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Highlights

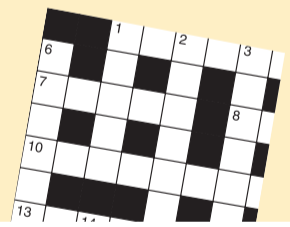


“ We have a quirky title which also sounds a bit like a Carry On film

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Highlights

German nobleman's recollections of his stay in Bristol in the early 1800s



● Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau with the sights of Bristol he enjoyed, clockwise from bottom left, the 'great ornament' Cooks Folly on the Downs, the



'wonderful' Redcliffe church, the 'interesting' Blaise Castle cottages, and the Hotwell

Prince in search of love who fell

AFTER the Battle of Waterloo (1815) fortune hunters in search of wealthy and marriageable heiresses made a bee-line for England.

Amongst the most colourful of these was Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871) later to become Germany's finest landscape gardener.

In 1826, after divorcing his wife and coming close to bankruptcy, the dashing Prince arrived in London.

Here he courted the daughters of a physician, an admiral, a Scottish baronet, an East India Company stockholder and a retail jeweller.

Two years later the Prince arrived in Bristol where he left us his impressions of the Hotwell, the Avon Gorge, Kings Weston, Blaise Hamlet and the Bristol Infirmary.

"I have already mentioned that the environs of Bristol, which lies in a deep valley, have a high and a deserved reputation," he wrote.

"Clifton, which rises in terraces on the hills immediately above it, seems only a part of the same town (and) it is easy to conceive that extraordinary

A German prince who came to England in search of a wife in the early 1800s found himself in Bristol – and wrote of his experiences, as **Gerry Brooke** finds

effects must result from such a situation.

"Three venerable Gothic churches rise out of the confused mass of houses in the valley.

"Like the proud remains of feudal and priestly dominion they appear to rear their grey heads with a feeling of their ancient greatness, in scorn of the mushroom growth of modern times.

"One of them especially, Radcliffe (Redcliffe) church, is a wonderful structure (but) unfortunately, the sandstone of which it is built has suffered so much from time, that its ornaments are nearly fretted away.

"As soon as I returned to my inn I ordered a post-chaise and began my excursions...

"I first visited the warm baths (which) are situated just at the beginning of a rocky valley which has a great resemblance to the Plausche Grund near Dresden, only that the rocks are higher and the expanse of water much finer.

"You drive for about a mile and a half on the side of a high hill, through a winding avenue of primeval oaks, planted far enough from each other to

"In this spot we met the Mayor in his state equipage, much more splendid than that of our kings on the continent.

"It formed a curious contrast with the solitary rocky scenery.

"As he passed, the postilion pointed out to me a distant ruined tower called Cook's Folly, the property of a former Mayor; a merchant, who ruined himself in building it, and now lives in a ruin.

"He could not complete the Gothic castle which he began to build in a most beautiful situation (but) perhaps it is a greater ornament to the scene in its present state.

"Ascending from the rocky valley we reached an extensive table-land which serves as a race-course, and thence over rising ground to a park, the entrance to which is very beautiful.

"The gardens, divided by neat hedges, form a pretty garland of flowers and herbs around the whole village.

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stretch out their giant arms on every side to their full extent before they touch.

"Beneath their branches you catch the finest views of the rich vale of Bristol. It is like a noble gallery of pictures (and) under every tree you find a different one.

"To the right, on the rising ground appears a dark belt of plantation edging the green turf.

"Laurel, arbutus, and other evergreens border the road (until) at a sudden turn, a house and flower-garden burst upon the eye in all their decorated beauty.

"At the end of this park lies a range of hills, along whose narrow crest you drive some miles, and arrive at a noble sea view.

for the charms of Bristol

"At our feet lay the Russian fleet at anchor, bound to the Mediterranean (and which) in the storm of last week narrowly escaped shipwreck on this coast.

"Not far from this park is an interesting establishment called The Cottages (Blaise Castle cottages).

"The proprietor, Mr. Harford, has endeavoured to realise the "beau ideal" of a village.

"A beautiful green space in the midst of the wood is surrounded by a winding road (and) on it are built nine cottages, all of different forms and materials – stone, brick, wood etc. and roofed with thatch, tiles, and slate.

"Each is surrounded with different trees, and wreathed with various sorts of clematis, rose, honeysuckle, and vine.

"The dwellings, which are perfectly detached though they form a whole, have separate gardens, and a common fountain, which stands in the centre of the green, overshadowed by old trees.

"The gardens, divided by neat hedges, form a pretty garland of flowers and herbs around the whole village.



"What crowns the whole is that the inhabitants are all poor families whom the generous proprietor allows to live in the houses rent-free.

"No more delightful or well-chosen spot could be found as a refuge for misfortune (and) its perfect seclusion and snugness breathe only peace and forgetfulness of the world.

"I returned by way of Clifton, from

“Beneath their branches (of oak trees) you catch the finest views of the rich vale of Bristol. It is like a noble gallery of pictures.

which Bristol appeared to lie under my feet.

"The scene was greatly enlivened by the multitude of gaily dressed church-goers of both sexes whom I met in every road and lane.

"In strong contrast with these cheerful groups, was a large house painted entirely black, with white windows, and looking like an enormous catafalque.

"I was told it was the public hospital, and a gentleman offered to show it to me.

"The interior was much more attractive than the exterior (and) its fine spacious apartments, and the exquisite cleanliness which pervades every part, must render it a most comfortable abode for the sick and suffering.

"In no place did I perceive the slightest offensive smell, except in the apothecary's shop.

"The right wing of the building is appropriated to male, the left to female patients.

"The operating-room was remarkably elegant, furnished with several marble basins into which water was turned by cocks, so that in any part of the room the blood could be instantly washed away.

"In the centre was a mahogany couch with leather cushions for the patients.

● *The Fortune Hunter – A German Prince in Regency England* is by Peter James Bowman and published by Signal Books. For more details please email kathleen@hurstpub.co.uk or log on to www.signalbooks.co.uk.

Highlights

Painting: Mother Pugsley's Well



Heartbreaking tale of widow

FOR many years this part of Nine Tree Hill, just off Stokes Croft, was known as Mother Pugsley's Field, after a widow who once owned it.

It was, apparently, a popular place for children to play.

During the Siege of Bristol in 1645, so the story goes, one of Prince Rupert's young Royalist officers, killed by Cromwell's Parliamentary troops, was buried

here. His young widow, who never recovered from the trauma, spent the rest of her life at this spring, grieving for her lost love.

When she died, in about 1700, she was buried in the same grave as her husband wearing her wedding dress.

The spring, pictured here in the 1820s, was later converted into a well.

On this day

1668: John Dryden was appointed the first Poet Laureate.

1732: Birth of Frederick, Lord North, who as prime minister levied the tax on tea that incensed the American colonists and provoked the Boston Tea Party.

1852: Frank Winfield Woolworth, merchant and founder of the chain store, was born in New York.

1912: The Royal Flying Corps was instituted by Royal Charter.

1936: Joe Payne scored 10 goals for Luton Town against Bristol Rovers on his debut as centre forward – a record for one man in one game.

1964: Sidney Poitier became the first black man to win an Oscar for best actor, in *The Lilies Of The Field*.

1980: Four days after his 23rd birthday, Severiano Ballesteros, pictured, won the US Masters, the event's youngest winner.

1990: The Soviet Union admitted the massacre of up to 15,000 Polish officers at Katyn in the Soviet Union in 1940.

ON THIS DAY LAST YEAR: Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said he



was "sorry" for failing to communicate his plans for the NHS to health workers after suffering an unprecedented vote of no confidence at the Royal College of Nursing conference in Liverpool.

BIRTHDAYS: Edward Fox, actor, 75; Seamus Heaney, poet, 73;

Marjorie Yates, actress, 71;

Al Green, soul singer, 66;

Peabo Bryson, singer, 61; Peter Davison, actor, 61; Stephen Byers, former Labour MP, 59; Garry Kasparov, former chess champion, 49; Rick Schroder, actor, 42; Lou Bega, singer, 37.

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