

THE TRAVEL CLUB

E-ZINE #01 MAY, 2020

Getting lost

Hilary Bradt loses three days
in the world's densest jungle

Hops, skip & a jump

A round up Britain's best breweries

Literary lockdown

A walk through the Chilterns and
Thames Valley in search of Ratty,
Matilda and three men in a boat

Plus...

Enter our boozy competition to **WIN**
a tour of Shepherd Neame brewery

Try your hand at our dastardly
Travel Teaser...

From the archives

Take a trip back in time to 1989,
and the launch of our
guide to Yugoslavia

Bradt GUIDES

TRAVEL TAKEN SERIOUSLY



THE PRELUDE



DESIGNER & TYPESETTERS

Pepi Bluck, Perfect Picture,
with help from Ian Spick, Bradt Guides

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Anna Moores & Laura Pidgley

Welcome to The Travel Club, and our inaugural e-zine! Cue the trumpet blasts and laser displays. You're now a member not only of what we hope will become the essential club for those who are serious about travel, but of a club within that club – the group of travellers who were there with us from the outset. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

In some ways, The Travel Club has been a long burn. We've discussed establishing a community of this sort on many occasions, but we've never quite got round to doing it. There always seemed something else ahead of it in the queue. Now, as we sit in lockdown, a club like this feels especially important. Of course, your support is hugely precious to us at this time, and we're so very grateful for it. But first and foremost our aim is to create something special, something with genuine, long-term value. Something you'll be pleased

and proud to be part of. We want this e-zine to focus on travel features with real colour and passion, indulgent articles that represent a 'warm bath' of a reading experience. We want you to look forward to receiving it each month. And we want to involve you as far as possible, whether by offering unique competitions to enter and puzzles to solve or simply inviting your feedback on what we could do to make the e-zine better.

And so, without further ado, I'll leave you to dive right in. Thanks once more for signing up to The Travel Club. We can't wait to see what you think.

Adrian Phillips
Managing Director, Bradt Guides

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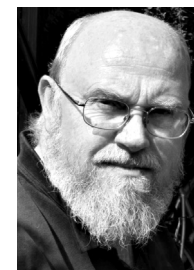
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GETTING LOST

*When I was asked to describe my standout moment from a lifetime of adventurous travel to launch this e-zine, I knew it was an impossible task – there were too many moments that came to mind, writes **Hilary Bradt**. But, as I sifted these memories, I realised that they tended to sort themselves neatly into themes. So, rather than one article, I've decided to write a series of them. And the theme for this one is 'getting lost' – something that came naturally to me from a very young age...*

1945: Lost on the beach

Bournemouth beach, before the end of the war. We lived in Bournemouth so the beach was an obvious place for my aunt and mother to take two children and a baby. I remember them sitting with their backs to a wall, while I trotted backwards and forwards to the edge of the sea with my bucket to collect water to pour over their feet. As you do when you are three years old.

Then I came back and Kitty and Mother weren't there. I don't remember any feeling of dismay, just – I suppose – surprise, so I started walking. I walked and walked. No-one seems to have taken any notice of this small child marching purposefully along the seven-mile Bournemouth beach.

I'm not sure how far I walked but since I was gone for three hours it must have been a considerable distance. Eventually a Nice Lady decided to take action and managed to reunite me with my distraught mother and furious older brother ('Don't let's bother any more, Mother'). I greeted my mother crossly: 'You lost me!'

The explanation for their disappearance? I had walked back from the sea at an angle. I've been taking long walks in the wrong direction – and blaming other people – ever since.

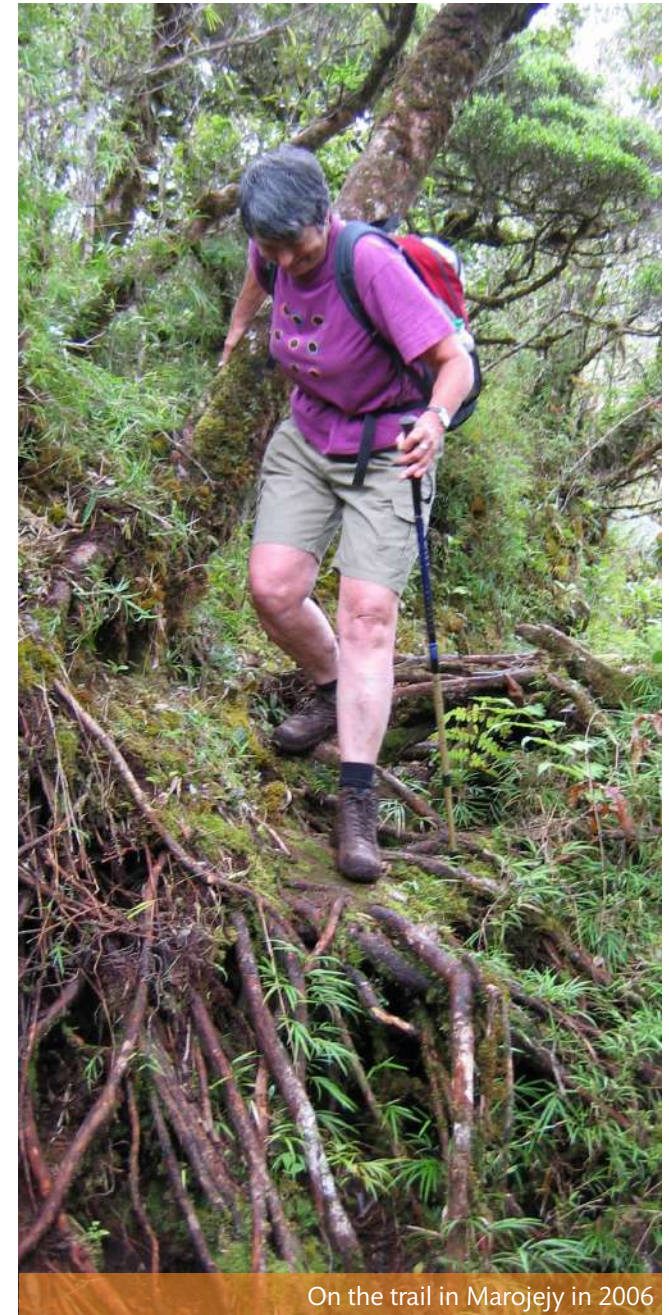
I had better elaborate. I have no sense of direction. Yes, it's a problem for a travel writer (I always claim it ensures that I write clear directions) but it does bring its own serendipity. You're never lost, just seeing new places.

1976: Lost in Madagascar

Marojejy was to be the highlight of my first visit to Madagascar. I had fallen deeply in love with the country, and here was a reserve that looked so wonderful on the map – all brown swirling contours and green forest, with no roads for miles and miles. The map showed a path running across it which, we reckoned, would take two days to walk.

As we flew into Sambava we could see the green peaks of Marojejy poking up through a covering of cloud. But there was something strange: it looked as though a box of matches had been strewn over the soft crumpled landscape. There had been a cyclone the previous week which had felled numerous huge trees as well as destroying much of Sambava.

Unperturbed, we hitched towards Marojejy. A shopkeeper offered us his floor for the night and an introduction to a representative from the Département des Eaux et Forêts. To our relief we now had the required permit but we had mixed feelings when he said he was coming



© HILARY BRADT

On the trail in Marojejy in 2006

with us. He didn't really seem dressed for a two-day backpacking trip: he had no luggage apart from a briefcase carrying his official papers, a clean shirt and three hats. He was wearing plastic sandals.

We would never have found the way ourselves. The narrow trail climbed steeply up the mountain to a large stone which marked the edge of the reserve. Our Man then told us that he had never actually walked in the reserve. Never mind, the trail was clear and we made good progress, until the first fallen tree blocked our way. For the rest of the day we scrambled over or crawled under trees. Our heavy packs unbalanced us, the heat debilitated us, and sweat ran into our eyes. That night we cooked a sumptuous supper, and shared it with Our Man. It had been a strenuous day so we deserved a treat.

Deep in the jungle

Next morning we followed the path to the river, which we crossed. There was no path on

the other side. We boulder-hopped after Our Man as he followed the river upstream. With a heavy pack this was very tiring, and we asked plaintively where the trail was. He didn't know. Should we turn back? No, if we followed the river we would soon find another path. We didn't.

The river entered a canyon, impossible to boulder-hop or even to wade. We climbed the steep, slippery clay sides, hanging on to lianas and hauling ourselves up to the overhanging jungle. I learned later that the high-altitude

rainforest in Madagascar is the densest in the world. I believe it. Without a machete to slice away the vegetation we could only move very slowly. The forest floor – what we could see of it – was composed of moss-covered logs and spongy leaves. Each step was a false step, the rotting matter giving way and plunging us into hidden holes. When we grabbed at plants or branches they hit back. There were plants that stung, plants that stabbed and plants that sliced. Blood soon mixed with the sweat that ran down our bodies. Huge trees, toppled by the cyclone,

blocked our passage. Their overhanging branches harboured fire-ants which dropped down our necks when we crawled underneath. I started to cry.

Back at the river, we sat down to consider our situation. We were lost. The map didn't make sense; Our Man was silent. We turned our attention to our blotched and blood-streaked arms and legs. Fat leeches had fastened themselves to our ankles and between our fingers. Since I refused to turn back and repeat the cliff and jungle trek, the only course was to follow the river. The map showed it winding towards Ambatobe, our destination. We no longer cared about wet boots nor safety when we crossed the river on moss-slippery tree trunks. Your sense of balance seems much better when you don't much care whether you live or die.

After 12 hours of unmitigated effort we stopped for the night. Wordlessly we set up the tent and cooked the last of our food: soup followed by tea and raisins. We were up at dawn. Knowing the rigours ahead, we drank our tea and ate our three raisins in even deeper gloom. The first six hours were the same as the previous day: slither, trip, sweat and push our way through water and jungle with no lunch to give us renewed energy. Then, in the early afternoon, Our Man shouted in delight.

***“Each step was
a false step, the
rotting matter
giving way and
plunging us into
hidden holes.”***

He was pointing to a human footprint in the damp sand by the river. Robinson Crusoe's emotion at finding a sign of another nearby human cannot have equalled ours. A few hours later we saw the sight we had long dreamed of – a solitary hut on the mountainside above the river.

The climb up was one of the hardest yet and we were bitterly disappointed to find the hut had long been abandoned. Still, there were some edible plants growing in the garden and Our Man was thrilled to find tobacco. He also found some other tasty food, collecting a bag full of large insects – leaf-hoppers we learned later. They were delicious roasted, he said. Supper was an almost cheerful occasion. We ate boiled leaves, Our Man coughed happily over his home-made cigars, and we found one last teabag at the bottom of my pack. We didn't roast the insects.

Rescued at last

Our mood was shattered again the following morning when we topped the hill above the hut and saw, not a village, but miles and miles of unbroken jungle. Six hours later we reached a trail but felt none of the anticipated elation. We were too tired. We just trudged onward until a voice greeted us from behind. We sat down

and let Our Man and the woman chatter away. 'She knows my family,' he told us excitedly. 'My wife is wondering where I am!'

The woman led us to her hut and we lay down on the palm-leaf mats while the family regarded us with gratifying respect and sympathy as Our Man told our story. Each newcomer was entertained with an ever-lengthier version. Then a huge bowl of rice was brought in, along with several kinds of vegetable. Feeling almost human we set off along the path to Ambatobe. With Civilisation at hand we became aware of the appearance we presented: our clothes had been wringing wet with rain and sweat for four days, we were covered in dried blood from scratches and leech bites, and we stank. When we came to a stream we motioned to Our Man to go ahead while we gave ourselves a wash.

With clean bodies and fresh clothes we approached the village. The inhabitants were all lined up on each side of the path, hands

outstretched, shouting 'Salama! Salama!' 'Salama!' We grinned, shaking the outstretched hands. It seemed a huge population for such a small village. Then we realised that the people at the back of the line were running to the front for a second go.

Reverently we were guided to the biggest hut where we found Our Man already enthroned and talking. The room filled with people and we smiled and nodded as the epic journey was described. It had the audience enthralled. Then supper arrived. They had killed a chicken in our honour, so we had not only rice and greens, but chicken stew. Then came a plate of what looked like large peanuts. The insects! They had a pleasant nutty flavour.

The next day two youths were enlisted to carry our packs and we almost floated along the trail. We arrived in under two hours, having covered about the same distance that we'd achieved in the previous three days. Did we blame Our Man for this adventure? Of course we did.

Hilary Bradt has been exploring and writing about Madagascar for over 40 years. In 2018, she was made an Officer of the National Order of Madagascar (the equivalent of an OBE in the UK) in recognition of her huge contribution to tourism on the island. The new edition of her flagship guidebook is out later this year – pre-order now with a 50% discount (using the code **DREAM50**).



LITERARY LOCKDOWN

*Some of Britain's most famous works of literature – from the tales of Chaucer to the creations of Enid Blyton – can be traced to one small area of the country: the Chilterns and Thames Valley. Join **Helen** and **Neil Matthews** as they read their way around the region...*

Hosts of great and beloved writers have lived and worked in the Chilterns and the Thames Valley: from children's authors (Enid Blyton, Alison Uttley) and murder mystery novelists (Agatha Christie, GK Chesterton) to playwrights (Oscar Wilde, Terence Rattigan, RB Sheridan), poets (Chaucer, Bunyan, Milton, Masfield, Eliot, Owen) and giants of science fiction and fantasy (Terry Pratchett, Mary Shelley). So, while lockdown continues, why not try our suggestions for reading your way around the region?

Matilda **Roald Dahl**

Roald Dahl made Great Missenden, in the central Chilterns, his home for 37 years. The village and surrounding area provide many links to his stories, such as the old petrol pumps in the High Street, which inspired the description



The Roald Dahl Museum in Great Missenden

© ROALD DAHL MUSEUM AND STORY CENTRE



Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury

of a garage in *Danny the Champion of the World*; and the library which the eponymous Matilda visits while her father is at work, her mother playing bingo and her brother at school:

[The librarian] Mrs Phelps, slightly taken aback at the arrival of such a tiny girl unaccompanied by a parent, nevertheless told her she was very welcome.

"Where are the children's books please?" Matilda asked.

"They're over there on those lower shelves," Mrs Phelps told her. "Would you like me to help you find a nice one with lots of pictures in it?"

"No, thank you," Matilda said. "I'm sure I can manage."

From then on, every afternoon, as soon as her mother had left for bingo, Matilda would toddle down to the library... two glorious hours sitting

quietly by herself in a cosy corner devouring one book after another.

Since 2005, Dahl's life and work have been celebrated at the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre (roalddahl.com/museum). Enter through its chocolate doors (which do actually smell of chocolate!) and you can explore three galleries: The Boy Gallery, which illustrates how his experiences influenced his ideas; The Solo Gallery, which reflects on Dahl's adult life, including his wartime experience in the RAF; and the Story Centre, a creative hub for young visitors to use the museum's exhibits as inspiration for their own writing.

The Dark is Rising Susan Cooper

The award-winning fantasy and children's author Susan Cooper grew up in Burnham; her brother Roderick says that Windsor Castle's keep was visible from Susan's bedroom window. The Chilterns feature in her writing, perhaps most notably in *The Dark is Rising*:

He saw that they had left his Thames Valley behind. No they were among the curving slopes of the Chiltern Hills, capped with great trees, beech and oak and ash. And running like threads through the snow along the lines of the hills were the hedges that were the marks of ancient fields



Windsor Castle

– very ancient, as Will had always known; more ancient than anything in his world except the hills themselves, and the trees...

And Will was falling, falling... He stood on a snow-mounded hill, with a copse of tall trees capping it far beyond, and two black birds drifting tiny to and fro above the trees.

And before him, standing alone and tall on the white slope, leading to nowhere, were two great carved wooden doors.

Elegy written in a County Churchyard **Thomas Gray**

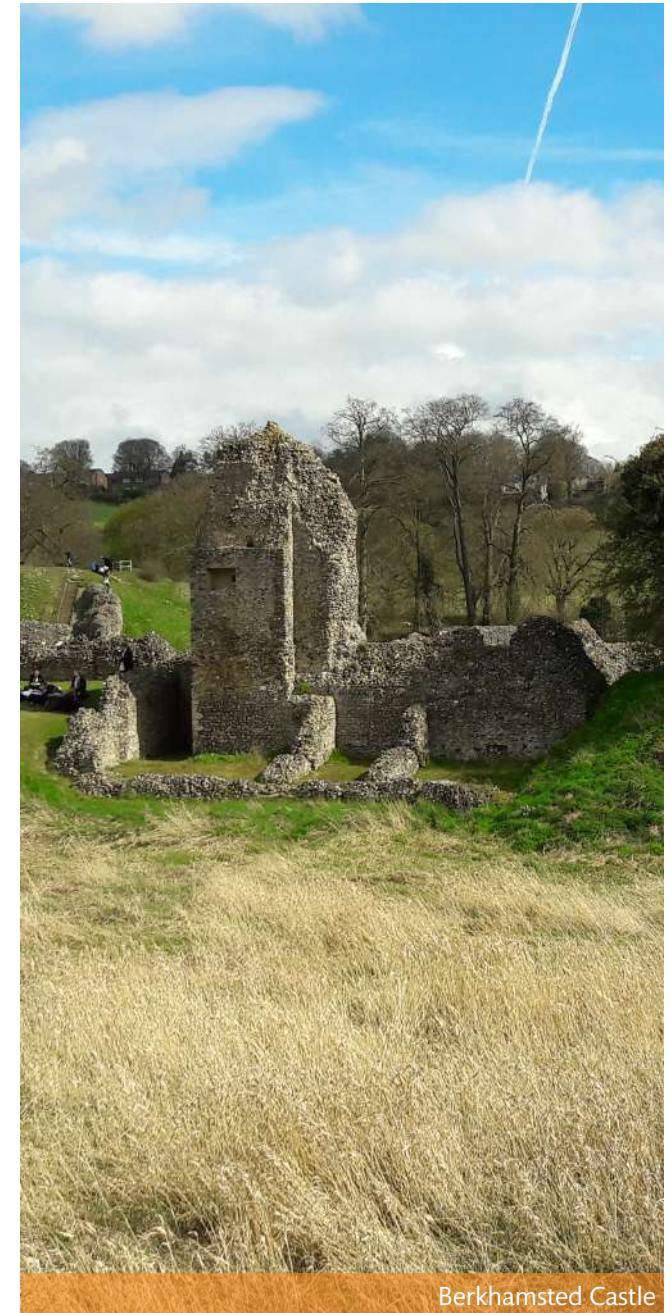
Four miles east of Burnham, near the southwest door of the Church of St Giles in Stoke Poges, sits an old yew tree. Legend has it that Thomas Gray sat under this tree to write his famous poem. A stone sarcophagus nearby displays extracts from *Elegy*. Public subscriptions bought ten acres of the neighbouring fields, so that we can still enjoy the same views that Gray did, and imagine the scenes he depicted:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

The Human Factor **Graham Greene**

The pretty north Chilterns town of Berkhamsted has another name: 'Greeneland', because Grahame Greene was born and grew up here. Berkhamsted and its landmarks appear under other names in *Doctor Crombie*, *The Captain and the Enemy*, *The Innocent* and *The Basement Room* – and as themselves in *The Human Factor* as the birthplace of the novel's main protagonist, Castle:

Castle was usually able to catch the six-thirty-five train from Euston. This brought him to Berkhamsted punctually at seven twelve. His bicycle waited for him at the station... he rode the longer way home, for the sake of exercise – across the canal bridge, past the Tudor school, into the High Street, past the grey flint parish church which contained the helmet of a crusader, then up the slope of the Chilterns towards his semi-detached house in King's Road... when he [had come] back from South Africa, he chose to return to his birthplace: to the canal under the weeping willows, to the school and the ruins of a once-famous castle which had withstood a siege by Prince Louis of France and of which, so the story went, Chaucer had been a Clerk of Works...



Berkhamsted Castle

(The story, by the way, is true; Geoffrey Chaucer was Clerk of Works for Berkhamsted Castle, the ruins of which remain to this day.)

Three Men in a Boat **Jerome K Jerome &** **The Wind in the Willows** **Kenneth Grahame**

If any single book has immortalised the Thames in literature, it's Jerome K Jerome's tale of the adventures of J, George and Harris and the dog Montmorency as they travel from Kingston to Pangbourne. You can still eat in The Bull at Streatley (bullinnpub.co.uk), where our heroes have lunch 'much to Montmorency's satisfaction', or in The Swan at Pangbourne (swanpangbourne.co.uk), where their journey ends.

[From Picnic Point to Old Windsor lock] A shady road, dotted here and there with dainty little cottages, runs by the bank up to the 'Bells of Ouseley', a picturesque inn, as most up-river inns are, and a place where a very good glass of ale may be drunk – so Harris says; and on a matter of this kind you can take Harris's word.

[From Marlow to Cookham] Dear old Quarry Woods! with your narrow, climbing paths, and

little winding glades, how scented to this hour you seem with memories of sunny summer days!

[On locks] They are picturesque little places... You meet other boats there, and river gossip is exchanged. The Thames would not be the fairyland it is without its flower-decked locks.

Kenneth Grahame spent much of his childhood watching the river's inhabitants near Cookham Dean and later moved to Pangbourne. While it isn't possible to identify specific locations with particular scenes from *Wind in the Willows*, E H Shepard may well have used Pangbourne and its surroundings for his illustrations, and it's



The *Wind in the Willows* exhibition at the River & Rowing Museum in Henley



The Shelleys' house on West Street

easy to imagine Ratty, Mole and the others on many parts of the river between Marlow and Pangbourne.

Ozymandias

Percy Shelley

This famous poem featuring a mysterious traveller isn't set in the Chilterns, of course, but its creation dates to 1817 when the Shelleys were living in Marlow. A friend and fellow poet, Thomas Love Peacock, found lodgings for them opposite his house on West Street; their residence, Albion House, is still standing today. Remarkably, T S Eliot also lived on the same street a century later. During their year-long Marlow sojourn, Mary completed *Frankenstein* (which she had started the previous summer while staying with Lord Byron at his villa on Lake Geneva) and Percy wrote two notable poems, *The Revolt of Islam* and *Ozymandias*:

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: 'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless
things,

The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear –
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

And finally...

The Chilterns

Rupert Brooke

Two miles south of Princes Risborough sits the Pink and Lily (pink-lily.com), a private house

converted into a hostelry in 1800. Rupert Brooke used to go for walks around here, and to drink in the Pink; there's a portrait of him above the fireplace. We couldn't finish without quoting from his poem about the Chilterns, and wishing all our local inns and businesses the best of luck in these difficult times. Let's hope that locals and visitors alike can continue to enjoy their hospitality for many years to come:

Thank God, that's done! and I'll take the road,
Quit of my youth and you,
The Roman road to Wendover
By Tring and Lilley Hoo,
As a free man may do...

I shall desire and I shall find
The best of my desires;
The autumn road, the mellow wind
That soothes the darkening shires.
And laughter, and inn-fires.

Helen and Neil Matthews have lived in the Chilterns since 1991 and have spent the last 30 years exploring and writing about the region's hidden corners and little-known treasures. In 2019, they joined our Slow Travel family with the publication of *The Chilterns & the Thames Valley*, available on our website at half price using the code **DREAM50**.



WORLDLY APPETITES: **AJVAR**

Spice up your lockdown dinners with this easy-to-make Balkan accompaniment – ideal for jazzing up sandwiches, salads and pasta sauces



Macedonian *meze* (from the Turkish, and ultimately Persian *maze*; also known as *ordever*, literally 'hors d'oeuvre') are the best-kept secret of North Macedonian cuisine. Usually served at the start of a banquet, meze are so tasty and varied that they can make a whole meal on their own.

The North Macedonian meze are a variety of cold 'creamed' vegetable spreads, initially cooked till soft and then hand blended with herbs and spices, onions and garlic, and doused with not too much oil. The most common are *pindžur* (roasted aubergine and peppers), *tarator* (yoghurt, cucumber, walnuts and garlic), *kajmak* (a type of clotted cream, often mixed with hot chillies and potatoes), egg and mushroom, and sweet grilled red peppers doused in garlic and oil (the latter usually only available in late summer).

The most famous of these meze, however, is **ajvar**, which is made every autumn when red peppers are at their most abundant. The best, of course, is homemade (*domašni*). To be invited into a North Macedonian home to make ajvar is considered a privilege (some say it is like being offered the possibility of citizenship), and will give you an idea of the meticulous preparation that must go into this North Macedonian speciality.

The recipe

2 aubergines
6 red peppers
Salt and black pepper
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
Juice of 1 lemon
140ml good-quality olive oil
1 tbsp finely chopped parsley
Toasted ciabatta, to serve

1. Preheat the oven to 190°/170°/gas mark 5. Cut the aubergines and peppers in half and lay them on a baking tray. Season, cover with a good glug of oil and roast for 30 minutes or until the skins begin to char.
2. Remove from the oven and leave to cool for 10 minutes. Once they are cool enough to touch, peel off the skins and remove any seeds and stalks.
3. In a large bowl, mash the vegetables with a fork (or you can use a food processor, depending on how smooth you like your ajvar). Add the garlic and lemon juice, and drizzle in oil, stirring constantly. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. To serve, top the ajvar with parsley and spread on toasted ciabatta. Alternatively, it works wonderfully as a pasta sauce.

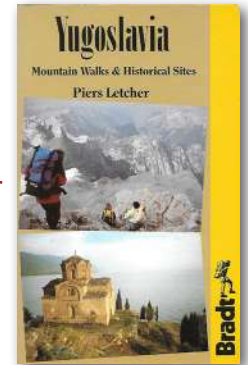


For more on North Macedonian cuisine, check out our [guidebook](#) to the country, now available with a 50% discount using the code **DREAM50**.



FROM THE ARCHIVES: YUGOSLAVIA

This month **Hugh Brune** goes back to February 1989 and the launch of our first and only edition of ***Yugoslavia: Mountain Walks & Historical Sites***, by Piers Letcher.



Like many thousands of books before and since – although perhaps not too many travel guides – the Bradt guide to Yugoslavia was conceived at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Having just finished *Europe by Rail* for an Australian publisher, Piers Letcher, then in his mid-twenties, was keen to pitch a guide to Czechoslovakia to travel publishers. So in the autumn of 1986, he came to Frankfurt. He trawled over 400 stands in three days, suddenly painfully aware of the competitive nature of the publishing industry. (For the uninitiated, the Frankfurt *Büchmesse* is a monstrous affair: over 200,000 people spread across ten vast halls, and everyone there with a book to push.)

And then, just as he was about to give up, he came across these two unlikely looking travel publishers...

When Hilary Bradt first visited Frankfurt in the late 1970s, she didn't take a stand. She and



Hilary (left) and the late Janet Mears (right), Bradt's very own Jack of all Trades, at Bradt's first Frankfurt Book Fair

her then-husband, George, prowled the aisles selling their books off backpacks. But by the late '80s, Bradt Publications was sufficiently established to have its own small booth. Hilary and Janet Mears, the company's first employee, would drive to the fair every year in a car laden with boxes of books. They stayed with friends (Hilary describes them as 'stoical') in a nearby village, usually getting lost on the way back in the evening, and on particularly exciting days losing their car in the car park as well.

Today, Frankfurt is for schmoozing, occasionally selling rights, and drinking steins of beer late into the night. The city's prostitutes are rumoured to take their holidays during the *Büchmesse* (supposedly because publishers are so keen to leap into bed with each other). But back then, you did actual business at the Fair. Customers from around the world would visit the Bradt stand and write out large orders for books. Then, as now, Bradt had a list packed with unique travel guides with international appeal, and Frankfurt was an important date on the calendar.

Piers and Hilary hit it off immediately. Both remember being rather daunted by the other – the young writer by the travel publisher with a growing reputation, and the young publisher by a writer who already had several books

under his belt. (As well as *Europe by Rail*, Piers had written books on personal computing – expertise that would prove useful when his new book went into production.) Hilary had already commissioned a guide to Czechoslovakia, which would come out the following year, so they agreed that Piers would instead tackle Yugoslavia.

Mountain walks and historical sites

This would not be one of Bradt's celebrated 'firsts'; there was already a Rough Guide to Yugoslavia, and a Fodor's. But it was felt the existing guides focused too much on the well-known and obvious places. As the back-cover blurb has it: '*Most tourists only know the Yugoslavia of crowded beaches and package tours,*' whereas the Bradt guide would highlight '*the wild places of the interior, as well as lesser known islands and beaches.*' Bradt was known for publishing hiking guides. The company's logo was still the backpacker who had featured on the very first book. But Piers insisted his book should also cover places of historical and cultural interest, of which Yugoslavia had so many, paving the way for the more general Bradt guides of the future. Hence the book's unique subtitle: *Mountain Walks & Historical Sites*. A classic author/publisher compromise.

There was a long-ish gestation period while Piers earned enough money in the real world to fund the research. He headed out in early 1988 to spend six months immersing himself in the culture, language, mountains, and the amazing history of Yugoslavia, a country he had visited several times before but never expected to write a book about.

Venturing into less-visited areas, he was routinely met with incredible warmth and hospitality. One particularly memorable encounter was recorded in a photograph which ended up on the title page of the book.



Piers (right) drinking homemade šljivovice in the remote village of Tōmiči

© MARTINE SIMON

'I was researching the wonderful Paklenica National Park (on the Dalmatian coast, now in Croatia) and came across Parić (and his wife) in a minute hamlet, accessible only by donkey track, high up on the karst plateau. They were one of only two couples living there, in a house with no electricity or running water, in a place where it can snow in every month of the year. I was plied with ridiculous quantities of fearsome home-made Šljivovice and had some trouble getting back down the hill to the private room I was renting before dark... So late was I, in fact, in returning, that a small search party had been sent out to look for me.'

The making of a guidebook

The manuscript was completed in September that year. Hilary describes the editing as 'extraordinarily smooth', although Piers remembers one stern admonishment of 'Purple prose!' scrawled in a margin. In those days, Hilary would still mark up proofs by hand. In fact, the entire production process was somewhat artisan compared with today's slick digital processes. Computers were tolerated, but only just, and only if they behaved themselves. Book manuscripts were typeset from disk by a company in Derbyshire, who would return a long roll of bromide which Hilary would then cut into pages herself and paste onto

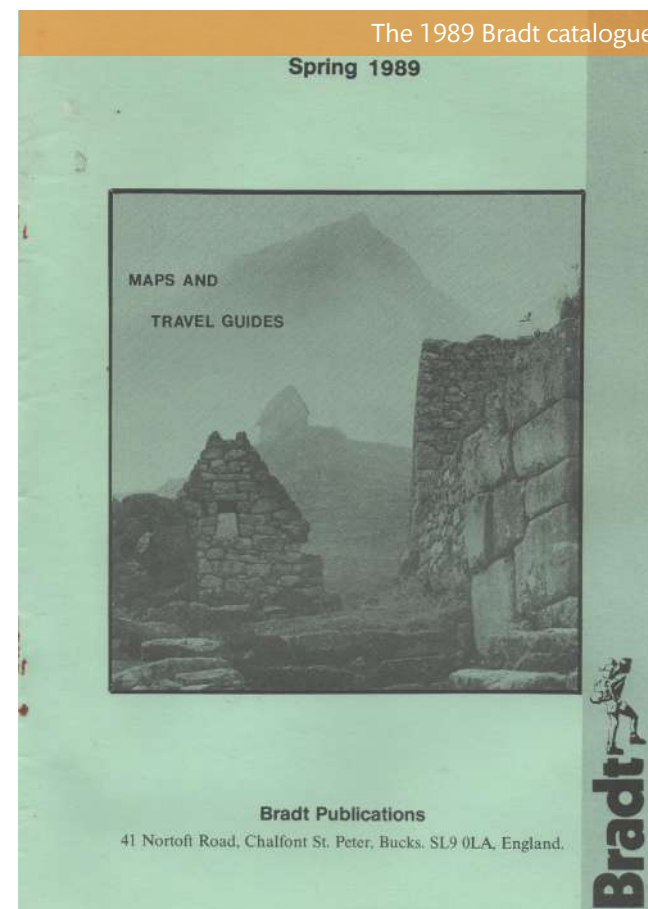
backing sheets. It was a labour-intensive process, but as she says:

'I loved doing it. It gave me complete control over the finished product and the necessary scrutiny of each page always drew out things that had been missed at proof-reading. This meant stripping in the corrected line over the one with an error. The type had to fit exactly, so clever rewriting was sometimes necessary.'

It was here that having an author who knew his way around a computer proved invaluable. While typesetting her Czechoslovakia guide, Hilary had learned the hard way the hazards of coding Slavic accents, almost all of which had to be later corrected by hand. Piers was able to save her several hours of manually adding upturned circumflexes.

The book was included in Bradt's Spring 1989 catalogue and published in February of that year. It was well received and for a couple of years enjoyed brisk sales. But a portent of its future was contained in this note added to the Preface:

'Note on prices and exchange rates: *Prices in Yugoslavia are subject to massive inflation (over 200% in 1988), though travellers are compensated for this by frequent currency devaluations.*



For this reason prices throughout have been quoted in sterling and dollars.'

A new Yugoslavia?

The *Brief History* section in the Introduction concludes:

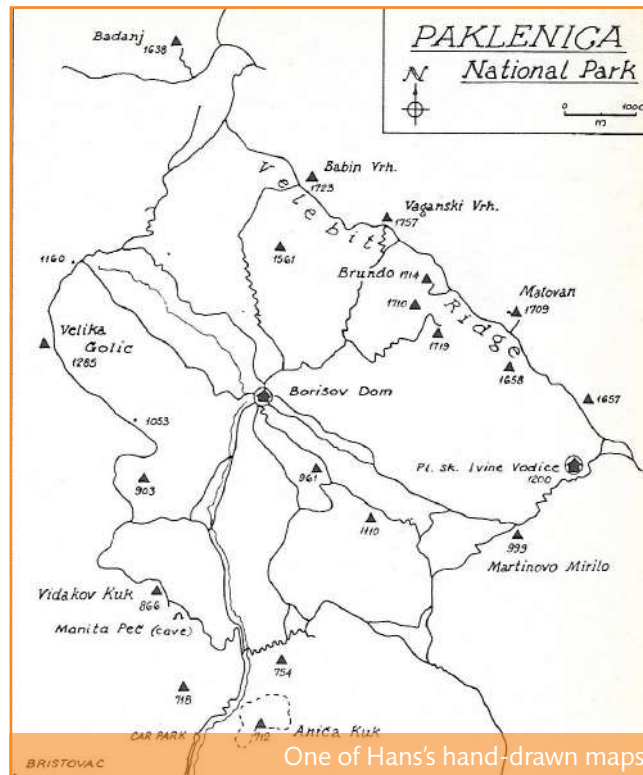
'Since (Tito's) death the old problems of nationalism, unfair distribution of wealth between

the republics, and corruption in government, have resurfaced... Kosovo is too important historically for the Serbs to let go, but with a majority population of Albanians it will always be a problem area.'

For a while, tourist areas in Yugoslavia were shielded from the simmering ethnic tensions and ravages of hyper-inflation. But in 1989, after the guide was published, Piers returned to the country and noticed things were already markedly different.

'I went to a beautiful orthodox monastery there [Gračanica, in Kosovo], and there was a fiercely nationalistic Serbian wedding going on, complete with waving flags and people roaring round in Belgrade-registered jeeps. Highly provocative stuff, only a few kilometres from Kosovo Polje, where Lazar lost the fatal battle in 1389 that gave 'Old Serbia' to the Turks for several centuries, and which played such an important symbolic role in kicking off the 1990s civil war.

But there were so many good things, too. Later, on the same day as the Serbian wedding, I was asking two local (Kosovar) kids for directions, and they insisted on coming with me in the car to my destination, to make sure I got to the right place. It turned out, however, that they simply wanted a



ride in the car, having never been in one before! So then of course I took them all the way home, back to their tiny, car-free, village, and their grateful parents.'

And then in June 1991, tanks rolled into Ljubljana and the young nation of Yugoslavia began to tear itself apart.

The Bradt guide stopped selling almost overnight, although in a strange twist the company received an order from the US State Department for most of the remaining

stock. Why? Because its maps (hand-drawn by Hans van Well, whom Hilary describes as her 'favourite cartographer of all time') were the best available to the country – certainly its mountain regions – since World War II.

There was no second edition of *Yugoslavia: Mountain Walks & Historical Sites*. Piers went on to write travel journalism for newspapers and magazines, and spent the 1990s raising a young family. He returned to Bradt in 2003 with the publication of *Eccentric France* and the first edition of *Croatia*, now in its sixth edition. Today, no fewer than five of the chapter headings in his original book have their own dedicated Bradt country guides: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia (now North Macedonia), as well as Croatia and Slovenia. There are also Bradt guides to Istria (the Croatian peninsula) and Kosovo.

Over thirty years after that first meeting in the halls of Frankfurt, Piers and Hilary are still in touch. Piers' wife, Sarah, is in negotiations with Hilary over one of her sculptures for his upcoming sixtieth birthday.

Hugh Brune is Head of Sales and Marketing at Bradt. Thanks to Piers Letcher and Hilary Bradt for sharing their memories.

HOPS, SKIP & A JUMP: A TOUR OF BRITAIN'S BEST BREWERIES

*From family-run businesses to innovative ale creators, there are a host of fine breweries in Britain, many of them offering tastings, tours and visitor centres. Here, **Ted Bruning** and **Rupert Wheeler** – authors of our new book, *Britain in a Bottle* – shine a light on some of the very best that should be on your list to visit when the lockdown ends.*



BrewDog, Aberdeenshire

Balmacassie Industrial Estate, Ellon AB41 8BX;
brewdog.com

The punk brewery with attitude. BrewDog started life in 2007, when founders James Watt and Martin Dickie loudly proclaimed that they wanted to shake up the brewing industry, and it wasn't long before they were causing waves with the launch of an 18.2% ABV stout.

Publicity was – and is – their speciality, and the less approving it is, the better. They took

great delight, for instance, in twisting the tail of the Portman Group – the drinks industry's ethics watchdog – with stunts such as naming their low-alcohol beer Nanny State. Never content to rest on their laurels, they decided to create the strongest beer in the world and came up with Tactical Nuclear Penguin (32% ABV), then Sink the Bismarck (41% ABV) and finally The End of History (55% ABV).

And they aren't just different with their choice of names. BrewDog cemented its alternative

approach when it took to raising capital not by tugging its forelock to the bankers, but by a spectacularly successful series of crowdfunding campaigns that raised more than £73 million. As a result, the company now has breweries in Brisbane, Berlin and Columbus, Ohio, which has a hotel attached. But Scotland is where it all started.

The Ellon site is a state-of-the-art eco brewery that has expanded over the years to include a second brewhouse called Site3; a fermentation facility called the Overworks that specialises in sour beers; and Lone Wolf Distillery, which produces gin, vodka and a range of whiskies including malt, grain and rye under the Boilermaker series. The DogWalk tour takes in the lot, as well as the canning line for good measure, but if you really want to splash out then go for The Big Dog tour: five hours taking in the DogWalk tour, followed by a meal at the DogTap bar and finishing off with an after-dinner tutored beer and cocktail tasting.

Batemans, Lincolnshire

Salem Bridge Brewery, Mill Ln, Wainfleet All Saints PE24 4JE; bateman.co.uk

This small-to-medium family brewery has a big history. It was founded in 1874 by farmers and home brewers George and Susannah Bateman

who decided to concentrate on the brewing side of their business, supplying other farmers who still paid their labourers partly in beer but no longer wanted to make it themselves. In 1880 the Batemans moved from their original home to the larger Salem House, and after paying wages in kind was outlawed in 1887 they were brewing enough to supply the village pubs where farmworkers now had to get their ale.

The firm has descended in direct line ever since, first to Harry, then to George II and his queen Patricia, and then to siblings Stuart and Jacqui. The status of 'family brewery' is much vaunted as a marker of tradition, continuity, reassurance and comfortable certitude.

Of course, the reality isn't necessarily that cosy. When a takeover bid comes along, relations are usually advised to accept the offer – and, more often than not, they do. So when a bidder came knocking at the doors of the Bateman family in the 1980s, it was the sad assumption of every beer-lover that another light in the dimming constellation of family brewers was about to flicker out.

***“The status of
'family brewery' is
much vaunted as a
marker of tradition
and continuity.”***

But to George and Patricia, Batemans-in-chief at the time, their funny-looking brewery with its almost random collection of buildings on the banks of the River Steeping meant more than a sheaf of share certificates. It meant family, for whose past and future they were prepared to fight, however hard the contest. And it was hard. Few banks were interested in putting up funds for a stubborn old couple who didn't know which side their bread was buttered on. But sleepless nights and frantic days notwithstanding, George and Patricia managed to raise the money.

As a result, Batemans is one light that never died. And for the visitor today, its devotion to family is attested by the many reminders of previous generations. The museum in the windmill is dubbed Harry's Artefact Room because it was Harry who bought and incorporated the 100-year-old cornmill next door to Salem House when it closed in 1920. The visitor centre bar is dubbed Mr George's Bar, and visitors can enjoy lunch from 12.00 to 14.30 every day in the Patricia

Room bistro. Tours followed by tastings start at 11.00 and 14.00 every day; booking is strongly recommended to avoid disappointment.

Fuller, Smith & Turner, London

Griffin Brewery, Chiswick Ln South, W4 2QA;
fullers.co.uk

It has to be admitted that from the street, London's oldest brewery is not especially prepossessing – it's one of those random accretions of industrial brick buildings you used to see everywhere. But step inside the complex and you'll understand exactly why it is so special.

Fuller's only acquired its 'London's oldest' status in 2006 when Young's, whose recorded roots are a century older, found it impossible to operate from central Wandsworth so slipped its moorings and moved to Bedford. Brewing on the Fuller's site was first recorded in the mid-



17th century, when there was a pub with its own brewery there and a private brewhouse nearby. Eventually they merged and over the years changed hands through sale and inheritance, until 1845 when the partnership of Mr Fuller, Mr Smith and Mr Turner was established.

During the decades of mergers, takeovers and closures that followed World War II, Fuller's and Young's doggedly held on to their independence, emerging as London's last two local breweries, strong on their home turf but hardly represented elsewhere. It was the high quality of their respective beers (and the poor quality of that of their competitors) that widened their appeal: Fuller's ESB won four of the Campaign for Real Ale's first five Champion Beer of Britain awards in 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1982. For much the same reason Fuller's London Pride, luscious and biscuity thanks to its high crystal malt content, went from ubiquity on its own small manor to near-ubiquity across the whole country.

More recently Fuller's has invested in opening up to its fans. Its showcase has long been the Mawson Arms, which stands right beside the brewery gate and has acted both as brewery tap and departure point for brewery tours. In 2018 the company opened a visitor centre including a beer shop and deli, a small pilot

brewery, and a 'growler bar' where you can buy draught ale to take home to round off the whole experience.

Ringwood Brewery, Hampshire

138 Christchurch Rd, Ringwood BH24 3AP;
ringwoodbrewery.co.uk

There's no visitor centre here, there's not even a brewery tap – just a shop with tasting bar and a few guided tours every week. But this is such an important shrine to beer-lovers that anyone who rates themselves a fan will make the hoppy pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime.

The reason? This was the headquarters of the Father of Microbrewing, Peter Austin. Like most of the founders of the early microbreweries, he'd had a distinguished career in the mainstream brewing industry; when Hull Brewery, where he was head brewer and worked for 30 years, was taken over by Northern Foods in 1975 Peter withdrew to Hampshire, aged only 54. Three years of the quiet life was plenty, and in 1978 he founded Ringwood in an old bakery in Minty's Yard, New Street.

Although Ringwood never had any pubs of its own, by 1986 sales of its beers, especially its two strong ales – Fortyniner (4.9% ABV) and Old Thumper (originally 5.6% ABV) – were such that the brewery had to move into today's



rather grander premises. These featured a large yard and handsome brick buildings that were, purely coincidentally, the site of Tunk's Brewery (which closed in 1821). The beers' rich, strong, toffee-ish character perhaps betrayed Peter's northern experience but it did them no harm in the south: the brewhouse has been expanded twice to cope with increasing levels of production.

In 1988 Old Thumper became the second-ever microbrewery product to win CAMRA's Champion Beer of Britain award. Meanwhile Peter was the Apostle of Microbrewing, earning reverence from cask ale drinkers and

even grudging respect from the big brewers. As well as founding and chairing the Small Independent Brewers' Association in 1980, he helped establish 40 microbreweries in the UK and a further 100 around the world over the course of a decade. After Peter sold his share to partner David Welsh to pursue consultancy, the brewery became the first of its kind

to be sold to a much bigger mainstream rival: Marston's bought it for more than £19 million in 2007. You might therefore argue that the current brewery is not really a memorial to Peter (he died in 2014 aged 92), but we reckon you won't be saying that after your visit.

Shepherd Neame, Kent

17 Court St, Faversham ME13 7AX;
shepherdneame.co.uk

There was a time when every town in the country had an old-established brewery at its heart. These days, this is not so much the case, but there are survivors – among them Shepherd Neame, the oldest brewery site in England.

Originally founded near an abbey in 1147, it has changed hands many times over the

***“Shepherd Neame
is one of the most
successful regional
breweries.”***

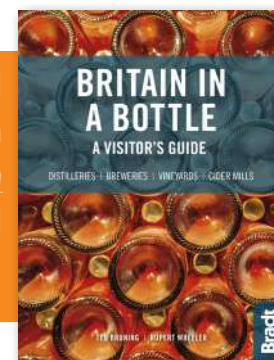
centuries, gradually expanding until the current dynasty arrived in 1864. The first Neame – the present head being Jonathan Neame of the fifth generation – promptly planted a brand new brewhouse plumb in the heart of the six-acre site, where it remains to this day. What gives the complex its character for the visitor is the way it has expanded within those confines as the years have gone by: at first sight, it is a total jungle.

As the company's continued independence illustrates, Shepherd Neame is one of the most successful regional breweries in the country – and this is mainly down to its excellence as a brewer. Being in the heart of hop-growing country, Shep might be excused for going crazy with hops and for Kentish-themed beers that taste

overwhelmingly of nettles, or lemon or blackberries, and damn the malt. But they don't. They believe in balance: if anything, Shep's most celebrated beers – Spitfire, launched to mark the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain; Bishop's Finger, named after the fingerboard signposts that pointed pilgrims to Canterbury – tend to err on the malty side.

Given the chaotic (to the outsider) nature of the brewery's expansion into a labyrinth of alleys and passageways connecting brooding buildings of uncertain purpose, towering slender chimneys and vast metal silos, it might not have been the most obvious candidate for a tourist attraction. However, the nakedly functional character of much of it is part of its appeal as not only a maker of superb beer but also a site of importance in industrial archaeology; and where facilities have been designed especially for tourists, such as the visitor centre and the Old Brewery Store venue – well, the awards keep coming.

Rupert Wheeler was previously the managing editor of *Whisky Magazine* and has been a judge in the World Whiskies Awards, while **Ted Bruning** has been a journalist in the licensed trade and hospitality industry since 1986. *Britain in a Bottle* – their new guidebook to the UK's breweries, distilleries, vineyards and cider mills – is now available to buy at half price using the code **DREAM50**.



WIN A BREWERY TOUR & TASTING FOR FOUR AT SHEPHERD NEAME

In these uncertain times, we know one thing for sure: many of us are looking forward to a good pint once we're allowed outside again.

We've teamed up with Shepherd Neame, Britain's oldest brewery, to offer one lucky winner and three friends the chance to enjoy an award-winning tour and tasting session (valued at £72). The 80-minute experience shows visitors all there is to know about the ancient art of brewing, from exploring the fermentation process in the Faversham Brewery to a tour of the Old Brewery Store's hop-picking memorabilia.

To be in with a chance of winning, let us know what you'd name a beer brewed under the current lockdown. You can suggest as many as you like – the more imaginative the better. (And, no, there'll be no prize for 'Corona'...)

Send your suggestions to ✉ competitions@bradtguides.com, putting 'Shepherd Neame competition' in the subject, and including your name and contact number. The competition closes on 22 June – we'll announce the winner (and share some of our favourites) in July's issue. See bradtguides.com/shepherdneame for full T&Cs.



TRAVEL TEASER

Go to bradtguides.com/bradtcrossword if you'd prefer to complete this digitally. Answers to be revealed in June's issue!

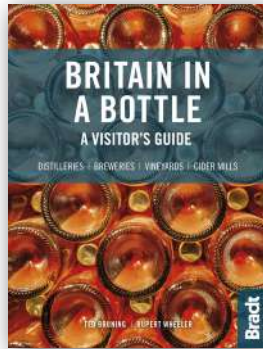
ACROSS

- 3. Nomadic homestead
- 6. Tree emblematic of Madagascar
- 7. Basque city, home to a world-famous annual bull run
- 10. _____ crowned crane, Ugandan national bird that features on its flag
- 12. Devonish cathedral city
- 13. Largest island in Cape Verde
- 15. Ethiopian city famed for its churches
- 17. Longest river in Asia
- 19. Portuguese archipelago in the Atlantic
- 20. The world's ninth-largest country
- 22. Magical 'spice island' located in the Indian Ocean

DOWN

- 1. Largest park in Belgrade
- 2. Capital city found on the slopes of the Pichincha Volcano
- 4. Iconic pyramidal peak found in the Swiss Alps
- 5. Most northerly circle of latitude
- 8. John Hanning _____, the first explorer to reach Lake Victoria
- 9. _____ Pis, cheeky sculpture that is an icon of Brussels
- 11. Swedish coffee break
- 14. Highest lake in the world
- 16. Region of Italy where Genoa is the capital
- 18. Albanian capital
- 21. Stimulating leaf popular in East Africa

FORTHCOMING BOOKS



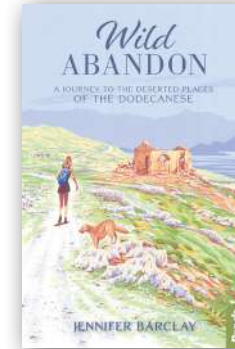
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COMING UP NEXT MONTH...

In the June issue of **THE TRAVEL CLUB:**

A perfect moment on the shores
of Lake Song-Köl in Kyrgyzstan,
the view from Masson Hill in the Peak District,
and another 'first' from the Bradt archives.

