

**AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #1 OF 2020 – January – For all New Titles: please see below for details.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

During December, Lan and myself had the privilege of spending two weeks in the Persian Gulf, visiting Dubai, Muscat/Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and a couple of Arabian sheikdoms with long names; none of which we had visited before. Our obvious reason for going there, apart from curiosity, was two-fold: to examine the quality of our artwork against reality, and to gauge touristic potential in the foreseeable future, given the tensions in the region. It was, as might be expected, an enlightening experience. Our report follows, below. We also should note that we are all entering 2020 in a state of uncertainty unlike previous years. Relations between the UK and the European Union remain fraught with tension, the Middle East remains tensed on the verge of conflict, trade wars between the USA and many countries (notably, but not exclusively, China) continue to disrupt the world economy, and the American political maelstrom continues to sweep all in front of it. Sigh. I think that we'll just fly off to southern Italy for a week of exploration. It beats watching the news!

## **NOTE TO ALL CUSTOMERS PAYING BY CHEQUE**

Please note that, due to increasingly stringent banking procedures, all cheques that you make out to us must be in the full name of our company, ITMB Publishing Ltd. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, our bank will refuse to accept any cheques presented by us in any other name. This is to minimize fraud, apparently. Cheques received by us in any other form of our name, will have to be returned to the sender for correction. It is no longer acceptable, for example, to use simply ITMB, or Mapline, as the payee, the full name must be used.

## **PERSIAN GULF**

The body of water to the east of the Saudi peninsula has traditionally been named the Persian Gulf, but the name Arabian Sea (or Gulf) is far preferred by the countries on its western side, as Persia, now called Iran, is a long-time competitor for power with Arabic Arabia. Lan and myself spent two weeks on an Azamara cruise operating out of Dubai to explore several nation feudal states in the region; unfortunately, neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia could be included, but we enjoyed seeing Dubai, Muscat/Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and various semi-autonomous sheikdoms of the United Arab Emirates. We also gathered valuable information for future maps.

One does not visit this part of the world for its historical noteworthiness, but to gain an awareness of changing geopolitical relationships. It is, after all, a distinctly different society from America or Europe, and is crucially important to world commerce. It is also filthy rich and ostentatious. Each of the port cities we visited – Dubai, Khor Fakkan, Muscat, Manama, Doha, and Abu Dhabi – are dominated by modern high-rise buildings that are, in many cases, architecturally awe-inspiring and obviously built for show rather than practicality. For example, Dubai has a five-story shopping mall that includes an ice-skating rink and Abu Dhabi boasts a massive mosque that is gargantuan and designed to impress. However, any piece of land that is undeveloped is a sandy wasteland, as agriculture is minimal. Almost everything is imported –

except oil, of course. 90% of the population consists of ‘guest workers’, mostly from India and the Philippines, and the society would collapse without their efforts.

Touristically, the region is friendly, safe, and peaceful. The sheikdoms do their best to stay out of the geopolitical quarrel between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but support the Shi-ite side of the religious dispute rather than the Sunni side. Qatar, in trying to play both sides, has found itself isolated, with its border to both Saudi Arabia and the UAE sealed, at least for the moment. Our only interaction with politics happened when Iranian gunboats encircled our ship. We just waved and took their pictures! Disgusted, they motored away.

Politically, the entire region is a despotic feudal series of states such as existed in Europe in the 1300s. The head of the UAE is the Sheik of Abu Dhabi; the Prime Minister is the Sheik of Dubai. The ‘parliament’ consists of the other five Sheiks. Government is by decree. All senior political/administrative positions are filled by members of the seven families. The head of Oman, a separate country, is also an autocrat, albeit benign. He is also elderly and has no direct heirs. The entire system, by its nature, is unstable. It is heavily reliant upon guest workers to maintain the infrastructure and construct sophisticated buildings. Few locals seem to work, and why should they? Oil makes them rich. However, the oil won’t last forever, and I saw little evidence of economic activity that was not based on oil wealth.

We saw the region from the comfort of a cruise ship. As a result, we experienced port calls that included opportunities to explore cities, with rare opportunities to go inland. One gains the impression that the entire region consists of brand new high rises until one leaves those areas with sea-water filtration plants. Then, one sees nothing but wasteland, low sand dunes, and the occasional wadi (an oasis with water). These are very pleasant and provide the traveller with a sense of life outside of the bubble existing in coastal cities. It is easy to rent cars, but also convenient to engage the services of a local taxi driver. There are lots of resort-style hotels, especially in Dubai, and we noted several well-known cruise ship lines at each port, so the region is popular. Our only potential negative experience was being approached by the two Iranian gunboats, shadowing our cruise ship for a few minutes.

## **TRAVEL TO ENGLAND**

One of the most frequent questions I receive is “Which country that you have visited do you like the most?” The question is not that easy to answer, in that most countries are interesting to visit, and the question implies ‘apart from Canada’. I lived in Africa for seven years, and have a natural affinity for that continent as a result, but politically, it is severely mal-administered by venally corrupt despotic autocrats. One can visit, but one cannot help but notice desperately impoverished individuals, and this lessens one’s pleasure in enjoying wildlife and gorgeous scenery. I also lived in England as a young adult, teaching elementary school in the Kilburn area of London. This gave me an opportunity to immerse myself into the culture of England by enabling me to explore the countryside surrounding the city, as well as London, on weekends.

London remains one of the truly great travel destinations in the world, thanks to its great wealth of historic buildings, churches, museums, parks, pubs, and shopping areas. I have been to London more than 60 times throughout my adult life, and it never fails to provide new things

I've never seen, but London isn't England; it is a microcosm of the world. One can spend one's entire trip and never leave the city, while having a marvelous time.

England, that portion of Great Britain left over after one excises Scotland, Ulster, and Wales, is so filled with castles, gardens, mansion houses, National Trust properties, parish churches, great cathedrals, battlefields, and places of significant happenings that, no matter what one's interests may be, they can be amply rewarded. One of my favourite places is St. Alban's cathedral, just northeast of London; wonderfully peaceful, it survived the dissolution of the monasteries because local people seized it and made it their parish church throughout the madness of Henry VIII to Cromwell. Lan and I visited Sir Isaac Newton's house in rural England, again, just north of London and slightly off the M1, and were amazed to discover that the tree he sat under while pondering why apples always fell downwards still exists. Thanks to him, we now know about gravity, but how wonderful it is that we can see exactly where modern science began. Similarly, I have stood on the spot where Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth, and for that matter, the spot where Harold fell in 1066, and on the spot where Anne of Cleves had her head lopped off, and the stone where King John sat when he was forced to sign the Magna Carta in 1215, at Runnymede. Last summer, I saw the spot Constantine was standing in York when he became Emperor in 303. One can do this in England. Once, I saw the only death mask existing in a church, near King's Lynn.

It simply isn't possible to see everything there is to see in England. Blenheim Palace is amazing, but so are a hundred other 'great' houses. I once saw a 6<sup>th</sup> century Saxon church, unchanged, and still in use. I visited Dode, a village made extinct by the Black Plague and never re-populated. The car museum at Beaulieu is a great treat to see, and I was suitably impressed by the very first computer ever made, in Bletchley Park. And yes, I've walked the public footpaths of rural England, and so can you. No matter how England's future evolves, post-Brexit, the 'essence' of England makes it one of the world's great travel destinations. ITMB has published several maps related to parts of England, as well as of Great Britain as a whole, trying to record as many attractions as can fit on to a map of a certain scale. Whether one uses our maps or those of AA, A-Z, Harvey, or Ordnance Survey, England will always be a place people will want to visit.

## **CHURCHILL**

While my mind is on England, there is a statue to the person who is arguably England's greatest leader, Winston Churchill, in Parliament Square. He is buried in a place of honour in Westminster Cathedral, and his home south of London, Chartwell, is now a national heritage property. His ties to the great Marlborough family and Blenheim Palace are well-known; not so well known is the tiny village nearby with the family graves.

Churchill was a master of the English language. He wrote a six-volumed series of books about World War II that resonate with greatness without being dry academia. He was a master debater and the king of the stinging retort. He was a great drinker and was once chastised by a matronly lady for being intoxicated. "Madam", he said, "Today I am drunk but tomorrow I will be sober. You, on the other hand, will still be ugly." A reader of the newsletter has kindly

forwarded me a selection of his pithy quotes, of which I submit the following for your enjoyment:

Diplomacy is the art of telling people to go to hell in such a way that they ask for directions.

Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision.

A nation that forgets its path has no future.

You don't make the poor richer by making the rich poorer.

An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.

Life is fraught with opportunities to keep your mouth shut.

I'd rather argue against a hundred idiots, than have one agree with me.

## **TRAVEL TO A LITTLE CORNER OF FRANCE**

We all travel for a reason, business or pleasure. The usual motivation for leisure travel is to explore a part of the world one hasn't seen. One such place is close to Calais, in France, but few have visited it. It is Azincourt, better known in English as Agincourt. Today, it is gently rolling farmland, but seven hundred years ago, it was the site of one of the most pivotal massed battles in European history. To appreciate its significance, one must close one's eyes and move back through time to 1415, and imagine 1,500 ships carrying 12,000 soldiers from Southampton to Harfleur (now Le Havre). At that time, King Henry V of England, still the Duke of Normandy and claimant to the throne of France, invaded in order to press his claim to being the legitimate king of France, which he actually was justified in seeking to assert. His campaign did not fare well and dysentery decimated his army. After Harfleur finally fell to an extended siege, he was forced to march the remains of his army to Calais (120 miles away and at that time an English possession) for the winter. The French army, nominally led by mad King Charles, blocked the only route to Calais with a huge army of some 30,000 men, including thousands of members of the nobility. Henry had perhaps 1,000 men at arms and 4,000 archers. Needless to say, the odds heavily favoured the French. They met close to a small walled manor called Azincourt, near the current village of Maisoncelles.

The French occupied a hill to the north, and the English a hill to the south with a reasonably level field in between where the French expected to decimate the English the next morning. Unfortunately, the local farmer had just plowed the field deeply, to plant winter wheat, then it rained all night, turning the field into a quagmire, which the French nobility did not appear to realize. The English did, and moved their archers within killing distance of the French line and planted sharpened stakes into the soft earth. They then provoked the French by firing 5,000 arrows into their packed troop formations. Without thinking, the French charged; no plan, no leadership, just 8,000 madmen convinced that God was on their side. It turned into a massacre. The English archers, with their longbows, shot hundreds of horses, tossing heavily-armoured riders into the muddy mire, where they became easy prey for being clubbed to death.

During the first minute of the charge, the English archers fired 60,000 arrows at virtually point-blank range into the on-rushing French. That is 6,000 steel-tipped arrows per second! In ten minutes, the French were devastated by 600,000 armour-piercing arrows by lightly armoured archers, who then used steel clubs to good effect, killing hundreds of French cavalry unhorsed and struggling through a mudbath, encumbered by 60 pounds worth of armour plating and face visors coated in mud such as to prevent them from seeing anything.

Logically, 8,000 men in sophisticated armour should have over-run the English lines with ease; instead, they were trapped by mud and devastated by arrows. The horses couldn't gallop in the mud. They couldn't see the sharpened stakes and they were easy targets for the unprecedented storm of war arrows unleashed by well-trained archers. Each horse that died created a barrier for those just arriving. Each warrior that died did the same. Thousands died in less than an hour. The second battle formation of another 8,000 mounted French men-at-war then charged, just as the first battle group was trying to flee, creating absolute chaos in the French ranks. More thousands died. Over 2,000 noble prisoners were taken; over 1,500 French nobles died, along with about 5,000 heavily-armoured French men at arms. The English lost perhaps 200 men and the French fled the field. France was destroyed for a generation. King Henry was named to be the next king of France, but died before he could be crowned. His son was crowned instead, and is the last English monarch to also be the monarch of France.

We best remember this episode of history through William Shakespeare's brilliant play Henry V, but this is why we travel. This is why we learn. If we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it. Think of Afghanistan. Think of Syria. Think of Iraq. The French in 1415, like the Americans in 2020, had all the sophisticated armour and seemingly every advantage. They lost. History repeats itself over and over. Go visit Dien Bien Phu. You'll see.

### **IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME!**

The inevitability of evolving technology has enabled us to do many things, such as on-line shopping. Sooner or later, also inevitably, children figure out the technology and use it to their unformed advantage. Just before our recent Christmas, one mother was horrified to learn that her six-year-old and her four-year-old, neither of whom can read yet, had figured out how to access her Amazon account and had ordered \$700 worth of toys, as she discovered when packages started arriving. She was, fortunately, able to return the bonanza of 'presents' to Amazon for the cost of return shipping, but the moral of the story is that our world is morphing into a form of reality where even exceptionally young children can fairly easily access areas of internet commerce. Fortunately, they rarely want maps!

### **WHY IS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATED ON December 25<sup>th</sup>?**

Christ was born, and existed, but was he really born on December 25<sup>th</sup>? No one knows. The early Christian church wrestled with this problem, and determined December 25<sup>th</sup>, in the old Roman calendar, to be the most 'auspicious' date. In truth, it was the winter solstice, celebrated for centuries as the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. When the Julian calendar replaced the Roman calendar, the solstice ended up on the 21<sup>st</sup>, but Christians were so used to the 25<sup>th</sup> by then that they just kept the 25<sup>th</sup>. In other words, no reason at all!

## **WORK IN PROGRESS ON CURRENT PROJECTS**

**No maps arrived from our printers during December. This is normally the case, due to heavy demand on both printers and shippers in the pre-Christmas rush, so we usually have a fairly heavy new releases listing for January. As of writing this, we are out of copies of the following titles:**

Banff and Jasper is now out of print. A new version has been prepared, for release in the spring of 2020.

Bulgaria is now of print. As a result of our recent visit to the country, a new and improved version has been prepared, so Bulgaria will be available again sometime in the spring of 2020.

Nova Scotia is quickly running out of copies (30 left). A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Philadelphia is almost out of print. A fresh edition, combined with a new map of Pennsylvania, is being prepared.

San Diego is close to running out of copies. A fresh edition is being prepared for release in the spring.

Shanghai is now out of print. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Slovakia is almost out of copies. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Sri Lanka is almost out of copies. A new edition has been completed and will be sent to press once the current edition is sold out completely.

Sweden is almost out of stock. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

## **NEW TITLES RELEASED IN JANUARY, 2020**

**Croatia Travel Reference Map 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. on waterproof paper 1:280,000 ISBN 9781771291682 UPC 817712916822 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP** – Croatia is ‘sort of’ in the EU, in that it is a member of NATO and has been ‘accepted’ by the other members. However, it is not fully accepted, which is why there are still border checks with the two EU fellow members bordering Croatia, although these seemed to me to be mere formality. The country is benefitting from its association with the EU, and twenty years of peace are eroding the fears of the war that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s. The country’s infrastructure is in good shape, hotels are full, tourists abound (at least along the coast in the summer), and things look good. Touristically, this is an ideal country to visit. The scenery is wonderful, the people are friendly, and the weather can’t be beaten. There is one error on the map, which we deliberately repeated from the previous edition, and this relates to the motorway extension towards Dubrovnik. It has now been decided to change the proposed routing via Bosnia to return the highway to the coast, build a two and a half kilometer-long bridge (now under construction) to a Croatian peninsula and create a new road further to the south of the country that would eventually link up Dubrovnik with the

rest of the country. The new route will be shown on the next edition. Since it doesn't exist at the moment, its future route is still a work in progress. **AVAILABLE**

**Malta & Gozo Travel Reference Map 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 2020 1:29,000 ISBN 9781771295376 UPC 817712953766 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP** – At last, Malta is back in print. The first printing of this edition had to be thrown out due to printing errors, so this map has been unavailable for far too long. Although the country is modest in size, it is historically rich and popular with tourists. The double-sided map shows the main island of Malta on one side, and the smaller island of Gozo on the reverse, as well as inset maps of Valletta, Bugibba, Marsaskala, Mdina, and Victoria. For history buffs, Valletta can't be beat, but the touristic city of Bugibba contains most of the resort hotels. Mdina, a walled city, is a World Heritage site. as is Victoria, a hilltop market town with a still-formidable citadel. The legacy of the Knights of St. John are everywhere. This is a very interesting and popular country to visit and a proud member of the EU. **AVAILABLE**

**Quebec (Province) Travel Reference Map 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. 1:1,620,000/1:150,000 ISBN 978177129 6403 UPC 817712964038 \$10.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP** – The largest geographical province of Canada is Quebec. While much of it is inaccessible landmass, the province is home to millions of people, both French and English, and is a major North American attraction. It contains the only walled city in the continent (Quebec City, the capital), a major ski resort (the Laurentians), and the vibrant city of Mont Real (Montreal). The map is double-sided, with the vast expanse of northern Quebec on one side (count the number of lakes!) and the more populous south on the other side. Due to the size of the province, there was only room left over for a regional map of the Montreal area, but ITMB does publish a separate map of that city for those needing more detail. As a point of trivia, the northernmost tipoff the Labrador Peninsula is part Nunavut, as are all of the islands. **AVAILABLE**