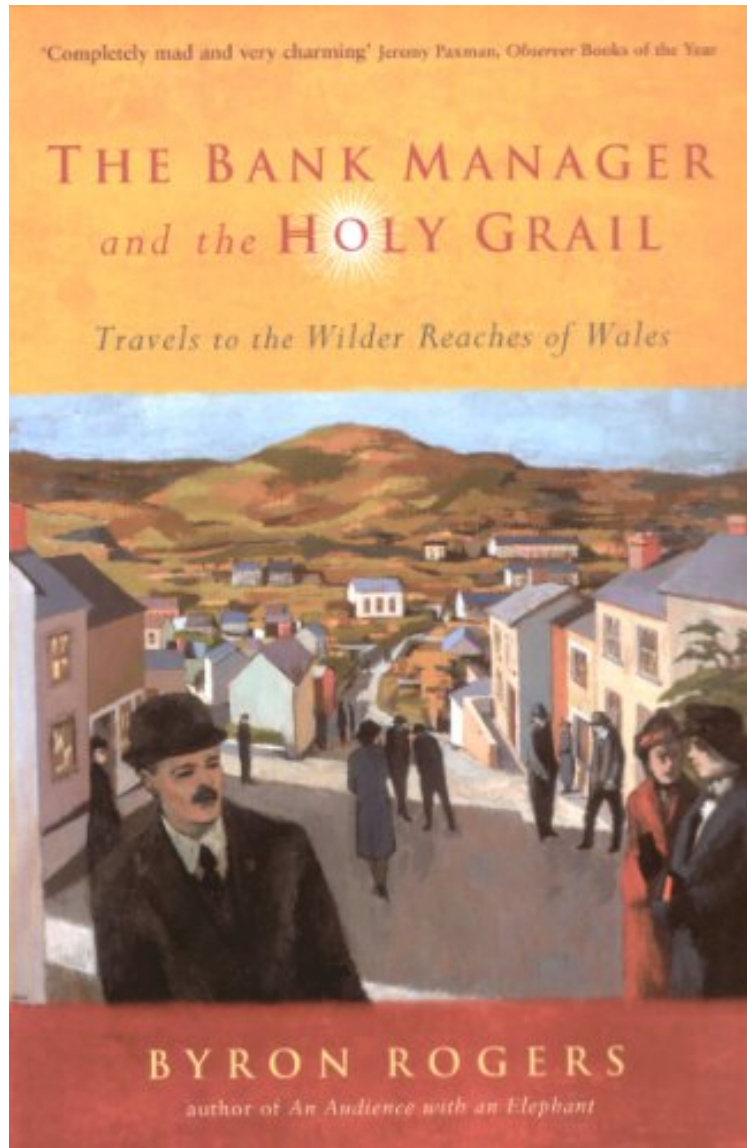


(Ebook pdf) The Bank Manager and the Holy Grail: Travels to the Weirder Reaches of Wales

The Bank Manager and the Holy Grail: Travels to the Weirder Reaches of Wales

Byron Rogers

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Byron Rogers : The Bank Manager and the Holy Grail: Travels to the Weirder Reaches of Wales before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bank Manager and the Holy Grail: Travels to the Weirder Reaches of Wales:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Looking for the soul of Wales, in its peopleBy John L MurphyThe subtitle differs a bit in two editions, "wilder" being subtracted, but the gist remains: a journalist, born in what was post-

war Carmarthenshire, returning to his homeland to uncover intriguing stories and lots of anecdotes. Since this is a collection of pieces written over the past quarter-century, it does lack a controlling theme, although the entries are arranged in roughly thematic sections: people he knows, those from the past that he wishes he knew, and then on to more historical and localized events. My only caveat, which took this rating down, was the lack of any map. For non-Cymric readers like myself, a chart of Wales and the sites mentioned in his many itineraries would have been invaluable. Without it, there's a too-random feel as one entry follows another across his homeland, although this is not a fault of the essays themselves, only their compilation for a wider audience. Rogers writes chattily but hides beneath an affable nature his considerable craft in getting an article of one or two thousand words to reveal a great deal about both his own diligence in constructing a well-made essay and his intelligence in arranging details to build up to an often movingly narrated conclusion. He's also a master of getting you hooked from the start, and his stylistic tic of addressing the reader as "you" may harken of an old-fashioned epistolary nature, but it does keep one's interest and moves the various stories along quickly. I have not said much about the actual contents of these collected tales, but suffice to say that although the wildness of many of them may be due more to mental than geographical conditions encountered, that they serve not only to entertain but to educate. Rogers avoids the cutesy details, the eccentric exaggerations of his subjects, or the folksy embellishment. As a native Welshman, and the first in his family line to actually write in English, his knowledge of both sides of the Welsh story means that this is a more rooted, rather than impressionistically superficial, excavation into the principality. His own pride, without being inflated or vain, about his hometown and its environs makes for a series of encounters that show his unending curiosity into the foibles and fantasies of his fellow countrymen and women makes for realistic, yet memorably distinctive, assorted conversations and ruminations. The untranslatable "hireath," a longing and a loyalty for the Welsh heritage and its manifestations, emerges in these pages of Rogers' travels.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. **THE BANK MANAGER AND THE HOLY GRAIL - BYRON ROGERS** By @TheHillpaul For those of us who used to eagerly await the arrival of the Sunday papers to read his column, this collection of articles by the great Welsh storyteller is a long-awaited treat. Myth and history are given that contemporary insight that makes you feel that you can reach out and touch what is described and the contemporary is given a mythic quality that only a writer who has kept his sense of wonder can evoke. If you don't believe me read the story of the title. Outsiders may make the best observers because they can judge critically, but insiders tell the best stories because they love their subject.

Byron Rogers's Wales is not the stereotypical nation of rugby heroes, eisteddfods and coal mining. His travels take him to an altogether stranger and more magical country. He pieces together the story of Kaiser Wilhelm's sojourn in a Welsh spa town before the Great War, and tours the Welsh waxwork museum largely populated with effigies of Prince Philip discarded by Madame Tussaud's. He also tells the true story of how a project to ensure the survival of the Welsh language came to involve the translation of pornographic novels, how Kurt Cobain proposed to Courtney Love in a nightclub in Newport, and above all how the Holy Grail came to be in the safe keeping of the manager of Lloyd's Bank in Aberystwyth. Byron Rogers's collections of travel pieces have become reliable sales and critical success, attracting acclaim from Miles Kington to Jeremy Paxman, and each volume reprinting several times. *The Bank Manager and the Holy Grail* a Waterstones' Best of Welsh' promotion choice in hardback in early 2005 continues that tradition.