

A landscape photograph of a stone circle in a green field with mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The stones are large, grey, and weathered, standing in a circular arrangement. The grass is vibrant green, and the mountains in the distance are hazy and green. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds.

England

Tales of a Time Traveler

Peter Bruce

Dedication

To you my beloved Randi – you who support me, endure me and love me —
you are a gift from the gods.

To you, my dear sons Harrison and Robin, who indulge my endless stories about
the people in this book. Thank you for your patience.

To you, my remarkable ancestors, who left the world a better place.

Thank you

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In This Book

This book is is an odd sort of travelogue. Like all travelogues, it recounts the places we visited and our ups and downs along the way. Yet it is also a time machine of sorts, for I relate the remarkable stories of my ancestors who once lived in those places.

In 2018, my wife Randi and I travelled to England for the first time where the good people of England (and good they are) suffered unforgivably from our ignorance for not much money. We, on the other hand, enjoyed it all immensely — the people, the places and history.

These pages, then, recount the joys and follies of two neophyte travellers (myself and my wife Randi) as we work our way through England over the course of an all-too-brief three week visit. Along the way, I travel back in time to ponder the lives of my mother's ancestors, stretching from the late 1500s to 1947.

Why England?

Why not England? I'm from there. Well, not exactly. My parent's were English, and their parents before them were, if not English, British, for almost a 1000 years for which we have records. I grew up looking at photo albums of little kids in sun bonnets and bloomers at the beach, of women, still in their sun bonnets and dressed to the nines, and men in Worcester jackets, cravats and straw boaters, picnicking in the country. We were English. My mother made that abundantly clear — Canadian yes, but English Canadian.

She's with me now in my office, there in her canister, propped atop the dust-covered IBM Selectric behind me. As I type, I can almost hear her humming ... "Those were the days, my friend, I thought they'd never end...." Yes, my roots are in England.

Sleuthing For Stories

I'm a genealogist. Ah hell, that's a lie. My cousin John is a genealogist. My forté is copying John's hard work and passing it off as mine. I'm a dreamer, a romantic. Facts are good – the when and where of my people. But for me, stories are better. I want to know who my people were as people, what they did for a living, how they lived, the times in which they lived, their adventures, missteps, achievements and loves. I want to know their stories.

I like to think of travel as a state of mind or better yet, a way of being in the world – wide-eyed, inquisitive, accepting. If we bring those qualities along when we travel, we invite others to engage with us, befriend us. The universe provides; we grow richer. For that matter, why not be that person every day, be that traveler right in our own backyard – with our partner, family and friends?

Travel As Discovery

Travel, I find, is a great teacher, if I'm listening. Travel reminds me that people are, at the heart of things, the same the world over. It has always been so. Parents everywhere rock their child to sleep, complain about their teenagers, and feel the joy of holding a grandchild. They aspire to a comfortable life, to do good for others, leave a legacy, love their family and friends, complain about the neighbours, and argue over money and their in-laws. There is comfort in that -- comfort in knowing that we are part of a greater whole, the human community, comfort in understanding that we are indeed all one. I must learn to slow down, engage with the people of a place. When we know something about a place's history and culture, when we've chatted with shopkeepers, talked politics in the pub, discovered something about the person sitting next to us on the bus, we add a depth, a richness to travel that a river

cruise or another venue cannot replace. There is little substance for me in staring through the rain-streaked glass of a tour bus watching a country and its people swish by. I must connect to understand.

Travel In Your Own Backyard

Travel doesn't have to be exotic. Flying off to Katmandu or Timbuktu (no longer recommended for non-Islamists) sounds exciting (guaranteed at the latter) but the thrill you derive may not be more satisfying than visiting the neighbourhood of your childhood. Better yet, you get to come back. We can't all do that. Your childhood home might be on another continent; it might have been razed and redeveloped; or it might require time and/or money you don't have.

But if you can get there, consider it. Travel back in time. Are the places I knew as a child still there? Does

lemon balm still grow among the Hamilton's shrubs? Do water skeets still live in the big ditch on 11th Street? And rats? Is the tree house still 25 feet up in the Favelle's Douglas fir? Is the ramshackle cottage of ancient and kindly Mrs. Trail still hidden behind the undergrowth? What of the sweet long grass behind Donnie's house where I lay on warm summer days? Or the rafters of Sharon's garage where I hid from an enraged man whose passenger door was mysteriously crushed by a flying boulder? What of huge Ghost Hall perched high among the trees, its three kindly spinsters, and the rank smell of must and decay when they opened the door? Or Goat Trail, the narrow rock ledge six terrifying feet above the forest floor in Leyland Park.

I've returned to my childhood town many times. The memories flood back as I idle the car down main street. There's the cop shop; remember the cells? And

there's the fish shop with its tile walls, iced counter, the fresh smell of the ocean and the wide-eyed stares of ling cod and salmon. And there's Mr. Munn's laundry. And the Herrington's flower shop. Julie lived over there in that alley with her mum. There were little shops where that parking lot is. Shane lived above one of them with his rough, chain-smoking photographer dad. Down there was the Lions Gate Times where I stuffed flyers into newspapers for a paltry sum. And right there was the empty Hollyburn Theatre where my buds and I kept five cops busy for an hour hunting us down. Remember pretty Miss Middleton with the bright red lipstick who sold admission tickets in the booth – the one who rented our bedroom downstairs and entertained men in the evenings to make 'ends meet.' She was nice; her stay was short.

Not all our memories of childhood are pleasant. Unhappy memories might arise too. Yet perhaps there

is value in recalling them – a chance to let go of what cannot be changed, return to what can be changed and more fully appreciate what is.

Chance

Have you ever stopped to consider how some tiny decision on your part changed the course of your life? I have, and I've come to realize that my life IS the result of many small decisions, and not much more – decisions made by me as well as decisions made by others I've never met.

In 1925, the chocolate business started by my father's family went broke. Had it thrived (as it did in the hands of my mother's family) they would have remained in England and my father would not have met my mother in Canada. My mother would not have been in Canada had her brother not been blinded in one eye in an accident, prompting a family move to Canada where

he could find a suitable occupation like farming. As it turned out, it was engineering. And if my mother and father had not met, chances are, you would be doing something else right now which might have brought you fame, fortune and the happiness you deserve. Not to be.

Thus, decisions which may seem inconsequential at the time, even go unnoticed, can immensely impact one's personal life and the lives of those who follow. Indeed, every action, large or small, reverberates across society and through time. Serendipity shapes the world, for good or for bad, despite the best efforts of human beings to plan things otherwise.

The Three Roads

And that brings me to the matter of how we choose to travel. There are three ways to travel as I see it. The first way is the 'One Road Approach' that calls for

establishing destination choice criteria, researching the options, making a Plan B, and creating a detailed itinerary. It takes months. Yet there is great comfort in knowing where one will spend the night, with whom, ("With me," says Randi) and where one will be between 10:30 and 10:45 the next morning.

The second way to travel is the 'Any Road Approach' favoured by my son Robin, an inveterate traveler, who, when the urge strikes, stuffs a few items in a backpack just large enough to house my travel socks, and within the week, he's gone. Not for 2 weeks, for five months.

The more I travel, the more I think he's got it right, at least right in good measure, for despite my best laid plans, I (we) invariably end up in the same place as Robin anyway, with no plan or a plan in tatters. You see the plan just never works. A good chunk of it anyway. Stuff comes up, 'unexpected contingencies.' -- the two museums planned for Tuesday morning are

swapped out for a long breakfast; the cathedrals do not allow photography; we can't find the venue (that's a big one); we eat up the time for two venues looking for a 'toilet' and when we find it, are obliged to spend another 30 minutes rounding up the 40 pence entry fee; and an evening we might have spent lingering in a quaint English pub is instead spent in bed...sleeping.

Furthermore, we can merrily plan a trip -- where we go, where we stay and what we do when we get there. However, if we haven't been there before, it's all a craps shoot, isn't it? We never know what we're in for until we get there. In the split second that it takes to click 'Submit' on the sign-up form, we are at the mercy of the universe. It may take us to a joyful place; it may not. But wherever it takes us, we're in for the ride.

Thus, struggle as we might to design and orchestrate our lives, we are in the hands of a greater power. There

is no escaping it. We might just as well go with the flow and let serendipity whisk us into the magical world of the unexpected. "Fine," says my good wife, "but at 4:30 sharp, I take my bra off and pick up my book." That could be interesting.

There is a third way to travel: the Middle Road Approach. The Middle Road Approach calls for making a plan. It does not require one to stick to it. The tricky bit is accommodations that, for places in high demand like Britain and the Continent, need to be booked well in advance. That limits your 'in the moment' options to hotels and to outfits like booking.com which sometimes allow cancellations with full refund within days of check-in. Accommodation aside, though, the rest could and in my growing view, should be up for grabs when you get there. By allowing who you meet, how you feel and what you bump into to dictate your itinerary, your visit in all likelihood will become a real

adventure. The Middle Road Approach is the one we took on this trip, not because we wisely chose it but because the universe chose it for us ... on Day 1.

I'm learning to 'go with the flow,' to let go of the plan when sticking with it subtracts from the adventure. I'm learning to treat my Great Plan as a guideline, even as a point of departure from which the Great Adventure will unfold as it will, growing here, shrinking there, adjusting to whim and circumstance.

We are learning that outstanding travel experiences grow from a hefty dose of serendipity, sufficient to render our predictable and boring plans useless and bring us the joy of the unexpected. The point is that all of it — the stuff that should have been and was, the stuff that should have been and didn't happen and the stuff that happened that was unexpected — IS the travel experience. All of it is grand.

WARNING

Reading this 'little book' is the equivalent of digesting the travelogue version of War and Peace. It is suitable only for the retired, those with a great deal of money, the un-employed and Maytag repair persons -- people with copious amounts of time on their hands who view reading this as an opportunity to put off hunting for the remote control, giving out Christmas bonuses to the servants or answering yet another call from a sex-starved housewife who thinks you look cute in a uniform.

So put together a ham sandwich, a glass or two of wine (hell, bring the bottle), grab some overnight gear and head for the recliner. This could take a while.

List of Ancestors

Part 1 The Northeast

Chaloner, Thomas (1559-1615)

Fisher, Mary (c.1623-1698))

Richardson, William (1660-1740) and descendants

Wigham, John Richardson (1829-1906)

Pease, Sir Edward (1757-1858)

Richardson, John Wigham (1837-1908)

Part 2 The Northwest

Savory, Hester (1751-1783)

Part 3 The Midlands

De Vernon, Sir Richard (and 118

Cadbury, John (1801-1899)

Spriggs, William (1898-1986)

Tudor, Arthur, Prince of Wales (1486-1502)

Catherine of Aragon (1485-1506)

Part 4 The South

Rose, Dr. Fulke (1644-1695)

Rose, William (1640-1711)

Pengelly, William (1812-1894)

Julian, Henry Forbes (1861-1912)

Savery, Thomas (1650-1712)

Part 5 London

Alexander, Joseph Gundry (1848-1914)

Alexander, Horace Gundry (1889-1989)

Fry, Elizabeth (1880-1945)

Sloane, Hans (1660-1743)

Part 6 London

Pepys, Samuel (1633-1703)

Shackleton, Sir Ernest Henry (1874-1922)