Allen Lane and the Development of Penguin Books





Books with his brothers Richard and John in 1935. Originally part of his uncle's publishing house Bodley Head, Penguin became a separate company in 1936. According to legend, Lane conceived the idea of producing good quality cheap paperback books in 1934 (the year Isokon opened) after visiting Agatha Christie (later an Isokon resident) when he was stranded at Exeter train station with nothing worth reading. The first Penguin book vending topical coverage (Penguin Specials), machine was installed in Charing Cross non-fiction (Pelican Books, 1937) and Road in 1937 and dubbed the 'Penguin- children's reading (Puffin Books, 1940). cubator'. The books cost sixpence (then about the same price as a packet of cig- After the war the imprint was further arettes) and in less than a year a million

Design was always a key ideal in the development of the Penguin brand. Covers were instantly recognisable with their central white title strip between bold horizontal bands colour coded to signify, respectively, general fiction (orange); crime (green); travel and adventure (cerise); biography (dark blue); drama (red); world affairs (grey), etc. Titles were rendered in Gill Sans (released in 1928), a font which became synonymous with progressive modern

had been printed.

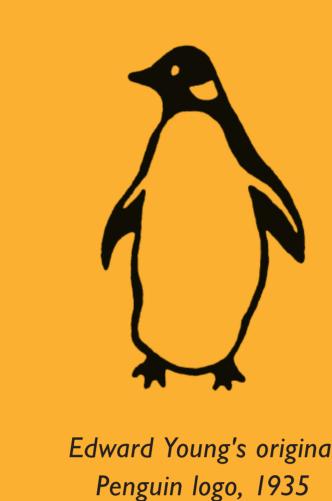
typography.

he popularity of Penguin books increased during the war, with the demand for good reading material for the forces at home and overseas. Readers were invited to leave finished copies at their local Post Office for free transmission to servicemen and women abroad. An agreement with the War Office also enabled troops to be supplied with Penguin books through the Forces Book Club. The range of literature was soon broadened to include

extended with the launch of larger volumes such as the Pelican History of Art and the monumental Buildings of England series by Nikolaus Pevsner (another Isokon neighbour.) Allen Lane was in the vanguard of the struggle against book censorship, fearlessly publishing D. H. Lawrence's novel Lady Chatterley's Lover in 1960, the subject of a notorious trial under the Obscene Publications Act in which his decision

The following year Penguin became a publicly listed company on the London Stock Exchange. Sir Allen Lane was knighted in 1962. Shortly after his death in 1970 the company was acquired by S. Pearson & Son. Penguin is now part of Penguin Random House and the largest English language publisher in the world.

Penguin Logo and the Lubetkin Connection



The Penguin Pool at

London Zoo, designed

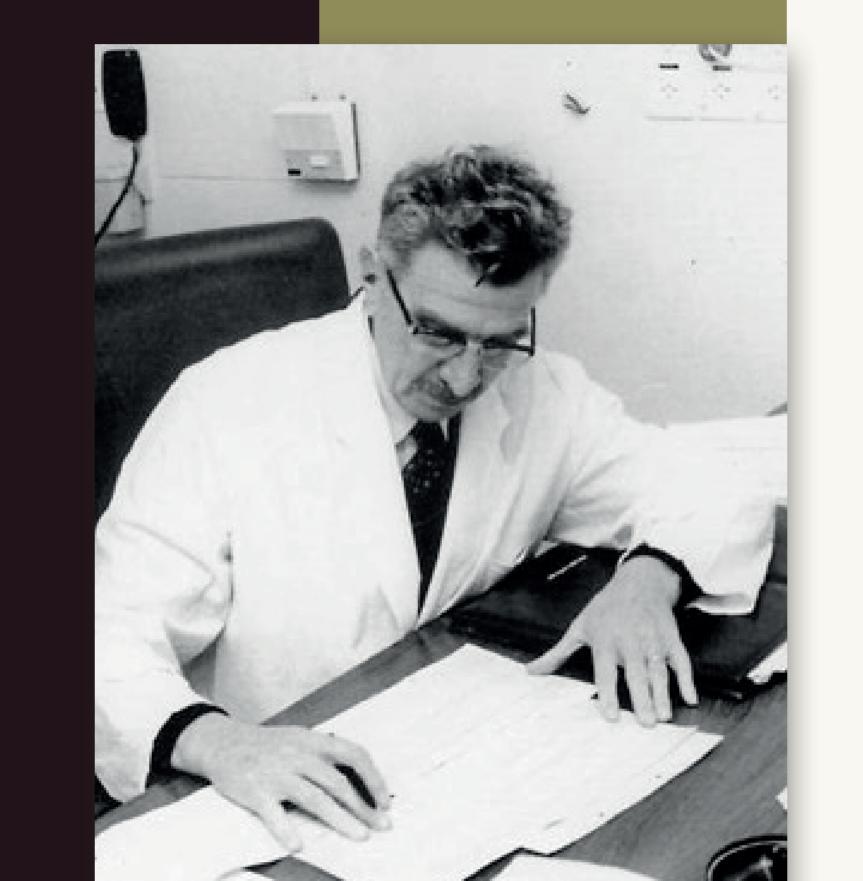
by Berthold Lubetkii

Inspiration for the famous Penguin logo came from the occupants of the equally iconic Penguin Pool, designed by the Russian architect Berthold Lubetkin (1901–90) and his partnership Tecton for London Zoo, and opened in 1934, the same year as the Isokon apartments. Lane had already considered using an animal mascot, having been impressed by the slightly earlier Albatross Library imprint. The original logo was created by the then 21-yearwho established the essential design identity of the Penguin brand and would become the first RNVR sub-Young later recalled 'It was the obvious answer, a stroke of genius. I went straight off to the Zoo to spend the rest of the day drawing penguins in

him to build a replica of the Pool in the forecourt of Penguin's headquarters in Harmondsworth, Middlesex – a commission that Lubetkin declined on the grounds that it would 'devalue the original'. Penguins would nonetheless become indelibly associated with both the publisher and the architect. Young's original design went through several iterations, before being refined into essentially its current form in 1948 by old office junior Edward 'Teddy' Young, Jan Tschichold, as part of a comprehensive refinement of the design and typography at Penguin. Meanwhile, the Pool, now listed Grade I, was a curtain raiser marine commander of World War II. to Lubetkin and Tecton's outstanding series of modern buildings in the interwar years, including the two Highpoint apartment blocks in Highgate and Finsbury Health Centre, also all listed Grade I.

According to Lubetkin, Lane invited

Allen Lane continued to draw on his connection with the Zoo, inviting its secretary Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell to join an editorial advisory board he formed to guide the development of the Pelican Books series, initiated in 1937 with the intention of adding an educational dimension to the popular appeal of the original Penguin list. As well as being a distinguished zoologist Chalmers Mitchell (1864–1945) was a prolific writer and biographer, a regular contributor to The Daily Chronicle and scientific correspondent for The Times.



niture Company in 1935 with Walter Gropius as Controller of Design. Some about 100 units were made. of its most famous products were designed by the Austrian architect Egon Riss (1901–64), one of the many European émigrés taken in by Pritchard, Ernest Race (designer of furniture for who arrived in 1939 having studied at the 1951 Festival of Britain) to create the Vienna Technische Hochschule and

The Penguin theme also connects us

to the Isokon, where Jack and Molly

Pritchard established the Isokon Fur-

The Penguin Donkey

Riss produced a range of designs for including the Isokon Penguin Donkey, the Long Chair by Marcel Breuer) and the Gull or Pocket Bottleship (both was acquired from Pritchard by Chris exhibited here in the Gallery). The most McCourt of Isokon Plus. celebrated piece is the Isokon Penguin new line of books published by Allen Lane. The intention was that, when placed alongside that other Isokon classic, Marcel Breuer's Long Chair, the College of Art, Shin and Tomoko Donkey would enable the user to select Azumi. alternate books with ease, avoiding the need to get up and go to a wall shelf. Fully loaded the Donkey could carry 80 Penguin books, with space between the panniers for storing magazines and and prolific architectural career with leaflets for insertion at the back of the standard Penguin advertising the

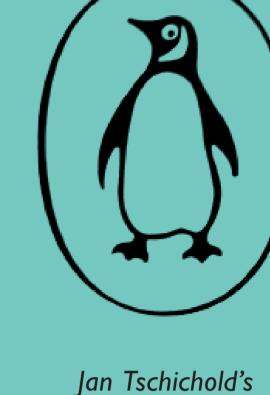
order one. Unfortunately the success of the original Penguin Donkey was thwarted by restrictions on plywood supply at the outbreak of war and only

However in 1963 Pritchard revived the Isokon Furniture Company and engaged a new version of the Donkey (also exhibited here) and the Bottleship II. Production continued until 1980, following which the licence to reproduce the original Isokon designs (including

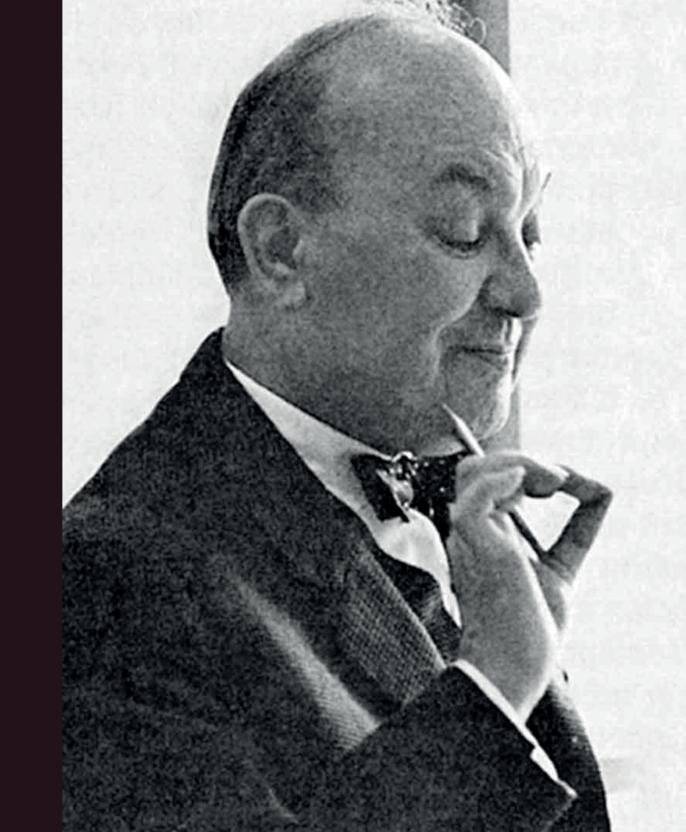
More recently in 2003, yet another version of the Penguin Donkey in birch wood veneer and pale grey lacquered wood was designed by the Japanese designers, and graduates of the Royal

After serving with the Royal Engineers during the war Egon Riss moved to Scotland and developed a successful the Scottish Coal Board. But ironically perhaps, it is for his inventive and charming design of the Penguin Donkey Donkey to facilitate readers wishing to that he remains best known.

Penguins Post-War



Penguin logo, 1949



Tschichold at work, 19XX

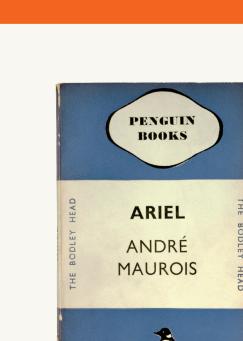
In 1946 Penguin Books embarked on what would become one of its most successful series, the Penguin Classics, aided by the comprehensive redesign of their book covers by typographer Jan Tschichold between 1947 and 49. Tschichold's career had begun in 1923 after a visit to the Weimar Bauhaus inspired him to become a passionate advocate of Modernist design, publishing the seminal Die Neue Typographie in 1928 – its title borrowing a phrase coined by his good friend Moholy-Nagy (later an Isokon resident).

Tschichold's revision of the Penguin logo was also undertaken during his Today, 70 years on from the publicatime at the company, resulting in the svelte icon that has remained largely unchanged ever since. The tri-band the King Penguin and Classics series Composition Rules, a four-page booklet the Pocket Penguins' typographical which concisely addressed every detail of typography and page layout, and which he enforced without compromise. The 500 books he produced at Penguin are regarded as a step change in design standards for publishing Britain.

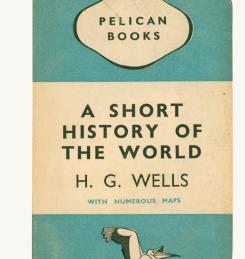
While the 50s were about improving standards and ensuring consistency, the 60s were a time of change, with typographer Hans Schmoller and then Germano Facetti, who had previously worked as a furniture designer, leading the design team. In 1961, Facetti commissioned the now famous 'Marber Grid', originally for the Penguin Crime series but latterly to unify a number of Penguin series, including Classics. Though adapted over the years, it was this basic template that remained until the 80s, when Penguin Classics were redesigned with a more traditional feel.

tion of the first Jan Tschichold Classics, Jim Stoddart, Penguin Art Director since 2001, introduces the colourful, small-format Pocket Penguins. Developed alongside the multi-million selling Little Black Classics launched in 2015, covers use a new palette to denote the works' original language, as Tschichold's Classics did in the 40s. The new logo developed for this series frees the Penguin from the confines of its orange 'lozenge' on Classics for the first time in over 50 years.

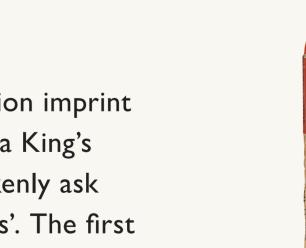
This display, which has been kindly sponsored by Penguin Classics, coincides with the 2016 launch of the Pocket Penguins series, in the original size to fit the 1939 Donkey designed by Egon Riss.



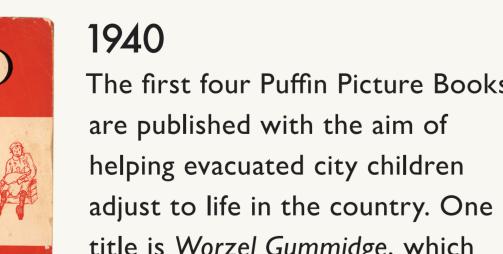
books, realising his vision to make quality books available to all at low prices. The books cost sixpence (the same as a packet of cigarettes). The first batch includes books by Ernes

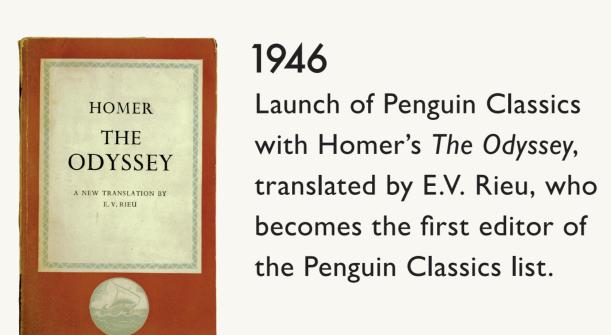


after overhearing someone at a King's Cross station bookstall mistakenly ask for 'one of those Pelican books'. The first Pelican book is George Bernard Shaw's



title is Worzel Gummidge, which would go on to become a popular



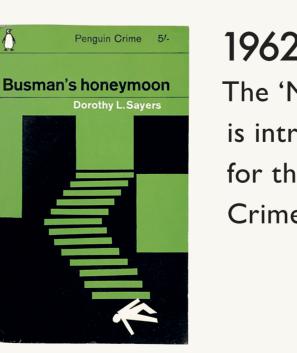


to soldiers cut off from

traditional layou

grid, the first major update to Penguin's

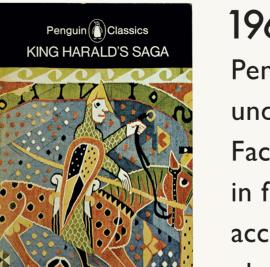
Lady Chatterley's Lover. The second edition,



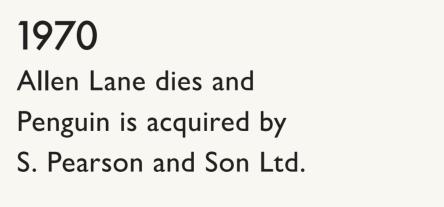
The evolution of the

Penguin Donkey:

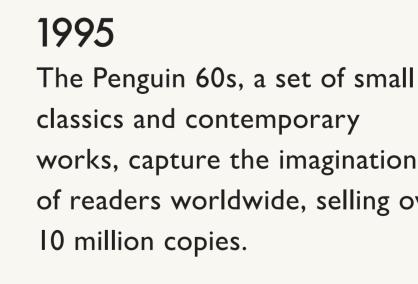
1939, 1965 and 2003.

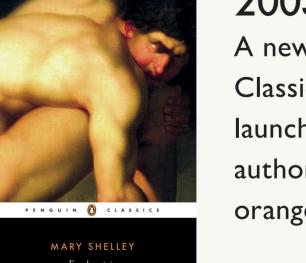


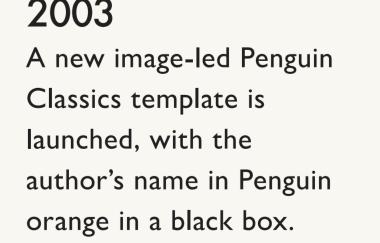


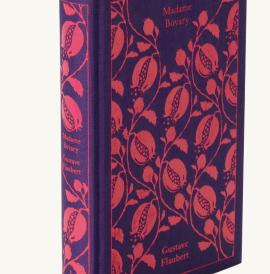


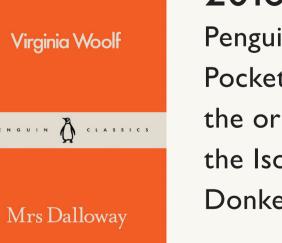














Penguin launches the Pocket Penguins in the original size to fi the Isokon Penguin