



# BEFORE 'THE CHASER'S WAR ON EVERYTHING', THERE WAS THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP!

The Bloomsbury Group are known for their contribution to the intellectual and cultural reformation of England in the early 20th century. Their thinking was ahead of their time and a rebellion against the cultural norms and accepted views of English society. Notably, the group were strong pacifists who rejected the idea of war and combat.

The group's rebellion stretched to practical jokes that set out to make a political point. In 1910, members of The Bloomsbury Group dressed up as 'Abyssinian royal princes' and tricked the Royal Navy into giving them a tour of their biggest warship the HMS Dreadnaught. The hoax was extremely well executed, with the group sending a fake telegram in advance to the ship telling them to prepare for their visit with a forged signature from the secretary of the Foreign Office. The group were given a special train to Weymouth where the ship was docked and upon their arrival they were met with a guard of honour. The group were so well disguised that even members of the navy who knew them did not recognise them!

All the royal 'princes' wore dark face make-up, dressed in long cloaks, turbans and wore fake beards to hide their identities. They even went as far as having a translator who spoke in a gibberish language to interpret what the captain of the ship was telling them. At the end of the tour they bestowed 'Abyssinian' military honours on some of the English navy officers.

Once the prank was over a member of the group sent a photo of them to a newspaper exposing the futility of the Navy and making them a national embarrassment. Although calls were made for the group to be arrested, humiliating the Navy is not considered breaking the law!

**SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO  
EDUCATION**