



## The Story of a book.

Okay, the first draft is done. It has taken years, on and off, to develop the story, with all its complex strands, characters and world-building. Set on the west coast of Ireland, *The Irish Horse*, is many things. A story of love, a story of murder, a story of magical realism, about how we touch a realm that we cannot reach or fully understand. The story maps a fight to save the environment from the encroachments of the oil industry. It is reminiscent of *Local Hero*, and the lyrical *Crows of Beara*. As I said, the book is many things.

Writing the book involved a lot of research... just which whales can you see off the coast of Ireland... ? Do Irish racehorses have passports [they do]... ? What constellations can you see in the summer off

that coast? What are the key points in the year of a sheep farmer? What is the environmental impact of a big oil terminal being built in a delicate eco-system? Yes, me and the book have had a lot of fun together, but now I've done all that I can do. It's been edited by friend and colleague Roger Haines, improvements have been discussed and implemented, thanks to his dedicated work. It's finished and I can't put the moment off any longer. It's time to send it out, like a message in a bottle, to unknown destinations.

But that's not the end of the story.(See what I did there?) To my delight, *The Irish Horse* was chosen as their book of the month by the Alstone Reading Club. (Thanks, guys, much appreciated!) This delightful group hosted a themed evening (Irish cheeses, horses on the napkins and cake toppers-genius!!) and gave me some very positive feedback.



They loved the book, the mystery, the elements of magical realism and the Irish quality. In fact, they said it made them want to visit the west coast of Ireland. Yay! To my relief they found the ending very satisfying and one lady said, 'You really caught me there. I didn't see that coming!'

Phew.

They also had some constructive comments on how the book could be made even stronger. I was very grateful for their insights, and was so energised that I went home and acted on their advice that same evening. So a newly edited version is coming out very soon!

What struck me most about the evening was the level of discussion and the joy they took in exchanging views. What a splendid thing a book club is!

PS there was some discussion about the cover so we are redesigning that too. Watch this space!

PPS. Yes, pretty chuffed that my book could generate such enthusiasm.

PPPS Don't belong to a book club? Give it a go!

PPPPS hope you like the cover. Art work by me; design expertise by Roj Haines!