

## Guides to help make the most of Britain

**Gary McLaren**, of Owl Bookshop in Kentish Town, takes his pick

**W**ITH the summer holiday season fast approaching and many people choosing to stay in Britain, sales in our travel section are booming.

We are still doing well with foreign destinations, especially those served by low-cost flights, but sales of guides to all aspects of travel over here are very healthy.

If the forecast of a hot summer is correct then we have a few titles that are perfect for making the most of your holiday.

Guardian Books has published **Wild Swim** by Kate Rew with advice on the best places to swim outdoors in Britain. Parliament Hill Lido and Hampstead Ponds get a mention but, if you're travelling further afield, how about Loch Ness or The Fairy Pools on the Isle of Skye.

In a similar vein, **Wild Swimming** by Daniel Start has 150 locations for swimming in the countryside. Published by Punk Publishing, there is also a companion title **Wild Swimming Coast**.

Punk Publishing is also responsible for the **Cool Camping** series and have just published **The Cool Camping Guide To Festivals** with tips and information about all kinds of festivals in Britain and Europe.

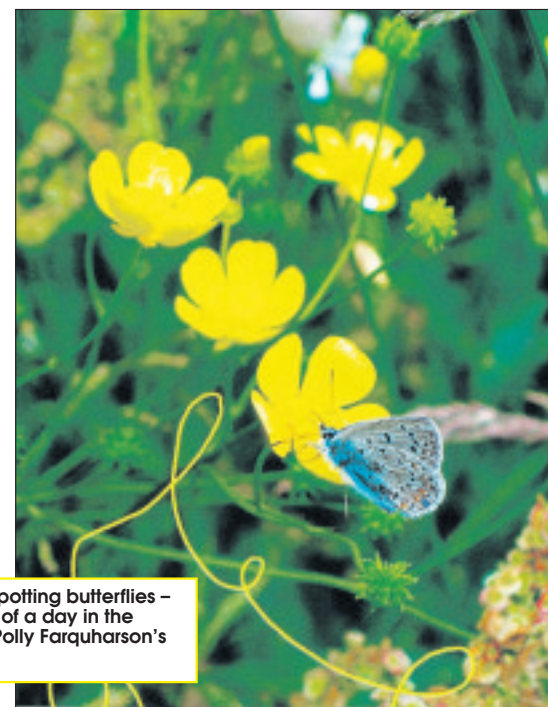
Also available is **Cool Camping Kids** with a selection of family campsites perfect for a camping holiday that kids will remember for the rest of their lives.

If you are brave enough to take the kids camping in Britain, you will need **Go Wild!** by Jo Schofield and Fiona Danks. Making a fire, foraging for food, building a tepee, map reading and many other essentials for survival outdoors are covered.

And don't forget your copy of the latest edition of the **Good Beer Guide** published by CAMRA, still the best guide to pubs in Britain.

If staying in London is your only option then try **London For Londoners** from Time Out. Written by the city's residents, it is perfect for exploring your local neighbourhood.

For days out in the city, **Adventure Walks For Families In And Around London** is a pocket guide with 25 themed walks. You can walk with Winnie-The-Pooh in the Ashdown Forest or discover the secrets of Roald Dahl's Fantastic Mr Fox in the Chilterns.



Chasing pigeons and spotting butterflies – just two of the wonders of a day in the country as pictured in Polly Farquharson's *The Green Line*.

**A** PHOTOGRAPHER and local mum has created an inspiring children's book about a joyful spring day out on Hampstead Heath.

Polly Farquharson based *The Green Line* (Frances Lincoln, £11.99) on countless happy days roaming the open space with a camera, loaded buggy and daughters Nancy, six, and Rose, four.

"We had such fun being outdoors – they loved being outside even from when they were tiny," says Farquharson. "I live near the Heath and it has always been a lifeline. We would spend most days there out in all weathers spending hours pitched under favourite trees. The pram was a station with everything in it and my memories of the children are mapped by particular trees or places on the Heath; a time spent breastfeeding leaning against a particular tree, or a day when both girls fell asleep in a spot where the grass was really high. If I pass that tree or field now I can conjure all the feelings of that day."

Farquharson enjoyed the freedom of those early years with no time schedule or fixed plan of where to end up.

"The fun was and still is, in what happened along the way – the small discoveries and adventures and the sense of excitement. My girls have a lot of energy and I am amazed by how much stamina they have, how far they can walk and their inventiveness in imagining games; splashing in puddles; roly-polying down a hill, making paths or collecting twigs." She adds that much of the book is about the way children see things.

"Often small things which hold such fascination like insects, flowers, or patterns on a leaf, things often never seen before... so there is an infectious excitement there."

Farquharson captures these simple pleasures in her child's eye view of one day trip to the Heath – the way a stick can resemble a snake, raindrops wobble on grass or tall flowers tickle your face.

She also conveys the childish wonderment of seeing nature's beauty – whether a powder blue butterfly, a bright yellow

# A walk in the park captured forever

There are many reasons to enjoy being outside as is clearly evident in photographer Polly Farquharson's delightful picture book. She explains to **Bridget Galton** how it all came about



Polly Farquharson with her daughters Nancy and Rose.

frequent walks with her mother.

Brought up in Camden Town, she attended Camden School For Girls before studying fine art at Goldsmiths. She contributed photographs of gardens and interiors to magazines and Sunday supplements, before taking time out in 2003 when

Nancy was born.

Even then, she would always take her camera with her on trips out, taking thousands of photos.

For her, these life-affirming images were a way of validating those often overlooked years caring for small children.

"I loved my work and the book

sprang from a desire to combine my years as a freelance photographer, with my life now and, the source of inspiration, my two daughters. I really enjoyed the time with my children and it was good to do something to celebrate that. Taking the pictures for the book crystallized those happy memories."

The *Green Line* should inspire all parents – the next time they have a day with their children – to swerve the ghastly hubbub of indoor play centres and head to their nearest open space for the day.

"We still spend days on the Heath," she says. "I hope the book shows that sheer freedom of being out on your own adventure, discovering the environment and not being told what to do all the time."

## Debut's impressive stroll around the J

THE J-WORD by Andrew Sanger  
Snowbooks £7.99

**I**N SOME ways *The J-Word* by Child's Hill author Andrew Sanger is a classic Ham&High novel. Composed with an experienced travel writer's command of location and atmosphere, the narrative traverses Golders Green, Golders Hill Park, Hampstead – particularly the Royal Free Hospital – and the council estates of NW5, with occasional forays to Muswell Hill and Tottenham.

As the title suggests, it is also a novel about Jewishness, an exploration of varying levels of adherence or non-adherence to Jewish traditions and a fascinating exposure of the vagaries of Jewish identity and its impact on individual lives.

Here I should declare an interest. As the author of *Lost Jews*, a non-fictional enquiry into the struggle for identity, I was particularly absorbed by how being 'Jewish' in many ways

but not in accordance with orthodox Jewish law affected one of the protagonists, Simon Silver, a successful journalist and travel writer, who appears to have suffered a nervous breakdown while on an assignment.

It is this breakdown which triggers the storyline when Penny, Simon's wife, is obliged to call on her father-in-law Jack, known as 'Aloo', to look after 10-year-old Danny while she flies out to join her husband.

Jack, an 80-year old widower who has lost his wife Mary to cancer, finds today's Golders Green, where his son's family have recently settled, a culture shock.

Despite frequently coming out with Yiddish words and phrases, he is keen to emphasise his Englishness as

opposed to his Jewishness, an aspiration reinforced by his many years living in a village outside the New Forest.

While he enjoys bonding with his grandson, a child prodigy with a particular fascination with prime numbers, he is unexpectedly called on to rescue two very different people in the space of a few days.

One, a seemingly drunken man, has collapsed near Golders Green Station and receives from Jack the kiss of life. The other is an ultra-orthodox Hasid, set upon by a gang of anti-Semites. Jack helps him escape, only to be assaulted and injured himself.

This is the crux of the novel, influencing the development both of the external action and of deep psychological processes



**B**UDDING writers inspired by the uniqueness of life around Hampstead and Highgate can enter their work in a short story competition.

The fiction prize – open to writers who do not yet have an agent or publishing deal – is part of a new three-day book festival jointly organised by the Ham&High and the London Jewish Cultural Centre.

The Hampstead & Highgate Literary Festival starts on September 13 and the line up of authors at Ivy House in North End Road, Golders Green includes Esther Freud, Kathy Lette, Arabella Weir and Sebastian Faulks.

Festival organisers are looking for original, engaging, previously unpublished short stories of 1,000-1,500 words with the opening line: "It was early morning on Hampstead Heath".

Entries will be judged by Camden Town novelist Amanda Craig and Ham&High editor Geoff Martin in two categories: 11 to 18-year-olds and adults (over 18s)

Mr Martin said: "Everyone involved is very excited about the literary festival and it seems the ideal opportunity to create a platform for new writers. The standard of entries is bound to be extremely high and who knows, we may unearth a future Booker Prize winning writer. That might sound far fetched in many areas but it's a real possibility in Hampstead and Highgate."

Louise Jacobs of the LJCC added: "With many great authors, poets and playwrights counted among Hampstead and Highgate's residents, past and present, what better than to take part in the first Hampstead and Highgate Literary Festival?"

"We hope the short story competition will encourage readers of all ages to use their imaginations, relish their surroundings and put pen to paper – or more likely fingers to keyboard."

"As Hampstead dwellers make their way each year to Hay and Cheltenham, perhaps in the future we will welcome visitors from the Wye Valley to Ivy House."

Winners will be presented with a prize on Sunday September 13 when they will hear their work read out by one of the well-known names taking part in the festival.

# Heath could be a gateway to glory

Unpublished authors alert! The Hampstead and Highgate Literary Festival today launches its short story competition



**Literary giants.** Clockwise from top left, Amanda Craig, Kathy Lette, Arabella Weir and Sebastian Faulks.

They will also see their work printed in the Ham&High on September 17.

Entries should be sent to Bridget Galton, Features Editor, Ham&High, 100A Avenue Road, NW3 3HF or sent by email to [bridget.galton@hamhigh.co.uk](mailto:bridget.galton@hamhigh.co.uk) by July 23.

□ To book tickets for the festival, call 020-8457 5000 or visit [www.ljcc.org.uk](http://www.ljcc.org.uk).



## Phinn-tastic time for all

**AUTHOR** and raconteur Gervase Phinn (pictured above) will be raising money for Muswell Hill charity The TreeHouse Trust with an evening at the Shaw Theatre in Euston.

The former teacher, whose biographical novels include *The Other Side of the Dale*, *Over Hill and Dale and Head Over Heels in the Dales*, will be at the venue on June 24.

He will talk about his life and work at the special evening in aid of the TreeHouse school for autistic children.

The event will also raise money for the Spike Milligan Statue Fund, a charity aiming to put up a memorial to the late comedian at Avenue House in East End Road, Finchley.

## Find Delhi at Daunt

**WRITER** Sam Miller will be at Daunt Books in Marylebone High Street to talk about his exploration of the Indian capital Delhi.

*Delhi: Adventures in a Megacity* is a travel book that gets to the heart of the teeming city that is both dreamtown and purgatory for its inhabitants. Miller will be in conversation with historian and novelist William Dalrymple at the book store on June 17 at 7pm.

Tickets priced £5 are available on 020-7224 2295.

## Celebrating a classic

ON June 16 every year, Dubliners celebrate the life of writer James Joyce on an occasion known as Bloomsday.

Fans step out in Edwardian dress and retrace the wanderings of Leopold Bloom, the hero of Joyce's magnum opus *Ulysses*.

The novel takes place on one day in 1904, on a date apparently chosen because it marked Joyce's own first outing with future wife Nora Barnacle.

The London Irish Centre in Camden Square is marking the occasion on June 16 at 8pm with a celebration of Joyce's work compiled and performed by Frank Dunne.

It will include music, song, poetry and extracts from Joyce's novels.

Tickets to *You Are Here Assembled* cost £5 from [info@londonirishtheatre.com](mailto:info@londonirishtheatre.com).

## Jewish north

of change which shape the future of Jack and his family in a more Jewish direction.

As well as presenting a fascinating range of characters including an Israeli mechanic, a vigorous elderly refugee couple from pre-World War II Vienna and a gang of racist thugs, Sanger's novel brings up some very relevant contemporary themes, not least the excessively lenient rulings so often handed down in today's Courts of Justice. By alternating the voices of his principal protagonists with third-person narration, he achieves both variety and strong character depiction.

With its blend of the familiar and unfamiliar, with its hint of adventure and risk-taking against a background of north London middle-class life, *The J-Word* holds the reader's attention and is a considerable achievement for a first novel.

EMMA KLEIN

# How we give ourselves away

**SNOOP: WHAT YOUR STUFF SAYS ABOUT YOU** by Sam Gosling (Profile £8.99)

**L**ET'S face it we're all nosy. Even those of us who deplore the intrusive nature of such TV programmes as *Big Brother* (all the rage at the moment, I hear) would love to know many things we have no business knowing. How else can you explain the popularity of OK! magazine and its ilk.

Not only that, but at the same time that we're making snap judgements about other people based on little more than what they're wearing, how they walk or even how they sign off their emails, they're doing the same about us.

Which brings us to this fascinating but somewhat alarming book in which author Sam Gosling (associate professor of psychology at the University of Texas) demonstrates how we all give away much more of ourselves than we mean to.

And it goes deeper than that. If, as things stand, we continually give away things about ourselves that we don't want to, can we deliberately *change* the things we give away and thus project a dif-

ferent, more positive picture of ourselves – even if it's entirely untrue? What to do, what to avoid and why is all in here.

**SUPERSENSE** by Bruce Hood (Constable £8.99)

**B**ruce Hood's book is subtitled 'From superstition to religion – the brain science of belief' and it tries to explore why as humans we believe in things which go far beyond any rational thought. Did you know, for example, that Tony Blair always wore the same shoes when answering Prime Minister's Questions? Or that John McEnroe refused to step on the white lines of a tennis court between points?

Why do people believe such things make a difference (most of us have something which we believe against all sense). Is it a 'supersense' we're born with? Or nonsense we're stuck with? Hood tries to unravel the clues.

DAVID CROZIER

