

Tom at Typewronger – You've Got Snail Mail!

Tom Hodges, the founder and owner of Typewronger Books on Haddington Place, has been just a little excited by a typewritten letter which he just received in the post.

This was not just any old letter, it was a letter from a fellow Tom – Hollywood actor, Tom Hanks, revealing that he too has a love of typewriters – and that he considers our own Tom as a bit of a hero.



Tom Hodges, Typewronger Books. Photo: © 2021, Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com

Explaining that he had in fact written to Mr Hanks first, more or less relating the story of his own life, Tom is nonetheless delighted that he received a response – also typewritten. The letter is headed up with a reproduction of the letterhead used by Colonel Tom Parker, the man behind Elvis Presley. Tom Hanks played Colonel Tom Parker last year and “this came from the job”.

Mr Hanks wrote: “Paris? Madrid? Edinburgh? Shakespeare & Co? Your life sounds like something out of Hemingway. And now you battle the giants to sell the best of books – and keep typewriters live. Did I tell you that you are my hero?

“I’m glad the McNaughtans and you have found each other. When I’m next in Edinburgh I’ll seek out the lot of you.”

Tom Hodges said: “I would really encourage everyone to get into letter writing. It’s worth doing. If you write letters people will write back and it’s worth so much more than an email or a tweet. If you write a letter on a typewriter to a certain American actor who is also a typewritten collector then he will write back. Tom Hanks is known to reply when people write to him on a typewriter.

“I told him the story of my shop and that we have an exhibition on here at the National Museum of Scotland at the moment called [The Typewriter Revolution](#).

“I thought it might be a nice idea to say that if you are in Edinburgh then this exhibition is on for a year and you might want to come to it – and to come to the shop. He has written a collection of short stories – Uncommon Type – and we sell many copies of it. It has a typewriter on the cover and it goes down well here. Mr Hanks wrote back to me on a typewriter and it is a lovely letter. He was working on an Elvis bio pic last year.

“I had told him about running away to Paris and living in Shakespeare & Company there, then spending some time in Madrid. I told him about my life and how I got into all of this. He said he might drop by. Here’s hoping! I think we would spend a lot of time geeking out about typewriters.

“It is lovely. It has been difficult – it’s never easy to work in an industry where you try to sell people books and the idea of reading and fixing typewriters as well it is all a bit odd.

“But then with lockdown and so on and so forth it has been tricky. To have something like this – a nice little ray of sunshine. It helps keep the spirits up.”



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Of course Tom Hanks’ book Uncommon Type is stocked at

Typewronger and available there to buy. In the film You've Got Mail Hanks played the owner of Fox Books a mega store which swamped a little family owned shop owned by Kathleen Kelly (Meg Ryan) called The Shop Around the Corner. There was even a typewriter in the film as Kelly's boyfriend (Greg Kinnear) used one to write his newspaper articles.

At the indie bookshop Tom not only sells books (just the good books), he also fixes typewriters within his wee bit of retail heaven at McNaughtan's, the antiquarian shop.

The business began with a pop up at Leith Walk Police Box on 5 November 2017 and it is now firmly established as a place where books and a little bit of magic come together.

Choose a book from the selection on offer and you can enjoy a seat there for a while, browsing through the books or listening to some vinyl. Tom or his staff will gift wrap your purchase and it can either be collected from the shop or delivered by Farr Out the cycle delivery service.

If you would like to run an event the space can also be used for that, and their evening open mics were paused for a time during Covid-19 but are now back, though with a very limited audience and performances split between live and recorded, with some of the audience perhaps sitting outside on the steps. There are screens and "air cleaning machines" around the performers.

And if you need a book consultation to get you back on a reading streak then Tom is available on Zoom or Skype. Their play reading group Type-CAST is back and recently read Laura Wade's "The Watsons" which was declared a success.

And very much à la Black Books there is wine served on some evenings.

Merchandise, including plectrums, umbrellas or tote bags, is available [here](#).

Every year on 5 November Tom goes back to the Leith Walk Police Box and sells his books from there for a day to remember where he started from on that date in 2017.



Tom Hodges, Typewronger Books. Photo: © 2021, Martin P. McAdam
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