

Sunday LIFE



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EDINBURGH PUB CRAWL - Have a pint in some colourful establishments. Page 22.

Penny Brand finds a new kind of inspiration from a photographer's work



ON A MISSION: Photographer Deborah Groves left a successful business to help poor Cambodian families.

PHOTOS: DEBORAH GROVES

Cambodian poor create enriching experience

TRAVELLERS and historians from across the globe flock to Cambodia each year to witness Angkor Wat — one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Many of them fly in and out of Siem Reap, staying in luscious five-star accommodation and visiting the ancient temple in air-conditioned buses.

It is only those willing to venture outside such tourist-infested areas that truly witness the real-

ities of Cambodian life.

For holidaymakers, this can be a real eye-opener.

What they see is the devastating aftermath of decades of war: a poverty-stricken country full of landmines, scarred children and limbless beggars.

It is hot and dusty. And roads are full of enormous potholes.

This is exactly the world photographer Deborah Groves stumbled across as a backpacker in 2004.

"Everywhere you look there are

heartbreaking scenes," she reflected.

"I felt very moved by it but also felt that there was a lot that could be done to help the people here."

Deborah ran a successful wedding photography business in Caloundra but after visiting Cambodia as a tourist, she was compelled to give up her career and return last year.

"My business was successful and I enjoyed it, but I felt that something was missing in my life,"

she said.

"When I set off from Australia, I didn't really know what to expect or how long I would be away. I just knew that I was going to be getting on a plane on April 17 and getting off at Phnom Penh airport the next day.

"I think the turning point came when I was in a park, photographing a festival and a beggar man just stood and stared into my eyes. His intense stare made me feel like he was imploring me to do

something — not to just walk away."

Deborah now resides permanently in the country, working voluntarily as an independent aid worker.

"My life here has two dimensions, which sees me commuting between Cambodia's two major cities: Phnom Penh and Siem Reap," she said.

"In order to support myself, I

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