

Clock Tower and Bamboo Scaffolding
"It was not in a great state of repair
and the bamboo scaffolding went up to
give the masons access. I have to say
the scaffolding in India is a tad more
attractive than here!"



All the Raj

Jagdish Road is a long way from Milsom Street, but these paintings of Udaipur are unmistakably from the brush of Bath's Peter Brown. DERI ROBINS discovers what led to Pete's passage to India

If you've lived in Bath for any length of time, and/or are a regular reader of this magazine, Peter Brown will need no introduction. He's Bath's premier plein air artist, probably one of the leading ones in the UK; he's that scruffy bloke you see out with his easel and paints in all weathers, capturing the light, colour and movement of the city in deft, sure strokes.

In the time I've known Pete he's morphed from a young artist selling his wares on Milsom Street to a renowned gallery exhibitor whose oils sell for five figures. His fortunes may have changed, but he's still the most down-to-earth, least affected bloke on the art scene.

Paintings everywhere . . .

Pete's best known for his Bath, London and coastal pieces, so his new collection of Rajasthan paintings, which you can admire in his new book *My Indian Travels*, might



Up Jagdish Road, Early Afternoon "It was a treat painting into the afternoon's sun; the frenetic atmosphere of traffic on foot, hoof and wheel from outside the Petiwal restaurant, a constant source of free Masala Chai, and various deep-fried spicy god-knows-whats"

seem a bit of a departure; on the other hand his attraction to places bursting with life and human interest must have made India a dream destination. So what was the catalyst?

"It all just happened, really," says Pete. "In October 2011 a friend, Patrick Cullen called to say he was organising a trip with a few painters and would I like to come. I don't usually do 'artists trips' but I thought, what the hell!"

Anyone who has ever travelled to India will identify with Pete's first impressions. "I was astounded. In the taxi from the airport my nose was glued to the window. There were paintings everywhere! It seemed to be, in a way, all those things I have painted in the UK but heightened – more compact, more life, of course more colour but more noise. An overload of information. Absolutely mental, and I loved it."

Rather than spread the net too thinly, Pete and the group spent all their time in the 'lake city' of Udaipur in Rajasthan. ➔



Early Morning Elephant Gate



Tarpaulin Shade, Back Street, Udaipur

"This was a quiet(ish) respite from the busier streets. I love these tarpaulins stretched out to form shade below with their muted colours – and the company from the workshop behind me was great"

"We painted like nutters. There was talk of travelling on, but the general feeling was that Indian life was pretty much there in front of us, and there was so much material that to spend a couple of days travelling would be a waste."

The artist's voice

Previous books and calendars by Pete have always had lively annotations, but for *My Indian Travels* he goes several steps further – the paintings are accompanied by a detailed diary, whose entries are typically engaging.

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"I have been keeping minimal diary notes in my sketch books ever since the 'Bath between the Snows' show at the Victoria Art Gallery in 2011," says Pete. "I was keen to record as much as I could on these trips; I'd write the journal back in my room after we'd eaten, which made for late nights but it was worth it just for the record."

Obvious final question: what's the next stop in Brown's travels?

"I'm hooked on India but would love to go anywhere with that amount of energy and life. I have been approached by a travel company who would arrange a trip to almost where ever I fancy.

"The problem is tying it in with family life . . . Watch this space!" **BL**

• ***My Indian Travels* by Peter Brown is available at £19.95 from peterbrownneac.com and local bookshops**



Back from School, Udaipur

"The blue and viridian green paint around these narrow passageways coolly illuminated the children"