EXPLORATION

Volume 2, Number 3

Quarterly

◈ *We shall not cease* ◈

ABOVE: Detail of one of Bellerby & Co.'s extraordinary handmade globes in London; Jonathan Hanson photo. OVERLEAF: The Avenue of Sphinxes, connecting Luxor Temple and Karnak Temple, Egypt (25°42'30.297"N, 32°38'54.999"E); Jonathan Hanson photo. COVER: The Great Pyramid of Egypt, tomb of Cheops, and the Sphinx of Khafre, at Giza (29°58'38.502"N, 31°8'7.6056"E). Photo by J. Pascal Sébah, 1919 (New York Public Library, CCO 1.0 Dedication).

EXPLORATION Quarterly

Vol. 2, No. 3 (January 2026)

"WE SHALL NOT CEASE FROM EXPLORATION

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time." – T.S. Eliot

Welcome to ***Exploration Quarterly,*** the publication for those who do not cease to BE CURIOUS . . . to LEARN . . . to EXPLORE . . .

We define exploration in the broadest sense:

Exploration can be geographical.

Exploration can be fractal.

Exploration can be introspective.

Exploration can be expansive.

Exploration can be structured.

Exploration can be unplanned.

Exploration can happen every day.

Exploration is continuously seeking new places, new ideas, new knowledge.

Exploration is the essence of being human, what brought us from the forests into the savannahs, and beyond the horizons of Earth to the edges of the known universe.

We shall not cease from exploration.

Thank you for joining us.

Jonathan Hanson Roseann Hanson

Founders, Curators, Editors, Designers

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Maker of Worlds: Bellerby & Co., London

Story by Roseann Hanson
Images by Jonathan and Roseann Hanson

"*The creation of the world did not take place once and for all time, but takes place every day.*"
– Samuel Beckett

In a warehouse loft in northeast London, flooded by natural light and suffused with quietness, a small team of artisans is creating new worlds.

The timelessness of the space, which is filled with old-school woodworking tools, engraving sets, ceramic watercolor palettes, and sable paintbrushes, leads you to believe this is a centuries-old family business of globemakers passed from one generation to another.

But Bellerby & Co. is just 17 years old, founded by Londoner Peter Bellerby in a very roundabout way. Wanting to present to his father, a naval architect, a fine-quality globe for his 80th birthday, Peter could find only inferior-quality modern versions or fragile and expensive antiques. So he decided to make his own. Already an entrepreneur—he was involved with running a music and events venue with an attached bowling alley (the latter of which would come to play in the future globe business)—Peter figured he could produce a high-quality globe for a few thousand pounds, in just a couple of months.

Two years and several hundred thousand pounds later, all of his savings were gone but he had birthed a unique company that creates exquisite globes entirely from scratch. There is a handful of companies creating handmade globes, such as Lander & May on the Isle of Wight, Zoffoli Mappamondi in Italy, and Columbus Globes in Germany (though it has to be said a few of these companies' offerings include some naff globes, such as ones that open to reveal a bar-cart or whose white-painted stands are slathered with gold leaf and would look at home in a Saudi sheik's London townhouse—or the current White House). Most of these companies do produce superficially beautiful globes, but after we visited Bellerby & Co. in November 2025, it became clear that they are creating globes at an order of magnitude higher than any others—each exquisite globe is crafted one-by-one by a few highly skilled craftspeople, in an atelier just as one would have visited

at the time of the Renaissance (except for the large-format ink jet printer and Bose headphones). When you order a Bellerby globe, it is made to order, just for you.

"There's a reason buildings are square," Peter told us, as he tried to describe the trials and errors of creating globes by hand, entirely from scratch. "There is no manual and nowhere to learn to make globes."

Envisioning the world as a sphere began around 540 BCE with Pythagorus, who made the postulation based not on science but on aesthetics. "Pythagoras, like many ancient Greeks, believed that circles and spheres were the most perfect shapes and therefore that the Earth and all the heavenly objects must be spherical," according to Jill Howard in University of Cambridge's teacher program, NRich.Maths.org. "So his model was based on aesthetic reasoning—he believed that the most beautiful and 'harmonious' shape must be the true shape of the Earth. He did not attempt to prove it, because it just seemed natural that the world should be geometrically perfect."

Into the Heroic Age: A Tour of RRS *Discovery*

Story and images by Susanne Seddon-Cowell

Stepping aboard the RRS *Discovery* at her berth on the River Tay in Dundee, I was touched immediately by the romance of polar exploration. I craned my head up at the mainmast rigging and thought, *These lines have known ice in the wind*. Took in the black timber of the massive hull. *This hull has breathed the waters of another world*. Continuing forward, I paused under the mainmast at the spot where able seaman Charles Bonner fell to his death from the crow's nest 112 feet above me, just as the ship left New Zealand harbour. Climbing the steps to the bridge, I felt some echo of the men of a bygone age, taking that leap into the unknown. I imagined how Captain Robert Falcon Scott might have felt in 1901, climbing these steps, knowing the responsibility of the lives of the men under his command, thinking of the wonders and dangers that awaited them at the end of the world.

As a wooden sailing ship with a coal-fired steam engine, the *Discovery* is unusual, even before you consider her extraordinary history. She carried Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and crew on the first official British exploration of Antarctica, the Discovery Expedition (1901–1904), and is one of only two surviving ships from the so-called 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic exploration (the other being the Norwegian *Fram*, launched in 1892).

The Heroic Age is the name given to the period of Antarctic exploration between the end of the 19th century and shortly after the First World War, when limited resources and technology meant the explorers of the time were tested to their limits, and frequently beyond. In the late 1800s, there was a surge of international interest in Antarctic exploration, in large part due to successful Arctic expeditions, and in Britain there was increasing pressure to undertake similar exploration of the southern polar region. The

INVESTING IN THE BEST

Gear that lasts a lifetime

By Jonathan Hanson

Images by Jonathan and Roseann Hanson

It's funny that I have no memory of suffering when I began backpacking at age nine, carrying a WWII-era GI surplus rucksack, a metal GI canteen, a Sterno stove, and canned food, with my Hudson's Bay wool blanket for cover. The mass of the rig must have comprised a substantial percentage of my own 60-ish pounds, and I vaguely recall blisters here and there—but I was *free*, and that's all that mattered.

Some years later, however, I *do* remember enduring a miserable, blustery night out after buying one of those cheap plastic tube tents (~$1.99-ish at the time and, criminally, still available today for around six bucks) rather than saving for a far more expensive nylon version, because I wanted a tent *right now*. The despicable thing rippled and snapped and crackled and collapsed on me on the windward side no matter how tightly I tied the ridgeline suspended between two sycamore trees or how many boulders I piled inside. My otherwise faithful German shepherd bailed in disgust and slept outside, and by morning the "tent" was ripped to near shreds.

That is the first time I remember thinking: *I didn't* save *money on that product, I* wasted *it.* I owe that stupid tube tent for every high-quality product I've owned and used since.

For some time, youthful penury prevented me acting on this germ of a philosophy, but when I finally scrounged enough to buy an external-frame pack to replace the GI rucksack,

I bought the better of two models offered at the department store where my mother shopped—from Camp Trails, at that time headquartered in Phoenix. It was a revelation in comfort and function, and worked flawlessly until I passed it on to my half-brother when I bought a newer Camp Trails model.

That pack solidified a conviction that buying the better—i.e., more expensive—product is actually the most economical approach in the long run. It's a philosophy I practice not only with camping equipment, but also with optics, clothing, tools, firearms, vehicles, you name it. (The only "exception" I can think of is furniture—our house is filled mostly with century-old pieces made of solid oak, which cost us less than new stuff but are far better made.)

By the time I was in my 20s, many now-veteran brands were just forging reputations, most of them with products then still made in the U.S. I bought a North Face sleeping bag and a Sierra Designs tent for a backpacking traverse of southern Arizona's sky island mountain ranges, and slept securely—if a bit uneasily—snowed in at 9,000 feet in the Chiricahua Mountains when a freak April snowstorm briefly closed I-10, 5,000 feet below me.

That bag and tent came from from the Summit Hut, a backpacking and climbing store in Tucson that was carefully curated with high-quality products. It had become a regular stop for upgrading my equipment, chatting with the knowledgeable staff, and finding out what was new. One day in 1982 I picked up a catalog from a company called Marmot Mountain Works, whose products the store had recently begun to carry, and took it home to look through.

It turned out to be less a catalog than a manifesto.

The first few pages didn't even list any products. Instead, there was a chart showing the superior thread counts in the fabrics used in Marmot's parkas and sleeping bags. Another section described the magical properties of a new, waterproof/breathable laminate called Gore-Tex. I learned that Marmot cut their nylon fabrics in individual layers with a hot knife, sealing the fibers to prevent fraying. I learned that the goose down they used was 15 percent higher in fill power than that used by the North Face and other brands, and was inspected batch-by-batch to ensure purity. I learned that their winter sleeping bags employed double draft tubes behind the zipper, and seven-compartment baffled foot sections lined in heavy-duty fabric so you could wear your boots inside if necessary. I learned about the heat-activated seam tape in their Gore-Tex garments (with photos). I read about their single-walled mountaineering tent, the Taku, which employed Gore-Tex fabric, a true bathtub floor with zero seams, and aluminum poles that were *pre-bent* and heat-treated for strength.

LEFT: The author in 2023 in Fairbanks, Alaska, at –40ºF, perfectly warm in his 1983 Marmot Warm II. ABOVE: With his first Camp Trails pack (ca. 1972).

EXPEDITION EGYPT:

By Jonathan Hanson

Images by Jonathan Hanson, Roseann Hanson, and Godfrey Sykes

"Yes, yes! Bandits are on this road!" the man in the dust-caked jalabiya assured us, hitching the sling of an AK47 over his shoulder. Behind him, a dozen and a half similarly attired and armed men—packed into the cabs and beds of two dust-caked Toyota Land Cruiser pickups—grinned and nodded affirmatively. Then, "You follow me, we escort you past them!"

This seemed extraordinarily generous, since they'd been heading the opposite way at some speed when they stumbled upon us. In fact, just before they appeared, an old Peugeot 504 sedan had scorched past from the same direction, with three rather wide-eyed people inside.

We'd been inspecting a half-buried stretch of railroad track abandoned by the British decades before, which we hoped to follow to its end in Kharga (Al-Karijah), when the car blew past and the trucks stopped. The eight of us were in three 78-series Land Cruisers—our guide, Mahmoud, was in the lead with our friends Steve and Diane, I was driving the second one with Roseann in the passenger seat, and Tarek, along with two other crew members, was in the third.

1912–2012

Our smiling Good Samaritan jumped back behind the wheel of the lead truck and cut a U-turn through the sand. The second truck followed. Somewhat to our surprise, Mahmoud did as well, and our convoy of five headed southwest alongside the railroad tracks.

Roseann said, "This is weird." I agreed.

For several kilometers we drove deeper into the desert as our suspicions grew. Then, apparently on some pre-arranged signal, the pickups accelerated and sped out of sight. At last Mahmoud stopped his Land Cruiser and we got out to discuss the situation—not that there was much to discuss.

"I don't like this," Mahmoud said.

"Uh, y*eah*," Roseann and I, and Steve and Diane, replied. It was looking more and more like an incipient ambush now that we were even farther from the paved road. Three nearly new Land Cruisers would be a significantly better catch than a single clapped-out Peugeot.

If we simply turned around and followed the tracks back toward Highway 60 there was every chance the trucks could catch us once they realized we hadn't followed. So we decided to cross the rails, head north straight through the dunes, and intersect the highway where it curved north parallel with the Nile. Our three trucks bumped over the barely exposed rails, and we blasted along the troughs of the northwest-southeast-trending dunes at 70, 80, 90 kph and more.

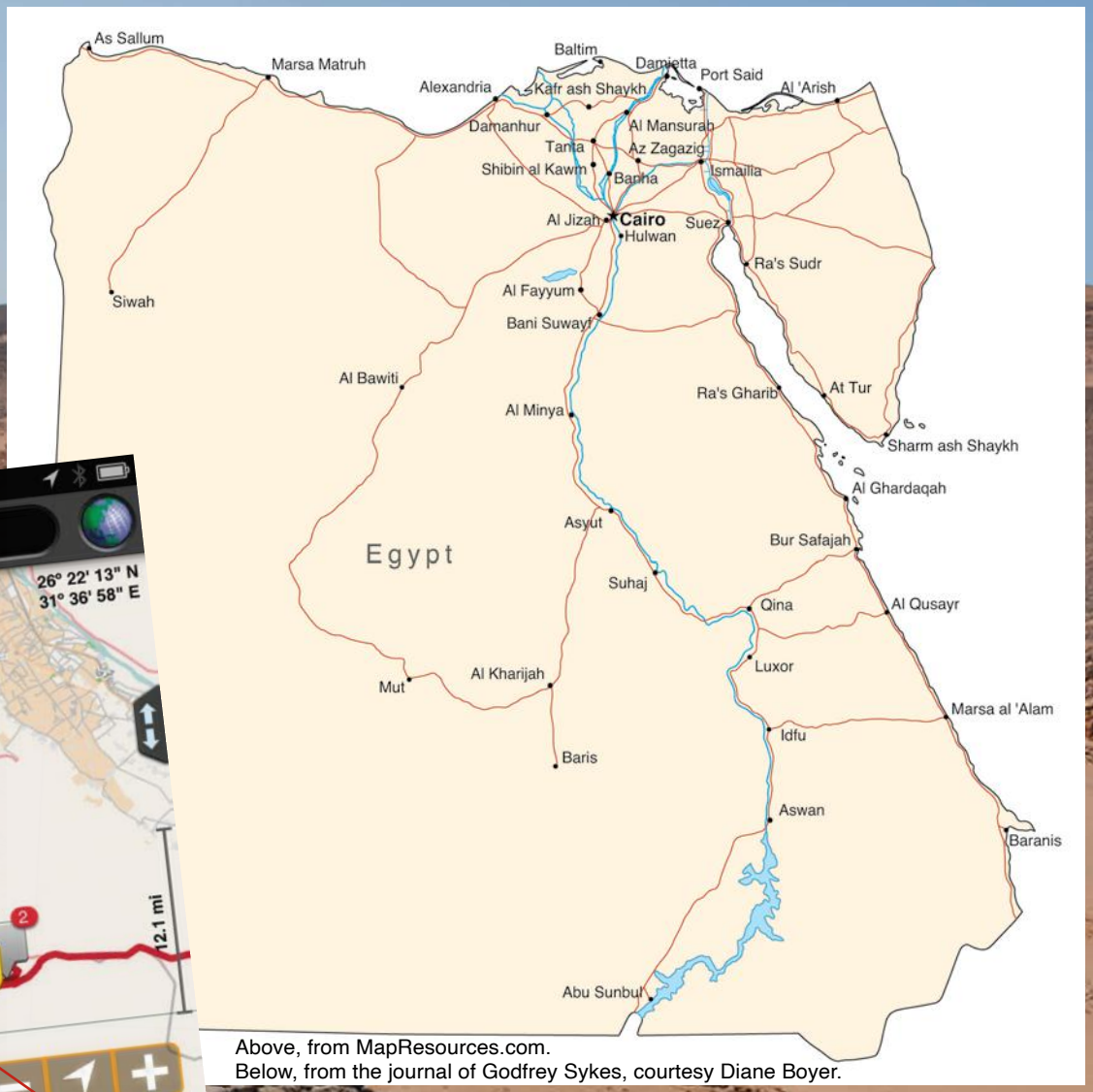
I started laughing hysterically.

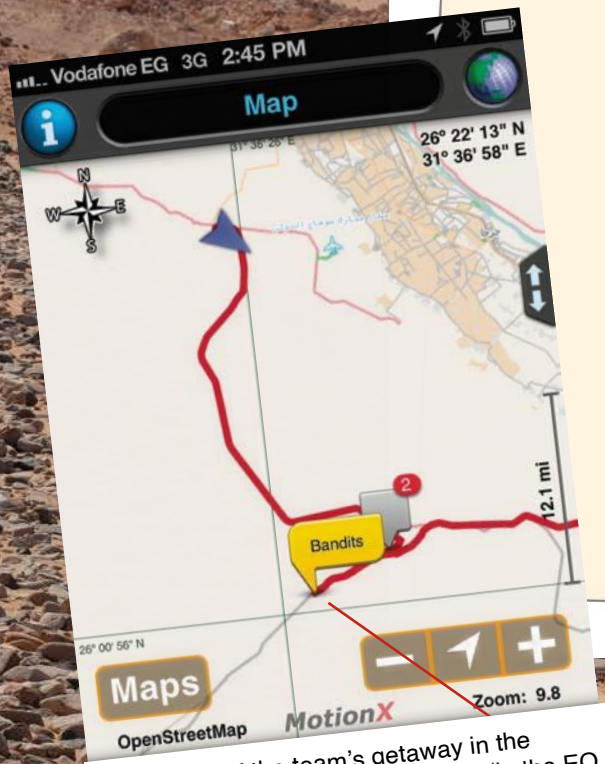
Roseann gaped at me.

"This is *awesome*!" I shouted over the roar of the diesel, and whooped louder as we side-slipped in a long, sand-flinging arc to thread the corridor between two dunes. "Get some video!"

"You're *insane*!" she shouted back—but held up the phone and captured some footage as our three trucks negotiated a gap between dunes, then accelerated again.

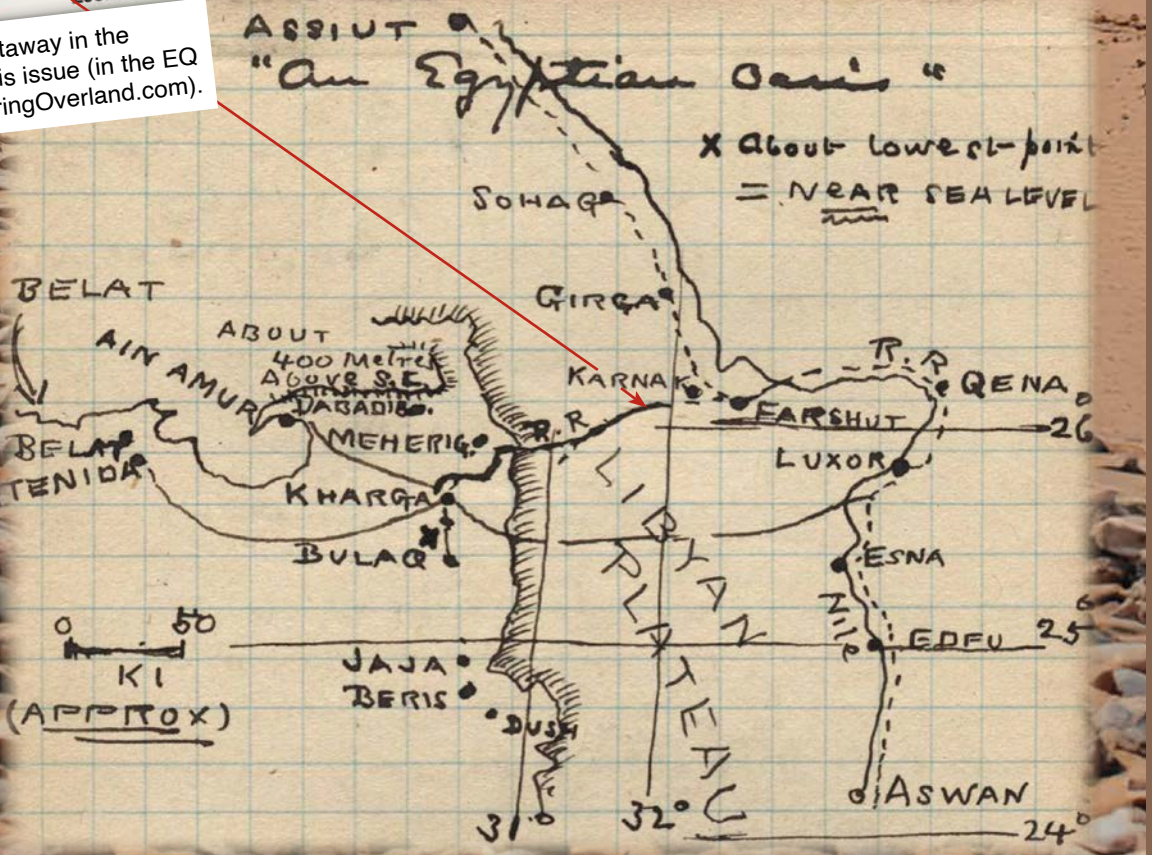
Nothing in the mirror yet . . .





Above, from MapResources.com.
Below, from the journal of Godfrey Sykes, courtesy Diane Boyer.

View video of the team's getaway in the digital flipbook version of this issue (in the EQ subscriber's area on ExploringOverland.com).



Vehicle Essentials

The Five Things You Need to Buy First

You've just spent as much on your new overland vehicle as a family home cost thirty years ago . . . now it's time to cruise Overland Expo with your AmEx. What should you buy first?

by Jonathan Hanson

with input from our panel of experts

I've lost count of how many people have contacted me over the years, brimming with excitement after purchasing a vehicle for overland exploration, and wanting to know what they should add to it first.

Invariably, I disappoint them.

I *know* they're hoping I'll facilitate the immediate purchase of those expensive accessories that shout adventure: a winch, driving lamps, diff locks, a suspension lift and big tires, and of course a roof rack on which to mount more adventurous-looking stuff like jerry cans and Wolf packs.

In truth, those are the *last* things you should add to your vehicle—if at all.

However.

There *are* several accessories and tools that I think are essential first additions to any vehicle intended to venture off well-traveled paved roads, whether it's a Subaru Crosstrek, an INEOS Grenadier, or a fully loaded Earth Cruiser.

They might not be as show-off-worthy as a shiny new Warn 12,000-pound winch with Albright Solenoids and synthetic line, but I guarantee you'll get far more use out of them.

A Case for the Commonplace Book

Thinking on paper for 500 years

By Roseann Hanson

The natural state of an explorer is curiosity. We read widely about the world around us; we dive into learning new skills and crafts; and we travel as much as we can. What binds all these activities is our drive to question, investigate, discover, experience, and always to grow our brains.

And the natural tool to facilitate exploration of all kinds—physical or mental—is the journal. Keeping track of our explorations and discoveries, from planning to execution, is as important as the exploration itself. I love the investigation part of exploration as much as the travel or mastering of a new skill: hours reading about geography, culture, customs, plants, animals, geology, weather; finding quotes from literature or poems; noting must-visit eateries or museums; researching crafts—it's like a treasure hunt with endless, guaranteed success. And cataloguing that information in a journal is the best way not just to enrich your exploration but to memorialize it.

Sure you can drag-and-drop websites and articles into folders on the cloud; you can save places on Google maps; and you can make digital documents and lists. I do all that. But I forget about them, and often I learn about something when I don't have a device or I want to sketch out an idea (which I can't do on a tiny phone screen). Cross-referenced annotations are difficult on digital media, and looking up cloud-stored media is not possible when off-grid (exception: see page 85).

But I always have my journal, and specifically what I call my commonplace book. This is not my explorer / nature journal (see *Exploration Quarterly* Vol. 1, No. 2), which is the record of all my explorations—including weather, geography, nature sketches, and trip narratives and details. Early on I knew I did not want to combine this more formal explorer / nature journal with favorite quotes, esoteric planning, notes, creative ideas, and personal mental meanderings.

And so my commonplace book is where I think on paper. It's where I research, plan, make lists, track tasks, dream up ideas, and keep notes from meetings. It's not fully chronological; mine is unevenly divided into two sections, the first and usually larger part for ongoing planning, meetings, lists, etc., and the second part for ideas, brainstorming, quotes from books and poetry, creative calisthenics, and my own philosophical musing. Pages are numbered, and the last handful house an index of high-level topics.

Locus communis is Latin for "a general or common place" (from the Greek tópos koinós) and as early as the fourth century BCE described a book used to collect phrases and sayings. Aristotle used a commonplace to organize his different forms of argumentation, and Cicero compiled favorite "proverbs, adages, aphorisms, and maxims" (called *sententiae*). In Rome, grammarian Aulus Gellius (b. 125) was best known for his *Attic Nights*, a commonplace book of subjects such as grammar, philosophy, history, and antiquarianism. In it he also preserved fragments of the works of many authors who might otherwise be unknown today. And shortly before Gellius, Seneca the Younger urged writers to use "commonplace ideas and *sententiae* as a bee collects pollen, and by imitation turn them into their own honey-like words."[1]

Greek and Roman philosophers would have written on tablets (clay or wax) or papyrus, and then parchment or vellum—the former being made from the skin of sheep, goats, or calves, the latter much finer and made only from calfskin.

Around the early 15th century, paper made from cotton rag fibers became more widely available in

ABOVE LEFT: Graham Jackson's commonplace books representing 12,005 days of notetaking, planning, and musing. ABOVE: The author's current commonplace book, showing notes from Royal Geographical Society's Explore Week 2025.

To showcase how many different ways one can approach commonplacing, I canvassed a few of Exploration Quarterly*'s writers and readers who use commonplace books, to find out their favorite notebooks and pens, as well as glean some of their tips for organizing and recalling.*

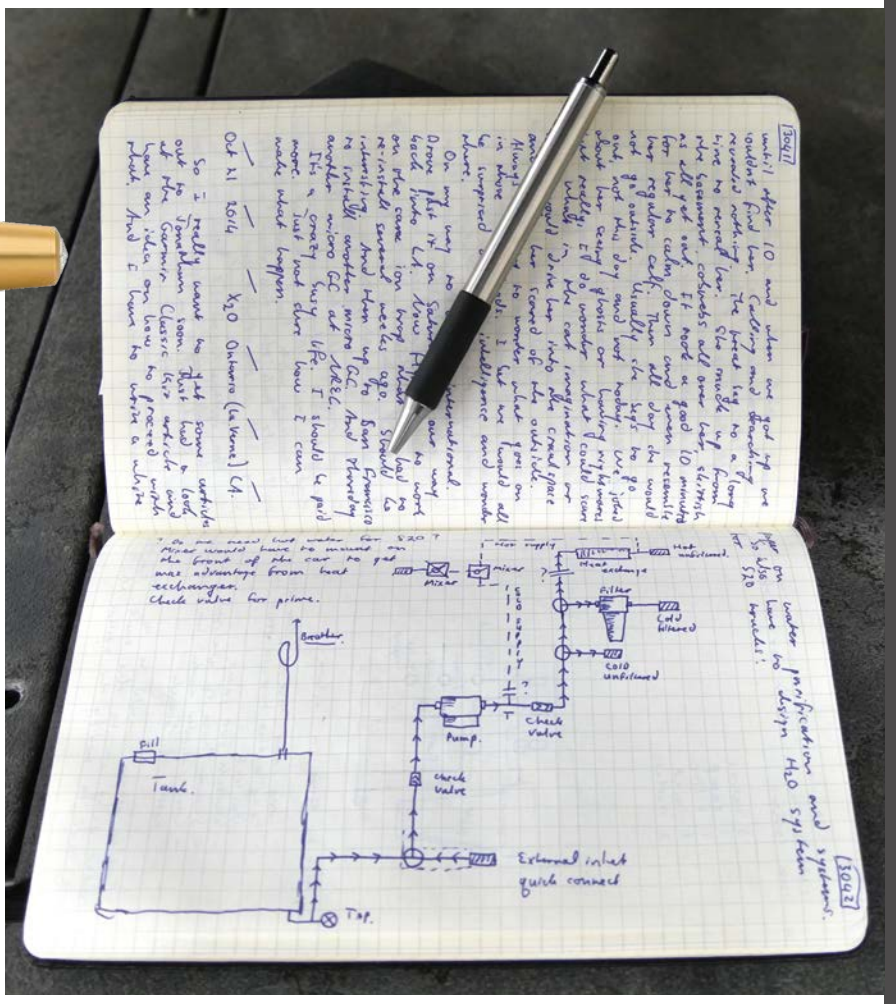
***Graham Jackson**, explorer and scientist*

Favorite notebook: Currently the Leuchtturm1917 Classic A5 size. "I like square-ruled paper because I draw a lot of maps and mechanical plans and it is similar to the science paper I used in college. I also like a denser word count per page that I feel the square-ruled grid allows me. I've never been good with a blank page and regular lines are boring. I started using regular-lined-page composition notebooks back in 1993. I always had to tape up the spines because they would fall apart, but I persevered through five of them. I then moved to National Brand wide-ruled "Lab Book" notebooks. Sturdier, but a similar size at 10 1/8" by 7 7/8". Those lasted me until 2011 when I moved to Moleskine square-ruled notebooks. I loved them to start, but the quality was questionable. The spines would start to come apart and the pleather would wear off at the corners."

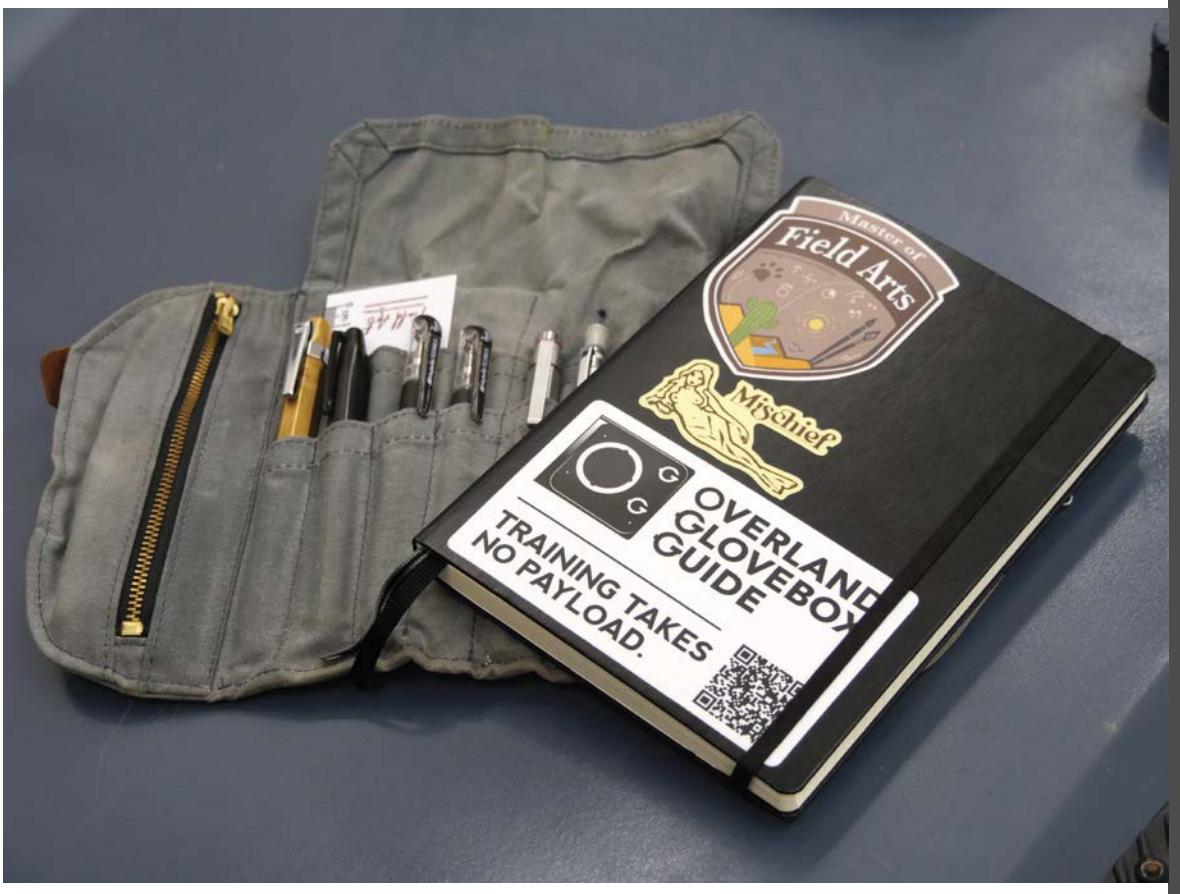
Favorite writing instrument: "Up to this point I had been religiously using ballpoint pens and had settled for many years on Zebra F-402 pens with either blue or black ink. I was happy with them for a long time and wore several out, but at some point in the late 2010s it seemed the ink got stodgier and didn't flow as well. I was searching for something better when a great friend of mine gifted me a Lamy Safari fountain pen. I loved it and it solved the ink flow issues I had been having, but I found the ink would also seep through the Moleskine paper. I got the finest nib I could from Lamy and tried different inks, but still had bleed issues. This led me to investigate other paper and other journals and I settled on the Leuchtturm1917 square-ruled. I then moved to the TWSBI fountain pen (introduced to me at Exploring Overland's New Mexico field arts camp), but soon after discovered the Kaweco Brass Sport Fountain Pen

with an extra-fine nib and Sailor blue ink or Platinum Carbon black ink; this is my current spot on the journey.

"The combination of the ink, the pen, and the journal have solved the bleed problem I was experiencing before. I do also use Pentel Hybrid Technica gel ballpoints for writing on airplanes or when the ink runs dry in my fountain pen. I carry my tools in a Sendak Mini Artist Roll from Peg & Awl." (Shown below.)



How do you organize / find your commonplace subjects? "I do not currently index, but I date every entry and use continuous page numbering (up to 3,610 as of today, an embarrassingly small number given the 12,005 days since I started!). I will start indexing of a sort since the Leuchtturm books have a table of contents section at the start and come with page numbers for each volume. Initially my journaling was pretty pedestrian and involved a lot of poetry. Now I'm adding a lot more elements such as postcards, art, wine labels, airline baggage tags, etc. I am also having a lot more fun with it since the days of teenage angst and commentary on all the ills of the world."



Citizen Science & Conservation

Adding a mission to your exploration

I hate people.

The motorcycle careened off the side of the track into the jungle, the faces of rider and pillion a study in shock and fear at seeing our Land Rover coming the other way. I was driving quite slowly, so coming to a stop was just a matter of letting off the throttle and rolling to a halt. A few seconds later the motorcycle appeared again, this time pointing back up the track and with only the rider as he bounced through the ruts, his companion now running along the edge of the jungle, a large, tightly wrapped package clutched in his arms. They vanished around the next bend.

My log reads:

> *10:36 | 13.12mi | Motorcycle encountered coming opposite. 2 people and large package. Immediately turned and ran.*
> *Nxx.xxx° Wxx.xxx°.*

Later that evening as we chatted to the two lonely rangers at the station where we were making camp, we mentioned the incident. They were immediately intense, asking if we had a location and were ecstatic when we did. The people we had seen were likely, they explained, artifact poachers. It is estimated that over 3,000 artifacts are removed from Guatemala's Petén region every month, bound for private collections where all context of their origin are lost and they transform from a heritage-of-humanity to a bauble-of-the-wealthy. The fact that we had recorded a time and a location was invaluable to their efforts in finding where the robbers were operating.

My quip about 'hating' people, while strong, is endemic of my constant desire to travel to remote places to get away from the busy bustle of humanity. For 40 years I've spent a lot of time in this pursuit, and it was not long after I started as a pre-teen that I began to realize that these wild places would not survive if we did not work very hard to protect them. The old aim of traveling for travel's sake

Story by Graham Jackson

Images by Graham Jackson & Jonathan Hanson

The Grass That Sweetens the World

By Roseann Hanson

Next time you savor your Ron Zacapa, or a traditional daiquiri (not frozen, *pah-lease*—that's for college girls), you can thank a humble but rather robust grass called *Saccharum officinarum* and, more importantly, the twelve and a half million Africans who were ripped from their homes and transported to the New World, enslaved, and forced to cultivate—along with other crops—this grass for sugar production.

Among the ten million who survived the journey were a few clever makers, somewhere in the Caribbean islands in the 17th century, who took the refuse of refined sugar production—molasses—fermented it, and distilled it into a most palatable drink—nicknamed rum after "rumbullion," at the time English slang for "a great tumult" (admittedly no one really knows for sure the word-origin for rum, but this one makes the most sense).

Humans have been utilizing plants for as long as we've been classified humans—we cultivate them, and we also eat the herbivores that eat the plants (having converted them into protein). That's how *Saccharum officinarum* entered the human diet—first as fodder for domesticated pigs in Papua New Guinea, since around 4,000 BCE.

Saccharum officinarum is a perennial member of the Poaceae family (grasses) that grows in clumps of thick, unbranched stems up to 5m (16 feet) tall. The stems are jointed, with alternating smooth, linear leaves up to 60cm (24 inches) long and 5cm wide. The internodes contain white pith filled with sugary sap. Harvest occurs before the plants flower, which depletes sugar content. (Art by Marina; Adobe.Stock.com)

The sugar cane plant spread to the east, and then north and west, as a "canoe plant"—a wonderful phrase to describe species that spread by the wide-ranging, immensely capable, and brave Polynesian sailors—spreading farther and farther into south Asia and China and across distant seas, until by the 6th century CE a cultivar had reached Persia (see map, page 98). But prior to reaching Persia, between 1,000 and 100 or so BCE, apothecaries in the Indian subcontinent had sorted out the process of turning sugarcane juice into crystals—so much the better for storing what at the time was an important medicine in the Ayurvedic tradition.

The word sugar probably was derived from Sanskrit "शर्करा" (śarkarā), meaning "ground or candied sugar," and synonymous with "grit or gravel." In the local Indian language where sugar was refined, the crystals were called *khanda*—you can guess the etymology here of "candy." Indian sailors carried as ships' supplies clarified butter and sugar (we heartily approve—what more do you need for sustenance,

ABOVE: Cane cutters in Jamaica in 1891. (Photo credited to James Valentine & Sons; public domain.)

RIGHT: Hacienda La Fortuna, a sugar mill complex in Puerto Rico. Painting by Puerto Rican Impressionist Francisco Oller in 1885 (1833-1917). Oil on canvas, 26 x 40 in. (66 x 101.6 cm). Courtesy the Brooklyn Museum.

“The world disappears when you go into it . . .
With no one to talk to, while skiing solo across Antarctica,
I began a conversation with nature. My thoughts were
broadcast out over the plains towards the mountains, and
other ideas sent back.”

– Erling Kagge,

Silence in the Age of Noise

(2017, English translation)