



Guildford Travel Club

50 years of travel for travel's sake

We look forward to welcoming...

Dominic Faulkner



20th February Colorado - the Great Unknown

Dominic kayaks the length of the Colorado River experiencing remote canyons and the stunning geology of Utah and Colorado.

Ash Dykes



6th March Surviving Madagascar

Ash completes the first recorded traverse of the length of Madagascar, a 1600 mile trek in 155 days, climbing eight of the island's highest mountains during the journey.

Phoebe Smith



20th March Extreme Sleeps - Adventures in Britain

Phoebe sets out to prove that the UK offers adventure to rival anything you will find overseas. In 2014 she became the first person to camp at all the extreme points of mainland Britain.

From the Chairman

We're midway through the season as I write this and unsurprisingly your favourite speaker so far has been John Pilkington who scored 98% in three categories with the subject scoring 93%. The only speaker to surpass these scores last season was Paul Goldstein and in one area our President, David Edwards. Both will be returning next season and you can also read about John's current travels in this Newsletter.

I'd like to welcome all the new members who've joined us this season and I hope you are enjoying your membership of the Club. Please come along to the AGM on 17th April when we also need to elect a new Membership Secretary and Volunteer Coordinator. We welcome new members to join the Committee and if you are interested in helping to run the Club do come and chat to me or a member of the Committee.

I hope you will enjoy hearing some great speakers this term.

Janet

From John Pilkington's Blog

Our Vice-President, John Pilkington, is in Eritrea and Ethiopia researching for his new talk 'The Abyssinian Difficulty'.

John writes, "Why on earth would you want to stay for a month?" asked the immigration officer in the Eritrean capital Asmara. It was a question I've grown used to since arriving in this forgotten part of the Horn of Africa.

How difficult life can be for Eritreans! Half her young men are in the army, and the other half often struggle to make a living. Electricity and water are a real luxury, leaving some people trapped in a circle of poverty shocking even by African standards. Despite it all, I've noticed that Eritreans do laugh and smile a lot.

It's Saturday night in the town of Keren. No power, so no streetlights. With its sandy roads it reminds me very much of Timbuktu, but here half the people are Muslim and half Catholic so the atmosphere is

slightly different. Strolling the streets in the early evening has been a joy. Neighbours catch up with neighbours, and the corner shops are busy under assorted lamps and generators.

It's been a thrilling start to the trip, and in January I'll fly to Ethiopia.

See John's website for much more!

<http://www.pilk.net/update1.ethiopia.html>



GTC News & Events

We need you! Committee Vacancies

I am sorry to report that two of our long-standing Committee members – Jenny Allan and Julia Hilton – will be stepping down at the AGM. We therefore need to fill two posts.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

The role involves processing membership applications and maintaining records as well as overseeing the Welcome Desk and dealing with enquiries about the Club. Additionally reporting back to the Committee regarding numbers attending talks and sending out occasional emails to members.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Key responsibilities include organising refreshments for Club evenings and Socials and purchasing supplies. Also seeking volunteers to help with the Welcome Desk, chairs and serving coffee.

Please come and speak to Janet if you are interested or for more information have a word with Julia or Jenny.



Book review - Paul Gillingham

Have you read any good travel books lately? If so we would love to hear about them. Do send a short book review (about 150 words) together with an image of the book cover to sharon.leigh74@ntlworld.com.

“Queen of the Desert: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell” by Georgina Howells

Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) was the creator of modern Iraq. She should have been more famous than Lawrence of Arabia as she did more to advance the Arab cause, had a deeper knowledge of Arabia and greater kudos among desert warlords. But he was a man!

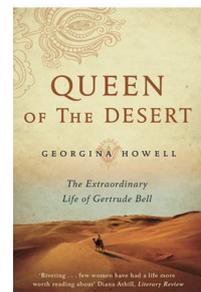
This biography, written by a woman, graphically describes the difficulties Bell faced in venturing out into the unknown – the dangerous Arabian desert – and competing on more than equal terms in the stuffy corridors of male colonial power and among the misogynistic desert sheikhs used to seeing women in veils or in harems.

Georgina Howells is a superb writer who equally explores the history and politics of the times with the emotional undercurrents of Bell's life, including her two major love affairs. She was a top journalist who wrote about many A-listers, but her greatest role model was

the Queen of the Desert. Her admiration for her subject perhaps means she sees Bell's contribution to history through rose-tinted glasses but she is not blind to Gertrude's faults. As a super-bright woman (a First in history from Oxford) who risked her life climbing the most dangerous Alpine peaks and suffering innumerable hardships crossing the Arabian desert, Gertrude was scathing of 'ordinary women' who lacked her intelligence, knowledge and courage. She had no time for Suffragettes, even though there could be no more liberated woman.

Bell's story very much resonates with today's world.

She was an assertive woman in a man's world and roamed areas –as volatile then as now - which have long been in the news: Syria, Iran, Iraq. It's no wonder this biography was a Book of the Week on Radio 4 and her dramatic life, ending in suspected suicide, was the subject of a recent Werner Herzog film starring Nicole Kidman.



We look forward to welcoming...(cont)

Kev Reynolds



27th March Walks and climbs in the Pyrenees

Kev shows us the Pyrenees at their spectacular best, from lush valleys to Alpine-style peaks, not forgetting an amazingly diverse flora.

Harry & Jean Wickens



17th April AGM & From Desert to Delta

Harry and Jean travel through Namibia and Botswana seeing the sand dunes at Sossuvlei, Sesriem Canyon and wildlife including hyenas, leopards and an overfriendly seal.

Meet a member - Mark & Sue Randall

When did your interest in travel begin?

It's in our blood. Sue's mum came from New Zealand and Sue's dad's work took him to Africa and so Sue lived there for all of her childhood. My father was in the Fleet Air Arm and later became a commercial airline pilot. Latterly in the course of my work we lived in Japan and then in Sweden for over 10 years.

Where was your first foreign travel experience?

Our first big trip together after we were married was to Ecuador and the Galapagos islands. We made a journey in a motorised dugout canoe along the Rio Napo, exploring the jungle along the border with Peru. There were the two of us, a local guide and a doctor from Glasgow. We stayed in grass huts along the river, met a few snakes and fished for piranha. The Galapagos islands were stunning and as this was the mid 80s there were only a few, mostly small boats in the vicinity, so we almost had the place to ourselves.

Where to next?

In March we're off to Northern

India, Bhutan and Nepal. We have been to many parts of Asia, a continent that we love visiting, but these are three countries that have alluded us to date.

Your preferred type of holiday?

We love touring, seeing diverse landscapes and enjoying meeting people from different cultures.

Your favourite place?

We have visited many wonderful places and keep going back to Asia and South America as regions we particularly like exploring. We generally don't go back to exactly the same places, so as not to spoil our memories. However, there is one place we do go back to regularly and

that's New Zealand. Partly because it's in Sue's blood, but that aside, it's an incredible country and we have made some really good friends there. One of our friends owns a stunning holiday home on an island called Kawau, which is in the Hauraki Gulf. It's only accessible by boat and there are no roads.

What would you never travel without?

For Mark a camera, for Sue hair straighteners.



GTC Committee

Chairman
Vice Chair/Membership Secretary
Treasurer
Programme Secretary
Assistant Programme Secretary
Hall Manager & Website
Assistant Hall Manager
IT Support & Design
Volunteer Manager
Publicity Secretary
Minutes Secretary

Janet Parsons
Jenny Allan
Colin Rumary
Carol Busby
Paul Gillingham
Andrew Luyten
Tom Garside
Chris Beynon
Julia Hilton
Rosie Spalding
Sue Rooke