

Talking shop

The Bookshop On The Heath

"I'm not an avid reader," confesses The Bookshop On The Heath Ltd owner Richard Platt. "But my late father subscribed to *Book And Magazine Collector* and I found it fascinating, all the different values, editions, years of publishing. I got hooked. I remember going to a charity shop in Orpington and picking up a Mervyn Peake for 20p and the following day I sold it for £20. I thought 'that's it, we're off.'"

After running a crime and detective fiction collectables catalogue, the incredibly helpful and knowledgeable Platt took over the lease on The Bookshop On The Heath Ltd in 2003 and set about turning it into 'the perfect antiquarian bookshop'. Stepping inside it today and you see he's clearly achieved his aim.

Completely refurbished with 30s art deco bookcases (all for sale) and row upon row of first editions it is, as one of his customers in the Visitors' Book inscribed, "like being a kid in a sweet shop."

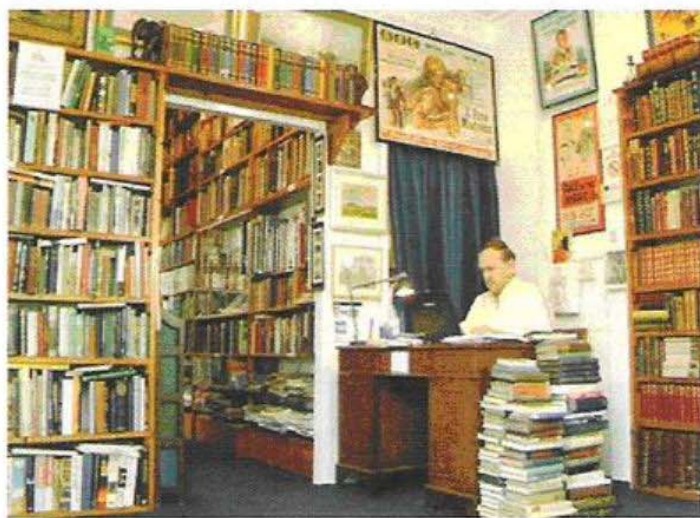
"I get most of my stock from private sales, I rarely go to auctions," explains Platt. "I spend a lot of time abroad finding items. A signed Oscar Wilde *The Importance Of Being Earnest* in a Geelong bookshop originally found in a skip, *The Little Red Book* by Mao Tse-Tung in China, some second and third edition early Agatha Christies in a dusty corner of a

garage in Melbourne. A day never goes past without someone offering me something worthwhile."

One of the main charms of the shop is that it appeals to everyone – "from young couples buying their offspring a first edition children's book and hardcore collectors to book investors and the casual browser looking for a cheap paperback."

And that's thanks to the wide ranging stock. On the shelves nestle first editions in full leather of A.A. Milne's *Winnie The Pooh* (£900) and *The House At Pooh Corner* (£750). There's also a first edition of the latter with veluscent binding in a handmade slipcase (1928, £1495). The shop also currently boasts first editions of John Lennon's *A Spaniard In The Works* (1965, £100), Ernest Hemingway's *Across The River And Into The Trees* (1950, £395), *The Romance Of King Arthur* illustrated in full colour by Arthur Rackham bound in full green full morocco by Temple Bookbinders of Oxford (1917, £975) and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens* also illustrated by Arthur Rackham and rebound in full green morocco and housed in handmade clamshell box by Temple Book Binders of Oxford (1912, £1450).

Platt also specialises in signed first editions – Nick Hornby's *High*

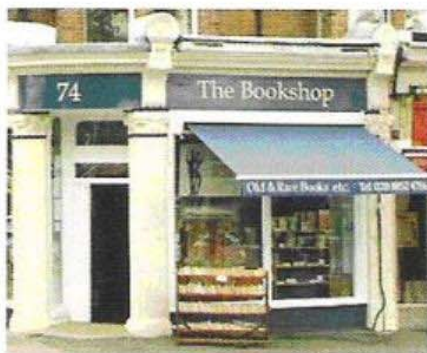


Fidelity, Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness Of The Long Distant Runner*, Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and *Night Edge Poems* by Jane Deverson with an inscription by Ralph Steadman (£250) to name but a few.

Original film posters for sale decorate the walls — *The Big Sleep*, *Dirty Harry*, *The Ipcress File*, James Bond — and for the music fan you can even purchase one off Beatles black and white photos courtesy of lensmen Roy Cameron taken on 12th September 1967 outside the Grand Hotel Restaurant on the Hoe, Plymouth (£195). Platt also offers a free on the spot search and a book binding and archival restoration facility as well as an internet service:

www.bookshopontheheath.co.uk

Lois Wilson



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