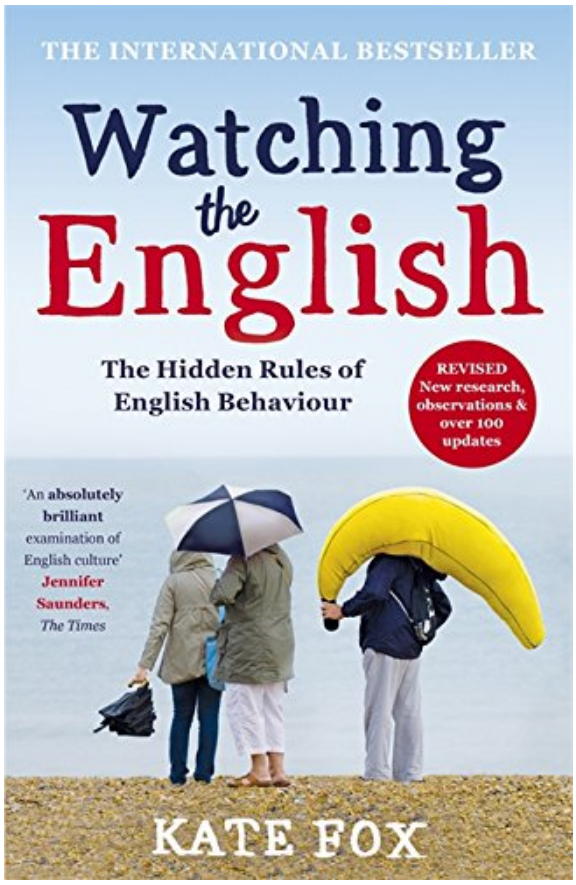
SHOW SOME RESPECT

Posted on June 12, 2015 by Eddie

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Categories: Mission, Observations

The English are strange. If you watch how people behave in a crowded space such as a railway station, you might notice something rather odd. If someone is standing still, perhaps reading a timetable, and someone else rushing along bumps into them, it is the one who was bumped into who will apologise. We apologise for standing in the wrong place, so that someone walks into us. it was this observation which prompted Kate Fox to write her wonderful bookÂ Watching the English which I strongly recommend.



One feature of our life is queueing; we are really good at it. If you want to offend someone from England, jump the queue. They are unlikely to shout at you, but they will give you a very disapproving look and perhaps mutter a few words about pushy people with no respect.

The English aren't all that strange. Actually, you could write similar things about all people. We all have things that are important to us and seemingly strange behaviours that only make sense when you understand the culture and habits that produced them.

However, it is incumbent on people who visit other countries to understand and respect the way in which others go about their lives. You don't jump queues in England, you don't strip off on a sacred mountain in Malaysia and when a Spanish town says that it is going to ban drinking in the streets, you don't say that you will ignore the rule because you want to "get mortal".

The backpacker in Malaysia and the tourists in Magalouf may well be intelligent, friendly, and caring people. However, to the local people who have to deal with them, theyÂ are simply people who show no respect. Whatever good qualities they have will be hidden by their actions, which is a shame.

I suspect that there aren't many mission partners who "get mortal" in the bars of Magaouf or who

whip their kitÂ off on mountain tops, but they can do things which are just as insensitive to local sensibilities. If we don't understand local cultures and traditions, we can communicate a huge amount thatÂ say far more than our actual words.

Learning language and culture takes time and study and it doesn't come naturally to us. We seem to believe that anyone can become a missionary with minimal training and preparation. This is tripe! Now, more than ever, we need people who are professionally and culturally equipped for the work they are doing.

If any of my colleagues have stripped off on mountain tops - please could they not post the images to my facebook page. Thank you!