lights, all the colour, all the sense of place.

We camp well as a family; we spend our summers under canvas and I love to take photographs when we camp; I see it all, I feel it all.

I am going to spend six months wrapped in the countryside. I am going to look for the real thing.
Since I first started using the big Gandolfi camera, I have been aware of its ability to reveal aspects of the landscape of which I was, at first, unaware; the quantity of information is beyond what one can take in at the time. Now I am seeing and photographing with more intensity than ever and know that I can produce a book of a type and scale that has not been seen before. Innovative, exciting and popular.

I have run the Saltwater Gallery here in Norfolk for nearly ten years and in that time have sold over 3500 photographs of pictures from all parts of the landscape of the British Isles. I have seen people who have never bought a photograph before come into the gallery and get overwhelmed by the experience of looking at these large format colour pictures of subjects that they know and recognize. The time has now come to put together a body of work that can move beyond the gallery.

There is a great debate at the moment about the changing nature of landscape, the pressures upon the countryside and the threats felt by many who love and cherish the rural landscape. This journey aims to prove that the landscape still has the capacity to provide rich experience; that in fact little has changed in our ability to respond to the forces of nature; that the physical geography is there in abundance and there continues to be available a deep sense of possibility and engagement.

These are not pictures that will perpetuate an idyll of rural harmony. I feel that much landscape photography at the moment is closing in on a nostalgic aspect of the rural. This immediately begins to homogenise the perception of land and misses the opportunity of showing the public the possibilities of engaging with landscape.

Soon there will be a move on from the current cold objective approach that dominates the photography art world. There is also at the moment a vision to bring different social classes together within the same recreational space; a sharing of the civilising and ennobling forces of nature. I would like to think that the book and the show were the beginning of a process that crystallized these feelings. Not sentimental and elusive, but rich, real and available to all.
ROUTE AND TIMING

This is a trip that will span the six months from spring to autumn 2006. The journey will begin in Shetland in March and work south down through Wales to Cornwall and then east through southern England. The final leg of the journey will be through the Pennines in the Autumn. We will be camping throughout. I have a thread of contacts and friends throughout the British Isles and will be encouraging their input as to where we will spend our time.

TRAVELLING GROUP

I shall be travelling for most of the trip with my family; my wife Miranda, and children Josey Jack (10), Katherine (8) and Mary (5). We will set up tents in fields and campsites throughout the British Isles. I shall be taking with me a camping set up with which I am very familiar. I shall have tables and chairs under an olive coloured shelter. The aim is to provide a welcoming environment that puts everyone into a certain state of mind that is slightly distant from the day to day. It is important that we have something to offer. I would like people who are local to the area where we are staying to be able to see the landscape afresh.

CAMERA

I use a 10x8 inch Gandolfi plate camera with a single lens (240mm medium wide angle) and colour negative film. It is a wonderful tool to use and the results are fantastically rich in detail and colour. Nothing surpasses the quality of the prints.

SUPPORT

Throughout the journey all the administration will be handled by the team at the gallery.

BOOK

The book will be a large format book of 75 to 85 prints. Through Saltwater I have a client list of 2500 people and feel confident that I can account for the sale of a significant number of books. The book will fit into the travel sections of bookshops as well as the arts sections. Interest from publishers is pursued by Karen Howes who is my agent in London.

EXHIBITION

The key to these pictures will be an exhibition of large format photographs. I use Grieger in Dusseldorf to print the large pictures.
CONTACTS

Please contact myself or Karen Howes

**Harry Cory Wright**
07774 211 191
harry@saltwater.co.uk
Saltwater Gallery
Ulph Place
Overy Road
Burnham Market
Norfolk PE31 8HQ

**Karen Howes**
0207 2219922
karen@interior-archive.netkonect.co.uk