

## **The Ian Thornton Project**

Exploring  
'The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms'  
with Prison and Community Reading Groups across  
Staffordshire.

'This book is pure poetry'

Prisoner at HMP Featherstone discussing  
'The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms'



'We had the chance to meet Ian when he visited our reading group last year. His visit made a huge impact on us. We are a very mixed ability group, so for some of us reading a novel like Johan Thoms was a big deal. What we all loved about Ian was how down to earth he was and how he made so much time for us. We've been recommending his book to everyone in here, and it's great to now be part of a project where the book is being read in the community as well as behind these walls.

**Prisoner, HMP Featherstone Reading Group**

Report by Alan G. Smith: Staffordshire Prison Library Service and Scott  
Whitehouse: Staffordshire Library and Arts Service

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## **Introduction**

The Ian Thornton Project is a reading initiative involving prison and community reading groups. It was delivered by Staffordshire County Council's Prison and Public Library Service with support from RAF Museum Cosford.

Staffordshire County Council Prison Library Service delivers library services in the six public sector prisons and one of the private prisons located in the County. The service is part of Staffordshire Libraries and Information Service.

RAF Museum Cosford wishes to ensure that the story of The Royal Airforce endures and enriches future generations.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- To distribute copies of 'The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms' by Ian Thornton to one Young Offenders Institution and two Adult Male Prisons in Staffordshire
- To form a focus reading group 3 prison libraries to discuss and evaluate the book and for young offenders & prisoners studying English to read the book in class
- To engage a local school and three public library reading groups in reading the novel
- To share opinions of the novel between the prison reading groups and the school/community reading groups
- Break down barriers so young offenders and prisoners feel part of the wider community
- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Enhance basic skills to enable access to future learning opportunities and employability
- Build on partnerships within prison and public library services
- Raise the profile of the prison libraries
- To deliver a project that will inspire people, capture something of the value they place on libraries and reading, and lead them to want to support activity in libraries more widely.
- To offer opportunities for volunteer engagement in an innovative project.
- Organise and deliver a celebration event at RAF Museum Cosford
- Facilitate a visit from Canada by author Ian Thornton

## **Partners**

**Staffordshire Prison Library Service**

**Staffordshire Public Library Service**

**RAF Museum Cosford**

**HMYOI Brinsford:** Unconvicted & Convicted 18 – 21 years Young Offenders Prison

**HMP Featherstone:** Adult Male Cat C Closed Training Establishment.

**HMP Oakwood:** Adult Male Cat C prison operated by G4S

**Kinver Public Library:** Staffordshire Libraries and Information Service

**Codsall Public Library:** Staffordshire Libraries and Information

Service

**Cannock Public Library:** Staffordshire Libraries and Information

Service

**Codsall Community High School:** Specialist Maths & Computing

College

## Background

In 2014 Alan Smith was approached by Harper Collins/The Friday Project publisher Scott Pack to see if he could facilitate a visit to a prison library by the author Ian Thornton.

Ian's debut novel: *The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms* had been published in the UK in 2013 and Ian, who resides in Canada, would be over on a visit for a month to promote the book.

Alan was more than happy to help arrange a visit and in July 2014 Ian spent an afternoon in HMP Featherstone Library. Prior to his visit Scott Pack donated a number of copies of Ian's novel to the prison so that a group of prisoners would be able to read the novel prior to Ian's visit.

The impact of Ian's visit is perfectly reflected by the quote on page 2 of this report.

Ian's experience of talking to the group at HMP Featherstone has stayed with him ever since and he has continued to keep in contact with both Alan and the group.

This led to the idea of growing the project on and allowing more prison groups to read this novel.

As '*The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms*' centres around the events that led to the outbreak of World War I, it also tied in with Staffordshire County Council's commitment to support a range of events, activities and projects that engaged with the observance of the Great War Centenary ... and at a meeting with Scott Whitehouse the idea of involving public libraries in reading '*The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms*' was first proposed.

Staffordshire prisons and public library services have successfully collaborated on a number of acclaimed projects now, including 'Books Unlocked' for the Man Booker Foundation and National Literacy Trust. The 'Ian Thornton Project' was a natural next step for both services and thanks to a strong link that Scott Whitehouse had already developed with RAF Museum Cosford, there was a potential for a partnership project that would be unique.

'We have worked on community projects in the past that have linked Brinsford with local schools on various reading & writing initiatives. This time however, we were looking to target a very specific group from the prison. Those lads who are of a high reading level, and it is very often those prisoners who are forgotten about because they don't have to attend education anymore. These are prisoners who still need to be challenged to show them what they can achieve. With Alan I selected a group of eight lads who we thought were capable of reading and discussing in depth Ian's book. It was a wonderful project to be part of because it provoked such deep conversations in the group and sparked off so many creative discussions.'

**Joan Morgan, Milton Keynes College, HMYOI Brinsford**

'We have an established reading that meets in the prison library every three weeks on a Monday afternoon. Initially the group was for the Over 50's population at HMP Featherstone, but we have been able to widen the membership and include a whole range of ages. Thanks to previous projects we have been involved with, we have made strong links with the public library service in Staffordshire, and our reading group is now linked to Kinver Public Library. We recommend books to each other. In 2014 our group were lucky enough to meet Ian Thornton. Although only a couple of those original members remain, the new group have heard so much about his visit that they couldn't wait to be part of this new project and read his novel. The idea of sharing ideas with the other groups and being able to ask questions of the author was greeted really enthusiastically and that is always delightful to see.'

**Adeline Fergus, Library Supervisor, HMP Featherstone**

'We have had a really wonderful run of projects over the last few years that have linked up various community groups, schools and public and prison libraries. I really feel like Staffordshire are way ahead in this area of across county partnerships. The best part of all has been the people we have met and the connections we have made. Those links are very strong and makes any new project so much easier to pitch to people because we have all worked together before.'

**Alan Smith: Reader Development Advisor & Library Supervisor: HMYOI Brinsford**

RAF Museum Cosford were keen to work with Staffordshire public libraries on a number of projects, including hosting the Young Teen Fiction Awards, an innovative reader development project involving schools across Staffordshire,

in 2015. In a meeting with Philip Clayton on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January Alan and Scott proposed the idea of the Museum hosting a celebration event to mark the end of the 'Ian Thornton' project. This was greeted enthusiastically by Philip, who showed them the Cold War Exhibition and the lecture theatre that would accommodate all the invited guests.

Alan had been liaising with Ian Thornton about the idea of the project. Ian explained that he would once again be in the UK in May 2015 for four weeks and he was more than happy to give up a day of his trip to join them at RAF Museum Cosford to meet all the groups involved and to give a short talk and Q&A about his writing. All of this Ian offered to do for free, including his travel to the event.

After a number of weeks of emailing and meetings, a final date of July 14<sup>th</sup> was proposed for the Celebration Event. This would allow five months for all the various groups to read Ian's book before having the chance to meet him.

Scott would order a significant number of copies and then those books would be sent from group to group across the county. This would be managed by Alan and Scott along with Staffordshire public libraries Lisa Dyke and Stephanie Whitehouse and prison libraries Adeline Fergus and Sarah Cripps.

## **Delivery and Response to the Novel**

During February 2015, Alan, Scott, Lisa and Stephanie planned out which groups they would like to involve in this project.

Alan thought that involving three prisons in close proximity would make the project more manageable, and as such chose HMP Featherstone, HMP Oakwood and HMYOI Brinsford.

'We have been very proud to be involved in a number of projects that Alan has managed which link Brinsford with the community. I believe that it is these initiatives that show off the quality of our library service here and challenge people to see the service as something more than a room of books/ I must admit, I took a glance at Ian's book and didn't think our guys would go for it. It looks like a brilliant read, but very difficult and we have a high percentage of low literacy levels here at Brinsford. Hats off to Alan and Joan though, they didn't give up and they found a group of lads who all really engaged and made us proud with their efforts.'

**HMYOI Brinsford Governor: Mr Russell Trent**



'I didn't know what to make of the book when it was first handed out, but I tell you something. We all loved the cover. That chess piece really stands out, and I loved the illustration of the stag. We spent most of the first session just talking about what we knew of the Great War, and Alan showed us some of the library books and the display. I don't think any of us realised how young some of those guys were who went t fight and never came home. It set the scene for the book perfectly and inspired us all to start reading. We read as a group with Alan and Joan and also in cell. We discussed it on the landings and in the association room. It was a very difficult book in places, lots to discuss and question, and so many brilliant characters. I've never read anything like this, and it made me so proud to be part of the group.'

'This is a real pleasure to be asked to be part of something like this. Particularly with the chance of meeting the author at the end of the project and being able to put across all the questions that our reading group had for him. I put together a group with the help of my library orderly who would meet in the prison library every week on a Monday morning. Alan joined us a few times to introduce the project, talk about Ian and his book and then return to get feedback, discuss the novel and take questions. It was a really positive event for Oakwood. We are still a very new prison and it is projects like this that really help to show the Governors just how special a prison library service can be to helping reduce reoffending.'

**Sarah Cripps, Library Supervisor, HMP Oakwood**

"I was also involved in 'Books Unlocked' 2015, so it seemed only natural to use my English class to take part in the 'Ian Thornton' project as well. I believe in challenging the group to read something that goes way beyond their normal comfort zone. 'The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms' not only provoked superb discussion, it really inspired the men with their own writing ambitions. They had heard about Ian's visit to Featherstone last year and were very keen to read his novel. I thoroughly enjoyed it.'

**Jane Inskipp, Teacher, HMP Featherstone.**

Scott, Lisa and Stephanie chose Cannock Public Library's Mammoth Cheese, Codsall Library's Writers Group and Kinver Public Library's Tuesday morning group to take part.

“The Mammoth Cheese Reading Group thoroughly enjoyed being part of the project. It was thrilling to know that so many other people were reading the same book and to have the opportunity to get together and to meet the author was fantastic. The celebratory event at such an interesting, and relevant, venue was just the icing on the cake”

**Lisa Dyke, Library Development Officer**

“It was exiting to work in partnership with an outside organisation, the staff at the RAF Museum Cosford were professional and the whole event was well organised with a fantastic venue, friendly staff and volunteers. It was also nice to work once again with the Staffordshire Prison Library Service and to see the work they are involved in. Looking forward to working with them both again in the future”.

**Stephanie Whitehouse, Library Supervisor, Codsall**

“Kinver’s Tuesday morning group has been part of several projects that have linked us with prison libraries. The ‘Ian Thornton Project’ was unique in the fact that we had a chance to meet the author at the end and also to spend some time discussing the book with all the other groups involved. Everyone was pleased that there was a date set for July and that gave us plenty of time to make arrangements. Using a setting like RAF Museum Cosford just made it even more special.

**Elizabeth Frost, Library Supervisor, Kinver**

Because a group of Young Offenders would be involved in the project Alan felt that it would be good to have a comparison with a group of Sixth Form students from a local school. They would be close in age and it would help the Young Offenders to feel valued in the project.

Alan chose Codsall Community High School with whom he had worked on several previous projects.

‘We have had great success working with Alan in the past. The projects have drawn out the very best in our students and reflected really well on the aims and initiatives of the school. We have even been featured on BBC Radio 4 because of these projects. We selected a group of students all aged between 16-18 who we thought would get the most out of Ian’s book. The students took ownership of the project and Alan came to visit them to discuss the book and lead the questions. We also organised for a group of them to visit RAF Museum Cosford and meet Ian Thornton and the other groups.’

**Paul Johnson, Deputy Head, Codsall Community High School**

‘Our group thoroughly enjoyed Ian’s book. They were all asking to read more of his work and none of them could believe this was his debut novel. It also tied in perfectly with our own projects on the history of The Great War and the chance to see some of the incredible displays at RAF Museum Cosford and meet the author and the groups is something very special. It was truly a unique project and a day we will never forget.’

**Louise Howells, Sixth Form Learning Mentor, Codsall Community High School**

Between March – June 2015, the various groups met, read and discussed ‘The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms’ with support from the public and prison library teams.

Alan, Scott, Lisa and Stephanie began to plan out the celebration event on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July. A series of meetings was organised with Philip Clayton at RAF Museum Cosford and then a variety of jobs/roles were divided up between the four of them to ensure that the day was a success.

Towards the latter end of May, Alan and Scott began to meet with the groups to evaluate their thoughts on the novel and then share those opinions with the other groups involved. Although RAF Museum Cosford were more than happy to have prisoners in attendance on the celebration event it would prove problematic for all three prisons involved to have this happen. However, representatives from the prison libraries, prison education and prison officers would be in attendance. Alan also visited all 3 prison groups to collect questions which he could then present to Ian Thornton on the day. Ian’s answers would then be fed back to the groups after the event.

A prisoner at HMP Featherstone also allowed his World War 1 display (which had previously toured HMP Featherstone, HMP Drake Hall & HMP Oakwood libraries) to be displayed at the museum on the day.

The project was evaluated both aurally and using a feedback form. Five key questions were asked of all the groups and below is a small sample of answers.

**1. The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms has been proposed for the Man Booker list. What do you think about this?**

‘I think it would be well deserved as I thoroughly enjoyed the book and it was original and unique, exactly the kind of book the Man Booker prize is all about.’

**2. This is Ian Thornton’s first novel, describe what you thought of the novel and whether you could tell this was a debut novel?**

‘It was very well written but also easy to read. I thought it was very clever and not obviously a ‘first’ novel.’

'The book was really engrossing, written in a great point of view that still evoked the historic focus. It was wonderful. I couldn't tell it was a debut novel.'

'What a first novel! Impressive, imaginative and exceptionally well written. A lively mind at work.'

'I thought this was a very interesting read. It became a novel that you needed to complete to understand. The whole thing about consequence and the difference another different decision about a certain event, or sequence of events would make to the ultimate outcome. I was not aware this was his debut novel. Wonderful achievement.'

### **3. Would you be interested in reading another Ian Thornton novel?**

Unanimous 'YES'

### **4. Being part of the project means that you will have the opportunity to meet Ian and also the other members of the reading groups who have been involved. What do you think of this project?**

'I think this has given everyone a unique opportunity to read a novel and meet the author whilst also sharing opinions with such a diverse range of people. Staffordshire should be very proud of accomplishing a project like this. This shows that Libraries really do bring communities together through a mutual love of stories.'

'I think it has been a great project and it will have helped to reach people in very different circumstances and stages of their lives. A real boost to everyone's wellbeing and the chance to meet the author, who was such an approachable and humble man.'

### **5. Would you be happy to be part of any future projects like this?**

Unanimous 'YES'

## **The Event**

The celebration event took place at RAF Museum Cosford on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2015. The day itself was several months in the planning due to the scale of the project and the level of organisation involved to make it happen.

Lisa Dyke and Stephanie Whitehouse concentrated on creating 'goody bags' for all the invited guests and organising the public library groups attendance.

Scott Whitehouse and Alan Smith focused on the invitations. Along with representatives from all groups, a list of VIPs was drawn up and professional invitations were sent (and confirmed) to the following people:

Maggie Appleton, Chief Executive Officer, RAF Museum  
Commander J Milsom, Chief of Staff and Principal Engineer, Defence School of Aeronautical Engineering, RAF Cosford  
Paul Pomfret, Assistant Director RAF Museum, Cosford  
Jean Reed, Prison Libraries Service Manager  
Alan Medway, Service Development Officer, Staffordshire Library and Arts Service  
Tom Palmer, Author in Residence at RAF Museum Cosford  
Miranda Dickinson, Sunday Times bestselling author  
Ian Thornton, author of The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms  
Heather Gordon, wife of Ian Thornton  
Christopher Hainsworth, TV/Film producer  
Rev'd John Vernon CF (Ret'd) Divisional Secretary SSAFA  
Jane Inskipp, Literacy Teacher HMP Featherstone  
Adeline Fergus, Library Supervisor HMP Featherstone  
Fran Orme, Library Assistant, HMP Featherstone  
Sarah Cripps, Library Supervisor HMP Oakwood  
Joel Stickley, Relationships Manager, Libraries, The Arts Council England  
Louise Howell, Sixth Form Learning Mentor, Codsall Community High School  
Joan Morgan, Deputy Head of Education HMYOI Brinsford  
John Dolan OBE, Cilip  
Jim Rose, Grenadier Guardsman (retired)

Other VIPs invited who sent apologies:

Cathy Rentzenbrink: The Bookseller, Quick Reads  
Hannah Howard: National Literacy Trust  
Scott Pack: Harper Collins  
David Kendall: The Reading Agency  
Cicely Aspinall: The Friday Project  
Inside Times: Prison Newspaper  
Not Shut Up: Prison Magazine  
John Vincent: Cilip,  
Mike Lawerence and Philip Atkins: Staffordshire County Council  
Gavin Williamson MP: South Staffordshire  
National Prison Radio

Scott and Alan also organised for the equipment needed for Ian's presentation on the day (laptop, projector) and a projection of the trailer for Ian's book to be played on a continual loop on the side of one of the planes in the Cold War Exhibition.

An itinerary for the day was drawn up:

13:15 – 14:00 Guest and visitors arrive

14:00 – 14:15 Introduction

The day before the event Alan, Scott, Lisa and Stephanie worked at the Museum to set up all the stands. This involved a 'meet & Greet' stand in the main Entrance of the Museum where guest could collect their identity badges, goody bags and also see the trailer for Ian's book being displayed. Then an area in the main exhibit where the HMP Featherstone's WW1 display was situated, alongside copies of Ian's book (for sale) and a chess board was set up for guests to play (chess plays an integral part in Ian's book.) This area was also used for the refreshments.

In the Cold War Bunker a large chess set was assembled on stage, and Ian's presentation was projected on to the main screen.

At various key points between the main car park and the event, A Boards were used to show guests where they had to attend.

On the day of the event, Scott, Alan, Lisa and Stephanie and Library volunteer Carole Jenkin were on site by 8.30am and working hard to ensure all last minute arrangements were made and everyone was ready to welcome the guests.

Ian Thornton arrived at Cosford train Station at 10:30am and was collected by Alan and driven up to the museum. He had a chance to meet all the key people involved in the project alongside two WW2 veterans, who entertained Ian with their stories of the war.

Ian also met fellow author Tom Palmer and was taken on a guided tour of the museum and then given lunch before the main guests arrived.

There was a wonderful turn out of guests, and Ian was delighted that so many people had been able to attend.

Philip Clayton welcomed everyone and spoke about the Museum's involvement in the event. Alan Smith then thanked the invited guests and spoke in detail about the project. He then introduced Ian Thornton who gave a wonderful presentation about his writing and his influences. This was followed by an engaging Q&A between Ian, Phillip and Alan, which gave the audience a chance to ask Ian questions about his writing and his future projects.

Refreshments were served in the Main Exhibit and guests had the chance to meet each other, purchase signed copies of Ian's books and also speak to Ian on a more informal level.

The event finished at 5pm.

## **Feedback on the Event**

Feedback forms were handed out to all delegates and below are an example of the positive quotes we received.

'Great to see Libraries doing classic Reader Development alongside everything else libraries contain these days!'

'Many thanks for a great occasion in a perfect venue. The project looks to have been a great collaboration across library services and communities. The enthusiasm of those involved was infectious.'

'Great afternoon. Ian Thornton was brilliant. Now I have a great new book to read. More of this please!'

'Great to have this event in this spectacular setting. Great to have heartfelt thinking from Ian about the impact of the project and the reception of the book in general. Ian's career is one to watch. Enjoyed the exploration of his influences too!'

'I thought the event was very well organised as it must have taken a great deal of effort and planning to arrange for all participating groups to come together in Ian Thornton's small window.

I thoroughly enjoyed the question and answer session which concentrated more on the author and the book itself. Thank you to everyone involved in making this a success.'

'Really enjoyable and interesting afternoon. I loved the museum and all the staff from the libraries and Cosford were lovely.'

'Thoroughly enjoyed this. A great and unique idea to have some many different groups read one novel and then bring them all together to meet the author at Cosford. I'm already looking forward to the next project.

Good to hear Ian Thornton talk and to meet him personally.'

'It was an exceedingly well organised event and very well attended.

All of the people that I spoke to in my role as a volunteer manning the stall Ian's book was on sale, were immensely impressed with his talk.

Volunteering has enabled me to develop more as a person and to increase my confidence but also gives me a chance to meet new people in the local community and to take pride in my local community'

**Carole Jenkin, Library and Arts Volunteer**

## **Conclusion**

Through 'The Ian Thornton Project' an insight was gained into the varying ways in which a single author can be interpreted across a broad spectrum of age-ranges and cultural backgrounds. It was also observed that barriers can easily be broken between groups of teenagers within a young offenders' prison and those who are in formal education within the community as all the opinions of the participants in the reading groups were valued and insightful.

Each group was able to learn from the other and this has improved self-esteem amongst the prison groups and also enhanced the learning of the community groups.

The young offenders and the adult prisoners across three Staffordshire prisons have gained self-confidence and a sense of worth by participating in a project which has reached far beyond the walls of the prison and had an impact in the wider community. This will have a very positive affect on their lives after prison when they return to their local communities.

All the groups have enhanced their listening and social skills by being part of a group and taking other people's thoughts and opinions on board.

A celebration event that drew together many candidates and representatives from all the groups involved, alongside invited guests and the author himself, is a memorable and unique event in Staffordshire Public and Prison Libraries.



'I remain as humbled and thrilled today by the honour of having so many people dedicate so much time to have my work disseminated across such a wide range of individuals and groups, who might not have otherwise seen my book. The friendship and support I found across Staffordshire touched me deeply. The memory of meeting the veterans and their remarkable stories of unfettered courage, both in conflict and in life since shall never leave me. The museum is an astonishing place, and I shall return with my kids one day soon, for here is THE story; the one that was pivotal in saving mankind and which must never perish.'

**Ian Thornton, author of 'The Great and Calamitous Tale of Johan Thoms**

'This was a wonderful event to be involved with and there were some really tremendous outcomes for those who participated across public and prison libraries. This kind of innovative reader development project is at the heart of what we do in Staffordshire Libraries, public and prison, and our partnership working with RAF Museum, Cosford, who hosted our celebration event, forged a further link with a National Museum on our doorstep with whom we share many common priorities and aims. A great demonstration of the value of libraries and museums in promoting participation in cultural and reading offers to communities'

**Scott Whitehouse Library Development Officer, Staffordshire Library and Arts Service**

On Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July International author Ian Thornton spoke to an audience made up of Staffordshire Libraries reading groups and representatives of the Prison service. This the first time the RAF Museum Cosford have run this type of event. Following several meetings with staff from Staffs Library Service a programme was put together that drew on the strengths of the author and his book, in an unusual, yet stimulating environment. The informative presentation by Ian was followed by a question and answer session led by the RAF Museum and Library Service. Such an event only strengthens the reputation of adult learning through literacy in the west midlands and this museum's collaborative links with the library service. As such the prestige and kudos the museum received from the author, SCC Library and Prison Service has led to agreement to run future workshops in 2016.

**Philip Clayton, Education Manager, RAF Museum Cosford**

## **Acknowledgements**

### Staffordshire Library and Arts Service

Jean Reed: Staffordshire Prison Library Service Advisor: YOI

Alan Smith: Library Supervisor, HMYOI Brinsford

Adeline Fergus: Library Supervisor, HMP Featherstone

Sarah Cripps: Library Supervisor, HMP Oakwood

Elizabeth Frost : Library Supervisor, Kinver Public Library

Scott Whitehouse: Library Development Officer, South Staffordshire District

Stephanie Whitehouse: Library Supervisor, Codsall Public Library

Lisa Dyke: Library Development Officer, Cannock District

### RAF MUSEUM COSFORD

Philip Clayton: Education Manager, RAF Museum

### The Friday Project

Scott Pack  
Cicely Aspinal

### HMYOI Brinsford

Joan Morgan: Deputy Education Manager, Milton Keynes College

Stephen Quick: Teacher, Milton Keynes College

Jacqui Smith: Teacher, Milton Keynes College

### HMP Featherstone

Jane Inskipp: English Teacher

### Codsall Community High School

Marjorie Tunncliffe: Headteacher, Codsall Community High School

Paul Johnson: Assistant Headteacher, Codsall Community High School

Louise Howell: Sixth Form Learning Mentor

All of the reading groups who took part from Kinver Library, Codsall Library and Cannock Library.

Extra special thanks to the marvellous Ian Thornton for making time during his visit to the UK to be with us for the celebration of this project and to talk to the audience about his influences and his writing.

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