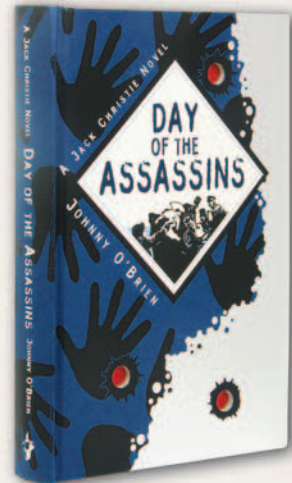


DAY ASSASSINS

Author Q&A

Johnny O'Brien, author of *Day of the Assassins*, tells us more about the book and his own time-travel aspirations.



Where did the idea for Day of the Assassins come from?

My wife, Sally, said that as I was always telling the kids stories and that I should write a book. I told her the idea was ridiculous. Then, sometime later, I was looking through a cupboard at my dad's house. We came across some of his father's old medals and things from when he was an officer with the Irish Guards in the First World War. There was an old trench telescope, a citation signed by Winston Churchill and even a bit of bone that he'd kept when his leg was amputated following an injury in 1918! That got me thinking...

If you did have a time machine, which other eras of history would you visit, and which historical characters would you like to meet?

The list is endless and there are lots of things that I'd like to have seen in British history – the Battle of Britain, the Armada, Waterloo... probably nothing original there. There are also some questions it would be good to find out the answer to: who killed the Princes in the Tower, (or JFK for that matter). Further back – how did Neanderthals co-exist with Homo sapiens? In terms of people, of course there are the usual suspects – from Churchill to Cleopatra – but the person I would really like to meet

is my grandad, as I was too young to know him.

I would like to know about his experiences in the war and how he was injured.

What sort of research did you do for the book?

Well, I did history at university and the kids have been going through the GCSE curriculum – so I've been learning all sorts of new bits and pieces. Other than that it's mostly reading or finding things on the internet. It's surprising what you have to cover – everything from where the guns are located on a Dreadnought to what time the sun sets in late June in Austria!

Best time-travel film: Back to the Future or Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure?

Back to the Future – if only to see a DeLorean go at 88 MPH! Although I understand that in the later films they gave it a Porsche engine to give the car the requisite zip!

DAY OF THE ASSASSINS

Author Q&A, continued

Best time-travel spaceship – The Tardis or The SS Enterprise?

Tardis. The Enterprise has just too much tight nylon in a confined space which has got to be a fire hazard.

What books did you read as a child?

Oh Dear. *The Ant and Bee stories*; Richard Scarry's *Busy Busy World*; *Hergé's Adventures of Tintin* and the Asterix books by Goscinny and Underzo.

What book would you take to a desert island and why?

Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* – it's very long and it might sink in second time round.

What book character would you like to have been?

Captain Haddock – lots of scope for misbehaviour, but a heart of gold. He had a great house too, with lots of strange friends and a cellar full of treasure. What more could you want?

Where and when do you write?

I have an office at home, so I write there at the weekend if I get a chance. Usually the dog comes and snoozes at my feet. I've never understood how a dog can sleep so much during the day – and then all night as well!

What's next for Jack and Angus?

They're donning doublet and hose and heading back to the sixteenth century. Why? To save the world of course! But don't worry, I've ditched the idea of writing it in iambic pentameters.

How would you describe Day of the Assassins in one sentence?

A time-travel adventure set in a (reasonably!) accurate historical context. The idea was that if you read it, you'd have fun and you might even learn something in the process. Sorry that's two sentences or three, in fact.

How does it feel to have your first book published?

Great! I hope people like it.

Watch a clip of Johnny O'Brien at www.dayoftheassassins.com

