

Tales from the Country 2008 (Dual-region)

Factsheet – Ep5 of 10 – Touring Guides

3rd July 2008 - ITV1 London

Selina Scott and Tony Francis take to road and river with two very different guidebooks, as they look back at the way we toured.

Selina hits the road with the help of the *Shell Guide* to Essex. The *Shell Guide's* were conceived by John Betjeman in the 1930s, when the yet-to-be Poet Laureate was working for Architectural Review magazine.

Betjeman suggested to the giant Shell corporation, that a new guide book was needed for the 1930s upwardly mobile driver. Betjeman suggested that Shell should fund and sponsor the guides, he would write them!

The first book, Betjemans's guide to Cornwall, came out in 1934. It was he said: "To illustrate places other than the well-known beauty spots and to mention the disregarded and fast disappearing Georgian landscape of England."

Eventually the *Shell Guides*, took in 34 counties of the UK. Betjeman's links with the guides ended in the late 1960s, and final guide book in the series, to Nottinghamshire, was published in 1984.

Now the books are regarded as design classics. This iconic status has led to an exhibition celebrating the guide taking place at Middlesex University.

For more on the exhibition, which runs until the 2nd of November 2008, visit <http://www.moda.mdx.ac.uk/shell%20guides/index.htm>

For more on the history of the Shell Guides visit <http://www.shellguides.freeserve.co.uk/index.htm>

During the programme Selina used the Shell Guide to Essex, first published in 1968.

She visited the town of Thaxted, home to amongst others the famed composer Gustav Holst.

It was here that Holst wrote The Planets, and also the tune to the classic hymn 'I Vow To Thee My Country.' The tune is known around the world as 'Thaxted.'

In the Shell Guide author Norman Scarfe talks of "national misfortune" befalling the town's 14th Century Guildhall. In 1910, during a period of restoration, the guildhall's plasterwork was stripped away to expose its ancient timbers.

For more on the town and the guildhall visit <http://www.thaxted.co.uk>

Selina also visited the parish of Debden and Wimbish, home to a sizeable Nepalese population. The village has long time connections to the Gurkhas, barracked at the local military base.

Now the native villagers and Nepalese have teamed up in order to 'twin' the villages of Debden and Wimbish with Tang Ting in Nepal.

For more details see <http://www.debden.org.uk>

Meanwhile Tony Francis was in the Wye Valley, looking at the legacy of the Rev William Gilpin, author of the first tourist guidebook in the UK.

Gilpin wrote 'Observations on the River Wye' in the late 1700s. In it he created the idea of the 'picturesque', the movement which celebrated the artistic appreciation of the landscape. An idea which seems natural now, was radical at the time.

The idea of 'The Wye Tour' had in fact predated Gilpin, with a Dr John Egerton taking his friends on boat trips from Ross on Wye down the river.

Gilpin's book – and the sketches of the views within it – highlighted the appeal of the area to a whole new audience.

Soon trippers, including Lord Nelson, were heading to the area.

For more on the Gilpin and the birthplace of tourism visit http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/pages/wye_so_special/birthplace.asp

Tony joined local canoe guide Graham Symond of Monmouth Canoe & Activity Centre, for a closer look at the river.

For more on them visit <http://www.monmouthcanoe.co.uk>

Tony also visited the Nelson Museum in Monmouth, home to an exhibition on the Wye Valley Tour, and also (as the name suggests) a host of material relating to Lord Nelson.

The latter comes thanks to a local Nelson fanatic who bequeathed her unique collection to the town.

Tony also joined up with artist Susan Peterken, who's published a book entitled Landscapes of the Wye Valley Tour. For more on Susan's work visit <http://ccgi.bigartweb.plus.com/ViewArtist.php?artistid=94&listpageno=0>

Finally Tony took another trip on the Wye, this time across it rather than down on the rope ferry operating from Symonds Yat.

The ferry crosses from the Saracen's Head Pub. For more on that visit <http://www.wyenot.com/symondsyat.htm> or call the pub on **01600 890435**