

Transcript of Podcast 077: New Series, New City, New Nel

{Intro:

Becky The Traveller: Hello. Just thought I'd test and see if this works, before I do a real recording. Bye!

}

{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a podcast looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Enby with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the why's behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

Well, that was an unexpectedly long break. To be honest I wasn't planning it but I did kind of need it. Everything has indeed turned out all right, at least in the short term, but I needed a few weeks to settle in, get a better setup for podcasting, and make sure everything chez moi was as comfortable as it could be. I've kind of almost done all I need to do; it's still not absolutely ideal, but then nothing outside of chick-lit ever is.

And, as you probably already noticed with the metadata, this is not the episode I intended to broadcast. This is largely because of a deal of procrastination; there's only so long you can spend checking the largely auto-transcription of two hours of interview of someone with a relatively hard voice to transcribe, without feeling your brain is melting out of your ears. But I did it, and now I have to edit it. Which is, in some way, a harder and longer process, and it requires to me to *think*. All that effort only for a couple of hundred people to listen to it. But promoting me is my VA's job. Except she won't listen to the episode either. Surround yourself with people who love you and push you up to be the best person you can be.

As a side note, Laura, my knees hurt because of the workouts I've been doing in your absence.

Anyway. This episode will be a short one, just in part to let you know I'm still alive, partly to give you an indication of what to look forward to in the new series of episodes, for a given definition of series, and mainly to give you a housekeeping life update. Laura's favourite part of the pod, she says. I don't know if that's going to be true going forward since she'll be seeing it in real time, but hey ho.

As you know I've recently moved to Manchester. And a strong part of my doing that was to make more social contact, to meet with more of my interest communities. As as you heard last time, I'd started with quite a bang, within my first two days of being there I'd done three social events, one of them quite unexpectedly. It's not kept to that ratio, to be honest it never could of course, but now we're into October things are starting to meet up after the summer break, and now that the Queer Lit bookshop has moved locations into a sizeable cafe with two levels and a decent amount of meeting space. So some groups will start meeting there. Although when I popped in there on Sunday to look for a small flag, there seemed to be a gay leather munch meet-up happening. I stick my finger into many pies, well, clearly not literally, but, that is not one of mine. It was rammed. The cafe part I mean. Not anything else. I don't swing that way and anyway, public place, you know. Anyway they didn't have the flag I wanted. Or any hand-held flags, but I'll clarify that next time I'm in. Which is while I'm writing this podcast episode, funnily.

While on the subject of alternative lifestyles, shout-out to Full Swap Radio listeners of course, the local kinksters are still having regular munches, so I've been to a couple of those and there's one coming up at the weekend. I'm not yet comfortable enough to go to an actual play event with them, but I'm sure that'll come with time. That being said, another of my fetishy communities, which is primarily online (Discord), is having a play party event in November, but not that far away from me. So I'm very tempted to go to that. It's a bit more specific in scope than the other ... it's tickling. Stop laughing. Or, er, you know what I mean. Anyway, weirdly I feel a bit closer to them, but that's because I've voice-chatted with them more. The last time I did so, they like my voice anyway, so they got me to read aloud a couple of dodgy DMs one of them had received on, I assume

Fetlife, and they liked my voice so much they said I should read erotic audiobooks. I guess being asexual means I'm less likely to get too invested in the content, so can be a bit more ... I suppose it's the opposite of method acting. Robert De Niro would have done this a completely different way. But he's not in the Tickling Discord server. I assume. Could you imagine Robert De Niro doing an audiobook version of *The Story Of O*, or *Fifty Shades Of Grey*? But then if Samuel L Jackson can read children's books ... after a fashion, anyway.

And while I'm a travel podcaster and blogger primarily, you all know what my most popular blog post is, so this is all definitely on-brand. Just don't expect even a YouTube Short about it.

It's not just kinksters I'm socialising with, either on or off-line. On Wednesday just gone I did something I've almost never done in my entire working life. I went to the pub with people I work with.

This is not entirely true. I don't work with them in the sense they're not in any way connected to my team, department, or stakeholders. And I'd never met them before. But I'm in the process of being transferred to the Manchester office of my organisation, and there's not many of us based at the Manchester Office (and many rarely go in anyway), so they seem to often make a point of meeting up just to socialise, because it's relatively easy to arrange to do so for a small group. And I was added to their Teams network on Tuesday, and pretty much the first discussion was about going out the next day. So I figured I'd pop along and say hi. Past me would not have done this. This is very much an example of personal development over the last couple of years.

Anyway we spent a couple of hours in the pub. Which is exactly what you expect on a work night. And they seemed pretty cool and friendly, so it augurs well.

I've also met up in the past month with people I know online in general. As you may remember, some months ago I appeared on someone else's podcast - Ruth Millington's *Extreme Holidays Pod*. She's based 'somewhere in the Peak District', and when I said I was moving to Manchester she suggested we meet up sometime. Well, one Saturday in September we did just that. We decided to meet up kind of halfway between us, in the town of Stalybridge, an ideal location with some decent pubs and, if the weather was okay, easy access to hillside hiking. The weather on the day was dry but very windy, so we decided to stay in the pub for a bit, then take a wee look around Stalybridge and nearby Ashton-Under-Lyne.

Stalybridge is a great example of 'Everywhere Is Interesting, But Not Necessarily For Very Long'. For a place I'd heard of a few times, it's surprisingly small, smaller than Kirkby-in-Ashfield, and there's ... not a lot there. It is home to a very good pub on the station platform, one of many across this part of the country (and people do real ale trips to visit them all, for example Huddersfield, Dewsbury, and Marsden). Just outside the station are two other pubs, which, as far as I'm aware, both hold records due to their name. One, 'Q', is the shortest named pub in the UK. Just the other side of Harrop Street, the side street coming off the main road, is 'The Old Thirteenth Cheshire Astley Volunteer Rifleman Corps Inn'. Which ... I'm less certain about this (the Q Inn has a plaque outside attesting to its fame), but it's been touted as the longest pub name in the country. Given the town also has a couple of micropubs as well, it's a place I'm likely to end up going back to, if for nothing else. And there isn't much else, in all honesty.

Anyway, it was cool to meet up with Ruth at long last, and hopefully next time we'll do a bit of proper hiking; she's very much an outdoorsy person.

With regard to hiking, the day after I met Ruth, I'd arranged to meet up with another online community, a group of Queer hikers based in Sheffield but who do hikes in the Peak District. One of the advantages of moving to Manchester is that I'm close to that part of the world again - if you recall in earlier episodes when I lived in Sheffield, I was out that way quite frequently, and indeed a long-form YouTube video will be out soon about the Sheffield Country Walk which goes along some of the more iconic parts of the area. And being close again to the Dark Peak may mean I can get out that way too, and hike around the bleak and dour Saddleworth Moor without getting thoroughly soggy, and hopefully be able to see, well, something. Anything would be nice. {pause} You may be pleased to know I'll refrain from the obvious jokes. Too soon, maybe.

Anyway. We did not go to Saddleworth Moor. Rather, we hiked from Grindleford to Sheffield, via the woods around Padley Gorge, past the tree trunk with coins hammered into it which I blogged about years ago, over Burbage Moor, then along the Porter Brook past Forge Dam and into Endcliffe Park. It wasn't a terribly quick walking pace, and we kept stopping to rest and enjoy the view, and allow people to catch up, but this was actually good for me as it meant I could switch around who I was walking near, and I ended up having a surprisingly large number of chats with different people. Two of the people there I knew from elsewhere, back

from the pandemic zoom writing group I was involved with in my Sheffield days, so it was good to meet up with them again in particular too.

I don't know much I'll be involved with that Queer hiker group, given most of their socials will be in Sheffield, which although isn't far, it's just far enough and expensive enough for me to not want to do on a regular basis, and given that we're now coming into Autumn and actual hiking is likely to be less common, but it's still a good group for me to be in regular contact with.

Now, earlier in the day I'd met Ruth, I'd met with someone who ... may or may not have contributed to this podcast before, but we've certainly both contributed to another podcast, several years ago. This is Shelly, someone I used to go to primary school with. I'd not met her since then, so it was a bit weird to finally meet up in person after so long, even though we'd re-contacted through the internet some while ago. She's now living somewhere in the mosslands between Liverpool and Manchester, and has recently taken up Parkrunning. A couple of friends of hers had suggested she come to do the one in Salford, and she poked me saying 'is this the one you go to?'. So we had a bit of a natter after she finished.

Speaking of Parkrun, I've been getting steadily better and fitter as I've been doing it, even though I've kind of only just started. I think every run so far as been quicker than the last, and my most recent time was my fifth fastest ever at Parkrun, so I'm definitely vibing with it. The last two weekends though I've volunteered rather than run, and the folk there are getting to know me by now so it's a nice replacement for Queen's in Glasgow. It's a much bigger Parkrun though; the turnout is a shade more than double, and it feels like it too.

I'm back up in Glasgow at the end of the month, actually. Primarily to, of all things, get my hair dyed. I know for a fact this is something I can do in Manchester, but I'd been planning it while I still lived up here and made tentative plans previously, so it seemed only fair to go through with them there. I'd messed the salonist around enough as it is with my prevarication and procrastination so I felt morally obliged to. Besides she seems pretty cool and is also Queer-friendly, which helps. I've no idea how well the dye will take, or how long it'll last, but it's something I've never done professionally before so call it an experiment on my part. It's something I'd always said I'd do, even when I was much younger, I said 'when I go grey I'll get it dyed sky blue'. My desires have changed so I'm going for some kind of vibrant purple, which is much more on-brand anyway, so we'll see how it goes. At least I'll know. And while I'm up there I might pop along to Queen's Parkrun, to either take part or to volunteer, then meet up with my friend Debbie for a bit. I arrive back in Manchester at around 1.30am on a Saturday Night Sunday Morning, which my VA says would be a great time to take wildlife video of the human partying and mating rituals. I suspect I will not be doing this, given that I'll already be standing out as being 'not what you expect to see at 1.30am on a Saturday Night Sunday Morning'. I think the clocks go back that night too. That's going to be a weird one.

I have a few other things upcoming that are tentative, and it's getting to the stage I need a calendar. I had a conversation with my VA about this - I need to see things holistically, like, a couple of months at a time, rather than be notified of things on-the-day or be able to see only a week at once. This is so I can see what's upcoming and not have things creep up on me unawares. I mean clearly they still will, and it does rely on me filling it in in the first place, which has always been my problem with shopping lists, that I forget to put items on them in the first place and this is why I don't have any mushrooms. Anyway, in terms of communities, these future plans include finally meeting up with the AroAce community here in Manchester, who meet up once a month, also there's a non-binary community who also meet once a month but also an additional once a month online, and then there's a couple of upcoming events at the Feel Good Cafe that seem interesting (I think one of them is a Trans quiz), and then there's another non-binary and trans munch somewhere and somewhen, and I'm mentioning it here in this pod simply to remind myself to look up the deets later on.

And then at the end of November I'm going on holiday with Laura, but that's a topic to talk more about in a future pod.

Finally, with regard to my own presence; I'm still on Twitter but since the demise of Tweetdeck, I'm far less active on there. I have recently joined BlueSky, same identity, I'm easy to find, and I'm still posting daily Short videos to YouTube. More Longer form videos will follow once I work out exactly what kind of thing I should be creating; it's largely an inspiration and storyboard thing. As you heard, I'm much more active on Discord these days, and I also recently merged my two LinkedIn profiles. I used to have one for travel, under my Barefoot Backpacker brand, and one for my data analysis skills, under my real name. I've now combined them both under my old Barefoot Backpacker identity, but changed my name on it to reflect my non-binary identity. Just call me Nel. It's short for Nelipot.

At the time of podding this pod, I've heard no contact from either of the community radio stations. Oh well, their loss I guess.

{section separation jingle}

Now, I want to talk a bit about future episodes of this pod. But I'm going to start off with a question. What are you interested in hearing about? What episodes vibe better with you? Do you like the travelogues that I do, where I talk about trips I've taken and how they made me feel? Are you interested in my talking about less-visited destinations and why you should go there? Do you prefer when I talk about aspects of travelling that you can relate to, or where I delve into more deeper and more political-adjacent topics? Are you interested in the history aspect of what I talk about? Are you more interested when I talk about lifestyle and community. And how do you feel about hearing contributions from other people; does it add context and variety, or would you rather just hear my voice? And what about those rare episodes where I'm chatting with my VA, where she's asking me questions on topics that appeal to me or which she's curious about?

Also, do you have any suggestions for future topics? Is there anything you'd want to hear me talk about, or even is there anything you feel you'd want to come on to the pod to talk about? I'm very open to suggestions; my remit appears to be quite wide and varied.

At the moment, I have tentative topics that take me well into 2024, but in the short term, I'm planning on doing episodes about:

1) Comfort Zones: do you like breaking them, or do you prefer to stay within them and find you enjoy travels more that way? What would you say your limits are, and have they changed over time? Is there anything you absolutely wouldn't do? I've done a couple of podcast episodes previously about Anti-Bucket Lists, and I think this is a natural follow-up to that.

2) Sex and Love on the Road: Oh, Full Swap Radio listeners, there's one for you! I'll be talking about two aspects to this: intentional meetups, where you've travelled to meet someone you feel you've had a personal connection with, and what happened when you met (was it lust at first sight, or did you feel a little catfished?); and unintentional meetups, where you've been casually travelling and then bumped into someone you've thought 'well, hello' about. Did it last, or was it just a fling? I'd also be talking about 'I was in a hostel dorm and I Heard Things From Another Bed', and also some of the, er, meetups I've had in my travels, some of which I mentioned in passing in my Twitter Space with V on Safety While Travelling.

3) New Towns: Most people live in places that have grown organically, even if they were originally built to a planned system. However, and especially since World War Two, there's been a growth across the world in planned new towns, places built with the explicit purpose of initially housing a couple of hundred thousand people at least. These places tend to have, in the UK at least, a 'reputation'. There's quite a few of them, and very few would be in travel brochures, so it seems the ideal subject for me to approach on this pod. Inspired by Cumbernauld. Because something has to be.

4) The Balkans: a part of the world I've visited a few times, mostly on backpacking trips where I've spent a few days in a place before moving on to the next town, or next country, because several of those countries aren't very big. But Everywhere Is Interesting (even North Macedonia), so I'll be talking a bit about my experiences in them all, and hopefully yours as well. I'm not quite sure what the actual scope of the pod will be, as there's three countries I'm not sure whether to include or not, but I'll see how the land lies. Aside from mountainous.

If you have any thoughts, experiences, or knowledge about any of these topics, feel free to let me know. As always, I'd be looking for voice recordings of up to around four or five minutes, and it doesn't seem to matter what format as I can convert almost anything, although as an aside, recordings in a Facebook message are a pain to download.

I'm also going to do a couple of pods on previous backpacking trips I've done - including definitely my South-East Asia trip which really pushed me into the travel vibe, and probably one on my experiences in Australia, especially Western Australia, because when people say 'I'm going to Australia', that often doesn't mean Perth. I mean, mainly for logistical reasons.

Related; I might do one on trains at some point, because I've travelled a lot on them, especially overnight and

across one and a half continents. But we'll see about that.

One day I'll also do a pod based on my backpacking journey around Jordan and Israel. But now is not the time for that. For reasons.

{end pod jingle}

Well, that's about all for this pod. Join me next time where I finally, *finally*, talk about a topic that most of you won't know anything about. Including me, which is why I did it, Until then, keep finding interesting things in everywhere you go, and if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}