

ADVENTURES
IN
ANGLOTOPIA

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Adventures in Anglotopia

The Makings of An Anglophile

By Jonathan Thomas

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*To My Wife Jackie
The Only One I Love More Than England
Yes, really.*

*I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land.*

Jerusalem - William Blake 1804



SEA OF THE HEBRIDES

THE MIN

GRANIPIAN MOUNTAINS

NORTH SEA

IRISH SEA

CAMBRIAN MOUNTAINS

ENGLISH CHANNEL

ISLES OF SCILLY

STRAIT OF DOVER

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INTRODUCTION

I was standing in front of Buckingham Palace the day before the Royal Wedding (the one for Prince William). It was a surreal moment. I was in my best suit, standing in front of a BBC camera, I was about to be interviewed by a BBC presenter I had seen on TV countless times. I was suitably nervous. This interview was the whole reason I came to cover the Royal Wedding. Running Anglotopia at this stage, I rarely left the basement; that's the joy of running a home-based business. Now, I was in front of the world. It was an opportunity I didn't want to squander.

There was a 'pre-interview' before the actual interview started. Then, *the* question was asked.

"Why are you such an Anglophile?" he asked, or a variation of that. It was a long time ago.

Why, indeed?

It's a question I've thought a lot about. I almost choked when it was my moment to answer; I'm sure I rattled something off quickly that didn't really answer the question. It's a question I've been seeking the answer to ever since I started Anglotopia in a closet in Chicago in 2007. Why do I love Britain so much? Why am I obsessed with a country that is not my own—a place I don't live, a place in which I don't have any immediate physical or familial connection? If I got the phone call tomorrow that I could move to Britain, why would I do it at the drop of a hat?

In almost every interview I've had over the years, I've been asked this question. When we meet Brits in person, they wonder the same thing. It's such a curious thing to them that someone could love their country so much. I get at least one email or online comment every week from someone wondering the same thing. It's a good question, but I've never really had a good answer for it.

When I was pondering what type of book I wanted to write, I settled pretty quickly on answering this one question. Coming up with an answer would not be easy. I would have to peer back deeply into my own past, before and after I started Anglotopia. I would have to find nuggets along a trail that weaved through my entire life and encompassed almost all the trips I've taken to Britain over the last

twenty years. At last, I finally have an answer.

The journey starts in a classroom in Indiana in the late '90s. When I walked into my seventh grade geography class and saw the TV, I was thrilled. It was a cold winter day, just a few days before we were supposed to go on Christmas Break. Our minds were already on Christmas, and we had no desire to learn about the geographical issues facing the Indonesian islands. A TV in the room meant one thing: we would be watching a movie that day — what a relief. We could just sit back and watch the movie.

But Mr. Milakovic did things a bit different. Rather than turn the movie on and return to his desk to do whatever it is he would rather be doing, presumably not teaching a bunch of ungrateful white kids about geography and instead planning a canoe trip through the Isle Royale in Lake Superior, he made us earn our movie. We had to fill out a worksheet with questions so specific, it would ensure we had to pay attention to every line in the movie. I'm grateful for this teaching strategy because it forced me to pay attention to the film. And it turned out that the film we watched that day, *The Empire of the Sun*, would become one of my favorite movies – and, consequently, provide the nugget of Anglophilia that I have today.

I knew nothing about the film. It had an alluring title. Mr. Milakovic introduced it to us quickly, telling us that it was a film about a little boy, about our age, surviving a time of war. I had heard of World War II by that point. How could I not even in the woefully inadequate US education system? But I had no idea *The Empire of the Sun* would personalize it, and put it in a context that would lead to a lifelong fascination with World War II and all things British.

I listened to every line in that film with great interest. Class was only forty-five minutes long, so it took us most of the week to get through it all, and I was excited every day to go to school and finish it. During Christmas break, I begged my mum to rent the movie from the video store (this was the late '90s, they still existed) and I watched it again with her.

The Empire of the Sun is a Steven Spielberg directed film (I consider *The Empire of the Sun*, *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan* to be the perfect unofficial trilogy about World War II) about a little British boy called Jamie (Christian Bale), living in China with his imperialist family, getting caught up in the Japanese invasion of China, and subsequently the greater events of World War II. He gets separated

from his parents and lives on his own for a while, before befriending a couple of Americans (John Malkovich and Joe Pantoliano) and ending up in a Japanese Concentration Camp. He's ignorant of the world and, in fact, has a lot of respect for the Japanese and their amazing airplanes. The adults around him struggle to cope with the depredations of war, while he comes of age in a time of suffering with a childlike wonderment at everything happening around him.

It must have been a bizarre world to live in. This boy lives in China, but he might as well have been living in Surrey. Their house was English. Their furnishings were English (with a dash of the Far East). Their food was English. Their car was English. His education was English. Their attitudes were English — post-Victorian Imperialist, to be exact. In the first act of the movie, he only sees glimpses of the country he really lives in and notices things aren't quite right. War is looming.

Jamie has spent his whole life in China, but he's British. Yet, Britain is a foreign place to him.

"I'm English, but I've never been there," he says.

That line spoke to me, and it still speaks to me. For a large part of my childhood and teenage years, I loved England, but I wasn't English, and I'd never been there. Why?

I found, as I was writing this book, that I kept looking for a single event that led to me becoming an Anglophile. But there wasn't a single one. It was the culmination of many events. British culture was everywhere in my childhood, often in the background. It was Roald Dahl books that I loved. It was British TV shows on PBS late at night. It was the classical music I liked. It was the history I devoured. It was popular culture with the Beatles and other British bands who were popular in America. It was Patrick Stewart and Marina Sirtis in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. I'm an Anglophile because Britain's biggest "soft-power" is its culture, and its, admittedly superior, culture is simply everywhere.

I grew up with Roald Dahl books. They were everywhere in school, and the '90s were the heyday of his books being turned into films. I read all of them. But here's the thing: young me didn't realize they were British. I just really enjoyed the books. I remember reading the description of the teacher's cottage in *Mathilda* and falling in love with the idea of that. It turns out it was an English cottage in the English countryside. His books were dark and twisted, but as I child, I

loved them, which was strange because I had a perfectly fine and well-adjusted childhood. What, exactly, was the attraction of reading about fellow children in horrible situations?

However, by far my favorite Dahl books were the two he wrote about his own life. They were the first autobiographies I ever read. He wrote them for children, and they were a joy to read. I loved hearing about his British childhood before the war. I wanted it. I even liked the idea of his boarding school. These were the days before Harry Potter when all the fans wanted to go to a British boarding school. I liked them before they were cool. I remember being so enraptured by *Boy* that I read it at home, then read it in the car on the way to my family's holiday cottage by a lake in Michigan, then did nothing but read the entire book until I was finished. I don't remember anything from that weekend by the lake other than reading that book. When I got home, I remember begging to go to the bookstore at the now-demolished Century Mall to order the sequel because you couldn't find it locally. These were the days before Amazon. I was so excited when they called to tell me the book had arrived.

When I reread the book last year in preparation for writing this book, I was immediately taken back to the bunk bed in that lakeside cottage, enraptured by Dahl's descriptions of his British childhood. It was like visiting an old friend, and I was surprised at how much I remembered. I was made an Anglophile before I even knew what an Anglophile was.

And that's what I realized writing this book. There was something in my personality that was predisposed to the enjoyment of English and British things. Still, it was stoked by the fact that the British (and its sub-cultures) were and are everywhere in American media, history, and life. You don't really notice them until they're pointed out by the British. Iced tea is a favorite beverage in America, and while the British fundamentally disagree with the concept of iced tea, we got our love of tea from them (even if we'd bastardized it). Our government, while a uniquely American creation, had its roots in the British parliamentary system.

Britishness is subtle and somewhat insidious in American culture. It's a British villain in a blockbuster film. It's a classic British show, airing late at night on PBS. It's in the speeches you hear or read in history class. Disney may have taken *Winnie the Pooh* and turned it into its own thing but *Winnie the Pooh* is fundamentally British.

Its creation and genesis could not be more British. And if you grew up in my generation, Pooh was a critical part of that. The same with Peter Rabbit, another British import that we've begun to just think of as American, even though it's British (the less said about the recent Americanized film adaptation, the better).

When you learn American history in school, they do go back in time and cover the colonization of the USA and how society here developed. It's a very British story, one of a brave people setting out across the vast ocean and populating a foreign and dangerous land (and unfortunately, displacing and killing the existing inhabitants, which is another very British way of doing things). America used to have a King. He's a joke to us, the mad king who let America go. But, he was our King until he wasn't. Then history progresses, and America and Britain become best of friends. We fight side by side in World War I and World War II. These seminal events, which are usually portrayed as being a bigger deal for Britain than us, had a huge effect on Anglo-American relations. There were hundreds of thousands of English war brides. They brought a fresh injection of English culture into the background of American life.

You only have to look at how our media goes crazy when there is a major royal event on. Americans love the Royal Family, a family we rejected. We have no real loyalty to them, but we love watching them get married and have babies and do all the things we expect of royalty. When Princess Diana died, it was almost as if we lost one of our own. Her shadow still looms large over American Anglophilia. Whenever I publish anything on Anglotopia about the Royal Family, inevitably Princess Diana will come up in the comments section. Instead of Godwin's Law (the theory that any internet argument will descend into comparison with the Nazis), we have Diana's Law. We even have similar affections for the Queen, and I expect that when the dark day comes when she's no longer with us, America will mourn hand in hand with Britain. Will our affections transfer to Prince Charles? Who knows.

I especially see it now that I have my own children. They're heavily influenced by British soft power. My daughter's favorite show for many years was *Peppa Pig*, a British cartoon. Some American parents have even claimed their children are watching it so much it gave them British accents (I was not so lucky). Disney may have co-opted princesses and princes, but you can bet my little girl loves hearing

about the real ones. The books and movies that were popular when I was a child are still as popular today. And now we have Harry Potter, a British cultural juggernaut, though as much as I've tried, I just can't get my kids into Harry Potter. Maybe when they're older.

British foods are more prevalent now than ever. You can find McVitie's digestives in Wal-Mart now. Finding good British tea (as in tea blended and packaged *in* Britain) is not hard to do. You used to have to order it from abroad. Finding good back bacon or English sausages is easy. American cuisine may be a fusion of many different cultures, but the foundational block is British cooking. Heck, roast turkey on Thanksgiving is a British import! Even the very idea of a "Thanksgiving" meal is British, and let's not forget that the first to celebrate were themselves English. America is a land in search of a native culture that has found it in its British roots.

I would revisit *The Empire of the Sun* every few years after that first time, eventually buying it on Blu-ray when its 25th anniversary happened. As I got older, the film became harder to watch. When I first saw the film, I was Jamie's age. So I identified with him and his fascination with the terrible world around him - and making the best of it. But then I grew up. I went to college. Met my wife, Jackie. Got married. Had kids.

Now, when I watch the film, I watch it in horror. I can't imagine the pain and suffering Jamie's parents went through in the film - being separated from their son for *five years*. My god, I don't even like to be away from my kids for a weekend. The thought of missing five whole years of their lives is almost more horrible than the terrible things Jamie witnesses in the film. Your child would be a stranger.

I also learned more about the author of the original book the film is based on, J.G. Ballard, as I got older. The film portrays Jamie's adventures as if he gets through them rather unscathed. He has depredations, but he's British about it. He grows up faster than he normally would - and there's a poignant scene at the end where we throw his suitcase in the water, essentially jettisoning his childhood. But if you delve into Ballard's other literary works, you understand that he was scarred for life by his experiences. Not only that, he gained a perspective on humanity at its worse.

There's even a word for it now: "Ballardian," meaning a picture of a modern world that alienates the people that live within it. I dare you to watch or read *Crash* or the film *High-Rise* and not think

that Ballard had lost all hope on humanity being capable of sensibility.

My son is now nine years old, and he's approaching the age of Jamie in the film. I can't imagine ever showing the film to him. I want to shield him from the horrors of the world, and of its capabilities. I know it's an impossible task, but this film means so much to me.

Through it all, and despite his admiration of American culture presented in the film, Jamie never lost his Britishness. He was stoic in the face of adversity. He was interested in what was happening around him. He was resourceful, still willing to learn his Latin in the middle of a war. Jamie embodied some of the things I loved most about Britain. It's strange that I got all of this from a Hollywood film, produced by Americans, based on a British book. Britishness is in the background. It's always there. We only need to look for it.



NO ENTRY

BUCKHILL LODGE
PRIVATE

THE FIRST TIME

The first time I visited Britain, I hated it. As a lifelong Anglophile whose entire identity had hinged on discovering Britain in person, this was a bit of a problem. I blame TV and movies for this. This was the age of *Notting Hill* and *Mr. Bean*. I expected London to be like what I'd seen on the screen. Even a show I considered to be as factually accurate and real as possible, Rick Steves' *Europe*, failed to prepare me for the "real" London. There was quite a bit of soul-searching on the trip as I coped with having all my fantasies about London crushed by reality.

My first trip to Britain was a graduation present. Well, really a pre-graduation present. I was going to graduate early from high school in January 2002 and the plan was to go with my mother after that. But, British Airway's direct marketing efforts (as in they sent us brochures in the mail) were so good in early 2001, we ended up going early. They had a deal that was too good to be true and we decided to take it. So, in June 2001, the era before 9/11 and before air travel became much worse, I took my first transatlantic flight to London.

I had one problem, though.

I'd come down with a cold the day before we left.

This meant that I flew with a head cold that was made substantially worse by the journey.

I struggle to sleep on planes, and even with the cold medicine I took, I still failed to sleep. So, I arrived in London feeling like hot garbage and I was unbelievably tired. I was not impressed by Heathrow Airport, which at that stage was still rather run down and rocking a 1970s chic that was showing its age. British Airways had arranged a "free transfer" for us, which meant that we had to wait for a bus to take us to our hotel in London. When it pulled up, it was the strangest bus I'd ever seen, more like a minivan but with room for, like, twenty people. Even the engine sounded different to anything I'd heard before.

"Where you headed, love?" the young driver asked my mom.

"The Corus Hotel on Lancaster Gate," she replied.

"Righty-o, get in!" he said grabbing our bags and putting them in the back of the van. We waited as several more tourists got on the bus and settled in.

The ride into central London was like riding a roller coaster.

You could feel every twist and turn in that bus, which the young man drove like a racecar. I suspected he was being paid by the trip from Heathrow to London and so had to fit in as many stops as possible in a day.

Everything was alien. We spent most of the journey on the motorway and then the Westway. Then we found ourselves driving through Notting Hill and, at that stage, I thought it looked rather run down. Not like the movie at all. We drove through lots of areas that appeared like this. It turns out the area we were staying, Lancaster Gate, was an odd place (at least in 2001), where there were all these beautiful old genteel Georgian buildings, but they were all rundown or poorly maintained. However, when we arrived at our hotel, it looked nice enough from the outside and the lobby seemed okay.

Our flight had made good time over the Atlantic, so we arrived early. But I learned when we arrived at our hotel that this was not a good thing. It was only about 10:00 a.m. and our room was not ready. It wouldn't be ready until around 2:00 p.m. This really confused me. Why would the hotels not be ready for people coming right off transatlantic flights? They made no effort to accommodate us in anyway. So, after we ate some breakfast, we simply camped out in the lobby and waited until our room was ready because we were too tired to do anything else.

And I still felt like garbage.

Eventually our room was ready and we followed a series of elevators and signs through this hotel. It seemed like we were mice in a maze. We opened the door and hit the bed. This is where we learned the first lesson of travel in London that all tourists must learn. Rooms, at least in the tourist hotels, are small. Our window had a view of Hyde Park. Well, sort of. It had a view of Dickensian chimneys with a leafy tree visible beyond.

We barely had room for us and our luggage.

I promptly collapsed on the bed and fell sleep for a nap.

As we explored London over the next few days, I felt like I was in an alien world. Things that were similar to the only other big city I'd been to, Chicago, were slightly off. There were elements that were the same - like plenty of homelessness, beggars, rude people, etc. - but what really shocked me was how grimy London felt. It felt dirty. That's not a word I think anyone would use to describe Downtown

Chicago. Everything was slightly shabby, covered in grime. We had cloudy weather the whole time, and that didn't help either.

People were not nice to us.

Every time I opened my mouth, I felt like I was being judged for being an American.

There were signs everywhere warning you of pickpockets.

There were even children panhandling.

Most of all, it just didn't feel like any of the places I'd seen in movies, and feeling is important. Sure, places looked just like they did on the screen, but they didn't feel like it.

It was the first time I experienced that reality disconnect between movies and real life. How could something not feel like how it made me feel on the screen? Cool Britannia this was not.

As I wandered through London that first time, still fighting off the cold and being quite surly and mean towards my mother, I realized I wasn't falling in love with a place I had staked my personal identity on.

I felt like I was failing as an Anglophile by not loving London as it was.

How should London feel?

Because how it felt to me was not how I thought it should feel.

Everything was slightly...off in London. The people spoke English, but it was a another kind of English that I didn't fully understand. The cars drove on the wrong side of the road. Until I realized they wrote on the street which direction to look, I was honked at quite a few times for looking the wrong way. I went to the movies and had to reserve my seat even though I was the only person in the theater. There were commercials before the movie (this was before this became a thing in America). Books seemed cheap to me, and I only learned much later it's because they don't charge VAT (sales tax) on books. Traveling in London that first time felt like I'd entered a parallel universe where everything was only slightly different.

It was very disconcerting to a boy who'd barely left the Midwestern United States.

Going through my box of mementos from that trip - I keep a box from every trip to Britain I've been on - I found all kinds of strange objects. Apparently, I went to the internet café almost a dozen times. I'm not sure why I did this. I was in London, why was I wasting time

on the internet? Probably writing letters home to my crush - letters long since lost to the graveyard of bytes. This was the day before Wi-Fi. If you needed to get access to the internet, you had to do it at an internet café . There are still internet cafés in London, but they're sketchy places now, more a place for terrorists and people who don't want their internet movements tracked. I haven't set foot in one in a decade. There is Wi-Fi and now smartphones everywhere now.

Riding the Tube was a fun experience. Coming from rural Indiana, I found it amazing that you could hop on this train, pay just £1.50, and go anywhere in London. It's more than £1.50 now, and it costs more the further you go, but that's beside the point. I felt like I had the "freedom of the city" to explore, just by purchasing a small little paper ticket.

We did touristy things and visited tourist attractions. That's what you do. We visited Westminster Abbey and the London Eye and walked along the Thames and went to Harrods and did all the things the guidebooks say to do when you go to London for the first time. But it all felt a bit hollow. I was finally achieving my dream of visiting London and I was not getting out of it what I expected. I was not overly impressed by Westminster Abbey and the London Eye and the Thames and Harrods.

What was wrong with me?

Looking back now, I think the real problem was that I was seventeen years old.

I just didn't know any better.

My expectations for myself, for London, and for my poor mother who bore the brunt of my surliness, were simply unfair.

Expectations breed disappointment. My expectations were simply too high.

How could seventeen-year-old me expect to have a complete understanding of London's history, culture, and context? How could I have expected myself to appreciate London's beautiful architecture? How could I have expected so much of myself when I didn't even really know myself?

By the end of the trip, I was starting to finally feel better. I finally started to get a feel for London. My mother, trying desperately to get me to enjoy myself, spotted a classical music concert she knew I

would want to go to. It was at the Royal Albert Hall and it was to be a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*, which was my favorite piece of music. She was brave and made a phone call to the box office and reserved the last available seats for us.

We went to the show and it was lovely. I'd never seen the Royal Albert Hall before. I had no context for how important the building was. Looking back, that was the problem, really. I had no context for anything. You can only get context for London by being in London. Nothing else can give you that context. As I sat there and took in the music and listened intently as my favorite piece was played, I realized that I was in one of those perfect moments in life.

As the violinist furiously played a piece pronounced "unplayable" by the first violinist to see the score after Tchaikovsky wrote it, I realized that London was beautiful. I'd just been looking at it in the completely wrong way. After the concert, we couldn't get a cab and struggled to get back to our hotel. Frankly, we had one of our scariest experiences in London. But, I was finally in love with London.

The only problem was that the trip was now over. I had no more time. I'd squandered that first trip. As I left London, I was sad because it was over, but I was actually upset because I'd lost the London I'd longed to visit for so long. However, I'd discovered what London really was and what it really meant to me. It wasn't a perfect city. It was grimy and cold (in culture and in temperature). Some neighborhoods had seen better days. It was filled with tourists and tourist attractions. It feels like a foreign place. I learned it's the imperfections that can make you love a thing. True love is loving something despite its imperfections. As my plane took off on that fateful trip, I couldn't wait to go back. When I visited again in 2004, this time with the love of my life, I could see the city through new eyes, and firmly fall in love with London properly. I've been discovering the real London ever since. It's more brilliant than any TV or movie could paint. I hated London on my first trip, but I couldn't wait to go back.



NOTES FROM A WILTSHIRE PUB

There is a pub. It's called Moon Under Water. It's an old Victorian place. If smoking was still allowed, it would be smoky and reek of tobacco and spilt beer. The tables are hardwood, no glass surfaces, soaked in centuries of alcohol. There are roof beams, low ceilings, a fire going in the hearth. There may be a dog wandering around. There's probably a dead animal over the mantle, covered in dust. The pub is always quiet enough to talk to your companions. The food is serviceable but you don't go there for the food. There isn't a TV, radio, or a piano. This is a place for drinking and socializing.

If this pub sounds familiar, that's probably because it doesn't exist; yet, it fits the stereotypes we all imagine pubs have. These points were actually set out by George Orwell in a classic essay about the Great British Institution that is the pub. His point was the Moon Under Water cannot possibly exist anymore. But we would all like it to. Despite classic pubs having gone the way of the dodo, pubs still play a critical role in the cultural life of Britain. Moon Under Water now exists in the minds of Britons, and every pub across the land is trying to capture the feeling that Orwell lays out.

Romance is a key part of finding a pub. More often than not, the vibe a pub gives off is the vibe that you bring with you. We have found our own Moon Under Water and came across it almost by accident, which is the best way to discover your favorite pub.

We arrived promptly at our booked time for Sunday Roast on a rainy afternoon. You must always book ahead for the best Sunday Roasts. The waiter showed us to our table, rickety and old with two very high pew-like seats. The pub was dark, and it was noisy with the Sunday Roast atmosphere in full swing. A Christmas tree twinkled in the corner. Children played while the large group of parents chatted about life. A fire crackled in both fireplaces. A black lab wandered around, hoping a scrap would fall on the floor. It was paradise.

The first task of any wayward Anglophile traveler when they visit England should be to find the perfect country pub. Don't believe the headlines that all the good pubs are closing. While there are certainly

pubs closing in great numbers, the attrition rate is no worse than most other businesses. There are still over 52,000 pubs in Britain according to the Campaign for Real Ale, an organization that advocates for pubs. I once saw a Google Map of all the pubs in Britain, and it was hilarious because it was essentially on giant red Google Map location point. There are plenty of pubs in Britain and plenty of beautiful country pubs to discover. It's important to find one.

Finding the right pub is like finding a friend, it takes work, and sometimes the chemistry has to be just right. After 20 years of travel in Britain, we finally found our perfect pub, deep in the Wiltshire Countryside.

We've been to lots of pubs in our travels. Some are terrible. Some are no better than a chain restaurant. Some you can't leave quick enough. Pubs can be very hit or miss. But the best pubs, in my humble opinion, are country pubs. They're fundamentally different than a pub you'd find in London or a smaller city. Often, the pub is the only piece of community for miles around. It's a gathering place for locals, but it casts a wider net. A good country pub will also attract outsiders and become a crossroads of sorts for weekend travelers.

Many country pubs find themselves along public rights of way, so they cater to walkers who plan their walks to include a good pub along the way. This is a critical task when planning a long day of walking in the English countryside. One must stop for a pint and a meal at your halfway point (or tea if you're teetotal like me). So, country pubs are often a hive of outside interlopers and locals angling for a space at the bar. Many will have places to sit outside, some with expansive views of the English Countryside.

A country pub lives or dies based on its food. While a pub can survive if it has decent beer on tap, it will not survive if the food is terrible. In the days of Yelp and TripAdvisor, a pub with bad food simply cannot last. When someone plans their weekend around stopping at a country pub for the atmosphere and the food, you can bet they're going to expect a certain standard of quality in the food.

The best pubs are ridiculously hard to find. Our new favorite in Wiltshire was impossible for our car's SatNav to locate. This was a problem since it was night and the back lanes leading to this pub were pitch dark and single track.

When you rely on the SatNav to get you anywhere in England, there's always a good chance it won't get you there. In fact, you can end

up in an unexpected body of water or at the end of a dead-end lane. As our car led us through the dark to the country pub we had never visited before, we got increasingly worried as the country track got narrower and narrower and the lights of civilization got darker and darker.

And then our SatNav told us we'd reached our destination and that we needed to get out of our car and walk the rest of the way. As this was in the middle of the road with nowhere to park and no sign of any human activity, we were pretty sure our car took us on a wild pub chase. Our GPS guide, we agreed, was taking the piss.

We drove on and a half a mile later, civilization suddenly reappeared, and we found our pub, lit up in the night like a beacon in the darkness. We parked the car, laughed that the SatNav yet again almost led us astray, and marveled at the picturesque country pub in front of us.

When we read the description in the guidebook provided by the cottage we were staying in, we knew we had to pay a visit for dinner: "Wonderfully sourced and cooked local food in unpretentious flagstoned, low-beamed old pub complete with wood-burning stove. A real find!" The romance of the place oozed from the page.

Of course, I've been to many pubs in my travels, but I have a major problem. I don't drink. Ever. I'm as teetotal as a Victorian temperance innkeeper. I can't stand the taste of alcoholic drinks - wine, beer, spirits. I detest it all. And I have tried many. I wanted to like alcoholic drinks, mostly because social drinking is a big part of British culture.

Turning twenty-one in America is usually a big deal. It signifies one major life change: you can now legally drink alcohol. And gamble. But alcohol is the big one. I was never really interested in alcohol, but felt the occasion of my twenty-first birthday elicited at least one drink. By this point in my life, I'd been to Britain three times. Each of those times, I could have taken a drink if I'd wanted one. I'd been to enough pubs. I just wasn't interested.

But when it came time for my twenty-first, Jackie came up with the best idea.

"Why don't we go up to that English pub on the North side of Chicago?" she said.

So that's what we did. We lived about ninety minutes outside

of Chicago, so a trek into the city was a big deal. We'd heard about this pub. It was supposedly the best English pub in the Midwest. The Red Lion was run by a tried and true Englishman. According to online reviews, it was decorated just as an English pub would be in London and served typically English fare like fish and chips and bangers and mash, as well as having English brews on tap.

It was also supposedly haunted.

We arrived in the afternoon, and it became clear that we were the only people there. Just us and the publican, who was indeed English. It was dark and smoky like you would expect to find a pub in England. It was like the proprietor had read Orwell's essay on the Moon Under Water and constructed a faux pub to match. There were typically English prints decorating the walls - Nelson at Trafalgar, pictures of the 1966 World Cup, and various other bits of English ephemera, undoubtedly found in an antique mall somewhere in the Midwest. The publican told us how the bar itself came from England and was original. The seats looked like they were taken right out of an episode of *Inspector Morse*, with high backs and hardwood.

I knew nothing about beer. I still don't. So, the publican suggested one and I said that'd be fine.

We sat down and ordered lunch. Being in "full English" mode, I ordered fish and chips to go with my beer.

I liked that place. It really did feel a bit English, though it was easy to see that it was making a good imitation at being English. It was definitely the most "authentic" British pub I've been to in the USA. Most are dreadfully un-British; a Union Jack over the bar and Newcastle Ale on tap isn't what makes a British pub.

My beer arrived, and it was the moment of truth. It was a pint, a whole pint of Newcastle Brown Ale. I took a sip.

It was vile.

I practically spit it out.

"Beer is an acquired taste," said Jackie trying to suppress her laughter.

I truly hated it but thought the more I tried it, the more I might like it.

I never liked it.

The fish and chips came, and I ordered a Sprite to wash it down. The fish and chips were very good but not authentic - fish strips and fuzzy fries are nowhere in the cricket pitch of authenticity (it should be

one slab of fish and CHUNKY CHIPS).

So, we'd traveled all the way to Chicago. I hated the beer. The food wasn't great. But the pub was lovely. We never encountered the ghost, only my true distaste for alcohol. The pub is no longer there (though the name Red Lion lives on in other Chicago bars), and I sort of miss it.

That was back in 2005. I still hate beer (I've tried several times since) and never drink alcohol. I'm well aware that drinking in pubs is a social pastime I'm missing out on. That's okay. You don't need to drink alcohol to appreciate the wonderfulness of pubs even though drinking is a big part of social life in Britain. You can feel left out sometimes. There have been several occasions where Brits have looked at me like I was from another planet when I ordered a soft drink in a pub. I just say, "I'm teetotal," and people usually leave it at that.

I still like British pubs, and you can still enjoy them without drinking. In fact, I would argue they're more enjoyable because you get to be the sober guy watching British people get increasingly more drunk as time goes on. Brits don't care if you're not drinking alcohol as long as there is any kind of drink in your hand - even if it's water.

After we'd settled into our newly found country pub, we placed our order and soaked up the atmosphere while we waited for our food. The place was filled with locals, and the combination of familiarity with each other and the lubrication of alcohol meant that they were an easy bunch to eavesdrop on. In the process, we got an insight into all the local goings on, some of which were rather exciting.

The big news story that day was that a few miles away, just outside of Salisbury, police had raided a marijuana farm. This wasn't just any farm, though. This farm was located in a disused nuclear bunker. Apparently old nuclear bunkers provide the perfect conditions for growing the popular drug. I couldn't help but notice a tinge of disappointment in the air because the place had been raided. The disappointment came not just because of the hit to the local marijuana supply chain, but that someone so clever had been caught. Who would have thought that an abandoned nuclear bunker in the Wiltshire countryside would have been the scene of a drug raid?

While everyone chatted, a young black Labrador retriever paced around the pub. He'd get caught in the legs of patrons standing

at the bar. Often, he'd come by our table to get a pet or two. He'd lay down for a few minutes, but because of his age, , he was much too excitable to stay sitting for long. We noticed that none of the people in the pub were not paying any particular attention to him aside from our table.

Dogs in pubs are always a shock for us. I can never imagine a scenario in the USA where I would see a dog in a bar or in a restaurant unless it was a guide dog. However, in Britain, dogs in the local pub are commonplace. It goes with the scenery. When you go for a walk in the countryside, you take your dog and Britain, being a civilized country, isn't going to make the dog stay outside. It could rain!

One night in another pub, we saw a chap with his large dog, enjoying a pint. We got to chatting with him, and it turns out he was the owner of a different pub in town and it was his night off. So, even the publican takes his dog down to the pub whenever he gets a chance.

Eventually, we overheard why everyone was ignoring the dog. There had been an incident earlier that day.

We didn't see it.

Those in the pub didn't see it, but everyone heard about it.

The cute little Labrador in question had escaped his owner's house and got into a chicken coop and ripped apart a local prize-winning hen.

He was merely in the pub awaiting the arrival of his owner who was away at the time. What a sense of community - you could be out of town, your dog could kill a local chicken, and the local pub will keep an eye on him until you come to collect him.

Back home, they'd have called the pound, and you'd be lucky to ever see the dog again.

The dog was extremely friendly; I simply couldn't imagine him being a murderer. Then I remembered my Labrador back home, and then I realized, yes, this friendly, stupid dog could totally be a murderer.

Before our dinner was finished, someone came to collect that dog. We were sad to see him go.

You can always get the best local news eavesdropping in a pub. Forget the Labrador incident. I'd much rather hear about the debate on where to put the new community cricket pitch, or find out who bought the large Stately Home down the lane that's been empty for a few years. And did you hear that Guy Ritchie flew into Compton Abbas airport in his helicopter a few days ago? He lives nearby, Madonna used to, but

we know how that story ended.

More than anything, you feel leisure in the air. The English have a much slower pace of life, at least out in the countryside. This is what is so wonderful about country pubs; their very atmosphere is sedate. You simply cannot be in a hurry in a pub. You don't care how long the food takes to get to you, because why would you want to leave such a warm and stress-free environment?

On this particular visit, it was the Sunday Roast between Christmas and New Year's. Britain shuts down from Christmas until after New Year's; it's not uncommon for most "white collar" offices to be closed for two weeks. This isn't considered part of your allocated time off either, which is usually five weeks in Britain plus public holidays. So, the pub is filled with people relaxing. You can feel the lack of stress. It's wonderful. No one is in a hurry to go anywhere. The only purpose of this rainy Sunday is to go down the pub, have a good Sunday Roast, chat with your friends, read the Sunday paper, down a pint or two, and perhaps walk back using a public footpath.

It's a glorious place to be.

When we left, we were in awe of the starlit night. This is something that always catches me by surprise when we stay in the English countryside. The stars are so incredibly bright. Since back home we live outside of Chicago, light pollution washes out most of the night sky. It's funny that we have to come all the way to the English countryside to see more stars than we can see back home in the Indiana countryside.

We climbed back into our rental car and got back onto the dark country road to return to our cottage. We didn't need the SatNav to guide us; we knew the road was dark and narrow, but we knew the way now.

Find your country pub, and don't tell anyone about it. I'm not telling you where this one is!



FINDING A HOMETOWN IN ENGLAND, SHAFTESBURY

When people ask me for Anglotopia's number one travel recommendation, I often tell them to pick a base you can return to trip after trip. For many people, this is London. For others, it can be a village in Northern England, or a city on the south coast. As one should, I follow my own advice. My hometown in England is a town in Dorset called Shaftesbury. It's not a perfect bucolic paradise, but it has become our home base in England. It's a place I can navigate my way around without needing a map. I know the local footpaths; I know the local shops; I know the local politics. It's like home. Shaftesbury became the genesis for Anglotopia's creation, which is a long, wonderful story I'm always happy to tell.

I first became aware of Shaftesbury in the late '90s as a teenager. One day while browsing the local Hobby Lobby, I came across a poster that was so beautiful I had to buy and frame it. It was a charming English street scene with a row of cottages following the gentle curve of a hill and a beautiful view of the landscape in the background. I was transfixed by it. As an Anglophile already, I was in love.

I bought the poster and put it on my wall next to my bed. That poster was there for years. It became a beacon of hope for me. The high school years are tough for most, and whenever I would struggle to get out of bed, I would look up at that poster to get motivated. I would think that things cannot possibly be so bad because this place exists in the world, and one day I'm going to visit it.

It was an odd poster, as I would learn later. The poster was of Gold Hill. The caption on the poster simply said, "Villages of Dorset," which I would learn later is a bit of a lie because Shaftesbury is not a village, it's a town, and the English are very particular about this distinction. So, the poster was selling me a fantasy- a fantasy I ate up. Little did I know, the fantasy would turn into a reality.

I began to see the street everywhere. I would see it in shows about England. I would see it in period movies. I would see it in English travel guidebooks. I learned quickly that Gold Hill was probably the most famous street in Britain. I wouldn't learn why until much later. I only saw the place in my own little universe as a place I dreamed of

going.

Gold Hill is famous because of Ridley Scott. Yes, the director of *Alien* and *Blade Runner*. He made a small hill in a town in Dorset the most famous street in Britain. Before he directed movies, Scott directed commercials. In 1973, he directed a commercial for Hovis Bread, one of Britain's most famous bread brands. I can attest that their bread is delicious. It's a period commercial that features a young boy in Edwardian clothing pushing a bicycle full of bread up a steep hill. At the end, he rides down at full speed, set to music from Dvorak's New World Symphony. The commercial was a huge hit. In fact, it's been voted Britain's favorite advert ever. The commercial made its director famous, but it also put Gold Hill on the map – sort of..

Most people couldn't figure out where it was. Because of the steep hilly scenery, most assumed the village was located somewhere suitably picturesque like Yorkshire. The stone cottages looked like something that would fit in in Yorkshire. But it's not in Yorkshire, and it's not a village. Gold Hill is part of Shaftesbury, a small town at the tip top of Northern Dorset. It's only meters away from the Wiltshire border. Gold Hill is hidden, tucked away behind the Victorian town hall, down a steep alleyway. Once you round the corner, you're presented with a view that takes your breath away every time.

Shaftesbury was put on the map due to its association with the famous Hovis Commercial, so much so that there's a giant loaf of bread sitting at the top of the hill. It's a popular stop for pensioners – or retired folks - on their tours of Britain. It's also popular with international tourists, and why you'll find Gold Hill in pretty much every guidebook about England and certainly the ones about Dorset.

The street has become a stand-in for what people think of when they think of England. That's not really fair to the rest of England, because there are so many beautiful places. I admit I've played along in this narrative so much that Shaftesbury and Gold Hill specifically are my chosen home away from home in England.

We've now been to Shaftesbury at least a dozen times over the last fifteen years. Our stays have ranged from a few days to almost three weeks. Cumulatively, we've spent several months in this one place. When you spend so much time somewhere, you learn a lot about it. We've watched Shaftesbury change a lot over the years. It's a microcosm of the changes Britain has gone through in the last few decades.

When we first started visiting Shaftesbury in 2004, the high street was very much like it was for the previous hundred years. There was a greengrocer selling fruit and veg. There was a butcher. There were pubs. There was a Post Office. There was an ancient hardware store (called an ironmonger in Britain), the kind of place that had everything down to random bolts not used in a hundred years. There was the baker making delicious baked goods. There was even bookshop. I'll never forget buying my first proper pair of Hunter Wellies in the local shoe store. There were also plenty of chain stores, the kinds you would find all throughout an English high street (their word for downtown or main street).

Despite its wonders, something happened to Shaftesbury in the early 2000s - something that happened all the time in America, but happened faster in Britain. A Tesco opened on the outskirts of town. A Tesco is the British equivalent to a Wal-Mart Supercenter - though they're still much smaller than your average Wal-Mart. When the Tesco opened, it began to suck the life out of the Shaftesbury High Street. Slowly, the old school businesses started to close. They just could not compete, and the nostalgia of their services was not enough to keep the customers coming.

The irony is that if you talked to locals, they would all complain about the Tesco and how it was killing their High Street. Yet, somebody was keeping the Tesco in business. It's a bit like pretending your house is not on fire, when in fact it is. Shaftesbury changed their High Street, not the Tesco. When the economic crisis hit in 2008, that was curtains for Shaftesbury's High Street. Any businesses that were hanging on by a thread closed down. There were empty storefronts galore. Then the High Street became infected with a disease that has infected all the other struggling High Streets in England- the proliferation of charity shops. Think of Goodwill, but ten of them on one street.

The high street is in much better health today. The traditional businesses may be long gone, and the Tesco has won, but there's nothing you can do about it now. Still, there's been a proliferation of small specialty shops that are always nice to visit when you're in town. There have even been some new businesses trying the traditional route like the wine merchant or the new tearoom in a 500-year-old Tudor building. The town still has great pubs, which are the heart of any town or village in Britain.

When we fly over to England, we usually hop right into a rental

car and drive down to Shaftesbury. I don't even need the GPS anymore; I know how to get there. The M25 to the M3 to the A303 - the highway to the sun.

As you leave Heathrow, England is as built up as it gets. As the minutes pass on the two-hour journey to Dorset, England begins to slowly change. As you travel outside the suburban sprawl of London, pockets of countryside begin to appear. Before you know it, you're driving past Stonehenge and into the most beautiful landscapes in England. Green rolling hills are all around you. Dramatic cloudscapes float by, even in the dead of winter.

I'll never forget driving into Shaftesbury after having just left the A303, and seeing snow all around us. It rarely snows in England. It didn't last long, but the big chunky flakes were beautiful. It was like driving through a Dickens' story. Shaftesbury is the highest town in England, so it exists in a microclimate of its own. That can mean rain, snow, sun, sleet all in the same day. It's magnificent.

When you spend a lot of time in a place, you begin to learn its landscape, its public rights of way, the secret places where you get a great view or spot an old mill still churning away. The wonderful thing about England is that you learn a landscape more intimately than your own. Back home you can live your entire life in a place and not learn its landscape the way you can in England. The British simply have a different conception of property and land ownership.

When I come to Shaftesbury, I get to *explore properly*, as I fantasized about when I was a kid. I always bring an OS Map with me on my journeys to England. The Ordnance Survey produces the most beautiful, detailed maps of the English countryside. Every structure, every footpath, every road, every railway, and sometimes every tree, feature on these beautiful maps. I can spend hours poring over them. Every time I visit my town, I bring my map, pick a new footpath, and explore it.

You never know what you're going to find. The most wonderful thing is that you have the freedom to be able to do this. If I started trudging around the farmland near my house in Indiana, I would likely be shot.

Mostly though, the best part of finding your hometown in England is usually, without trying, you pick up a few friends along the way. Making friends with locals completes the circle of what makes a place homey. Now when I book our yearly trip to Dorset, I don't

fantasize about the landscapes; I look forward to meeting up with our friends again, going down the pub and catching up on the latest gossip or political news (and if you want an idea of how ruthless local politics are in Britain, just read *The Casual Vacancy* by J.K. Rowling).

Anywhere in England is an embarrassment of riches for things to do, and Shaftesbury is no different. Within twenty minutes of Shaftesbury, there's a castle, a Stately Home, several good pubs, forests, hills, streams, footpaths, and so much more. It's a microcosm of everything I love about traveling in England. I love that their "local Stately Home" is Stourhead House and Gardens - a beautiful National Trust Property that everyone should visit at least once in their life. The gardens are literally an Eden (or Arcadia, to borrow a phrase the English use).

Further afield, drive an hour, and you're at the Dorset Jurassic Coastline. With more Stately Homes, more castles, and even a tired old seaside resort town, Weymouth (which isn't so tired anymore). I spent my entire life growing up in the USA without having seen the Atlantic Ocean. I've now seen it dozens of times, just on the other side of it in Dorset. I can now navigate the roads of Dorset without a map. If I need something, I know where to go to get it. If I want a good meal, I know where the good restaurants are. If I need a flash card for my camera, I know I can overpay for one on the high street. If I want to go to a decent secondhand bookstore, I know there are a couple in Bridport. My wife knows where all the knitting shops are.

Need help finding a home of your own in England? Throw a dart at a map of Britain. Go to it. Don't leave for a week. If the place clicks with you, you've come home.

Now you can spend all your free time thinking about how to get back there as much as possible.



THE COUNTY WITHOUT A MOTORWAY

My home state is Indiana. I've spent most of my life here (save for a few years in Texas when I saw a young child). I know the rhythms of its life. I know the landscape (sorry mostly flat). I know the people (a mostly rural, uncomplicated folk). I know the history (a lot of Lincoln and little of anything else). I know the culture (sorry, Indiana, there isn't much). But it's my home state, it's where I own a home, and it will always be "home" to me, no matter how much my heart lives somewhere else.

It was only natural that I found my "home state" in Britain when I started to get to know the country better. Never mind that Britain doesn't have 'states' in the American sense. In fact, you could fit almost the entirety of the United Kingdom within the borders of Indiana. No, Britain has counties. They're a bit like states, but don't tell the British that. Each county in Britain is different, much like our states are different. They have their own histories and cultures and rivalries. The recent row between Devon and Cornwall over which order to put the clotted cream on your scones is a great example of that.

Dorset has become my "home state" in Britain. It's the place I try to spend the most time I can when I travel. It's the place where I pour over Ordnance Survey maps to try and learn every nook and cranny of the landscape. It's where I get lost on long walks and visit every tourist attraction imaginable. I want to know Dorset as well as I know my home state of Indiana. It must be so. If I see a book about Dorset, I buy it. I have Dorset flag bunting hanging from the ceiling my office. I have pride for a place I've never even lived. I probably know more about Dorset than many locals, and I always want to know more.

To me, Dorset is everything that Indiana isn't.

When we visited Dorset for the second time in 2005, we stayed the night at a local B&B, and chatted with the innkeeper.

"What brings you to Dorset?" he asked.

"Oh, it's just so beautiful and quiet here," I responded.

"You know, we're the one of the only counties in England without a motorway!" he exclaimed. This gentleman was always pretty excitable.

This blew my mind, and when I looked at a map just to confirm

such a boast, he was right. There is no motorway in Dorset - what we would call an interstate. There are major roads, but no massive motorway cutting through the landscape. Couple this with historically poor railway connections, Dorset can feel a bit cut off from the rest of the world - and this is truly wonderful. The pace of life in Dorset is slower. It takes forever to get anywhere, and that's lovely. Where my home is in Indiana, I live in between two interstate highways. Less than a mile from Interstate 90 and about three miles from Interstate 80. No matter what direction the wind is blowing, you hear one highway or the other. The whole of traveling America passes by my house every second of every day. I'm also under a major flightpath into Chicago, so airplane noise is constant. Not only does Dorset not have motorways, they don't have flight paths into Heathrow. Merciful silence.

My first literary exposure to Dorset was through the works of Thomas Hardy, who set many of his books in and around Dorset (and the greater 'West Country'). *Far From the Madding Crowd* was a favorite book of mine as a teenager. I loved the title. All I wanted was to enter the world of the book and live in Dorset. I didn't know, at the time, that really the story was a swan song to country life in Dorset which was forever changing thanks to the advent of railways, tractors and the overall industrialization of farming.

Dorset changed during Hardy's life, but Dorset is still very much a rural area, with more landscape than people. When they made a new film adaptation a few years ago of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, they were able to film most of it in Dorset, and in many of the real locations Hardy wrote about. That's how much in Dorset hasn't actually changed.

One of my favorite short novels is *On Chesil Beach* by Ian McEwan, which chronicles the terrible wedding night of a young couple in 1960s Britain. The landscape of Dorset also plays a big role in the background of the story with their final argument taking place on the iconic Chesil Beach - a three-mile-long spit of shingle where the rocks inexplicably change in size from one end to the other in an ordered procession. It's a remarkable place, and I can see why McEwan set his book there. When the film came out recently, I was very pleased to see that they filmed it in the real place and it added great dramatic weight to the film.

There are just so many empty places in Dorset. When you drive around on any given day, you will not run into very many people. The

villages feel closed to the world, and even the big towns are not as bustling as you would think. It's remote. It's cut off from the world. And it's perfect in every way.

Of course, what I'm most in love with is the landscape. There is not a flat piece of land in Dorset. It's beautiful, green - even in the winter - rolling hills provide a dramatic and varied landscape that I never tire of looking at. I can spend hours in the dining room of our favorite cottage on Gold Hill, Updown Cottage, staring out at the Blackmore Vale, watching the landscape change as the sun rises and sets. If I ever showed you the flat and dull landscape in Indiana where I live, you would understand what a novelty curves in the landscape are to me. I'm sure there are more beautiful landscapes in Britain, and I've even been to a few places I might even say are more beautiful - like the Lake District. But that's like choosing your favorite child. I love Dorset's landscape. It's my first love and will always remain so. My soul lives in the Dorset landscape.

I've gotten to know the landscape very well. I've traversed the county countless times in rental cars, walked innumerable miles and taken thousands of photographs. I'll never forget going out with a professional photographer and learning to see the landscape in a different light. It was just two days after Christmas, and I was a big fan of his pictures. I bought his calendars every year, even in the USA. He is known for his beautiful landscape pictures of Wiltshire and Dorset. We corresponded by email and much to my joy, he agreed to take me around Dorset to photograph some of his favorite spots.

This was the highlight of the trip.

We set off early, then spent the day chasing the sunlight - the low winter golden sun paints a perfect landscape to photograph. He taught me the thought process for composing good pictures of the landscape - how to frame things, how to pause, look, and wait for the right light. I'd been taking pictures for years, but he really taught me how to hone my photography and take pictures worth printing and hanging on the wall. We drove along miles of single track country lanes. We found the empty places of Dorset, where we encountered no people and only heard sheep. We even visited an old manor house at one point, where no one else was visiting. It was a surreal day. It felt like we had all of Dorset to ourselves.

Of course, Dorset has tourists and crowds, but they focus mostly on the southern coast where there are plenty of lovely old seaside towns

and villages. One ended up playing a starring role in a major British TV drama. The honey-colored sand cliffs in West Bay, Dorset became the unofficial star of the ITV Show *Broadchurch*. When it aired in Britain, it was an event. The show itself was about a small rural town in Dorset that struggled to cope with the murder of a local boy. The story was interesting, but it was also interesting to have such a story set in such a remote place.

It put West Bay on the map. Even when we visited in the winter, there were plenty of people talking about it. It also helps that the place is beautiful, no matter what time of year it is. On the one hand, I was excited to see one of my favorite places be part of a Major British Drama. But on the other hand, I was a bit sad that the rest of the world was going to discover my special place. When the show aired on cable TV in the States and was a surprise hit, I thought that would be the end of my solo love for Dorset.

Thankfully, years after the show has finished, I'm happy to report hordes of tourists have not ruined Dorset. It's much the same as it always was. Quiet and unassuming. I'm sure the British people reading this chapter are baffled.

Dorset?

Really?

I'm sure there are plenty of other places in Britain that many of my descriptions could apply to.

Still, none of them are Dorset because it's my home.

Just like Indiana is my home state, Dorset is my home county. I love it, warts and all. It's an irrational love. No love for your home is purely rational. You love it because it's home. I've spent cumulative months over the last fifteen years in Dorset, and I hope I can spend many more years there in my life to come. One day, I hope to know every road, every lane, every grand house, every Iron Age ruin, every barrow, every field. I know this is optimistic, but I want to learn as much as I can about my home.

Dorset calls me home every day, and I can never get back there soon enough.