

# Island authors pen guide to all things British

By Erin Tiernan

One island couple has turned their own efforts to bridge the gap between what is foreign and what is familiar into a new book called "Britannia in Brief."

Inspired by their relationship and their shared adventures, New York native Leslie Banker and her English husband, William Mullins, have co-authored a cultural encyclopedia of sorts that humorously corrects Americans' "misinformation" and offers the inside scoop on all things British.

It all started after their engagement and a subsequent trip to London for a friend's wedding. It became clear that if most Americans were like Leslie, they were in dire need of some explanation about life and language in the U.K.

"Leslie would corner me for cultural debriefings: Are the Tories left wing or right wing? Why is the queen called Brenda? Why doesn't the bartender in the pub mind that no one's tipping him?" Mullins said. "After a couple more trips, we decided we had to

write this book."

The two have used their own experiences as a tangible manifestation of the cultural divide that exists between the two countries.

Banker did most of the questioning, and the two said they found the writing process fairly quick and easy.

Banker said that through Mullins, a slew of British visitors and a couple of trips across the Atlantic, she soon found out what was on the "telly" and what the "WAGs" ('wives and girlfriends' of the footballers, or as we Americans call them, soccer players) were wearing.

But "Britannia in Brief" goes beyond pop culture to offer a witty expose of everyday life in the U.K., including such mysteries as spotted dick and the rules of cricket. Truly a comprehensive travel companion, the book also outlines British history, language, society and politics.

"Before writing the book, I thought I knew a lot about British politics," Banker said. "Come to

find out, I know a lot more now."

Banker and Mullins moved to Jamestown in October, 2006, for a change of pace from their busy Manhattan lifestyle and started their family this past October with the birth of their daughter, Harriet, now eight months old – or, as they describe her in the book, their "little dual citizen."

Although the book took approximately four years from conception to publication, the majority of the research and writing took place over the course of a harried and hectic six months.

"The manuscript was due to the publisher this past September," Banker said, adding that she was pregnant with Harriet at the time. "And I was due in October, so there wasn't any room to be late."

"Britannia in Brief" is the couple's first book together, but Banker has co-authored two other books, and both have been active contributing freelance writers to several print and online publications. Mullins is currently a financial software developer, but he

isn't ruling anything out for the future.

"We had great fun writing this one and have some ideas in the hopper for the next one [book]," he said. "The only unfortunate outfall of our research is Leslie's addiction to the English tabloids online!"

Banker said this book is aimed at an American audience and that possible ideas for future books include a reverse take on "Britannia in Brief," targeted at Brits about the do's and don'ts of American culture.

Banker and Mullins offer some first-hand anecdotes about the cultural divide and how to avoid looking foolish while overseas.

The couple will read from the book at a British-themed book party at Schock Gallery this Saturday evening. All profits from sales at the book party will benefit the Jamestown Arts Center to help foster the growth of the next generation of writers and artists.

Head down to the gallery between 6 and 8 p.m. for a spot of tea and some twiglets.

## NHS walking tour of celebrated artists and writers

The Newport Historical Society will offer a walking tour showcasing celebrated Newport artists and writers of the 19th century on Saturday, Sept. 5, at 1 p.m.

This one-time tour covers the Kay/Catherine "Top of the Hill" neighborhood and focuses on celebrated artists and writers, such as Jane Stuart, Henry James, Clement C. Moore, Julia Ward Howe and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The tour passes many architecturally significant properties, including houses designed by Richard Morris Hunt and the firm of McKim, Mead and White.

The tour begins at the Museum & Shop at Brick Market, 127 Thames St., and ends at the Jane Stuart exhibit at the Redwood Library & Athenæum. Tour length is approximately 90 minutes. Cost is \$15 per person and \$10 for NHS members; reservations are strongly recommended. Call 841-8770.

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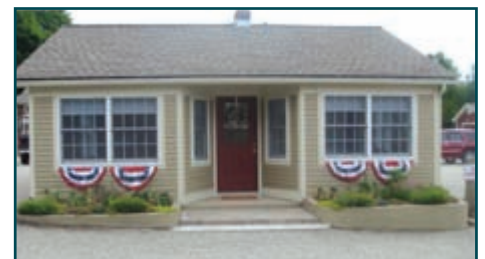
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