

Tom is opening a bookshop within a bookshop today

by Monty Roy who owns the Leith Walk Police Box

Meet Tom the owner of Edinburgh's newest bookshop within a bookshop at McNaughtons Leith walk which opens today.



Tom worked in bookshops in Paris. When he returned to Edinburgh, he volunteered at Edinburgh Palette at St Margaret's House. He had no money, no job and zero start up capital but knew that he wanted to own a book and typewriter shop. He has been running pop-ups at St Margaret's House and at Leith Walk Police Box (LWPB) during the Christmas period. More recently he used the police box as a precursor to opening up at his permanent premises on Leith Walk, using it as a test bed. He needed to find somewhere where he could afford to lose money whilst finding out whether a new bookshop could support itself.

What made you choose LWPB?

I specifically wanted to trade out of a police box. I'm a massive Doctor Who fan, and previously ran a pop-up bookshop from a homemade TARDIS at Sandvikfest music festival in Sweden. When I heard about LWPB I knew it would be the right fit.

What did you learn from your experience of holding a pop up?

I learned that people in the area like books, that they like to buy them from independent booksellers and they like to chat – the concept seems to work! I've had a few good repeat

customers. Mostly I learned that my friends and family are amazing – helping me cart all the books and furniture there from my flat across town each week.



Your top tips of running a pop up at LWPB

Run your business like a proper shop. Because it's outside you might think oh, this is a market stall, it doesn't need to be well organised, it doesn't need to feel comfortable. Well I stick down a carpet, usually an armchair if the car I get is big enough, arrange the books in alphabetical order (for the most part!) and in different sections – naturally sci-fi and fantasy are inside the policebox!

Conversely, you're trading outside in the street. Not everyone who walks by will be interested. But I smile and say "Hello" to everyone who walks past – and they might drop by one day. At the end of last year I had a lady shout out a cheery "Morning, Bookman!" to me as she walked by. That made me feel like I'd cracked it, I was becoming part of the landscape. And it's an ace superhero name.

Oh, and watch out for people with dogs. I lost a perfectly good Iris Murdoch to a weak-bladdered Shih Tzu...

Why should the customers come to your new shop?

Independent bookshops back each other up. Our main competitor is not Kindle – it's Amazon. It's about customer service being better than standard shops- it's the details that count. I have rustic but iconic brown paper packaging, and wrap books for free, I give people jelly babies and origami animals and bookmarks even when they're not buying books.

Typewronger at McNoughtons will be selling a mix of classic and contemporary new books. I want to make it a comfortable place to visit, building up a community of artists, writers and readers. There will be typewriters for people to play with. It will be a space for creativity. Eventually I want to go into small press publishing and to collaborate with artists to launch a business publishing wing.

Typewronger at McNoughtons, Haddington Place opens on 1st June 2018.

Leith Walk Police Box supports entrepreneurs, creatives, charities and campaigners.