

SOUTH OF THE DOWNS – AN UNDERTAKING ON PAPER

Notes and references

BEDFORD SQUARE

1. Factual errors

In 1986, Nigel Newton founded Bloomsbury Publishing. Now best known for Harry Potter, Newton is an adamant advocate for correctness and printed matters. According to him, “a bookcase in your home is a living museum of your mind.”

2. Living squares, loving triangles

But it isn't all tittle-tattle: much of the intellectual clique's artistic, political, philosophical and literary output remains widely respected today, while this summer the British Library is publishing – to no little excitement – possibly the last pieces of Woolf's unpublished work.

3. Olivier and the Charleston

Olivier Bell is one of the few remaining voices that knew the Bloomsbury Group first hand. Married to Quentin, who ran the Charleston Bulletin with his aunt Virginia Woolf, she was an art history student whose penchant for research helped collect Woolf's diary to bring her biography to life.

4. Pre-order the phoenix

“It was quite hard to find a bit that doesn't give too much away if you haven't finished the book. But this bit is where Harry has to talk about what he might do after Hogwarts. So he's come along thinking he might do that and this is what happens.”

BRITISH MUSEUM

1. Sloane, the omnivorous collector

The founding collection of the British Museum was bought for the kingly sum of £20,000. The contemporary collection comprises 8 million objects.

2. The Stone of roses and sand

The Rosetta Stone is the most visited object in the British Museum collection. Since 2003, the same year as the release of *The Order of the Phoenix*, Egypt has been requesting its return.

3. The Pillar of Storgé

The affection of parents for their offspring, one of four types of love in Greek. Also the rumoured name of the sixth book of Harry Potter.

4. The gold standard

The Philosopher's Stone is the alchemic equivalent to the Rosetta's linguistic unlocking. Capable of turning base metals into gold, it was an idea John Maynard Keynes wanted national economies to move beyond. Gold is not good value for currency.

RUSSELL SQUARE

1. Budget axed

The British Library struggled to get funding over its long and tumultuous build. Finally completed in 1998, its architect referred to its construction as his 30 year war.

2. Bloomsbury is Chelsea

A strange symmetry in analogies. Sloane's collection was housed mostly in Bloomsbury but eventually in Chelsea near the end of his lifetime. Bloomsbury Publishing, with their large Harry-induced spending power, are an unusually powerful independent publishers.

3. Anna's newsstand

Lending his name to the eponymous newsagents, Henry Walton and Anna Smith started out with a modest newsstand in Euston. In 1965, the year of J.K. Rowling's birth, W.H.Smith was the largest

single book retailer in Great Britain and invented the Standard Book Numbering (SBN) system.

4. ISBN – the magic numbers

ISBN grew from SBN, and gives each book a unique identifying code calculated using a specific mathematical formula, upon the request of the publisher. Used by over 200 countries, the number of digits was increased from 10 to 13 in 2007, to cope with the catalogue.

BRUNSWICK

1. Territorial 1967

In the year the British Library left its ambitions for Bloomsbury, the Brunswick too tried to reach for Euston. Both now listed buildings, the Brunswick's ambitions were truncated by the Ministry of Defence's site for the Territorial Army, which still holds the space today.

2. 1955, another kingly sum

Both the cost of the first printing press Virginia and Leonard Woolf bought to found the Hogarth Press (£19 5s 5d from a helpful assistant in brown overalls at St Bride School of Printing) and Nigel Newton's year of birth.

3. 500 is all it takes

Another straightforward symmetry across time: the money you need to write as a woman in 1929, according to Woolf, and the number of printed copies of the very first Harry Potter in 1997.

4. Milk and yoghurt

"It is not easy. Someone said a few years ago that the shelf life of a book is somewhere between milk and yoghurt. But there is this thing called word of mouth that is deaf to marketing," says Newton.

BRITISH LIBRARY

1. Fishing for thoughts

"Thought - to call it by a prouder name than it deserved - had let its line down into the stream."
Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, p.7

2. Poor St John

Colin was always known as Sandy, and inspired by Wittgenstein. A painter and friend of many artists, his British Library was the largest public building to be constructed in the UK in the 20th century and claims to be the largest in the world in terms of its catalogue. It is also one of the youngest buildings to receive Grade I listed status, despite vocal opposition to its now recognised aesthetic value.

3. Francis' box

Francis Douce played a practical joke on the British Museum, leaving them a box full of rubbish that they were only permitted to open 66 years after his passing. Despite this, he left the Bodleian Library one of its most valuable bequests ever.

4. Breakfast

Nigel Newton, a similarly unusual character in the British world of books, cheerfully chatted to Fiona Carruthers about his love of Lizard Island, printed matter and the persistent survival of the physical, over breakfast. Fiona happens to be the codename for the original Kindle.

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Through the controversial years of planning and construction, Wilson's designs were criticised by hi-tech architects for being namby-pamby, reviled by traditionalists for lacking power and glory, and jeered at by the Prince of Wales for resembling an academy for secret police.

South of the Downs by Tail Bend Travel for Bloomsbury Festival 2017

ABOUT TAIL BEND TRAVEL

Established in 2016 at the curve of the mid-millennial turn, Tail Bend Travel is Ruben Green and Sophie Mak-Schram.

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