

Fancy a Cuppa?

*50 great places across the UK for tea, coffee
and cake – all with a story to tell*



SIMON DUFFIN & ANITA VOLKERT

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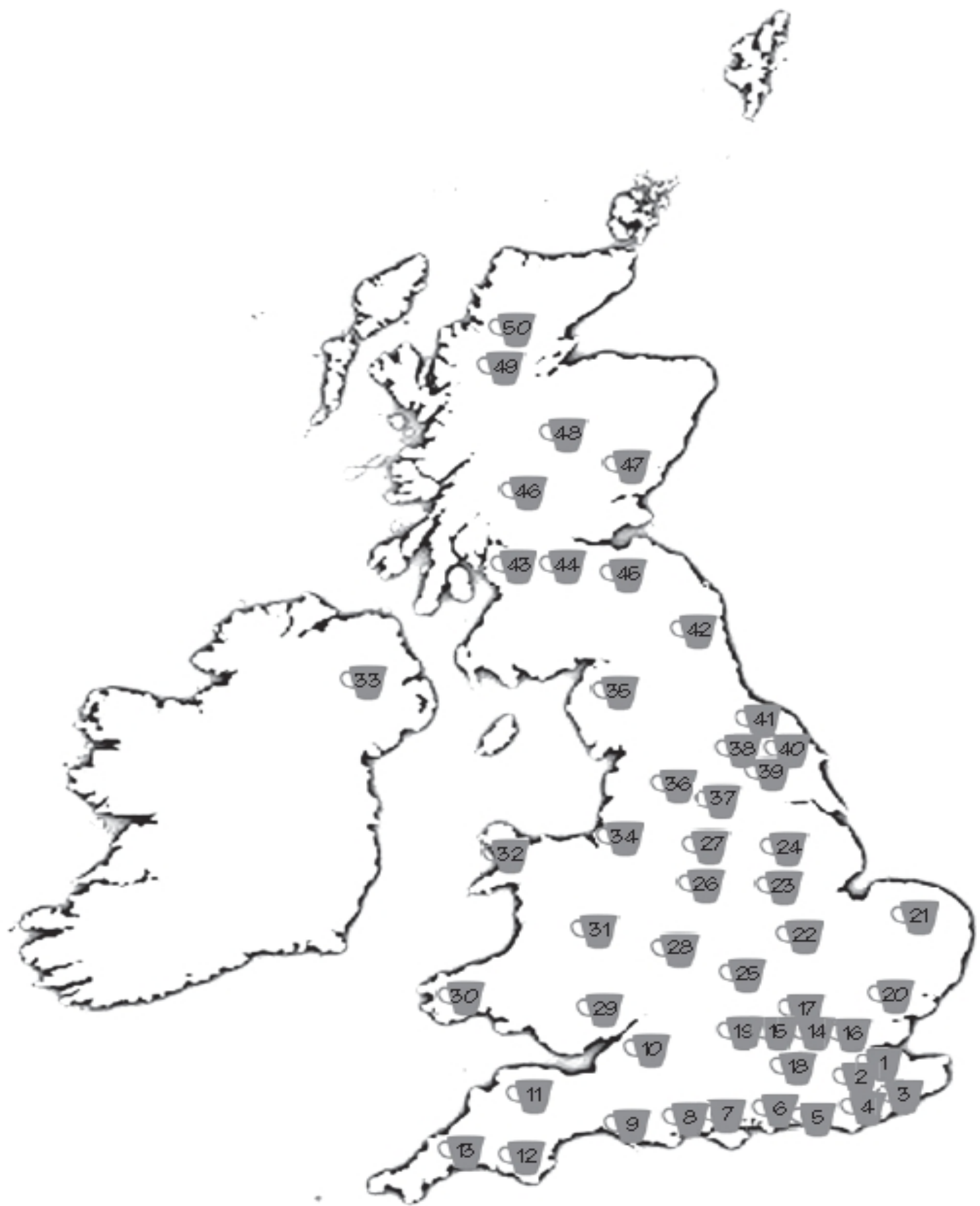
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50 places on the map



Fancy a cuppa? - 50 top stories

The South – from Kent to Cornwall

1. Rochester

Fancy a cuppa surrounded by portraits of Dickens characters in this old Norman town which now sells itself on David Copperfield and Micawber? The building has been a pub, a jeweller's, a dowser's, a milliner's and now a hardware store. A lovely cream tea here with a good range of teas and excellent scones (but no butter, and clotted, not whipped, cream).

2. Penshurst

How about a cuppa in a beautiful English garden in summer or by a roaring wood fire on a cold day? The ginger cake and lemon drizzle are hard to beat anywhere in the country. Thank goodness the saddlers and harness makers turned this into a tea room back in the 1930s.

3. Rye

You'll be well-served in this haunted Tudor vicarage with a link to Mary Queen of Scots. If you fancy savoury, you could do worse than try the local crab in a soup or sandwich before a stroll round this wonderful cinque port on the Kent/Sussex border.

4. Battle

Don't let the ghost of a monk put you off your cuppa in this 1420 Tudor hall with a secret passage from the fireplace to the Abbey over the road. Also check out the pagan symbols to ward off witches. With so much history in one building, don't forget to have your tea: we recommend the Dutch apple cake with it...



1 Rochester – Peggotty's Parlour

*81a High Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 1LX –
upstairs above the hardware store
01634 847 951*



The menu

A good range of home-baked cakes (Victoria Sponge, cappuccino cake, bread pudding); great scones for the cream tea (no butter & it's clotted cream, not whipped here); also mince meat tart. Check out some of the savouries too: corned beef hash; sardines on toast, or the peggotty rarebit (cheese, ham & egg on toast). Also good range of teas (even the Lapsang was strong!)

Who runs the place?

Since 1982 the whole building (including hardware shop below) has been in the family of the Johnstones; Fiona is in charge of the shop downstairs and only helps out up in the tea room when they're stretched. Running the show the day we were there: a young brother & sister team – him serving, her baking..



The building

An 18th century pub on this site was demolished and replaced by...another pub! In the 19th century, things got more decorative, with a silversmith and then a jeweller occupying the building. The 2nd floor flat was used for dowsing during the First World War, and rumour has it that one of the flats was many years ago a love-nest for a young lady involved in a secret tryst with someone high up in the nearby Cathedral. Clothes and millinery took over between the wars, and then tools and hardware from 1951. Lovely portraits of (in)famous Dickens characters adorn the walls of the tea room today: Micawber; Augustus Snodgras; Harold Skimpole; Wackford Squeers.



The setting

Dickens is the biggest-seller in Rochester. If you don't fancy the Rochester Sweeps Festival in May (sweeps as in chimneys, that is), you go to the Summer Dickens Festival in June or the Dickensian Christmas Festival in December; or just wander up the High Street and count the number of Dickens-related retail outlets and eateries. Rochester was there long before Dickens, however – check out the Norman cathedral and castle: or stroll up the road to the former naval dockyards at Chatham.

Opening hours

Monday – Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm

Saturday 9.30am – 5.00pm

Sunday 11.00am – 4.30pm

