Internship report
James Field – S3171051

at

Geographical Magazine, London UK

4th December – 9th February

Supervisors

Geographical: Paul Presley, Editor
University: Garrie van Pinxteren
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Motivation

I applied to Geographical Magazine primarily because during the MA course I realised my writing style, sensibilities and interests were more suited to non-hard news. Specifically, cultural writing, features and long-form, that in my view allows more creative freedom of expression and form.

This is not to say that there isn’t an important place for hard-news/traditional journalism in my future, but for the internship I wanted to follow my interests and passions, as well as my particular skill set, as I consider myself a better writer outside of the more restricted, formulaic format of hard-news.

This leads me to my second main reason for applying to Geographical Magazine, my personal interest in the content, and my view (learnt during the MA course and by talking to journalists and tutors) that niche journalism is the future, and specializing is one of the best ways to get into the field.

Yet, while it is relatively niche, Geographical still has over 100,000 regular readers and covers a broad range of topics, including: nature, wildlife, travel, geopolitics, culture, reviews, photography, environmentalism, science, and climate. The demographic of the readership tends to be UK based and well-educated, with an international/global outlook.

On top of these reasons, the two biggest passions in my life are film and travel, combining this with a strong interest in environmental issues, wildlife and culture, a magazine either focusing on film or global wildlife, travel and environmentalism seemed the obvious choice. I applied to a couple of film magazines and a couple of travel/global politics/environmental magazines, of the responses I received Geographical Magazine seemed the most interesting and offered the best opportunity for me to really contribute, write, and experience as much of the working of a successful magazine/media company as possible.

Once I arrived at the magazine, on my first day these expectations began to be met almost immediately, when after brief introductions I was asked to research and write up a story for the website straight away.

One of the biggest advantages of Geographical Magazine was the relatively small team, which varied from 5 to 10 depending on the stage of production and whether any of the other writers or the editor were away working on a project/story. This small team allowed me the maximum opportunity to contribute in various different areas of the magazine, as well as work closely with the core team of experienced writers and the editor Paul Presley. It also created a comfortable, familiar atmosphere in which I felt free to ask questions, get opinions, and receive constructive feedback.

The magazine is owned by Syon publishing, a primarily commercial company, and the managing director Greame Gourlay, who is also editor of Dive Magazine one of Syon’s other publications, worked in the same office. This allowing me the chance to interact with and talk to someone with a great deal of valuable experience and contacts in the industry, as well as the field of journalism more generally.

Twice a month we had editorial meetings for Geographical Magazine with the other main staff writers, led by Paul the editor. These involved pitching feature ideas and stories for the following month’s magazine, as well as for the website. During these meeting I was required and expected to contribute as any other writer, and my suggestions were taken on board in the same spirit. On top of this, there was also a monthly meeting with the publisher Greame, which I also
attended. This was a great experience, and I contributed in small part to both publisher meetings I attended, although as an intern I was naturally less involved in these than the monthly editorial meetings. *Geographical*, and *Syon publishing*, is an interesting place to be at the present. They’re a relatively small operation that has been running successfully for a long time, *Geographical* for over 80 years, but recently they’ve begun to branch out, looking at ways to increase circulation such as attending trade shows and further specialising their content. The publisher is also in the embryonic stage of creating another even more niche magazine to pair with trade shows. This was an extremely interesting and useful process to see, and it was nice to be involved with a well run and successful organisation with ambitions.  

**Main Tasks**

As I’ve said, because the magazine is run by a small team I was able to contribute and work on most of the different content, sections and production. This includes the website, the app, different sections in the monthly print edition, editing and proofreading, and the commercial side.  

The first week was a bedding in week, but I still wrote and researched three articles for the online site, as well as preparing and creating copy for two sections of the magazine’s print edition in January and February, involving different styles and forms of writing, as well as in-depth research. I had to juggle these task with some photo editing and article conversion for the web and app versions of the magazine. This multi-task approach is more or less how the majority of the weeks progressed, with me always taking part in many different areas of content and production. While at times this was challenging, it was also fantastic to be thrown into the deep end and never short of work to do. During this time I often had to write breaking news for the website, which meant dropping whatever I was working on and turning around copy to a tight deadline. This provided valuable practice and experience with the more traditional hard-news style as well as the environment of a more high-pressure newsroom. Another one of my main tasks was to check the layouts of the features, as they will appear in the magazine, to make sure that aesthetically it looked good on the page, check for grammar, spelling and punctuation, and fact-check any information like dates and figures that appeared in the articles. My first real experience with professional editing, these tasks involved a different journalistic skillset as well as getting to grips with the adobe InDesign software used to finalise the layout.  

My efforts in the first three weeks were rewarded with extra responsibilities and trust. This was evident in positive feedback on my written and editing work but also by my main assignment of the whole internship, which was covering the launch of an upcoming conservation mission in the Indian Ocean. I had to watch, take notes, and interview as many people as I could get hold of. Using my interviewing, transcribing, note taking, and contacts making skills, learnt during the MA course was very satisfying. I eventually had to compile all this information and turn it into a six-page feature for the March issue of the magazine, which was challenging and sometimes stressful as it would be a prominent feature in that month’s edition, but also very exciting and rewarding. The opportunity to write a longer piece showed an extra degree of trust
in my abilities as a writer from the editor, as well as the chance to see my name in print for the first time.

In the last couple of weeks I had to prepare for and interview a prominent academic on her recent book. After transcribing the interview, I then used it to form a feature for the March issue of the magazine. To prepare for the interview I read the academics book, which I then also reviewed. The whole process of this was great. It was a chance to practice two more totally different styles of writing, namely question and answer interview form and book review, not to mention reading a really interesting book as part of my work.

Finally, before the last week and weekend of my internship, Thursday to Sunday, I was helping to represent the magazine at a trade show, this gave me an interesting insight into the commercial side of the company, which I hadn’t been involved in up to this point. Spreading awareness of the magazine and making contacts in the industry, as well as talking to other publications about submitting content, was a useful chance to see a crucially important part of the operation of a magazine, as well as the mind-set and industry-work an entrepreneurial freelancer needs to get into.

Supervision

As mentioned, working in a small team, in quite an intimate working environment, meant that a good working relation developed between myself and the team, including the editor Paul who was my supervisor at the magazine.

I never felt unable to ask questions about the operation, my tasks, or the quality of my work, and Paul also was useful and constructive when there was something I needed to change or work on. In this respect the supervision was ideal. The long feature I worked on for the March issue required some editing, and Paul was helpful with his suggestions as well as complementary and encouraging. I never felt that my supervisor had a problem with my work, in terms of the quality or my general work ethic, I think this was shown in the trust he showed by giving me greater responsibilities, but the good, comfortable working environment meant that I’m sure he always felt able to give me critical feedback if it had been needed.

This was confirmed at the end of the internship when we had a one-to-one feedback meeting on the final day, in which he expressed how pleased he was with my contributions and work during the eight weeks, as well as giving me a couple of useful pointers in areas I can improve.

From the point of view of the university supervision, this was also extremely helpful. After three weeks I had a skype meeting with Garrie van Pinxteren and the editor Paul, in which Garrie helped reinforce the idea of progression and direction, which I’m sure had a positive effect on how the editor saw the internship over the next few weeks. Throughout the internship Garrie was always very quick to respond to emails and extremely forthcoming with useful advice and suggestions.

Applying my Masters and New skills learned

The skills I brought with me from my Masters were invaluable, not just the different writing styles practiced, but also interviewing, research, and photo-editing. But perhaps the most
useful was the experience of juggling multiple tasks at once while still producing quality work to deadline.

Another key skill I made good use of was the source finding techniques acquired during our section on online investigative journalism, taught by Henk Van Ess. Specifically, how to get hold of the contact details for a source whose email and phone does not appear in any documents, webpage or press-release, by using the ‘backdoors’. This was especially satisfying to use since it was a technique not known by others in the newsroom.

As the internship involved using, improving and perfecting skills taught during the course, most of the new skills learnt were in the areas of editing and production that, understandably due to time constraints, were not really taught during the Masters.

Adapting the print edition for the website and app, whilst sourcing and editing photos, were relatively new to me, but Paul was patient and helpful, and I believe I picked up these tasks fairly quickly.

Editing was a particularly interesting experience: checking for grammar, spelling, fact-checking, and reforming layout to make the copy look visually better on the page. All very important skills to get to grips with if I hope to work for a similar style magazine in the future.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall the internship was an extremely positive experience. I couldn’t have asked for a place that gave me more to do or more opportunity to contribute in every area of the magazine. It also helped me to confirm that this is the area of journalism/writing that I feel most comfortable with and want to get into, as I found the topics and style of writing really interesting and enjoyable, which made it a genuinely nice experience going to work.

The plus side of an internship in a relatively small company is that I was given more to do and trusted with bigger projects rather than just copy editing, contributing to one small area, shadowing someone, or making tea. This means that I now have a more impressive portfolio of published work to help me sell myself as a journalist to other potential employers. It also made for a nice working environment and I always felt at ease to question my colleagues and editor on the working of the magazine and advice about my writing and the journalistic life in general.

However, the flip side to this was that in a small operation there is unfortunately no room or spare finances, that you might have in a bigger company, to take someone on at the end of the internship, no matter how successful the internship was. Working in a niche area, on the types of stories and features I was working on, also meant that I was unlikely to develop many useful contacts to take into my impending freelance career. Having said this, I still would choose this type of internship, where I come out with an overwhelming positive experience and a big portfolio of work, instead of a job offer at a company I don’t really want to work for.

Having had an end of internship debrief with my supervisor and editor Paul, I feel even more confident to say that the quality of my work, ability to pick up new task quickly, and general work ethic, was high throughout. I consistently received complements from colleagues on my writing and ability to work efficiently to deadline, the editor also made a point of praising my editing skills, which is positive as this is not an area of the process I was previously familiar with. But for me the best complement of my work was the level of trust shown in my journalistic
skills, as I was given more work and bigger features, particularly the six-page spread in the March issue of the magazine.

Having said this, there are areas that I still feel need improvement, notably my use of grammar, my pitching, and my tendency to over-write.

Grammar has always been an issue for me, it’s something that I continually try to work on, but I evidently still need to be more careful, especially when going into the freelance market. My editor mentioned a few time things that I need to look out for, and double-check, which has made me even more aware of this.

My sourcing and pitching of stories was also clearly less refined, focused, and well researched than that of the other lead writers, when we met for the monthly editorial meetings. This is also something Paul brought up with me, although he did say that this is not unusual for someone new to a company, and it’s also something that comes with time, once you know better what the magazine and editor look for in a story. This is an area I intend to work on as it’s one of the most important aspects of the job, even more so as a freelancer trying to get articles commissioned.

My other main area of potential weakness is something that has always been part of my writing, much like my struggle with grammar, is my habit of being too flowery with my language, ‘waffling’, or over-writing. This is one of the reasons that I’m not especially suited to the hard-news form. This aspect of my writing was not really a problem at Geographical, as the feedback for my work was overwhelmingly positive, with only minor editorial changes needed. The style and form of the magazine allowed for more creative leeway in the copy. Yet in a few pieces I wrote, particularly the large feature, I found it challenging to cut it down to size, and reducing my habit of becoming a little too ‘literary’ was something I had to get used to. George Orwell once said on writing, that if a word can be cut it should be, this is something that the internship has taught me I still need to work on.

As I’ve said several times, my experience was an extremely positive one, in terms of my role at Geographical Magazine, my supervision both within the company and from the University, and my feelings after completing the two months, so it is difficult for me to come up with many recommendations for how the internship process could be improved.

Perhaps someone who had a negative experience is better placed to make suggestions, but for those who don’t have a comfortable or good working relationship with their supervisor/editor, I might recommend a process whereby if the company/paper/magazine agree to take on an intern they must also agree to a on-to-one debriefing meeting, such as Paul did with me, where the intern get feedback, constructive criticism, and feels free to ask questions. On top of this they must also agree to help the intern with references, contacts, work suggestions, and of course give them a minimum amount of work to do, so that upon completion the intern comes out with at the very least a reference and an improved portfolio. Something like this could be agreed via email or in writing before the internship, so that all parties know how it should progress.

Attachments

Links to web articles/stories:
http://geographical.co.uk/uk/uk/item/2569-england-s-first-resident-dolphins

“We have better maps of the moon and mars than we have of our own seabed” laments Oliver Steeds, Chief Executive of Nekton. “We've come to the point where the most important part of our planet is the least known to us”.

Correcting this almost paradoxical state of affairs was one of the founding principles of the Nekton Oxford Deep Ocean Research Institute, and why in October this year they plan to launch the Nekton II Mission, to explore, map and broadcast, the depth of the Indian Ocean.

Nekton seems to be infused with the spirit of early space exploration, their mission statement is “to explore the depth of the ocean and reveal the unknown for the benefit of humankind”, replace ‘depth of the ocean’ with ‘heights’ and you have NASA’s.

“The sea is a mirror to sky after all” says Steeds, “If you look at the 50s, 60s development of space exploration, billions and billions were invested and there’s lots that we can learn from NASA in terms of our communications they are very mission focused often very positive and optimistic. It’s that heroic odyssey which inspires people to think differently.”

This idea of pure exploration with application is what drives the Nekton deep sea project, and the idea of an optimistic, positive mission that inspires rather than depresses, is fundamental to their philosophy, and fundamental to the legacy that the organisation aims to create.

Having spent much of his working life as an investigative journalist Steeds is well aware of the importance of communication and storytelling in achieving their goals, “we think the exploration of the ocean as the next great odyssey for humankind is something that inspires people and that’s why we look very carefully at what NASA did and see what we can learn from them. There’s a simply purity to what they do that inspires us.”

‘Inspire’ and ‘legacy’ are the bedrocks of this mission, and words that you hear a lot when speaking to the Nekton team. It’s a mantra with a purpose, something their principal scientist and marine biologist Dr. Lucy Woodall explains, “To excite a younger generation, so that in another ten years time there’s going to be someone like me from one of those countries, go out into their own waters and look at it, rather than needing an organisation like ours to come in.”

THE DEEP

When we turn our inquisitive gaze downwards away from the stars, the lack of knowledge of our planet comes into focus. 71% of our planet is covered by ocean, yet less than 5% of the ocean has been explored. At least 97% of our
biosphere is in the ocean and based on this it’s estimated more than 90% of marine species remain undiscovered, yet only 0.25% of the high seas are protected.

“The deep ocean is the largest and most poorly explored and studied ecosystem on Earth,” explains Professor Alex Rogers, co-founder of Nekton, the project’s science director and one of the world’s leading oceanographers. “Given the pressures the ocean is under at present there is an immediate urgency to get a better understanding of how life is distributed in the ocean, how the ocean works and how to improve our management of it so it begins to recover.”

Rogers believes marine science needs a massive upscaling to rival that seen in space research, where projects are funded for 10-30 years instead of three years and access to the most advanced technology is available.

In order to work towards this point, Nekton’s strategy is what they call a “holistic approach”, by combining four major activities to achieve the greatest impact: Scientific research; policy; public engagement; capacity development.

According to Nekton, much like the space race of the 50s and 60s, we now face a ‘race to the deep’, before the damage created by human activity, such as pollution and overfishing, encroaches catastrophically on the bathyal zone (the deep ocean between 200 and 3000 feet), where the majority of marine life exists. For Professor Rogers this is the next great frontier of exploration and discovery, “From 1872 to 1876, the global challenger expedition transformed our understanding of the ocean and resulted in the birth of marine science. With the systematic exploration of the bathyal zone, we have the opportunity to create another step change.”

**INNOVATION**

Nekton’s approach to exploration, and what separates it from previous deep sea expeditions, revolves around its commitment to innovation in scientific method and sustainable development, four key areas in particular:

- Standardising research; AI; DNA; and ‘Big Data’.
- Innovation.

First thing on the agenda for the Nekton team was to create a standard protocol for measuring the state of the ocean, called GOSSIP, the General Ocean Survey and Sampling Iterative Protocol. This they hope will feed into a legacy of more accurate, more collaborative marine science.

In the realm of AI they are utilising technology from driverless cars to automate video data analysis. For DNA they produced the ‘Ocean Ark’, to help progress understanding of the ocean genome, and they hope to develop and build mobile sequencing labs for scientists in the field.

But perhaps the most ground breaking—certainly the most aptly named—of the innovations, is the ‘Big Data’ OCTOPUS (Ocean Tool for Public Understanding and Science) system. A large ocean data storage and analysis platform that “harvests” from 98 billion data points, which should lead practical applications like improved ocean policy and public engagement. This is especially important in aiding the legacy of continued research in the mission regions after the expedition has moved on, as Dr. Woodall explains, “Building up the database is really important, a lot of local people we’re working with are saying right now that they don’t have the capacity to know what’s in their waters”.

Innovations also come in the communications arena, as well as doing a live radio broadcast from the submersible, the Nekton’s Bermuda Mission made the most of new technology to film and broadcast from depths previously unseen. “We put 360 cameras both on the boat and underwater” says Will West, a documentary filmmaker and the team’s head of content, “viewers could see from the front of a submarine what it was like at 150m down, which I don’t think had ever been done before.”

In terms of innovation, a defining feature of the Nekton’s Missions, that Steeds is keen to emphasise, is that the majority of the personnel will be from the host country, which increases local involvement and engagement, whilst helping to ensure a legacy. “You need that local and political willing and you need that local and political support, you can’t just come in and tell people what to do, and that’s where we’ve had success in Bermuda” say Steeds. “we don’t want them to participate, we want them to be the leaders of what were doing”.

**MISSION I: BERMUNDA NORTH ATLANTIC**

By their own admission Nekton’s Mission I to Bermuda in the North Atlantic, was not a total success. All of the mission’s planning and organisation had to be done in 8 months, the weather was a challenge, and many of the innovative filming techniques were yet to be perfected, meaning a planned documentary never became a reality.

“The greatest challenges were to set up the expedition over a very short time period”, says Rogers. “Organising the science day to day for the ship, submersibles and technical dive team was also challenging... Finally, there was the sheer physical challenge of long hours during the day, diving and then processing samples, ensuring all our image data was backed up and planning the following day.”

This is not to take away from the achievements of the mission, some of the highlights being the discovery of the deepest invasive lionfish in the Caribbean, as well as sub-mesophotic (deep areas of medium light penetration) communities of black corals, including species not seen before in Bermuda, 100 square miles of seafloor mapped, and a global audience of 750 million reached.

Perhaps more importantly for the organisation and its ultimate goals, it was a vital learning experience, as Steeds says, “it was a chance for us to pilot our approach, our ambitions”.
It was also the first chance for the team to trial and develop the GOSSIP protocol, to get to grips with the pressures and strains of intensive field work on the ocean, and a crucial warm-up for the far more ambitious Mission II.

MISSION II: INDIAN OCEAN
Taking the lessons learned and methods developed in Bermuda, the second phase of Nekton’s deep ocean project will venture into the even less known waters of the Indian Ocean.

The third largest ocean in the world, accounting for 20% of the world’s ocean surface, the Indian Ocean is the least explored, least protected, and least funded of all the oceans. With around two billion living on its shores, the majority in low income countries, there is rising exploitation of marine resources, pressure from international fishing fleets, and a growing interest in mineral deposits. It is also an increasingly complex geopolitical climate, as China looks to extend its influence in the region. For these reasons, Nekton believe the Indian Ocean holds the greatest potential for transforming livelihoods through the sustainable development of the Blue Economy, and if conservation action isn’t taken soon it may be too late.

The Mission will involve six major expeditions across six distinct ‘biogeographical regions’ of the ocean, and they expect to more than double their Mission I audience, up to 1.5 billion globally, with attention grabbing innovations like ‘live broadcast explorations’.

From a science and discover standpoint it offers a tantalising prospect. “The region contains a treasure trove of unknown biodiversity and features, such as large submarine plateaus which are scarce or unknown elsewhere.” Says Rogers. “It is also a rich area for coral reefs and mesophtotic reef ecosystems are completely undocumented from the region.”

But for Steeds the expeditions ultimate goal lies in sustainable development. “Creating a regional organisation that can manage the sustainable governance of the Indian ocean is our Everest, and the anchor of the mission is a summit on the state of the Indian ocean that we hope to hold in Oxford in 2021” he says. “we’ll bring together our scientific discoveries and policy recommendations and we hope that will be the time to announce that we have these networks across the Indian ocean”.

Of course the success of the mission depends on Nekton achieving their funding goals before the scheduled October start date, and thanks to their launch partner, Kensington Tours, they are a step closer, but more funding is needed for such an ambitious plan.

ANOTHER GREAT LEAP
The enthusiasm, energy and optimism of the Nekton team, does manage to capture some of that sense of wonder that early space exploration inspired, and encourages that they will meet their funding targets. The appears the mysteries of the deep ocean and the possibilities of the bathyal zone, have found keen partners in an organisation that espouses the spirit of pure exploration. The hope is that this combination will lead to real discovery, application and conservation, but at the very least Nekton are offering a different story, not in opposition to the doom and gloom narrative surrounding the world’s oceans, but alongside it.

“The majority of communication is about demise and around the destruction of the ocean, which has an important place in the spectrum of reporting, but we feel what we can add something different” says Steeds. “after all, Martin Luther King didn’t say ‘I have a nightmare’ he said ‘I have a dream’”

It’s in this spirit of optimism that Nekton will launch their Indian Ocean mission in October of this year. In doing so they again look upwards to find the inspiration to delve downwards, summing up their lofty ambitions by adapting the words of Neil Armstrong, “Humankind is poised to make its next giant leap: into the deep ocean.”

2.

- The Usine Guerin Sugar plant in Saint Pierre, before the eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902

The native ‘carib’ people knew it as “fire mountain”. As early as the summer of 1900, activity was noted in the crater of Mount Pelée, towering over the northern tip of Martinique. The warning signs were dismissed, and work continued at the Usine Guérin sugar plant, as it did for the 30,000 inhabitants of the Caribbean Island’s largest city Saint Pierre.

On 23rd of April 1902 Mount Pelée began its eruptions, yet it wasn’t until the evening of 2nd of May that people began to take it seriously, as loud explosions and earthquakes rocked the island, a huge plume of black smoke rising up from the crater blocked out the sky.

Three days later the streets of Saint Pierre were invaded by snakes, chased from the slopes by burning ashes. At the same time, near the mouth of the river Blanche, the Guérin factory was overrun by ants and venomous centipedes also fleeing from the mountain. But before the workers could worry about the factory’s new inhabitant, they were buried under more than 60 metres of pyroclastic mud flow. Twenty-five people died in the factory that day, as it became the first large scale victim of the volcano.

Finally, in the early hour of Thursday the 8th of May, while colonial Islanders were preparing to celebrate Ascension Day, the nightshift telegraph operator was sending reports claiming no significant new developments.
Before he signed off, his last transmission at 7:52 a.m. was simply "Allez", moment later the line went dead. Mount Pelée had erupted decimating the city of Saint Pierre, around 26,000 lost their lives.

The devastation wrought by the 1902 eruption ensured that the island was never caught off guard again. Mount Pelée continued to erupt for three more years, after which it lay dormant until 1929. But to date, the tragedy that began at the Usine Guérin sugar plant was the last fatal eruption.

- **Terminus of the proposed canal - Limon Bay**

In 1871 the USS Nipsic anchored in Limon Bay. The bay was no stranger to sea traffic, sitting just west of the towns of Colon and Cristobal, that together formed the northernmost point of the panama railroad. The demand for a faster route to California had seen the bay flooded with fortune seekers. However, the crew of the Nipsic were not in search of gold, they were in search of a place, somewhere that would become the Atlantic gateway to one of the greatest and most difficult engineering feats in history, and after their visit, the bay would never be the same.

The ship was part of the Darien Expedition, led by Thomas Oliver Selfridge for the U.S. Navy. Selfridge came from a navy tradition, his father was an admiral, and he distinguished himself for the Union during the U.S civil war. But the objective of the Darien Expedition was not a military one, it was to scout out a good place for the northern end of the Panama Canal.

About 4.5 miles long and 2.5 miles wide, and protected from storms by breakwaters at its entrance, Limon Bay made a natural harbour on the Caribbean Sea, and as it was decided, the perfect location for the canal's Atlantic Terminus.

A decade later in 1881 work began on the 77km shipping canal across the Isthmus of Panama, connecting the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Twenty thousand people lost their lives during the construction, mostly due to disease, but it was eventually opened in 1914 after 33 years of construction.

3.

**Cocoa**

By Kristy Leissle

Privilege; luxury; exploitation; poverty; gender politics; a hundred-billion-dollar industry. Kristy Leissle opens with a memory that demonstrates how all this could spring from the passion a small brown bean inspires. “When I was about 5 years old I tried to run away from home because my mother would not buy me chocolate.” Yet as Cocoa’s progresses, this childish memory increasingly plays in stark contrast to the depth of analysis needed to unpack the complex industry and politics of this global delicacy.

Beginning with a whistle-stop tour of cocoa’s history, Leissle moves on to the contemporary industry. Production, economics, politics, trade, consumerism, geography, no aspect of the South American bean is left unexamined.

As Leissle unravels the twisted knots of the cocoa industry, it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore how problematic the string that emerges is. From the general ignorance of Africa’s role in the contemporary cocoa industry, to the exploitation of labourers, and the questionable fairness of ‘fair trade’. Not to mention the worrying gender politics of the trade, as she points out, “when it comes to cocoa, no one is free of its politics”.

By shining a light on the little known story of the raw material from which all the world’s chocolate derives, the book also demonstrates the importance of questioning where our consumer products come from, and how much suffering or injustice might have taken place for them to reach us.

Cocoa is a tomb of fascinating facts and shocking statistics that makes for dense reading at times, but the author’s personal stories and anecdotes from fieldwork offer some light relief from the detailed examination, even if they’re scattered in perhaps too sparingly—although understandably the story of the bean itself takes precedence.

As a US based academic and researcher it’s refreshing to hear Leissle demonstrate awareness of her relatively privileged position, while also not holding back on her critique of the murkier aspects of the trade. Yet despite shining a spotlight on the harsh realities wrapped up in cocoa, she still sees optimism in a sustainable future where the work of farmers is valued and honoured.

Whether it leaves you awed, angry or hungry, Leissle’s comprehensive exploration of the cocoa industry will certainly appease any desire for information about one of the world’s most popular consumer luxuries, and whatever you take away from Cocoa, I guarantee you’ll never look at chocolate the same way.

4.

**Where in the world**

February – Switzerland

1. It was not involved in either of the ‘World Wars’
2. Did not officially become a UN member until 2002
3. It has four official languages
4. An estimated population smaller than London
5. Has won more Nobel Prizes and registered more patents per capita than any other country

March – Hungary
1. Its name derives from a word meaning “[alliance of] ten tribes”
2. Paprika is an important ingredient in much traditional cooking
3. The largest ethnic minority is Roma
4. The Crown of Saint Stephen (which also goes by another name) is a national symbol
5. The relief is largely flat rolling plains

April - Slovakia
1. A national symbol is the Cross of St. Cyril and St. Methodius
2. Hungarians form the largest minority group
3. The chief energy source is nuclear power
4. Brandy is a widely popular drink
5. The 18th-century outlaw Juraj Jánošík is a national hero likened to Robin Hood for the UK

May - New Zealand
1. The relief is predominantly mountainous with ten mountains over 3000m
2. In 2016 it suffered three earthquakes of magnitude 6 or above
3. 90% of the population lives in cities
4. The first explorer to reach the country named it Staten Landt
5. Almost nine-tenths of the indigenous plants are unique to the country

June - Maldives
1. An archipelago of 1,190 coral islands
2. The highest point is the 8th tee of a golf course
3. The smallest country of its continent
4. Most of the population subsists outside of a money economy
5. The official religion is Sunni Muslim

July - Uruguay
1. The second smallest South American country
2. A national symbol is ‘The Sun of May’
3. Mate tea, traditionally sipped through a metal straw, is a national drink
4. Hosted and won the first Football World Cup
5. Three quarters of the country is grassland

August - UAE
1. Immigrants make up about 88% of the total population
2. Nearly the entire country is desert with some of the world’s largest sand dunes
3. The four colours of the flag represent fertility, neutrality, petroleum resources, and unity
4. A federation of seven states
5. Arabic is the national language

September - Malaysia
1. The ceremonial head of state has the title ‘Yang di-Pertuan Agong’ meaning ‘Paramount ruler’
2. One of 17 ‘megadiverse’ countries in the world
3. Became an independent member of the commonwealth in 1957
4. A traditional sport is called ‘top-spinning’ or ‘main gasping’
5. It is comprised of two non-continuous regions

October - Madagascar
1. The world’s fourth largest island
2. 60% of the population are under the age of 25
3. The traveller’s palm (tree) is a national symbol
4. Its name derives from Venetian explorer Marco Polo confusing the island with the Somali port of Mogadishu
5. The population consists of 18 ethnic groups

November - Nicaragua
1. One third of the country is covered by forest
2. A national symbol is the turquoise-brown motmot bird
3. Produced noted poet, journalist and diplomat Rubén Darío
4. The largest ethnic group are “mestizo” a mix of Amerindian and Caucasian
5. Borders the Caribbean Sea and North Pacific Ocean

December – Singapore
1. A total population roughly the same as Barcelona in Spain
2. The name derives from a combination of the Sanskrit words for ‘lion’ and ‘city’
3. The five stars on its flag represent the ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice, and equality
4. Three fourths of the population are ethnically Chinese in origin
5. According to the IMF and World Bank it has the 3rd highest GDP per capita in the world