

UP FRONT

With Mozart, McIntyre, pea sticks and prawns, laughter, legends and choirs among the many items on the menu in May, it promises to be a busy month across the Marshwood Vale and beyond. And let's face it, after a soggy winter and a world recently described by the Pope as 'ravaged by a handful of tyrants', a bit of R&R won't go amiss. Despite the gloom, I was recently reminded of one of life's great positives at the Sherborne Travel Writing Festival. Listening to panels and talks, a key takeaway was the kindness of people. From travel writer and novelist Colin Thubron to biographer and author Sara Wheeler, writer and journalist Adam Weymouth and war reporter and journalist Jen Stout—who featured in our April issue—the message was that what we can learn from travel has enormous value. All speakers commented on the kindness they had experienced around the globe. Although travel helps us appreciate commonalities between disparate groups and takes us away from the echo chambers that are so limiting to the development of a better world—something that populist and divisive politics likes to ignore—it also helps us learn how to deal with challenges. Some of those are hinted at in a new book by Horatio Morpurgo, which Christopher Roper reviews on page 34. The story tells of Horatio's investigation into the discovery of an astrolabe, an early navigational instrument, in Lyme Bay in 1967. Horatio's investigation dips into Atlantic slavery, Empire, marine conservation, John Fowles, Mary Anning and even Extinction Rebellion. While Christopher's review mentions the 'demographic catastrophe' caused by early expeditions to the Americas, what we learn when we travel and experience different cultures with an open mind simply confirms the value of dialogue over conflict.

Fergus Byrne

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