



BRIEFLY



Showcase for local writers

The work of local writers – whose day jobs range from accountant to cucumber picker – is to feature in a new exhibition at Hull Truck Theatre.

The Ferensway venue will form the backdrop for The Writing on the Wall exhibition, which will showcase the work until the beginning of June.

www.hulltruck.co.uk/the-venue/exhibition-space



Women studied – and survived

In 1869, five women enrolled at university for the first time in British history.

Doctors warned that if women studied too hard, their wombs would wither and die. Using the words of the women themselves, *Bluestockings*, by Yorkshire-educated Jane Robinson, out in paperback at the end of this month, tells their inspiring story.

CHARTS

Paperbacks

- 1 *The Girl Who Played With Fire* Stieg Larsson
- 2 *The Way Of Fire* Jamie Johnson
- 3 *Wolf Hall* Hilary Mantel
- 4 *Nocturnes* Kazuo Ishiguro
- 5 *Brooklyn* Colm Toibin
- 6 *Dinosaur Cove: Battle of the Giants* Charlie Small and Rex Stone
- 7 *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* Stieg Larsson
- 8 *Thomas To The Rescue: Thomas & Friends*
- 9 *Medusa Project* Sophie McGerale and Chris Higgins
- 10 *The Catcher In The Rye* JD Salinger

Hardbacks

- 1 *61 Hours* Lee Child
- 2 *Solar* Ian McEwan
- 3 *Breaking Dawn* Stephenie Meyer
- 4 *Little Darlings* Jacqueline Wilson
- 5 *1000 Years of Annoying The French* Stephen Clark
- 6 *The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary* Jeff Kinney
- 7 *Dog Days 4* Jeff Kinney
- 8 *Twilight: The Graphic Novel* Stephenie Meyer
- 9 *The Pacific* Hugh Ambrose
- 10 *The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest* Stieg Larsson

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South American odyssey to discover truth about the past

FAMILY SECRET

Robin Bayley often thought of running off to Mexico to follow in his great-grandfather's footsteps. He tells Sarah Freeman about his adventures.

WHEN Robin Bayley was a little boy his grandma used to tell him stories of a foreign land where bandits reigned.

As he sat on her knee, he was transported back to Mexico at the turn of the 20th-century, where his great-grandfather had hidden bags of silver for a man everyone else feared, who went hunting for tigers and who was rarely seen without his spiked spurs and sombrero.

Robin, who grew up in Sheffield, never tired of the tales, but when he happened to glance at the photograph of his great-grandfather which hung above the fireplace he found it hard to marry the image of the clean-cut, clean-shaven man who stared back at him with the pistol-toting owner of a South American cotton factory.

"My grandma once told me, 'Robin, there are three versions of the truth, my version, your version and the truth,'" he says. "She was absolutely right. As a kid, I hung on every word she said, but as I grew up, I did wonder how much of the stories had been embellished by a little artistic licence.

"The one thing I knew for certain was that my grandfather had been in Mexico. I also knew he had an affair out there. It was something of a family scandal."

Born in the Lancashire village of Tottington, Robin's great-grandfather, Arthur Greenhalgh, was the son of a mill owner, but when his father died he realised the business was on its knees.

Penniless, he decided to seek his fortune elsewhere and with the firm having established contacts with factories in Mexico in 1898, armed with little more than



MEET AND GREET: Just some of the family discovered by Robin Bayley.



PAST AND PRESENT: Robin Bayley, above, and, right, Arturo on horseback.



the Baedeker guide to the United States and Mexico, Arthur set sail, leaving behind his fiancée, Mariah.

Soon finding his feet, Arthur, known by the Mexicans as Arturo, showed his entrepreneurial spirit and found work as the manager of a cotton mill. It wasn't long before Mariah joined him and gave birth to their first daughter.

However, Mexico was politically unstable, at the first stirrings of revolution, the Greenhalghs fled back to England where their second child, Robin's grandma, Ruth, was born. That should have been the end of Arthur's Latin American adventure, but he was a man with itchy feet and the lure of Mexico proved too strong, as did the appeal of other women. During his second stint abroad, Arthur

had an affair with another woman, with whom he fathered a daughter.

"When anyone ever asked me what I would do if I won the lottery, I would always say, 'Follow in my great-grandfather's footsteps to Mexico,'" says Robin, whose book of his journey, *The Mango Orchard*, is just out.

"I just always had a sense that there was something out there. I'd always admired the way he had headed off alone into the unknown and I had always been fascinated, if not a little horrified by the way he had left Mexico in such a hurry and never returned."

Robin never did win the lottery, but when he had the opportunity to take voluntary redundancy from a job as a children's television executive, he grabbed it. "It might have been a little

was too far-fetched," he says. "The night I ended up in the brothel was pretty scary. I thought it was just another hotel, but it soon became clear that they were offering more than bed and breakfast. Then in the middle of the night I was woken by gunfire and the sound of a dead body landing on the metal roof over my head.

"There were definitely some moments when I wondered what on earth I was doing out there, but they were massively outweighed by the many good times I had and the genuine people I met along the way."

After a few months of travelling around, Robin found what he had always suspected – a long-lost family. His great-grandfather's Mexican daughter had given birth to 11 children, and each of those had at least four children. "It's a bit like finding a secret trunk that you know has not been opened for many, many years," he says.

"There's always a sense of nervousness about what you might find inside, but to be the one to unravel the various threads feels like

a real privilege."

Robin Bayley, *The Mango Orchard*, published by Preface, £12.99.

