



Merrie Albion. Simon Roberts. Dewi Lewis Publishing.

*THEY SAY:*

For over a decade, Simon Roberts has photographed events and places across Britain that have drawn people together in public, communal experiences. This has often been an implicit theme of his work, the apparent desire for common presence and participation and the need to share a sense of belonging, suggesting something distinctive about our national character and identity.

Whilst Roberts's interests have often gravitated towards evolving patterns of leisure, and the consumption and commodification of history, he has also chosen to photograph events and places that have a more immediate, topical significance in the turning of Britain's recent history, and which – summoning the sense of a national survey – collectively form a visual chronicle of the times in which we live.

Merrie Albion ranges across several of his projects from the last decade, projects that have explored not only our leisure landscape but also our social and political landscape. The book registers a distinct shift in approach, and tone, from his work in *We English*. Roberts has exchanged the element of discovery and revelation evident in his earlier travels through England, for a form of 'reporting', in which he responds to subjects and places that are already firmly positioned within the public consciousness – defining locations in our recent national story.

WE SAY:

'Merrie Albion' is a beautifully produced collection of photographs from Simon Roberts' projects from the last decade, documenting events and places across Britain that have drawn people together in public communal experiences.

Designed by Ben Weaver, the book as an object draws you in immediately. Substantial in size and tactile in design, the unusual cover creates a sense of something special and significant.

The scale of images is perfect – Roberts' large format photographs demand to be viewed at a size that allows you to pore over every crisp detail, and the choice of paper offers beautiful reproductions with a tactile quality that sits perfectly within the design of the book as a whole.

Seeing the projects assembled in this way, complimented by insightful and considered text by respected writers from a range of backgrounds, makes 'Merrie Albion' a fascinating study of a Britain that is at once familiar and strange. Although we recognise many of the scenes pictured, be it from press coverage of events such as the 2010 Elections, or memories of childhood visits to National Trust properties, seeing them captured from Roberts' characteristic elevated, slightly distanced viewpoint and in large format, allows us to experience them from a fresh perspective.

'Merrie Albion' is a book I can imagine returning to many times in years to come - a stunning record of a uniquely British landscape.

Merrie Albion by Simon Roberts

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Image above © Simon Roberts

*Merrie Albion was reviewed for Shutter Hub by Jayne Lloyd.*