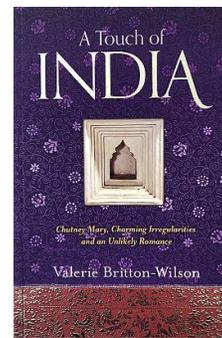


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***A Touch of India* reveals the entwined stories of two generations of Anglo-Indian women who made Australia home**

Fascinating history, a touching love story plus travel adventures

One of the inspirations for Dr Valerie Britton-Wilson's latest book was a bundle of wartime love letters from her father to her mother, sent to then Bombay from the jungles of Burma.

A Touch of India not only explores this romance and end-of-Empire India, it provides observations about life in contemporary India. There are fascinating moments from the author's and her mother's lives, each of them confronting the ups and downs of India as successful independent Anglo-Indian women, yet decades apart.

As a Melbourne author and social researcher, *A Touch of India: Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance*, is Dr Britton-Wilson's fourth book, having previously published three non-fiction works including *The Secret Life of Money* and *New Faces of Leadership*.

The 300-page memoir includes more than 85 historic and family photographs including the author's great grandfather who was a Lt Colonel in the British Army (and grandson of a knighted Director of the East India Company) and her great grandmother, a French vicomtesse. They moved to India in the mid-nineteenth century to set up a tea plantation.

Writer of the love letters, Valerie's father, Donald Britton, was an English concert pianist turned commando officer who fought in Burma in the famous Chindit brigades during WW2. After the war he married the author's mother, Pearl Creed, a journalist, writing and illustrating her own weekly column in the Times of India, then one of the largest circulating newspapers in the world. Donald became the Director of Music at Melbourne Grammar and later, working in Queensland, received an OAM for his services to music.

As the history unfolds, the author shares the stories that Pearl wrote to pass on to her children. One of these related to the White Australia Policy and an official from Australia House who visited the Britton family in England to check on their 'whiteness'.

The book dissects what it means to be a '*Chutney Mary*', influenced by skin colour, race, caste and social position, issues that have relevance outside India, such as in multicultural Australia. It also provides a wealth of observation, knowledge and insight: from horrendous accounts of the 1947 partition, to a dowry murder, to chronic corruption.

Intertwined with vivid pieces about episodes in Pearl's life, are her daughter's own experiences in contemporary India. For two decades, Valerie Britton-Wilson and her friend Sue McFall would visit India at least once a year.

"We established a textile and clothing business to augment our trips and we'd explore a new part of India on each visit," she said.

"The range included limited-edition women's fashion clothing, bedlinen and accessories that we would sell in an annual 'pop-up' shop, a term that hadn't even been coined when we started.

“This business venture spawned the book’s subtitle ‘charming irregularities’. Both the charm and kindness of people we encountered, as well as the challenges of dealing with unfamiliar customs and business practices.

“For people who have been to India, it will revive memories of its colour, flavours and smells. For armchair travellers who are fascinated by India, *A Touch of India* is a wonderful introduction,” Valerie Britton-Wilson added.

The charms and challenges of modern India are many, encapsulated in this biographic memoir that is a potpourri of travelogue, genealogy, socio-political commentary and Indian cuisine: always informative, sometimes funny and often poignant.

A Touch of India is published by Blooming Books and distributed by Thames & Hudson. It has an RRP of \$32.99 and is available in all good bookstores and can also be purchased directly via the book’s website.

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About Valerie Britton-Wilson

Melbourne writer Valerie Britton-Wilson was born in Cambridge, UK. Her parents moved their young family to Australia in 1954. Valerie has an MA in political sociology and a PhD in social psychology, both from The University of Melbourne. She has written three previous non-fiction works, including *The Secret Life of Money* and *New Faces of Leadership*.

Valerie is a social and political researcher, specialising in depth interviews and focus groups. She has also worked in research and production for ABC TV education and SBS TV interview programs. She has served on the boards of two leading schools. Valerie is married and has three children and three grandchildren.

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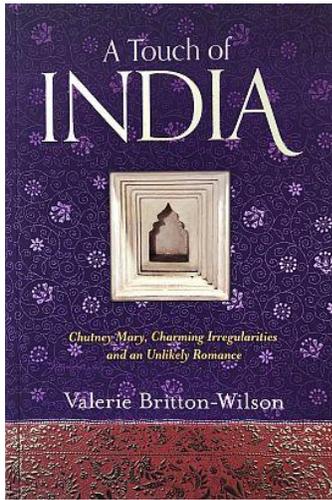
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Media enquiries: Books available for review and giveaway comps.

Issued on behalf of Dr Valerie Britton-Wilson. T: 0409 808 544 E: drvaleriewilson2@gmail.com by WMC PR.

Contact Wendy McWilliams on T: 03 9803 2588 / 0421 364 665 E: wendy@wmcpr.com.au

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Front cover of the memoir, A Touch of India, by Valerie Britton-Wilson



Lt Col Henry Gordon Creed, 1812 - 1877, grandson of Sir James Creed, MP, Director of East India Company. Henry's twin brother Richard was killed in action in India



Aurelia Cecilia Creed, 1829 - 1905, eldest daughter of Marquis de Bourbel de Montpinçon. Henry and Aurelia had ten children



Wedding of Donald and Pearl Britton outside St Mary's Church, Parel, Bombay, August 1945, and cutting the wedding cake.



Donald and Pearl on their honeymoon and Donald's posting as Military Commandant in Mussoorie in the Himalayan foothills. This photo was taken at Chaubattia, another military rest station nearby. The six-month sojourn in the hills might have helped Pearl acclimatise, ready for the bleak post-War winters ahead in England.



Indigo dyeing in Rajasthan. Fabric is dipped up to 7 times. With each dipping, when it come into contact with oxygen in the air, the colour changes from yellowish, to greenish, to light blue, and finally to the dark indigo blue that we love. Strips of dyed fabric laid are out on the red earth to dry in the sun.



The colour and beauty of produce displays, even in the humblest of places. The little pyramids of fresh eggs with lime and chilli decoration were on a cart in a back street near Alwar in Rajasthan.



Sue and Valerie at Hampi, an under-visited UNESCO world heritage site, in Karnataka, southern India. It covers over 40 square kms, in hilly country dotted with huge granite boulders, and includes about 1600 monuments: temples, aqueducts, monasteries, stables. Mostly built 1336 – 1570 but occupied much earlier and mentioned as a site in the Ramayana. Mainly Hindu but also Jain and some Muslim architectural elements. All in varying states of repair and disrepair. A fascinating place. Some say it was once the world's second largest medieval city (after Beijing).



Author, Valerie Britton-Wilson

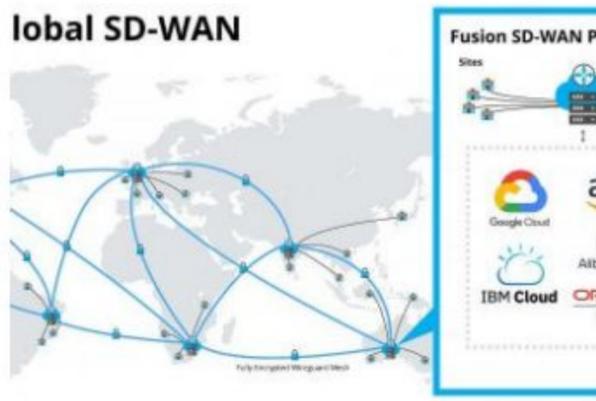


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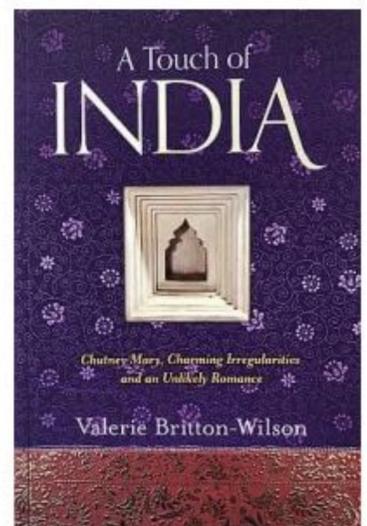
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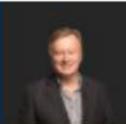
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Aside from his radio career, Denis has also enjoyed a decorated singing career, with his incredible baritone voice giving Australians spine-tingles every Christmas Eve at the annual Carols by Candlelight concert.

Denis lives in Geelong and takes every opportunity to spruik his beloved Cats!

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Established in 1992, WMC PR is a full service public relations or "communications" agency that provides an innovative, proactive, flexible and cost effective PR service that offers a high level of personal service. Services provided include PR communication strategy, publicity and promotion, advertising, newsletters, brochures, product launches, websites, surveys, annual reports, communication programs, issues

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www.valeriebrittonwilson.com

More information and images are in the attached documents.

If you would like to run a book giveaway, review the book or conduct a Q&A with Valerie, please contact me.



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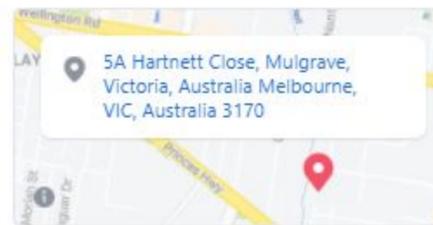
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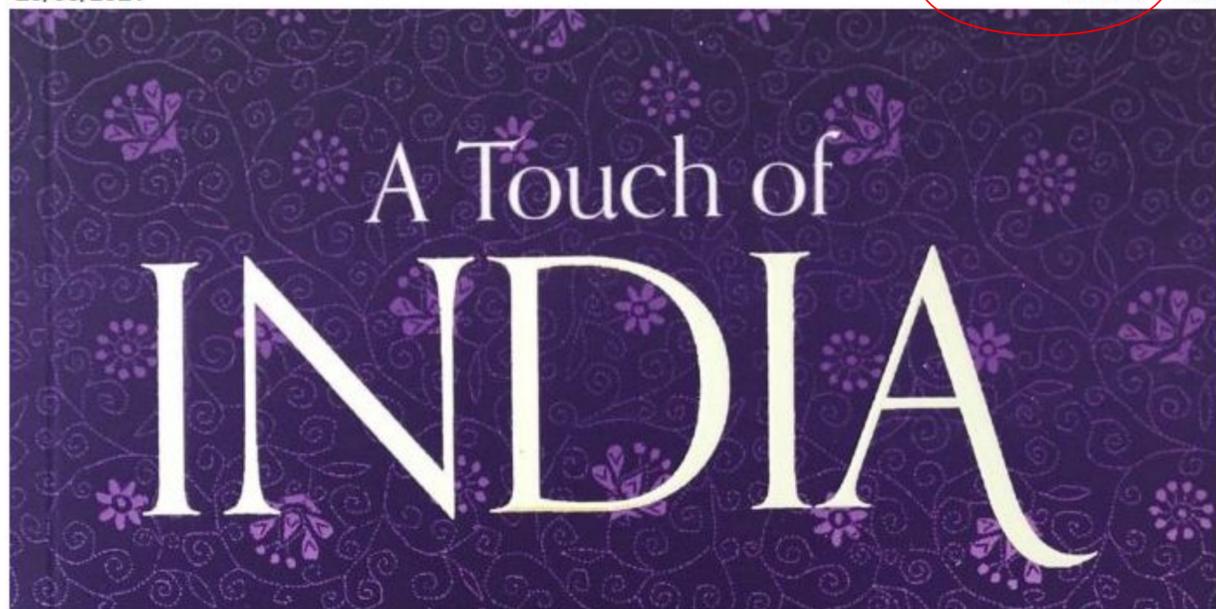
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INDIA TOP STORY

Melbourne author on India, Anglo-Indians & a wartime romance

By Our Reporter
28/08/2021

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A new book on the life stories of two Anglo-Indian women provide an insight into end-of-empire Bombay, dramatic views of the Partition of India in 1947, the White Australia Policy and takes a look at middle class India then and now.

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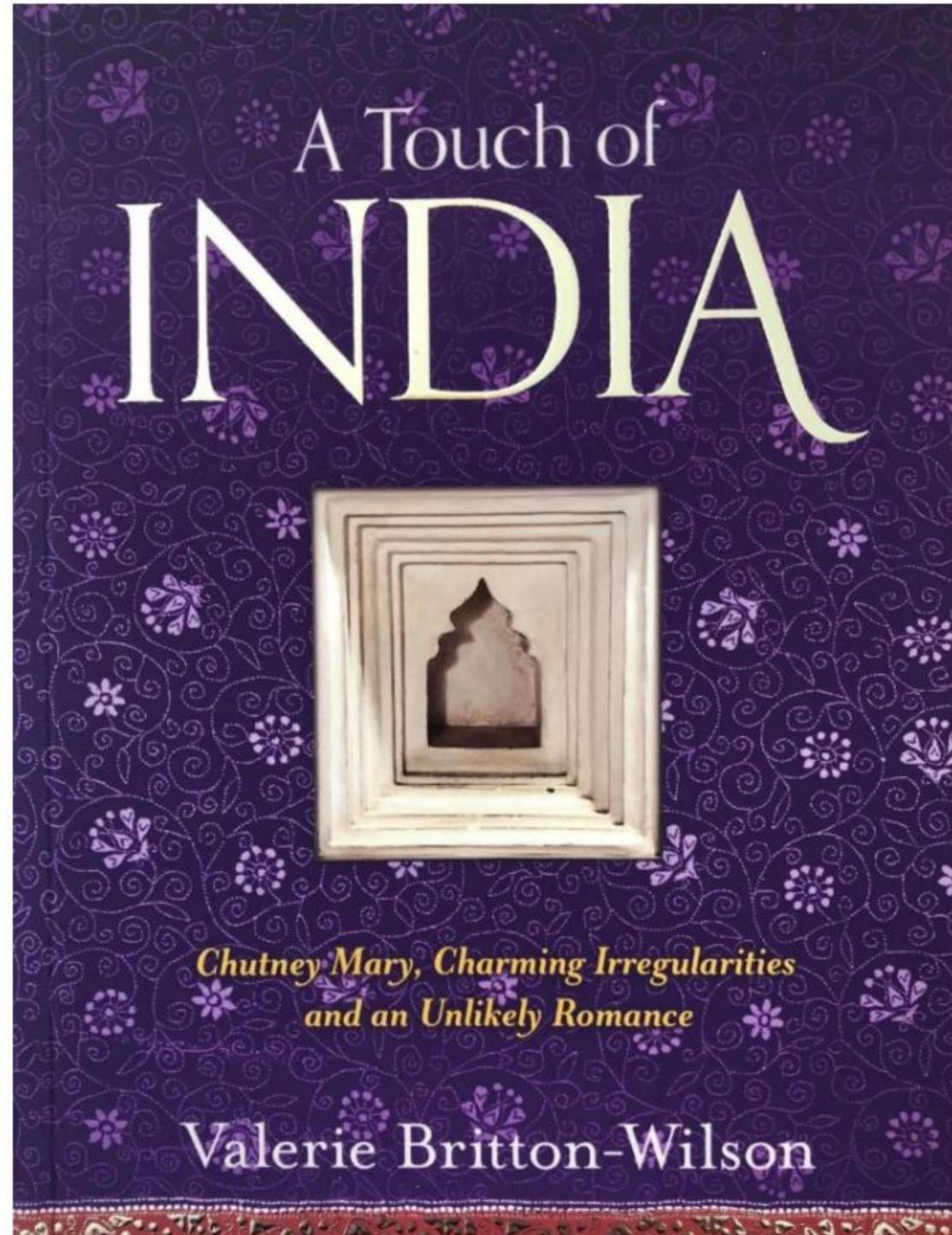


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father to her mother, sent to then Bombay from the jungles of Burma.

A Touch of India not only explores this romance and end-of-Empire India, it provides observations about life in contemporary India. There are fascinating moments from the author's and her mother's lives, each of them confronting the ups and downs of India as successful independent Anglo-Indian women, yet decades apart.



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A Touch of India: Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance by Valerie Britton-Wilson

As a Melbourne author and social researcher, *A Touch of India: Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance*, is Dr Britton-Wilson's fourth book, having previously published three non-fiction works including *The Secret Life of Money* and *New Faces of Leadership*.



Melbourne author Dr Valerie Britton-Wilson

The 300-page memoir includes more than 85 historic and family photographs including the author's great grandfather who was a Lt Colonel in the British Army (and grandson of a knighted Director of the East India Company) and her great grandmother, a French vicomtesse. They moved to India in the mid-nineteenth century to set up a tea plantation.

Writer of the love letters, Valerie's father, Donald Britton, was an English concert pianist turned commando officer who fought in Burma in the famous Chindit brigades during WW2. After the war he married the author's mother, Pearl Creed, a journalist, writing and illustrating her own weekly column in the Times of India, then one of the largest circulating newspapers in the world. Donald became the Director of Music at Melbourne Grammar and later, working in Queensland, received an OAM for his services to music.

As the history unfolds, the author shares the stories that Pearl wrote to pass on to her children. One of these related to the White Australia Policy and an official from Australia House who visited the Britton family in England to check on their 'whiteness'.

The book dissects what it means to be a 'Chutney Mary', influenced by skin colour, race, caste and social position, issues that have relevance outside India, such as in multicultural Australia. It also provides a wealth of observation, knowledge and insight: from horrendous accounts of the 1947 partition, to a dowry murder, to chronic corruption.



Intertwined with vivid pieces about episodes in Pearl's life, are her daughter's own experiences in contemporary India. For two decades, Valerie Britton-Wilson and her friend Sue McFall would visit India at least once a year.

"We established a textile and clothing business to justify our trips and we'd explore a new part of India on each visit," she said.

"The range included limited-edition women's fashion clothing, bedlinen and accessories that we would sell in an annual 'pop-up' shop, a term that hadn't even been coined when we started.

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Anglo-Indian Pearl (Val's mother) and British husband Donald. Edward (Pearl's father is top right). Pic supplied.

"This business venture spawned the book's subtitle 'charming irregularities'. Both the charm and kindness of people we encountered, as well as the challenges of dealing with unfamiliar customs and business practices.

"For people who have been to India, it will revive memories of its colour, flavours and smells. For armchair travellers who are fascinated by India, *A Touch of India* is a wonderful introduction," Valerie Britton-Wilson added.

The charms and challenges of modern India are many, encapsulated in this biographic memoir that is a potpourri of travelogue, genealogy, socio-political commentary and Indian cuisine: always informative, sometimes funny and often poignant.

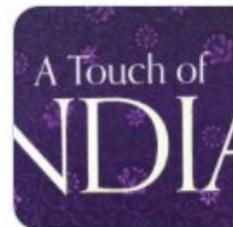
A Touch of India is published by Blooming's Books and distributed by Thames & Hudson. It has an RRP of \$32.99 and is available in all good bookstores and can also be purchased directly via the book's website.

www.valeriebrittonwilson.com

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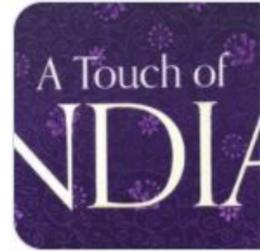
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Indeed dear Trish, we applaud your results orientation, professionalism, dedication and hard work at the WTO. Wish you well in your next endeavor!



George Mina [@AusWTO](#) · Jan 12

Farewell to our dear friend and colleague, Trish Holmes, our excellent Deputy Permanent Representative, who departs this week.

Thanks for your huge contribution to our interests at the @wto.



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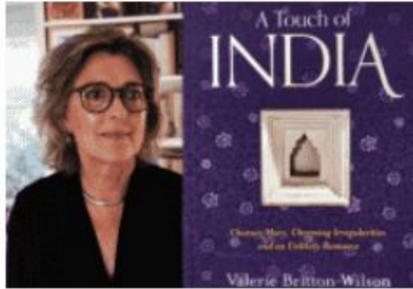
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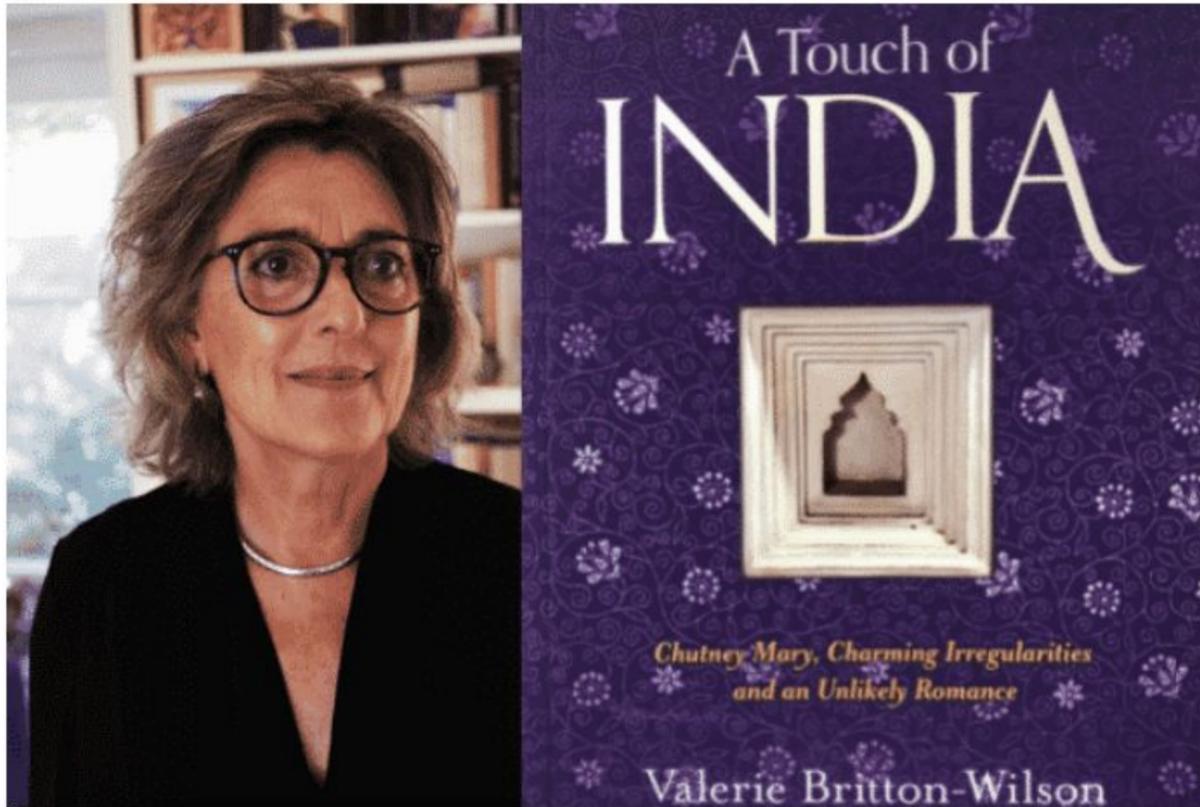


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Being a 'Chutney Mary' and an unlikely romance with India (Book Review)

Valerie Britton-Wilson's search for her mother's Anglo-Indian identity and roots among the challenges and complexities of modern India.

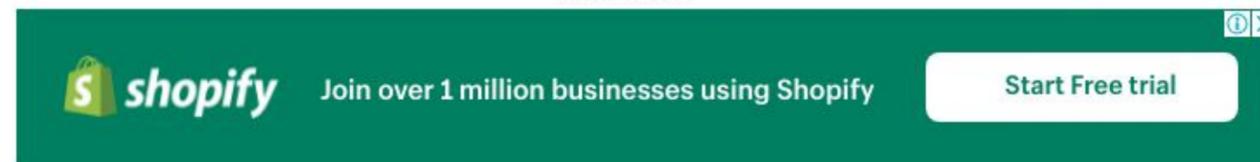
By Rashida Tayabali October 22, 2021



For Melbourne-based social and political researcher Valerie Britton-Wilson, India has long held inexplicable allure. In her latest book *A Touch of India* she details a deep cultural interest – a fascination with fabric – as well as a much more personal and profound connection.

Valerie is part Anglo-Indian thanks to her mother Pearl Creed, who was one quarter Indian. Pearl was born in Mumbai in 1921 and raised in then-Bombay under British Rule. She was often referred to as a 'Chutney Mary', a derogatory term used by the British for women of mixed Indian and European blood. Living a fairly adventurous time for a woman in that time, Pearl also wrote a regular *Times of India* column in the 1940s and worked in an ad agency.

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A Touch of India starts off with Valerie and her friend Sue McFall sitting in an old Ambassador car, searching for the house Pearl had grown up in, Willingdon House. Hearing colourful stories about her mother's childhood and teenage years captivated Valerie as a young child. However, seeing it as an adult, she struggles to identify with it amidst the confusing bedlam of India, as she puts it. Although she gets a brief look into the house her mother once occupied, she feels overwhelmed and leaves quickly.

[READ ALSO: From an Indian Palace to the Outback: The Last Prince of Bengal \(Review\)](#)



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To celebrate NAIDOC week 2020 (between 8-15 November) I spoke to Yakunytjatjara poet Ali Cobby Eckermann about her time in India where she taught...




Valerie and Sue in Hampi, Karnataka

But on that first trip, the unlikely romance begins, and Valerie is drawn back to India multiple times. Her travels take her across the country, visiting different tourist attractions like The Gateway of India, Taj Mahal (which hold special memories for her parents) Kolkata, and Amritsar.

During these yearly trips, accompanied by her friend Sue, Valerie tries to find out about members in her family tree, helped by Pearl's letters. Valerie starts her own garments business named 'Moti' (Hindi for Pearl, after her mother), forms friendships and business relationships, and ends up falling in love with the country despite its idiosyncrasies and chaotic nature.

She also compares her parents' journey to Australia from Britain after the war, noting ironically that her mother's Indian blood was deemed unsuitable under White Australia policy. She intertwines history and historic events with her present-day experiences and those of her mother's bringing the best of her academic background and writer's eye to her experiences in and of India. Along with her observances, she shares the stories of the middle-class Indians she meets, their struggles and a shocking look into a dowry murder. These personal stories from her childhood and that of her mother's, shown in black-and-white images spread across the text, also add a new dimension to the story.

READ ALSO: [John Lang, Rani Laxmibai's Aussie attorney against the British \(review\)](#)

Images from A Touch of India

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Ep 7: In the case of Sushant Singh Rajput

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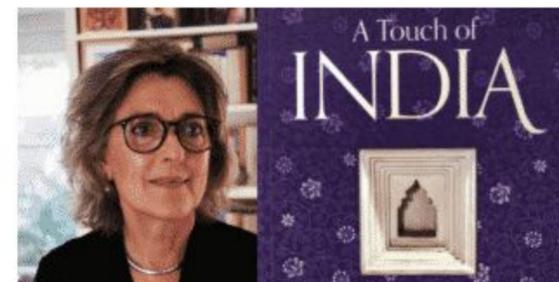
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Being a 'Chutney Mary' and an unlikely romance with India (Book...

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Valerie (right) with her mother



Valerie's experiences of sourcing garments from India, and then exporting them to Melbourne makes for interesting reading, the manner of doing business in India and Australia so vastly different. But at every step of the way, the author has successfully balanced the different viewpoints and avoided cliches. There is humour and there is tragedy, all skillfully written to enthrall readers from all backgrounds.

A Touch of India also highlights her parents' love story, how they met and the difficulties they faced when trying to get married (Pearl was engaged to someone else when she met and fell in love with Valerie's father) and making their way from Britain to Australia. One can sense Pearl's longing to go back home to India within her recollections, and Valerie's need to make sense of her 'Indianness'.

The book ends with Valerie and her sister bringing their parents' ashes back to India and scattering them into the water in sight of The Gateway, a fitting tribute to their parents' story and Pearl's heritage.

For me, the book symbolises the need to make sense of a part of one's identity, no matter how small it is. I also loved the references to various books and articles that backed up the author's own experiences and thoughts, an ode to her academic background. Every page was written with heart, and sentiments and observations showed up beautifully.

Overall, *A Touch of India* is engaging and beautifully written, compelling me to keep reading until the end. The human stories and perspectives make this book special and a must-add to the bookshelf for all lovers of India – modern and historic.

Valerie Britton-Wilson, *A Touch of India*, Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance, Bloomings Books Pty Ltd, 2021.

[READ ALSO: Book Review: The Snow Line by Tessa McWatt](#)

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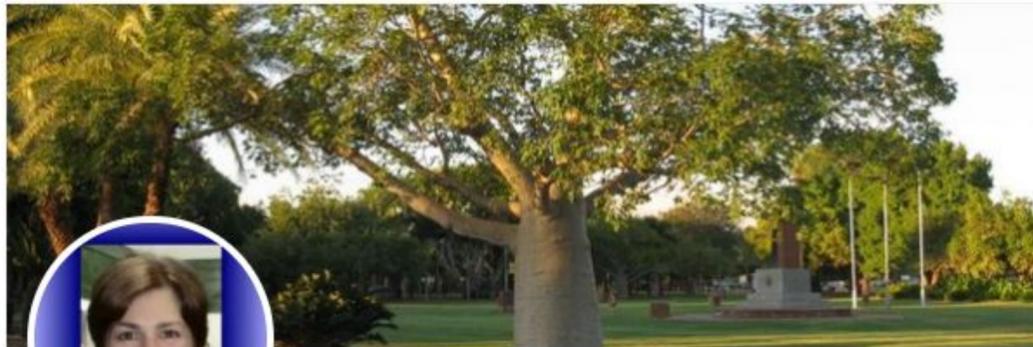
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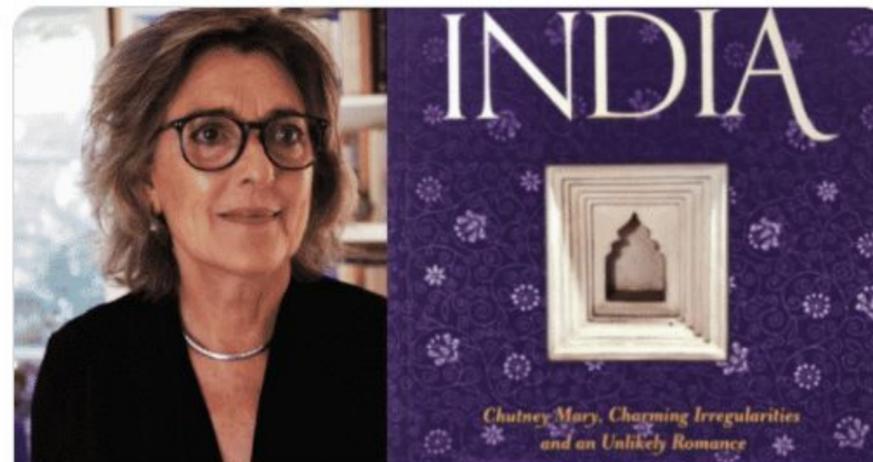
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In her book A Touch of India, Valerie Britton-Wilson details a deep cultural interest with Indian fabrics, and her own cultural heritage.



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SNAP DECISIONS

Spot the differences

SUSAN KUROSAWA

Late last year, I started walking my coastal postcode and suggested we all do the same (Departure Lounge, October 10-11). There are 12 suburbs in the meandering 2257 cohort (a very 2021 word, incidentally).

I must admit I stalled in the bushland realms, with potholed paths and no signposts, and failed to complete the task.

But I have been walking more than usual this year, even if in an unstructured way.

One of the best rambles, in March, was along thoroughfares from the northern end of the Sydney CBD to the shores of Circular Quay, looking way up and clocking architectural styles of buildings not so readily appreciated at ground level. Let's call it walking with benefits, and a particular purpose.

Which brings me to a new guidebook with a singular theme. Sydney Art Deco and Modernist Walks: Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay by Peter Sheridan, an internationally recognised authority on Art Deco design, covers just a square kilometre but what a promising patch for stickybeaks is postcode 2011.



Art Deco building Marlborough Hall in Potts Point, Sydney

in the former category designed by Emil Sodersten and five of Harry Seidler's 1960s buildings that "reflect his mastery of reinforced concrete".

Of course, you don't need to set off on just one walk. It would be fun to stroll around, flaneur style, with pauses in the likes of Elizabeth Bay's harbourside Beare Park, overlooked by modernist buildings Oceana, Riviera and Ashleigh. Also in the neighbourhood is Boomerang, the famous 1926-built mansion in Spanish Mission style embellished, at least to my eye, with a touch of Rudolph Valentino film-set fantasy.

This handbook is destined to be an agreeable and long-lasting companion of mine, full of eye-opening discoveries and true Serendipity, which, for the record, is an apartment block on St Neot Ave, Potts Point, circa 1973.

[Instagram @susankurosawa](#)
[newsouthbooks.com.au](#)

The book is well organised, with a good map and suggested trail easily accomplished in two to three hours. Plentiful photographs assist the identification process of 75 Art Deco and 32 Modernist gems, including five

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Tasmania joins Japan in an unusual but beneficial new Fresh Start soap collaboration from Melbourne-based Bathing Shed. It goes like this. Take the highest grade 100 per cent Tassie cold-pressed and vitamin-rich hemp seed oil, fragrant herbs and botanicals, and create a long-lasting soap made by hand in Japan. Each small batch takes one month to produce and the traditional method allows for the highest extraction of hemp seed oil and preservation of nutrients that include omega acids. The makers claim "incredible antibacterial properties" and evidence that Fresh Start can improve symptoms of eczema and psoriasis. Expect no artificial fragrance, stabilisers, preservatives or colouring agents in the Bathing Shed range, which includes hand gel and moisturiser. A share of revenue goes to Clean Up Australia. 100g; \$19. Add a hemp fabric gift bag, \$3.

[bathingshed.com](#)
SUSAN KUROSAWA



In recent years, a summertime lunch like no other has been served under the low branches of a 120-year-old tree on Kangaroo Island. The Enchanted Fig Tree "wilderness dining" season returns December 16-April 4, but the business behind it, Gastronomo, is also looking further afield. Locations near Adelaide are being considered for 2022, while another Kangaroo Island gourmet experience launches this spring.

Described as a "progressive dining adventure", The Feast takes place at a secret location near Snelling Beach. It begins by an outdoor fire with welcome cocktails featuring Kangaroo Island Spirits, and foraged produce including traditional foods of Australia's First Nations. The feast proper is served at a structure originally built from gum trees and corrugated iron by European settlers. It enhances the theatre of this series of dinners lit by candles and stars.

Chef Stephanie Vass favours time-honoured, low-waste cooking processes, such as fermentation and curing, alongside contemporary techniques to create intriguing flavours and textures. Her menu for The Feast is inspired by the history of Australian cuisine, from pioneer fare to the international dishes introduced last century by Margaret Fulton. Vass will prepare produce from land and sea over fire, coals and smoke, and South Australian wines are among the drinks available for purchase.

This pop-up experience is on Thursday-Monday evenings, October 14-November 1 and November 11-29; \$145 a person. SeaLink, which operates Kangaroo Island's ferry, will offer an intra-island transfer bus service to and from the dinner, as well as self-drive weekend packages that include The Feast.

[gastronomodining.com.au](#)
PATRICIA MAUNDER

FOLLOW THE READER

A wedding in Rajasthan

MELANY JAMES
MT GAMBIER, SA

One year BC (Before Covid) we received an invitation. My nephew was getting married in Udaipur, Rajasthan. It would be a three-day celebration, an occasion not to be missed and our first visit to India. We arrived in Delhi in late December 2019. It was the coldest day in 100 years according to our Airbnb owner in Hauz Khas. The small bar heater in our room

was utterly inadequate. We joined other guests for breakfast wearing coats and scarves. A mother and daughter from Russia sat shivering at the table. With mugs of home-brewed chai warming our hands, we exchanged travel stories aided by Google Translate and gestures. Despite warnings of the air pollution, we wandered around the neighbourhood visiting markets, parks and ancient tombs seeing happy people wherever we went.

We flew to Udaipur to congregate with fellow wedding guests and the bride and groom at Chunda Palace, a hotel on the banks of Lake Pichola. The views were breathtaking; the rooms all decorated with traditional artwork. Beyond, locals were going about their daily routine, cars, motorbikes, auto rickshaws and cows crowded the streets.

The wedding celebrations were

unforgettable, starting with Mehndi night, when guests, dressed in all shades of yellow, mingled and young girls painted our hands with henna. The wedding day ceremony featured colourful drummers announcing the arrival of the groom and, later, the bride. There was music, dancing and laughter at the evening reception on the hotel rooftop and throughout the three days and nights we all ate the most delicious food. After the

wedding we continued on to Jaipur and Agra. We travelled by night train, private cars and auto-rickshaws and visited temples, stepwells, museums and "must see" Taj Mahal.

We flew back to Australia in mid-January 2020. Soon after our arrival, borders closed but our concern for the welfare of those wonderful people we met in India continues, with WhatsApp messages now our only form of contact.



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BOOK CLUB

A TOUCH OF INDIA
Valerie Britton-Wilson

The subhead of this deeply textured family memoir encapsulates its myriad story threads: "Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance". I first heard the Chutney Mary reference in India about 30 years ago. My Anglo-Indian friend, June, daughter of an Indian mother and Scottish father, has now passed but she told me this was just one of the mixed-blood references she'd endured, along with "flying fish", meaning neither one thing nor the other. In my novel Coronation Talkies, set in the Western Ghats of India, I based the plight of a character on June's stories of racism from all corners, of the fatigue of trying to "pass" as white.

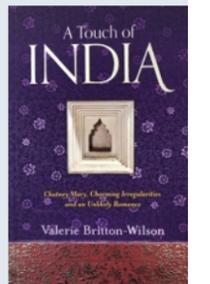
In A Touch of India, Melbourne author and social researcher Valerie Britton-Wilson traces the history of her mother, Pearl Creed, of part Indian blood, who was a successful Bombay journalist and artist in her youth. She married distinguished British musician and scholar Donald Britton and settled in England.

Their application to move to Australia with their young daughters in the 1950s was during the era of our infamous "white" immigration policy. A consular officer visited the Britton home in Winchester for a surreptitious skin colour check. But,

ironically, inter-racial marriages (or mistress-taking) had been encouraged during the early rule of the Raj "to contribute to stability and order in society". Britton-Wilson delves further into family history, and uncovers tender love letters, mysterious ancestors and tragedies while charting a parallel course of her own journeys in "entrancing, exasperating, exhausting, addictive" India over the past 20 years with her friend, Sue McFall. The pair established a textile and clothing business and have travelled widely, getting to off-the-map places. Those contemporary stories are encapsulated by the book's "charming irregularities" subhead.

There's a neat juxtaposition of discoveries about Pearl's childhood in Bombay, where the author's visit to her late mother's apartment block is compared with original notes discovered inside a foolscap notebook in a tin trunk: "There is more apparent cheerfulness on any street in India than you will see in the sombre-peopled streets of the Western world," wrote Pearl. Aside from the lively disclosures, A Touch of India is a triumph of research and a reminder all families have tales worth telling. We need to treasure mementos, correspondence, dog-eared documents and photos to better understand the lives of loved ones past and to consider our own place in history.

SUSAN KUROSAWA



BOOK CLUB

A TOUCH OF INDIA Valerie Britton-Wilson

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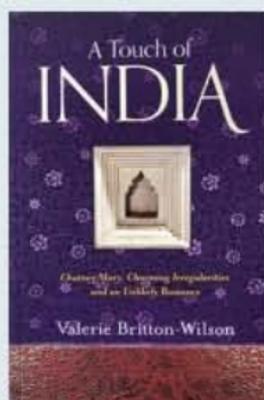
In *A Touch of India*, Melbourne author and social researcher Valerie Britton-Wilson traces the history of her mother, Pearl Creed, of part Indian blood, who was a successful Bombay journalist and artist in her youth. She married distinguished British musician and scholar Donald Britton and settled in England.

Their application to move to Australia with their young daughters in the 1950s was during the era of our infamous "white" immigration policy. A consular officer visited the Britton home in Winchester for a surreptitious skin colour check. But, ironically, inter-racial

marriages (or mistress-taking) had been encouraged during the early rule of the Raj "to contribute to stability and order in society". Britton-Wilson delves further into family history, and uncovers tender love letters, mysterious ancestors and tragedies while charting a parallel course of her own journeys in "entrancing, exasperating, exhausting, addictive" India over the past 20 years with her friend, Sue McFall. The pair established a textile and clothing business and have travelled widely, getting to off-the-map places. Those contemporary stories are encapsulated by the book's "charming irregularities" subhead.

There's a neat juxtaposition of discoveries about Pearl's childhood in Bombay, where the author's visit to her late mother's apartment block is compared with original notes discovered inside a foolscap notebook in a tin trunk: "There is more apparent cheerfulness on any street in India than you will see in the sombre-peopled streets of the Western world," wrote Pearl. Aside from the lively disclosures, *A Touch of India* is a triumph of research and a reminder all families have tales worth telling. We need to treasure mementos, correspondence, dog-eared documents and photos to better understand the lives of loved ones past and to consider our own place in history.

SUSAN KUROSAWA





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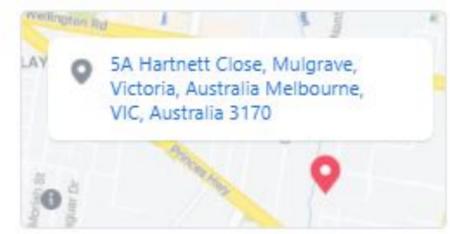
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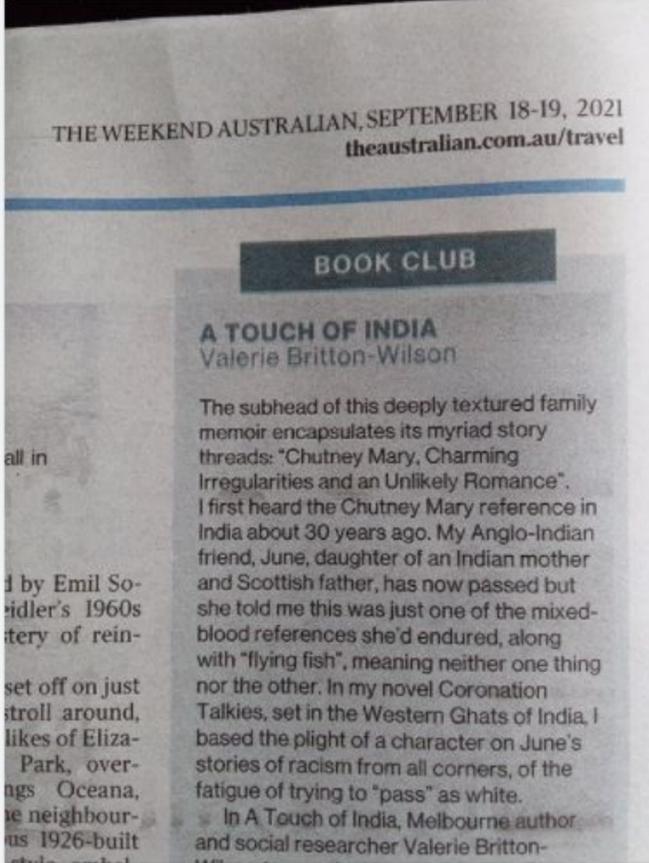
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WMC Public Relations Pty Limited 3h ·

Fantastic review in today's The Weekend Australian of Valerie Britton-Wilson's new book, A Touch of India, by Susan Kurosawa. It's in the Travel + Luxury Liftout.



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18 EASY NO-COOK MEAL IDEAS



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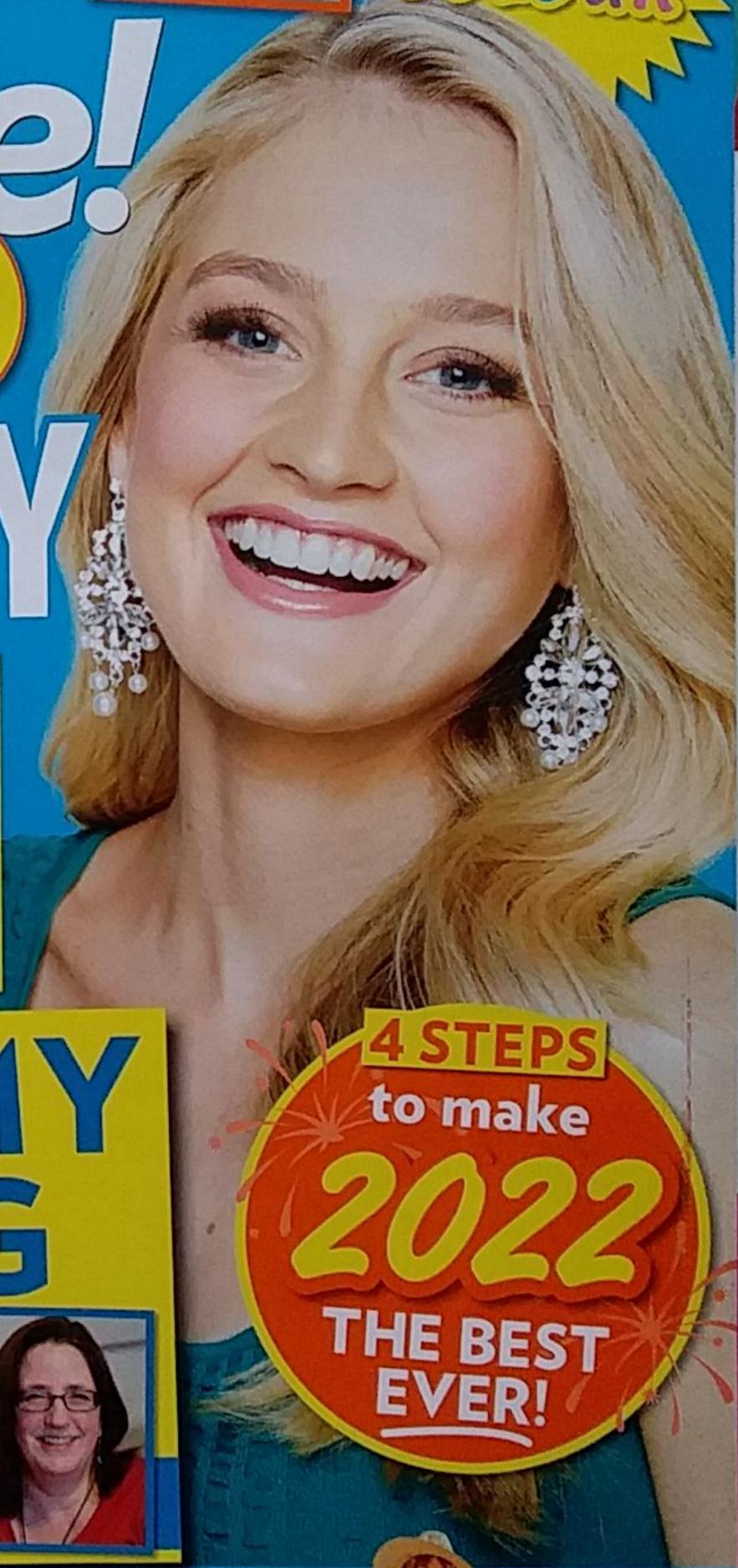
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REAL LIFE
+ MORE!

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81KG GONE
I HALVED MY SIZE
for my boy

I JAILED MY CHEATING HUBBY

He had three wives!

4 STEPS
to make
2022
THE BEST EVER!

My boy's a golfer AT 3!

are media

A baby at 57 SAVED MY LIFE

My tortoise is my TWIN

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January 2022

Welcome to that's life! MEG

It's so great to see you!

Hard to believe the new year is finally here (or almost here, depending on when you're reading this!). The last two years have been tough for many people, so I reckon there are lots of us who have high hopes for 2022. I loved reading our guide (Page 62) to tiny changes you can adopt that'll help you make it a great year. Having made some big resolutions in the past, which I have of course broken, I reckon going small is definitely the way! The most important thing is to do what works best for you. Happy new year to you all!

Linda
Linda Smith - Editor



PAGE 32

PUZZLES
WIN! \$20,000
MONSTERCROSS

THE HUGE CASHPRIZE MUST BE WON!

This is your big chance to bag a whopping \$20,000 in cold, hard cash! We love giving away our car, but we also love bringing you the opportunity to win this huge cash prize. Just imagine what you could do with \$20,000! You could pay off all your bills, set up a savings account and spoil the whole family. So get puzzling!

Katie and her family have found a charming way to help city people understand what life is like for people living on the land.

PAGE 64

PUZZLES - every puzzle has a prize!

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| 3 Scrambler \$100 | Sudoku 2 \$70; | 49 Word Search \$500 |
| 11 The Biggie \$100 | Anagram Arrow \$90 | 55 Spot the Difference \$200 |
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me friends MEGA MONTHLY

DON'T MISS OUR

**NEXT
ISSUE**

Monday,
Jan 17

When Valerie was sorting through the belongings of her late parents, she stumbled upon a pile of precious love letters. Written in wartime, they revealed a side of her father she never knew.

PAGE 8

Carol could never find shoes that fit her longer feet. So she opened her own shop!

PAGE 16



THE HUGE CASH PRIZE MUST BE WON!



PAGE 64

PAGE 20

Was a jilted teenager responsible for the horrific murder of two schoolgirls?



PUZZLE 1 SCRAMBLER

Rearrange the letters in each line of the first grid to form a new word and write it in the second grid. When you are done, a word will appear in the coloured column, reading top to bottom. Write this word only on the entry coupon and you could be a winner.

WIN!
\$100
CASH

TO ENTER:

Turn to page 81 for details or visit thatstlife.com.au/puzzle-entry

1	G	O	L	U	M	1			
2	G	R	U	P	E	2			
3	T	E	F	E	L	3			
4	V	E	R	G	A	4			
5	M	E	T	E	R	5			

WINNING ANSWER:



Summer is well and truly here, and what better way to celebrate than with an ice-cream treat or two... or three! These delicious recipes will wow your friends and family.

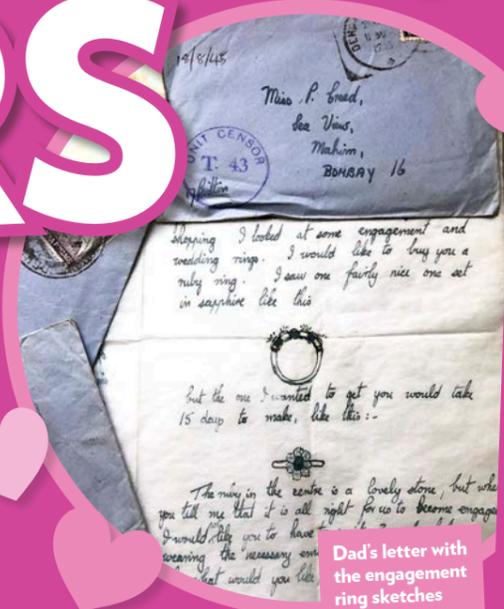
PAGE 30

LETTERS of Love

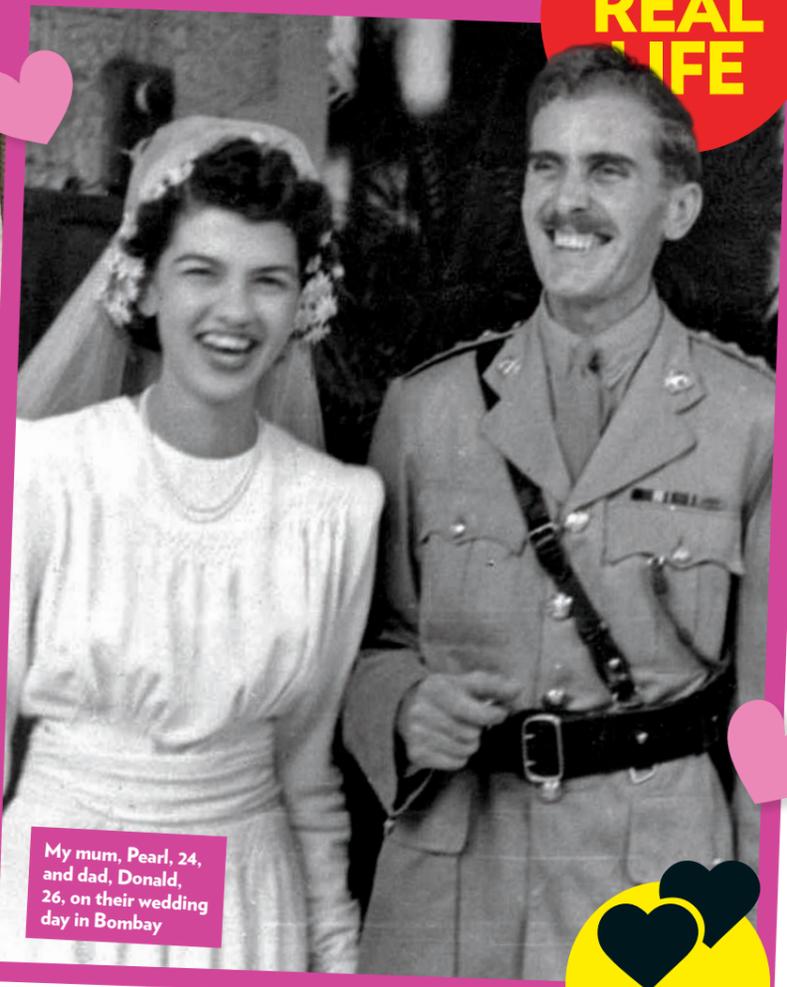


It was an honour to read Dad's words to Mum

Valerie Wilson, 74, discovered her father's love letters and a passion she never expected



Dad's letter with the engagement ring sketches



My mum, Pearl, 24, and dad, Donald, 26, on their wedding day in Bombay



My mum, Pearl, in her 20s



My daughter Charlotte now has Mum's ring



Me and Cara standing behind Dad and Mum

Tugging a tattered blue suitcase from under the bed, I stared at the manilla envelope inside.

Private: Wartime Letters from Don, the label said.

My father, Donald Britton, met my mother Pearl during World War II in India. They married in 1945, returning to England before emigrating to Australia in the 1950s.

Mum passed away in 2014, aged 93, and Dad died in 2016, aged 96.

I was sorting through their belongings and stumbled across many precious wartime love letters spanning 1943-45.

Over 70 years old, they revealed a whole new tender dimension to Dad.

The father I knew was a slightly buttoned-up Englishman. A child piano prodigy, who went on to become the Director of Music at the Melbourne Grammar school, he'd sometimes seemed stern.

If only people knew when I'm playing, the turbulent emotions... within me, Dad had written to Mum.

Dad, then 24, was studying music, French

and Spanish at Cambridge University when he was called up to fight.

He became a major in the Chindit regiment, fighting bravely behind Japanese lines in the treacherous Burmese jungles.

Dad often visited India on leave. By chance he was seated next to my mother, then 22, at a dinner party in Bombay in 1943.

Mum was a beautiful,

brought an intensity to their romance. Dad's words showed how passionately he loved my mother.

It only remains for me to take my courage in both hands and say... rather bashfully, I love you.

Mum was working in the British censorship office, and portions of the letters were blacked out to conceal army locations.

I could scarcely imagine the other censors reading

fighting behind Japanese lines in North Burma.

But in 1945, Dad's letters resumed in earnest. Still in Burma, he wrote to Mum's parents asking for her hand in marriage.

Dad sent two sketches of engagement rings for Mum to choose from and arranged for a beautiful ruby ring to be sent to her.

I looked down at the very ring on my own finger, with its delicate alternating rubies and diamonds in a square setting.

Dad arranged leave, and my parents were married on August 30, 1945.

'It was a wonderful day,' Mum explained, whenever she told the story.

The wedding photos of their reception at the Taj Hotel, in Mumbai, India, showed my mother looking elegant, in a white silk

crepe dress, and my father, dashing like the movie star Errol Flynn, in his uniform.

Mum's older half-sister Blanche and her younger sister Hope was a bridesmaid.

Dad's commander stationed him and Mum in Mussoorie, in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Dad wrote of how he hired a piano, playing again for the first time in years. Italian prisoners of war broke down in tears of joy when he played Italian arias.

The letters stopped, but looking through old photos, I remembered the countless stories I'd heard of their exciting past.

My parents returned to England to live in Cambridge later that year, and Dad finished his degree.

From the moment he met her, he was smitten

charming character. Anglo-Indian, she wrote for *The Indian Times*.

From the moment my father met her, he was smitten.

You are so lovely! Dad wrote. You overflow with grace.

In a bold move, Dad described his stay with Mum's parents, Hope and Edward, days later.

My stay at Sea View was heavenly... to sleep in your house... all this was absolute bliss.

Dad returned to Burma, but wrote to Mum and visited her frequently on leave.

The wartime context

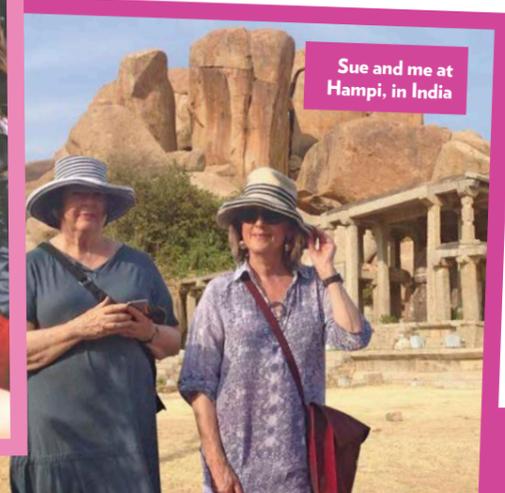
Dad's intimate letters.

The letters stopped in 1944, possibly because Dad's unit became embroiled with more

AS TOLD TO LISA BROOKMAN PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Me, Mum and my daughter Charlotte



Sue and me at Hampi, in India

Mum was in for a shock living in student accommodation on rations with no servants. She gave birth to me in 1947, followed by my sister, Cara.

When Dad accepted a job as Director of Music in Melbourne, in 1954, someone from the Australian High Commission came to assess our skin colour.

Looking us up and down, they decided my sister and I were one sixth Indian, but my mother was one third. Because of this, Mum's fare to Australia had to be paid in full, not the 10 pound fare like the rest of us. It seems barbaric anyone would even think like that.

'It's just how things were,' Mum always told us.

Dad went on to an amazing career in music, gaining a Medal of the Order of Australia.

Mum wrote scores of plays and TV scripts, penning episodes of the TV

show *Prisoner Cell Block H*.

It wasn't until 1999, when I was 50, that I visited India with my friend Sue.

Sue and I developed a clothing business called Moti, which means 'Pearl' in Hindi, like Mum's name.

I'd then visit India yearly to source fabric. There, I discovered one of my ancestors was a director of The East India Company.

My great-grandfather moved to India in the mid-nineteenth century to set up a tea plantation.

I feel so privileged to have found my father's love letters and honoured to share their love story in my book *A Touch of India*.

My parents might be gone, but the love they shared will live forever. 🇺🇰

'A Touch of India', published by *Bloomings Books*, is available now in bookshops and online. Visit valeriebrittonwilson.com



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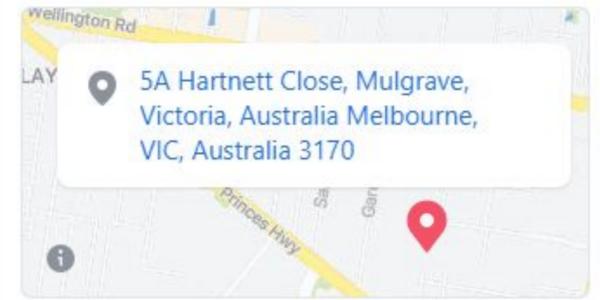
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The just-out Jan issue of That's Life includes a beautiful heart-warming story about our client Valerie Wilson, who has written a memoir called A Touch of India that relates to her and her mother's life in India.
<https://valeriebrittonwilson.com/>



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NEWS > TRAVEL



ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

Four new books to reactive your sense of adventure

PENNY THOMAS shares four new books to satisfy your wanderlust

Penelope Thomas



CRUISING

World cruise fleet rises to health challenge

GEOFFREY THOMAS reveals cruise companies' new measures for 2022, 2023 and beyond

Geoffrey Thomas



EXCLUSIVE | START BOOKING

CONFIRMED: Perth secures direct flights to Rome

WA's status as the Australian gateway to Europe has been cemented with Qantas set to reveal on Wednesday it will establish direct flights between Perth and Rome - and the return of the non-stop London route.

Josh Zimmerman



BIGGER REACH

Virgin opts for trendsetter United Airlines for US flights

Virgin Australia has struck a new partnership with United Airlines that will triple its reach into the Americas, giving passengers access to cities across the US, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America.

Geoffrey Thomas



RAMPING UP

Flights set to soar as WA reopens

Australia's biggest airline is set to ramp up flights to and from Perth to meet surging demand for when WA's border reopens.



TRAVEL

Qld tourism boost as border reopens

Queensland tourism is back on track after the state reopened its borders under a "more pragmatic" chief health officer, Flight Centre boss Graham Turner says.



NOSTALGIA

WA remembered from the window of a DC-3

GEOFFREY THOMAS on a book that takes a colourful look at the past



TRANSITION PERIOD

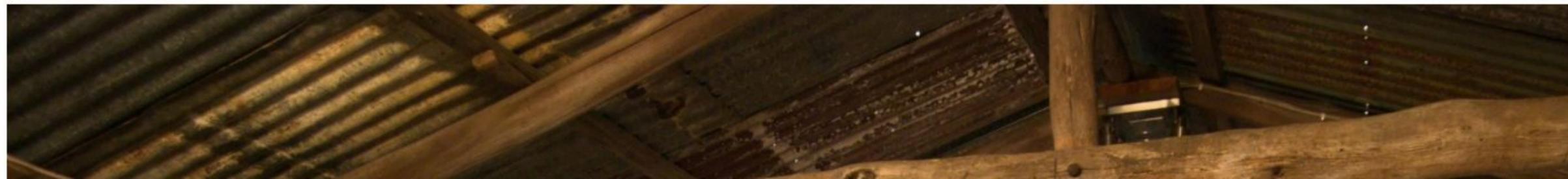
Omicron won't delay WA's border reopening: McGowan

The emergence of the fast spreading Omicron variant won't derail the plan to drop WA's border, according to WA Premier Mark McGowan, with a potential January reopening coinciding with two

Spot the differences

A new book guides urban explorers around Sydney's art deco and modernist gems.

By SUSAN KUROSAWA



Book club

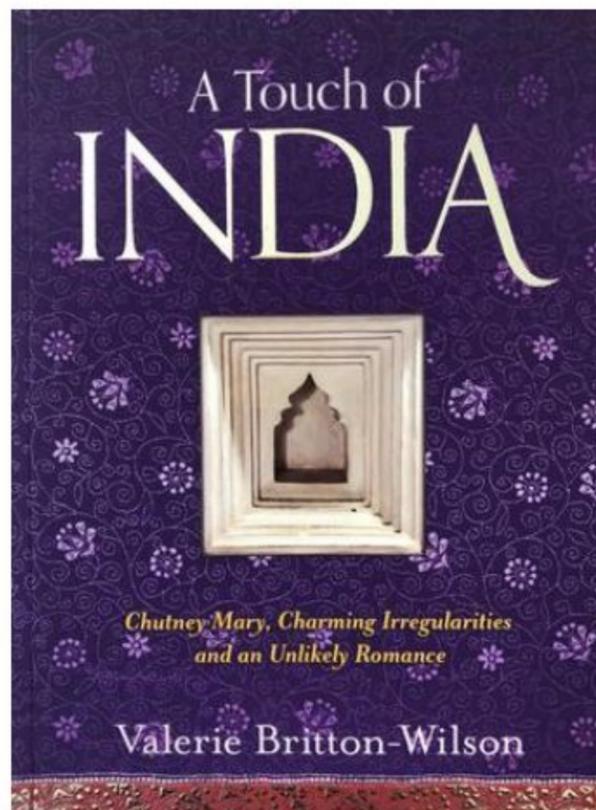
A TOUCH OF INDIA

Valerie Britton-Wilson

The subhead of this deeply textured family memoir encapsulates its myriad story threads: “Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance”. I first heard the Chutney Mary reference in India about 30 years ago. My Anglo-Indian friend, June, daughter of an Indian mother and Scottish father, has now passed but she told me this was just one of the mixed-blood references she’d endured, along with “flying fish”, meaning neither one thing nor the other. In my novel Coronation Talkies, set in the Western Ghats of India, I based the plight of a character on June’s stories of racism from all corners, of the fatigue of trying to “pass” as white.

In *A Touch of India*, Melbourne author and social researcher Valerie Britton-Wilson traces the history of her mother, Pearl Creed, of part Indian blood, who was a successful Bombay journalist and artist in her youth. She married distinguished British musician and scholar Donald Britton and settled in England. Their application to move to Australia with their young daughters in the 1950s was during the era of our infamous “white” immigration policy. A consular officer visited the Britton home in Winchester for a surreptitious skin colour check. But, ironically, inter-racial marriages (or mistress-taking) had been encouraged during the early rule of the Raj “to contribute to

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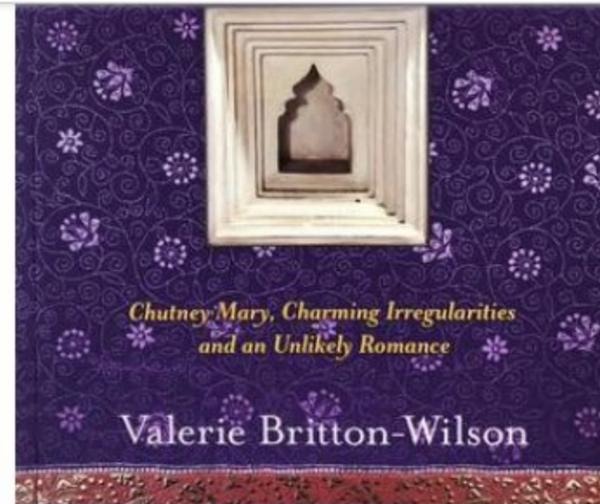
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A Touch of India.

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SUSAN KUROSAWA

Spend it

SUSAN KUROSAWA

Spend it

Tasmania joins Japan in an unusual but beneficial new Fresh Start soap collaboration from Melbourne-based Bathing Shed. It goes like this. Take the highest grade 100 per cent Tassie cold-pressed and vitamin-rich hemp seed oil, fragrant herbs and botanicals, and create a long-lasting soap made by hand in Japan. Each small batch takes one month to produce and the traditional method allows for the highest extraction of hemp seed oil and preservation of nutrients that include omega acids. The makers claim “incredible antibacterial properties” and evidence that Fresh Start can improve symptoms of eczema and psoriasis. Expect no artificial fragrance, stabilisers, preservatives or colouring agents in the Bathing Shed range, which includes hand gel and moisturiser. A share of revenue goes to Clean Up Australia. 100g; \$19. Add a hemp fabric gift bag, \$3.



Bathing Shed soap.

bathingshed.com

SUSAN KUROSAWA

SUSAN KUROSAWA, ASSOCIATE EDITOR (TRAVEL)

Susan has led The Australian's travel coverage since 1992. She has lived and worked in England, France, Hong Kong and Japan, and has received multiple local and international awards for travel writing and featu... [Read more](#)



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Travel

Four new books to reactive your sense of adventure over the holidays

Penelope Thomas | The West Australian
Wed, 15 December 2021 2:43PM



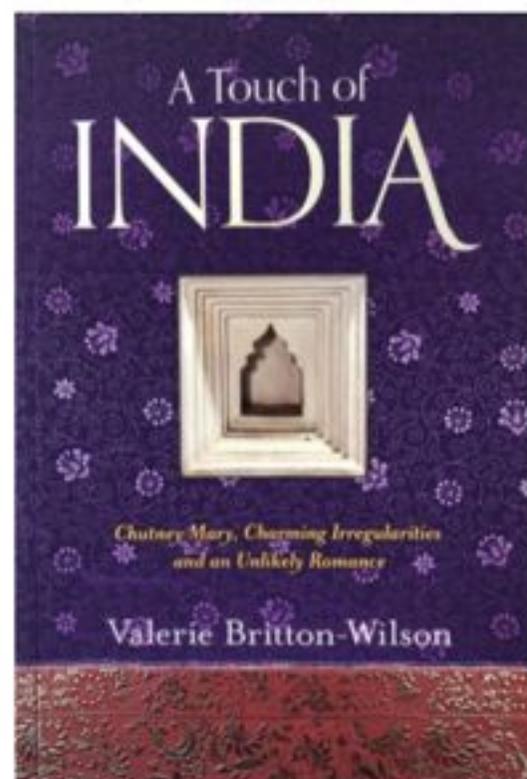
By Chance The Future by Amy Rudder Credit: Supplied

From a roadtrip through the Australian desert, to traversing treacherous terrain in New Zealand, here are a collection of new books that explore the highs and lows of travel whilst celebrating extraordinary journeys.

A Touch of India

Valerie Britton-Wilson

(Bloominings Books, \$32.99)



A Touch of India by Valerie Britton-Wilson Credit: Supplied

Inspired in part by a bundle of wartime love letters from the author's English-born father to her mother, the 300-page memoir dissects what it means to be a "Chutney Mary" and the complexities and nuances of having mixed blood.

Throughout the book, the Melbourne-based author and social researcher shares some fascinating moments from her own life, having worked for over two decades in India. It also provides a wealth of observation, knowledge and insight; from horrendous accounts of the 1947 partition, to a dowry murder, to chronic corruption.

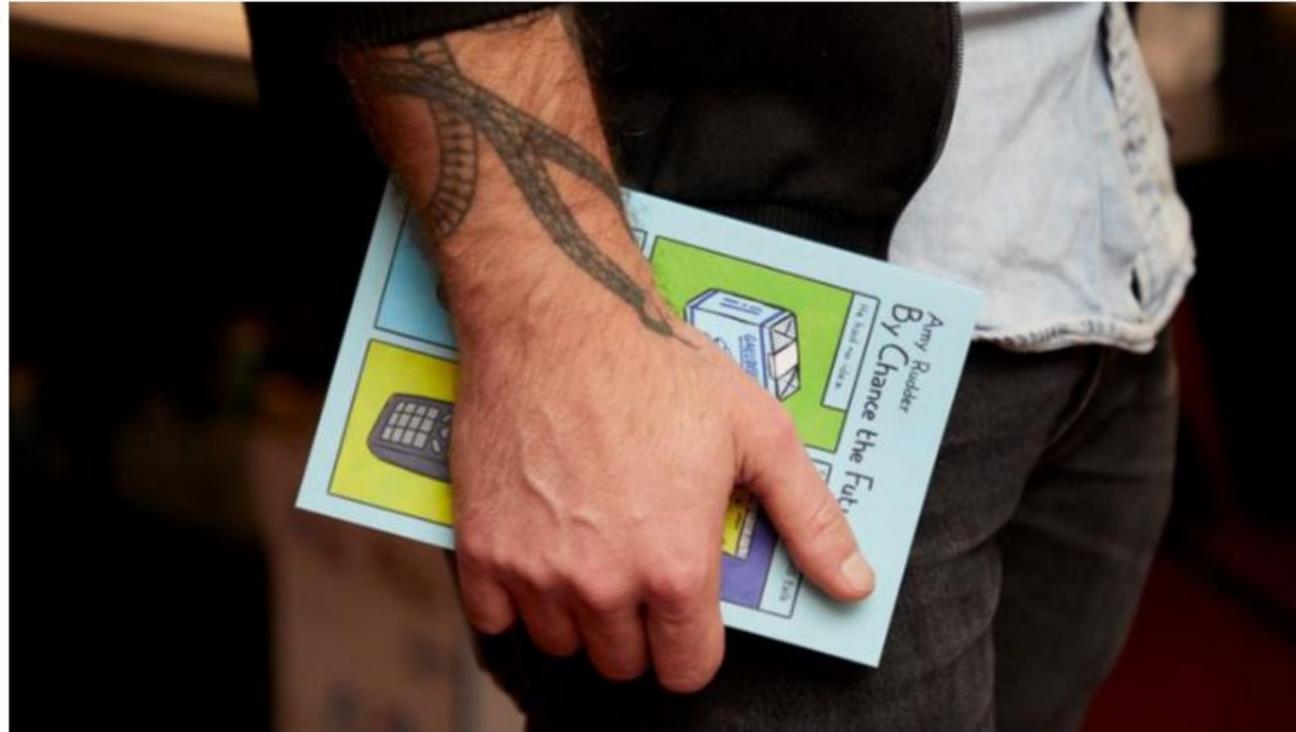
Engaging and beautifully written, A Touch of India leaves readers with a richer understanding of middle-class India, whilst providing a touch of history, travel and textiles along the way.



Travel

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Penelope Thomas | The West Australian
Wed, 15 December 2021 2:43PM



By Chance The Future by Amy Rudder Credit: Supplied



From a roadtrip through the Australian desert, to traversing treacherous terrain in New Zealand, here are a collection of new books that explore the highs and lows of travel whilst celebrating extraordinary journeys.

By Chance The Future

Amy Rudder

(The Disputandum, \$29.95)

By Chance the Future is Amy Rudder's debut novel that tells a story of stepping out into the world and trusting you'll know what to do when you get there.



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\$80M set aside for COVID test isolation payment

Blending travel writing, philosophical treatise, self-deprecating comedy with a dose of political criticism, the book takes you on a journey back in time to the year 2001.

The author highlights both our very human hypocrisy and genuine attempts to connect, and the singularity and the sameness of our youthful adventures as we attempt to individuate from our families and countries of origin.

While the story is focused on life at the turn of the century, it makes you reflect on where we were 20 years ago in comparison to where we are today – at a distance and with hindsight.

Uprising

Nic Low

(The Text Publishing House, \$34.99)

Uprising by Nic Low is a riveting blend of nature writing, indigenous storytelling and great adventure through New Zealand's Southern Alps.

Best described as a part-guide and part-memoir, the book follows Low on a journey of discover as he retraces the paths and stories of his ancestors.

Having grown up hearing stories from the mountains on his father's European side, the author sets out to understand how his Maori ancestors on his mother's side knew that same terrain before Europeans arrived in New Zealand.

Throughout the gripping adventure, the author meets with tribal leaders to try and understand how his forebears saw and traversed the land. He then sets out on an expedition across treacherous terrains using only the traditional oral maps of his ancestors as his guide.



Uprising by Nic Low Credit: Supplied

A Touch of India

test isolation payment

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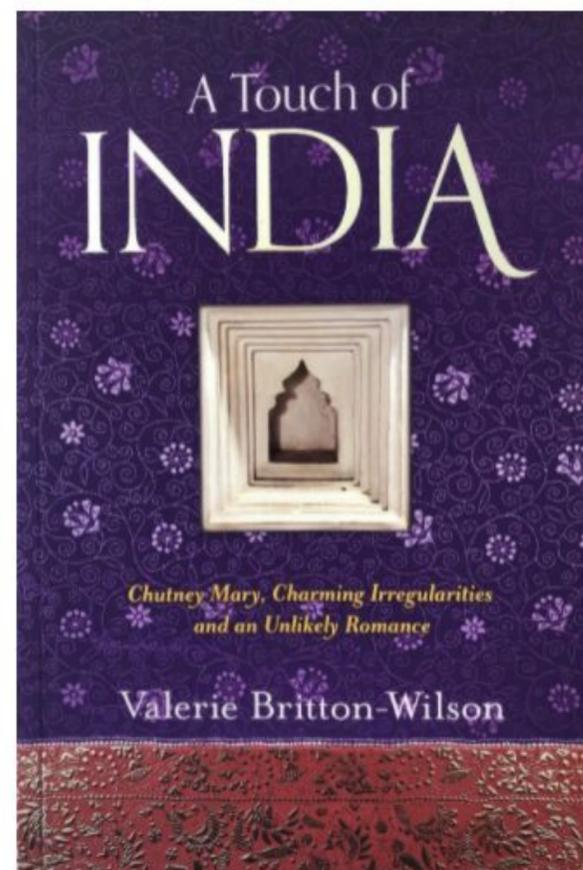
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A Touch of India

Valerie Britton-Wilson

(Blooming Books, \$32.99)



 A Touch of India by Valerie Britton-Wilson Credit: Supplied

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Engaging and beautifully written, A Touch of India leaves readers with a richer understanding of middle-class India, whilst providing a touch of history, travel and textiles along the way.

Road Tripping with Pearl Nash

Poppy Nwosu

(Wakefield Press, \$24.95)

Road Tripping with Pearl Nash is Poppy Nwosu's third romantic novel for young adults. It follows protagonist Pearl Nash on a road trip during the summer holidays before her final year of school, exploring friendship, love, grief and the courage to move forward in life.

While the whirlwind road trip through South Australia's coastal desert region was supposed to save Pearl's slowly disintegrating friendship with her best friend, nothing seems to go to plan and the protagonist ends up in the middle of nowhere beside a boy with an endlessly irritating attitude but a great smile.

Full of adventure, humour and heart, Road Tripping with Pearl Nash is a story about home and family, about breaking apart and fusing together, and, of course, about love.

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To: Wendy McWilliams

Cc: 'Valerie Wilson'

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Fresh travel stories from the West's Travel team delivered direct to your inbox



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So much to see. So much to do. And the perfect place for our annual New Norcia Photography & Writing Workshop Weekend

In April this year, 50 of our readers joined Travel team members Stephen Scourfield, Mogens Johansen, Will Yeoman and friends for a weekend of photography and writing tutorials and workshops, panel discussions, music and spoken-word performances, communal drinks, meals — and plain good fun.

We're doing it all again next year. Why not join us?



CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY READING

Four new books to reactivate your sense of adventure

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CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY READING

Four new books to reactivate your sense of adventure



Penny Thomas finds much to enjoy in some recent travel-related books

From a roadtrip through the Australian desert, to traversing treacherous terrain in New Zealand, here are a collection of new books that explore the highs and lows of travel whilst celebrating extraordinary journeys.

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This week on The West's dedicated travel podcast, Aviation Editor Geoffrey Thomas and Travel Editor Stephen Scourfield discuss the day we've all been waiting for.

Premier Mark McGowan has announced Western Australia will reopen its borders to the rest of the world on February 5. But how will that affect your own travel? What flights will be available? And what do you need to be prepared for? Hosted by Will Yeoman. Produced by Samson Tangney.



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KB Eliza's debut book Vignettes of the Possibly Dying book has caused much controversy among readers and critics alike

PONDERINGS PUBLISHING **161** - Posted by Ponderings Publishing 11 10 2021



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[SEPTEMBER 28, 2021 - HOBART, TASMANIA

WILDLIGHT PUBLISHING **162** - Posted by Tara Marlow 28 09 2021



A Touch of India reveals the entwined stories of two generations of Anglo-Indian women who made Australia home

Fascinating history, a touching love story plus travel adventures

WMC PR **2090** Posted by Wendy McWilliams 06 09 2021

2090 is a really good view rate. (number of times it has been viewed by different media)



New web series launches - The Art Hunter

Melbourne-based broadcaster, David Hunt has launched The Art Hunter - a new weekly web series streaming on YouTube, with each episode showcasing an emerging or established artist with in-depth interviews. A St Kilda resident and long-time presenter on Australia's first and only LGBTQI+ community ra...

JAMESON & CO **434** Posted by Erin Jameson 25 06 2021

Media release



Special eBook release Anniversary edition of Julietta Jameson's Christmas Island, Indian Ocean marks 20 years since the Tampa crisis How a tiny island and a boat full of refugees changed Australia forever eBook available July 15, 2021 through select major digital

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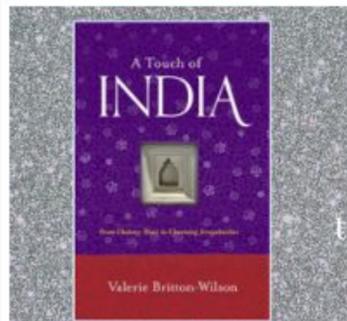
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more information about the announcement will be available closer to the date.

For more information on previous Australian Children's Laureates or the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation head to www.childrenslaureate.org.au

Title Spotlight



A touch of history, a touch of travel, a touch of textiles, of humorous and touching anecdotes and much more...



In *A Touch of India*, Valerie Britton-Wilson discovers the challenges and charms of modern India whilst uncovering the life of her mother Pearl.

Pearl was a journalist with the Times of India in the 1940s who unexpectedly fell in love with a brilliant Cambridge pianist on leave from fighting the Japanese in the jungles of Burma.

Pearl's descriptions, and the discovery of touching love letters, are interwoven with the author's experiences over two decades in this fascinating country.

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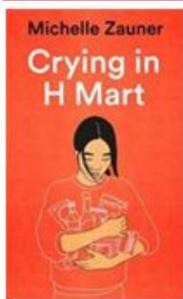
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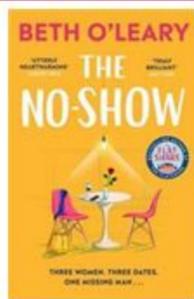
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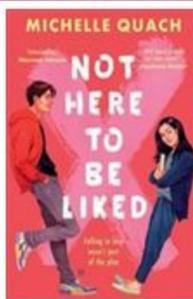
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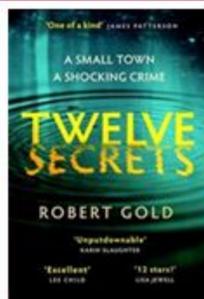
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Q&A - A Touch of India
Chutney Mary, Charming Irregularities and an Unlikely Romance

Q: What was the impetus for you writing the book?

A: I really wanted to share my daily, extraordinary experiences in India over 25 years of visits. I loved this country so much a friend and I started a small business solely for the purpose of regular visits! It was a career detour for both of us, surprising to family and friends. I also wanted to intertwine my insights into contemporary India with my mother's stories of her life growing up in end-of-Empire Bombay. Born in 1921, Pearl was a woman of mixed blood called, disparagingly, a *Chutney Mary* by the British. She was quite talented and had a regular column in the Illustrated Weekly of India that she wrote and illustrated herself.

Q: Was her mixed blood a problem for her?

A: Not so much in India but when in 1954 her British husband, my father, applied for the family to come to Australia as 10 Pound Poms, there was a problem: the White Australia Policy. Australia House in London sent someone to 'inspect' us in Winchester, where we then lived, to ensure we were not too dark-skinned. The story is surprising to people today and intriguing to read.

Q: Was there a long family history in India?

A: My mother's heritage included a very aristocratic French great grandmother but an Indian orphan grandmother, found on the street. That contrast provided fascinating fodder for further investigation! Her ancestor even further back, in the 1750s, was a Director of the East India Company. Since William Dalrymple's book *The Anarchy*, there is a lot of interest in the East India Company. Like other Directors, he was also an MP. But I discovered that his fortune had a shadowy source...

Q: Did you have a sense of what sort of book you wanted it to be?

A: Well first of all, easy to read and engaging. The long-time literary agent who picked it up said it was the first time he'd stayed up all night reading a manuscript right through! I wanted it to be informative but with a light touch. So there are interesting dollops of history, there are adventures in the textile business (that's where 'charming irregularities' in the subtitle comes in), travel insights, some tragic first-hand stories about Partition and its devastating effects on families, as well as a recent heart-rending dowry murder.

Q: The last element of the subtitle, an Unlikely Romance, what does that relate to?

A: My father, who was a concert pianist and a student at Cambridge when WW2 broke out, was drafted into the famous Chindits, an experiment in guerrilla warfare. So he was transposed from Cambridge to the jungles of Burma, fighting the Japanese behind their lines in an effort to stop them getting in to India. On leave in 1943 he met my mother at a dinner party in Bombay. They fell immediately in love – as I was to discover, while writing the book. I found an envelope labelled PRIVATE in which were his 'courtship' letters, written from perilous and ghastly conditions in Burma. The romance had many hurdles which emerge through the letters, plus a major 'inconvenience' with an unexpected and poignant twist...

Q: And the title A Touch of India?

A: No-one can possibly hope to write definitively about a country like India. It is full of challenges but also charms. I tried to capture some of all that. What attracts people and what puts them off. Often books about India focus on the very poor or the very rich. This is true in fiction set in India too. Whereas a lot of the insights in my book are into middle-class India, which is a growing proportion of the population, as we know.

India is a fascinating country with a long and deep history. Indians now make up our largest migrant intake, as well as being vital to our education and hospitality sectors. So it will become increasingly important that we as Australians learn more about India, with our shared colonial history as well as similar parliamentary and legal systems. Not to mention curry and cricket. But I would also add, even more important, shared senses of humour!!