

Tour Times

A publication of Mary Valentine Tours



May-June 2023

Dear Reader,

In this edition of **Tour Times** you'll find news and features on the return of Big Ben, Paddington's BAFTA Award, book and film recommendations, a piece about an extraordinary woman we love to visit in Bath, and suggestions for happy traveling, as well as an update on our September 2023 tour. As always, if you have any questions, give us a call at 323.868.6394.

Mary

Ben Is Back in Town

After five silent years, and at a cost of 81 million pounds for repairs, Big Ben is once again bonging from its home in the Elizabeth Tower in Parliament Square. Though seen and heard by millions over the years, most people are unfamiliar with its history and mystery.



- ◆ Big Ben's gongs were first broadcast on BBC on New Years Eve in 1923.
- ◆ No one really knows why it's called Big Ben. One theory says it as named after heavy-weight boxer Benjamin Caunt, a celebrity at the time.
- ◆ At one time the British government planned to use fake Big Ben bonges during World War II to confuse enemy planes trying to find Westminster.
- ◆ The clock is still adjusted using pre-decimal pennies. Adding one penny to the pendulum causes the clock to gain two-fifths of a second in 24 hours.
- ◆ The clock is hand-wound three times a week. Each winding takes about 15 hours to complete.

Tour Times is a publication of Mary Valentine Tours.

For the past 15 years our tours have focused on "off the beaten path" locations and experiences throughout England.

We plan to expand our 2024 tours to include Wales. In 2025, we plan to add Scotland.

For more information about our September 2023 tour or any upcoming tours, contact us at:

Mary Valentine Tours
15030 Ventura Blvd. #456
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
323.868.6394

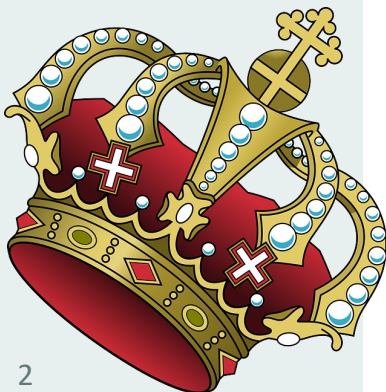


Stops in September 2023 tour include Couture exhibit at Kensington Palace, Greenwich, and Liverpool's new library addition. See page 5 for details

Things You May Not Know about the New King

Things not widely known about King Charles III include:

- ◇ His Majesty founded The Prince's Trust with his Navy severance pay of just over £7000 in 1976. The charity has now supported over one million young people. We visited the Trust on our first tour in 2007.
- ◇ The King, as Prince of Wales, was given the title, 'Keeper of the Cows,' by the Masai in Tanzania in 2011 to recognize his work as a farmer.
- ◇ A champion of environmental issues for over 50 years, The King first spoke publicly about his concerns on pollution and plastics and their impact on the natural world in 1970.
- ◇ In 1975, His Majesty became a member of the Magic Circle, a society of stage magicians founded in London in 1905, after passing his audition with a magic trick.
- ◇ The King purchased an Aston Martin DB6 Mark 2 Volante in November 1970, which has since been converted to run on E85 bio-ethanol made from by-products of the wine and cheese industries.



This Month's Book Recommendation

The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie by Alan Bradley, National Geographic Books, 2010

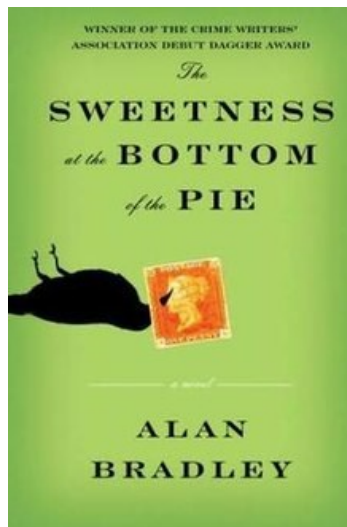
Flavia de Luce is a precocious 11-year-old and amateur sleuth. In the summer of 1950, she discovers a dead bird with a stamp affixed to its beak at the front door. Soon thereafter she finds a dead man in the garden.

Flavia finds such mysterious goings-on exciting. "I wish I could say I was afraid, but I wasn't. Quite the contrary. This was by far the most interesting thing that had ever happened to me in my entire life."

Readers follow her investigation as she battles with her mean older sisters and fights to clear her father of a murder charge.

Set in the English countryside, this coming of age novel has received multiple awards, including the Crime Writers' Association Debut Dagger Award, the Dilys Award, the Arthur Ellis Award, the Agatha Award, the Macavity Award, and the Barry Award, and was nominated for the Anthony Award. It's subsequently been translated into multiple languages.

Also available on audio.



Congratulations, Paddington!

The Paddington Bear video of his tea with Queen Elizabeth II has won a BAFTA award. BAFTAs are the UK's version of an Oscar.



Paddington's video was produced for the 70th anniversary celebration of the Queen's reign. It showed the bear and the Queen sharing tea and marmalade sandwiches as she revealed what she kept in her handbag.





“Tell me about a typical day.”

Meet Nicola Beaman *by Joanna Valentine*

As any seasoned traveler will tell you, the people we meet are often the best thing about travel. Here’s a profile of one of the most extraordinary people we’ve met on our tours: Nicola Beaman, founder and owner of Persephone Books.



We eagerly anticipate the delivery of the monthly newsletter from Nicola Beaman. Always beautifully written and full of references to other material, her newsletter gives us a sense of calm and the will not only to carry on, but to fight the good fight.

Ms. Beaman will turn 80 next year, and she will also celebrate two important milestones – the 25th anniversary of the publication of the first book by Persephone Books and their reaching 150 titles. The books have all have a distinctive gray cover with designer prints for the endpapers and bookmarks.

Their authors are “forgotten women” writers from the 20th century.

In May of 2022, we stopped in to visit and have a discussion of a collection of short stories. Ms. Beaman had prepared tea with homemade scones. She sat with the office dog in her lap as she spoke to us of writing and her life. She asked us to each tell her what a typical day in our lives was like. It was a charming and memorable afternoon, and none of us left without a book, a shopping bag, or other souvenir from the store.

Join us in May 2024 as we spend a day in Bath on our way to Wales. We will once again drop in on Ms. Beaman and Persephone Books.

In the meantime, we encourage you to follow Persephone Books on Facebook and/or Instagram, but even better, subscribe to her monthly newsletter at Persephonebooks.co.uk.



SEPTEMBER 3-10, 2023 TOUR SCHEDULE

LONDON, OXFORD, LEICESTER, BIRMINGHAM, LIVERPOOL, THE COTSWOLDS

You're invited to join us for eight extraordinary days in London, Oxford, Leicester, Birmingham, Liverpool, the English countryside, and the Cotswolds. See England as you haven't seen it before. Here are some things to look forward to:

- 4- and 5- star hotels and dinners at outstanding restaurants
- A traditional afternoon tea
- Greenwich, home of the Royal Navy College with its magnificent painted ceiling, and the Prime Meridian
- The state rooms at Buckingham Palace
- King Richard III Center, where we'll learn the story of how his remains were found 500 years after his death
- Kensington Palace's "Crown to Couture" exhibit
- A day in Liverpool
- Punting on the Cherwell river and a tour of Oxford
- A village circus
- A winery tour in Surrey

Cost per person: \$6059. This covers hotels for eight nights; eight breakfasts; seven dinners; one afternoon tea; group taxis in London; a luxury coach in the countryside; tickets and entry fees to all venues. Not covered: airfare, airport transfers, lunches, incidentals, and tips for our driver. Group size: 7-10.

To reserve a spot, send a non-refundable \$500 deposit to Mary Valentine. A second payment of \$2779 is due no later than July 1, 2023. The balance (\$2780) is due no later than August 1, 2023.

Send payment to Mary Valentine

15030 Ventura Blvd. #456 Sherman Oaks, CA 91403.

Questions? Call us at 323-868-6394 or 747-998-5630.

Movie News



The Full Monty Series

The Full Monty stars Robert Carlyle, Mark Addy and Tom Wilkinson reunite in a new TV series set 25 years after the hit movie.

Peter Cattaneo's 1997 comedy followed an unlikely group of men who turned to stripping to earn a living after the steel mill they worked in shut down.

It won an Oscar for best original musical or comedy score and was nominated for three others, including best picture and best director.

The eight-part series will launch on Disney+ on June 14.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

Retired pensioner Harold Fry lives in Kingsbridge with his wife Maureen, whose marriage to him has become despondent and quiet. One day, Harold receives a letter from his old friend, Queenie Hennessy, who is dying from cancer and is living in a hospice in northern England.

Harold then decides to walk the length of England to reach Queenie in Berwick-upon-Tweed without the use of transport or support from Maureen. Along his 450 mile journey he encounters a variety of people who show interest in his hiking achievement. As he walks he reflects on his life and we learn his and Queenie's story.

Viewers can watch this film on Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, and Amazon Prime.

Our next issue of **Tour Times** will feature our 2024 tour schedule.

