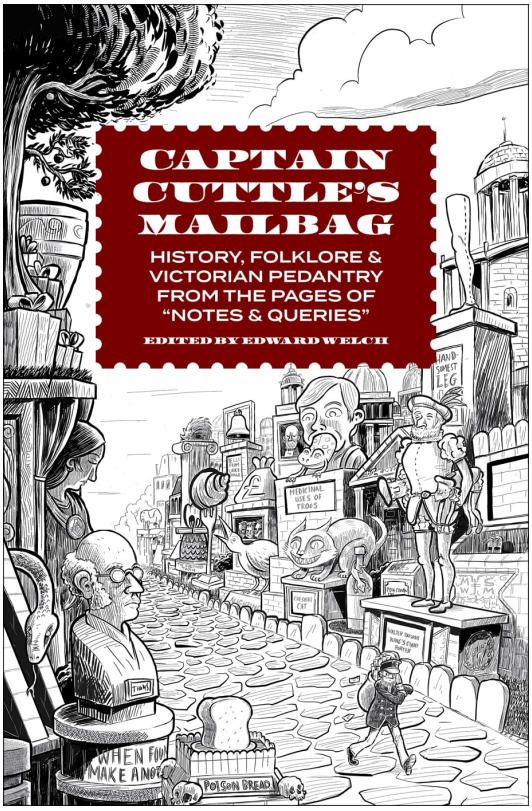
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Tel: +44 (0) 1394 389950
Email: uksales@accartbooks.com
Web: https://www.accartbooks.com/uk



Captain Cuttle's Mailbag

History, Folklore, and Victorian Pedantry from the Pages of "Notes and Queries"

Edward Welch

Illustrated by Matt Wiegle

ISBN	9781946053039
Publisher	Abbeville Press
Binding	Hardback
Territory	World excluding USA, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Australia
Size	213 mm x 139 mm
Pages	272 Pages
Price	£19.99

- An amusing and informative anthology of *Notes and Queries*, the Victorian magazine for which no subject was too odd or obscure

How did the Honorable Miss E. St. Leger become a Freemason? Did Lord Byron meet a hippopotamus, or was it only a tapir? Whence the popular prejudice against redheads?

These were among the topics discussed in the pages of *Notes and Queries*, a weekly magazine founded in London in 1849 as "a medium of inter-communication for literary men, artists, antiquaries, genealogists, etc." Its motto was "When found, make a note of"—a saying of Captain Cuttle, the hook-handed old salt of Dickens's Dombey and Son. Some subscribers to *Notes and Queries* contributed brief notes on curious facts they had uncovered; other sent in arcane queries to be answered. The result was rather like an erudite Internet discussion board, complete with its flame wars and trolls.

This book anthologises the most interesting exchanges from the First Series of *Notes and Queries* (1849–55). Here, ordered by subject—with judicious footnotes, of course—are delightfully pedantic remarks on the daily life and amusements of olden times, the doings of faeries, revolting folk remedies, strange forgotten, poetry good and bad, and oddities of natural history, among many other things. Also included is a selection of advertisements from the magazine, for such products as Grosjean's Celebrated Trowsers, Rimmel's Toilet Vinegar (good for several purposes), and the Rev. Edmund Saul Dixon's treatise on *Ornamental and Domestic Poultry: Their History and Management*.

Original drawings add an extra touch of humour throughout, and a lively introduction describes the history and workings of *Notes and Queries*. Full of useless information and Victorian fustiness, ***Captain Cuttle's Mailbag*** will fascinate trivia buffs and time travellers alike.

Published 27th Sep 2016