

The Hall Of Fame David Prowse

In the bedroom shared with older brother Owen, There was rivalry between us, I recall, As we fought for space on which to pin our pictures In the hall of fame that graced our bedroom wall.

So my footballers and cricketers competed With the motorcyclists Owen so revered But to turn one's back could see the balance altered As Stanley Matthews strangely disappeared.

"Mice!" he'd say, by way of explanation And dig me in the ribs to make me smile, He was older and so teasingly persuasive That it hardly rendered argument worthwhile.

Sometimes I'd try a trick or two, I'd hide the drawing pins But he'd merely borrow those I'd used before

Which left my Denis Compton unsupported

And he'd slip behind the headboard to the floor.

Then one day, with the roaring of a throttle

Which re-echoed like a lion in his den,

My brother donned his tractor-driving gauntlets

To join the ranks of motorcycling men.

And when he'd passed his test, I took the pillion

To chug along the country lanes of home

And as that new-found unity grew stronger,

His heroes were no longer his alone.

Through changing bikes and changing Cornish seasons,

After years in which we'd merely rubbed along,

We found the trusting comradeship of brothers,

Each knowing that the other made him strong.

In years to come, he'd meet his girl and marry

And the hall of fame was mine, as his bequest

But among the many pictures I selected,

I added one that stood above the rest.

A familiar face in goggles and a helmet

Sitting proudly on a Norton of his day,

No young man tells his brother he's a hero

But I like to think he knew it, anyway.

● For inquiries about David Prowse's books of poetry call 01752 600366.



Books

Sarah Pitt discovers two different works of fiction set in India and inspired by

Kaleidoscope helps tangled tale unfold

THERE are thousands of them, people who go missing while travelling – and not all want to be found. The photographs staring from noticeboards on café walls intrigued Clare Jay when she was travelling in India.

Breathing in Colour by Clare Jay Piatkus, £7.99

In *Breathing in Colour*, her mesmerising first novel, she tells the story of 18-year-old Mia, whose disappearance sends her mother on a frantic search across southern India, from Madurai to Trivandrum, Hampi, Varkala, Bangalore and back to Madurai, on the trail of a daughter she has lost in more ways than one.

"The idea came to me when I was in India myself backpacking," says Clare. "I'd end up in cafés trying to get something to eat and escape from the heat and I used to see missing posters on the walls. I used to think, what happens to these people?"

"I ended up doing some research into it through the Missing Persons Bureau and also read articles about these missing people, and learned that some of them choose to disappear from their Western lives.

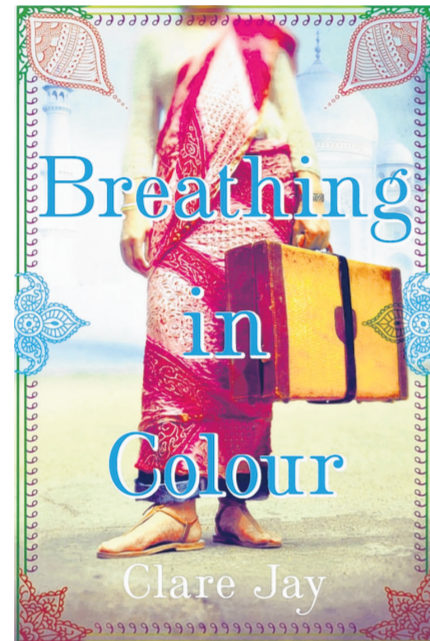
"This idea of choosing to disappear was quite an interesting one for me. Why would someone do that? And thinking of this young girl, why would she want to disappear?"

In Mia's case the answer lies in the tragedy which tore her family apart 13 years before. As her mother, Alida, travels through southern India, following clues in the vivid collages which Mia has left to be discovered in her hotel room, the reason for the rift between mother and daughter gradually emerges.

Through it all, India is revealed in all its sensory exuberance, made even more intense by the way Mia experiences the world, as a person with a condition called synaesthesia, whose experiences of taste, smell, sound and sight are jumbled up in the mind.

Clare's interest in this condition was sparked by her PhD research into how dreams can influence creative writing.

"I knew I wanted Mia's character to experience the world in a different way and I didn't know how," she says.



DAVE MEEHAN

Clare Jay and right, the temple in Hampi, which Alida visits on the trail of her missing daughter Mia in Clare's novel *Breathing in Colour*

those places in her writing.

"I like exotic locations," she says. "For me it is more fun to write, and I like the idea of giving the reader that experience as well.

"When you are in that place you soak up the atmosphere and it is very nice to go back there in your mind. It was very nice when I was writing the book to disappear to India."

She spent "quite a few months" backpacking through India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, some seven years ago.

"It is a very good place to set a book, because there is so much richness to it," she says.

And she found that she could return to India by delving once more into the travel diaries she wrote at the time.

"Whenever I travel I always write travel diaries," she says. "Being in India is very exciting, and I had all these travel diaries which were my own vivid picture of India. They took me straight back into it. If I wasn't sure where to set a scene, I would just open them up."

Travel bug meets need to explore and create

THE LIFE YOU WANT by Emily Barr *Headline Review, £12.99*

WHEN Emily Barr came back from a year's travelling around the world, she became a star of the emerging genre of travel-lit with her first novel *Backpack*.

Now her eighth book has hit the shelves, taking Tansy, the heroine of that first novel, back to the India she knew more than 10 years ago.

The *Life You Want*, set in the heat and rush of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, has a plot so gripping it coils itself around you then pulls tight. The story has that trademark mix of plausible characters, a storyline with more twists than a mountain pass and local colour that has made Emily a perennial presence in the bestseller lists.

The book opens with Tansy, now the mother of two sons, frustrated in her marriage and teetering on the brink of both alcoholism and an affair with her son's dishy surfer dude teacher Mr Trelawney. When she collapses at a family party, and an invite to help at an Indian orphanage arrives from an old travelling friend, Tansy is on the next plane, glugging one too many glasses of wine, ready to unleash her anger on rickshaw drivers, men in bars and mouthy backpackers.

All is not what it seems at the strangely well-equipped orphanage though, and as Tansy becomes more embroiled with the life, she finds herself in a desperate situation which will need all her resources to extricate herself from. The yearning for a child of an American couple who are travelling to India to adopt is set against Tansy's ambivalent feelings towards leaving her own children behind. Soon the two threads collide, cataclysmically.

The family are settled in Falmouth, where they have lived since moving back from their last adventure in South West France, itself the inspiration for Emily's novel *Plan B*.

and create

France, itself the inspiration for Emily's novel *Plan B*. Emily started out as a travel writer for the Guardian, which carried her fortnightly blog when she was travelling although she was always keener on putting the places she visits into fiction. Her evident talent soon secured her a literary agent who negotiated her a two-book deal when she was a quarter of the way through *Backpack*. She then had to write 75,000 words in five months, "which was certainly motivating, that total terror".

"I try to write one book every year, because it is has been our main source of income for the past seven or eight years," she says.

She is currently writing her ninth novel, her children – Gabriel, seven, Seb, five, and Lottie, two – established in their routine of school and nursery.

"I pack up my computer and head down to a café in town and work there, because



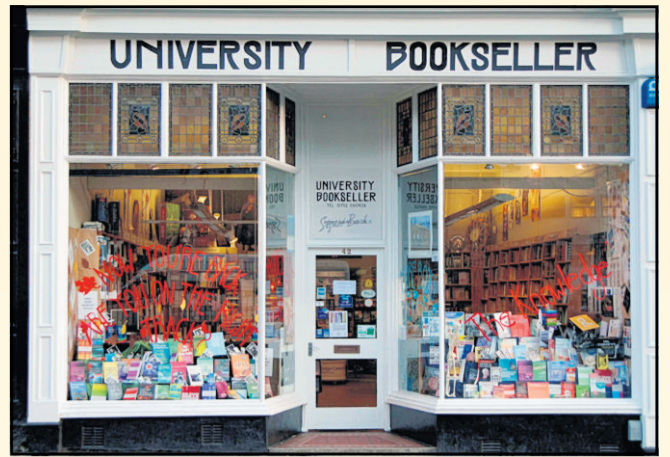
Author Emily Barr on her recent trip to India

otherwise I feel the house closing in on me," she says.

Her new novel starts off in Falmouth, but inevitably heads for more exotic climes, in this case Venice by train. This provides the perfect excuse for a few days away with the same friend who accompanied her to India.

"I tend to think what would be a really nice trip and work the book around that."

THE WMN BOOKS CHART



Bestselling titles from the Westcountry's independent bookshops

This week's Top 10 comes from University Bookseller North Hill, Plymouth Telephone 01752 660428



1 Pronouncing Shakespeare – David Crystal
This is an excellent account of the Globe's project to perform Shakespeare in "authentic" accents of the period. Cambridge University Press, £14.99

2 The Victorians – Jeremy Paxman

Jeremy Paxman offers his personal take on the most important and influential period of our national past, using the paintings of the era as his starting point. BBC Books, £25

3 Voyage of the Beagle – Charles Darwin

When HMS Beagle sailed out of Devonport on December 27, 1831, Charles Darwin was 22 and about to set off on the voyage of a lifetime. His journal shows a naturalist making patient observations concerning geology, natural history, people, places and events. Penguin, £9.99

4 Plymouth's Favourite Trees

A collection of accounts and thoughts from the people of Plymouth about their favourite trees and why they are important in city life. Plymouth Tree Partnership, £5.99

5 The Horse Boy – Rupert Isaacson

When their son Rowan was born, Rupert and Kristin's dream had come true, but their beautiful boy developed a disorder that left him incapable of communication. But one day father and son were walking in the woods and stumbled across an old brown horse, Betsy. Penguin Books, £12.99

6 Barack Obama – The Inaugural Address 2009

Penguin presents a keepsake edition commemorating the inauguration of Barack Obama with words of the two great thinkers and writers who have helped shape him: Abraham Lincoln and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Penguin, £7.99

7 Somewhere Towards the End – Diana Athill

Diana Athill made her reputation as a writer with the candour of her memoirs; now aged 90, and freed from any inhibitions, she reflects on the losses and occasional gains that old age brings. Vintage, £7.99

8 Coffee with Shakespeare – Stanley Wells

A chat with William Shakespeare turns into an evocative journey into the personal and professional world of the greatest writer in the English language. DPD Books, £6.99

9 The Origin of Species – Charles Darwin

Written for the general public of the 1850s, this is a rigorously documented, highly readable account of the scientific theory that now lies at the root of our attitude to the universe. Penguin £9.99

10 White Tiger – Aravind Adiga

The story of a low caste Indian servant who decides to free himself from the shackles of servitude in order to make good in modern India. This is a very readable and worthy Booker Prize winner. Atlantic Books, £7.99

BOOKSELLER'S CHOICE

The Secret Scripture – Sebastian Barry A beautifully written, emotionally charged book telling the story of Roseanne McNulty, a woman nearing her 100th birthday and confined to Roscommon Mental Hospital. Visits by her psychiatrist Dr Grene kindle an unlikely relationship that uncovers not only their personal truths, but secrets embedded in Ireland's history. Faber and Faber, £7.99

