



I grew up...

...with the impression that Hornby was not a common surname. There were no Hornbys at my school, nor at college. Twiggy's real name is Leslie Hornby, but not a lot of people know that, and there were no other famous Hornbys. Later, when I became a teacher, and met hundreds of kids, there was not a Hornby amongst them.

And then, for some baffling reason, a few years ago it seemed to change. I met a student from, I think, Edinburgh University, who told me that she was at college with a Hornby – a Nick Hornby. I chuckled merrily and signed a book for him, but this Nick Hornby has since gone on to be a documentary film-maker, and even this profession, wildly dissimilar from my own, has caused confusion. This Nick Hornby made a film about something terrifyingly serious – possibly Serbian war-crimes – which was broadcast on TV, and the London Evening Standard previewed the programme by noting that “Nick Hornby (About A Boy) directs.” I am sure that this sudden leap in tone and subject-matter intrigued a great many people.

And then it started to get really confusing. A friend emailed me to say that he wouldn't be able to come to my reading in Deptford, South-East London – a reading I knew nothing about. He directed me to a website advertising the event, which did indeed say that I would be appearing at a venue there, and reading from new work. I contacted the people responsible, and told them that I knew nothing about the event; they told me that it was Nick Hornby the artist who would be reading. (I still haven't found out what he was reading, this artist, or why.)

Since then, Nick Hornby the artist and I have been in touch via email, partly because Carey Mulligan, the star of ‘An Education’, is one of his best friends. And in June we are going to appear together, in conversation, at an event hosted by the law firm Clifford Chance. Nick Hornby the artist, it turns out, is talented, as well as young, and Clifford Chance have invested in his work. Sooner or later he will become more famous than me, and people will ask me in shops whether I'm him, and it will kill me. But I'm looking forward to meeting him properly. I shall tell you how it goes.

Nick Hornby told me, incidentally, that at a wedding recently he met another Nick Hornby. “Ah,” I said. “The director.” “No,” said Nick Hornby the artist. “He's an architect.” Nick Hornby the architect is married, apparently, to Amanda – the name of my wife.

But why is all this happening, after all these years? Can I at least claim to have started something? I don't suppose I can.

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