



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

NEWSLETTER

December 2013

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Any Old Iron ~ reminiscences of early printing days by Michael Daniell

"Any old iron?!" This was a call still prevalent on the streets of Oxford in 1978 when Michael contemplated his newly purchased treadle press, delivered in five 2cwt pieces and now lying in his driveway. He resisted the temptation in a manner that had eluded him the week before when he negotiated its sale, in the Atlantis Café from a Mr Dashfield of the Raven Press in Bristol, one of the most chaotic premises he'd ever encountered. Daunted, he was encouraged by both John Eickhoff and current member Paul Davies to get it running.

Michael had found work as a publisher at the Oxford University Press; climbing the southwest stairway to his office the sound and the smell of the presses permeated. He was hooked. Not long after he attended a letterpress course at the Whittington Press; cost £65.88p incl. VAT @ 8%. Jonathan Stephenson formed the Oxford Branch of the British Printing Society which, in 1982, metamorphosed into the Oxford Guild of Printers with John Smith, Tom Colverson, and others at the helm with the first Fine Press Book Fair in close pursuit.

Michael admitted his enthusiasm for the "heroic printer", passing round items from his archive but starting with *Henry & Eliza* from the Kit Kat Press, printed by Kenneth Hardacre from whom he received much support and encouragement. We saw his version of *Industrious Pirate* first printed by Robert Louis Stevenson's twelve year old step-son. Also a piece about Parson Davy who in 1795 had printed his 26 volume *System of Divinity* only for the Bishop of Exeter's secretary to dismiss it as a "trifle"; Beatrix Potter in her childhood had discovered a press, some type and woodblocks but her home-made ink was so messy it was confiscated thus curtailing her endeavours; we were reminded of Shackleton's monumental *Aurora Australis* printed on the Antarctic ice.

Conant Brodribb had been another printer to encourage Michael: Conant described making fifteen trial proofs of a title page, not knowing at the end of it all whether the fifteenth had been any better than the fifth. "Turn it upside down" was his advice to resolve typographic balance. John Ryder has been an inspiration, as had Jan Tschichold's *Penguin Composition Rules: "marvellous guidance". (Hart's Rules didn't rule. . .)*

We delighted in his resuscitation of the word 'booking'; and of his delicate colophon by Sarah van Niekerk. This was a charming account of a printer's exploits and philosophy delivered in a style which is surely the essence of the Guild.

Miles Wigfield

Guild meetings

Unless otherwise noted, the meetings are held at the Bell in Charlbury, at 7:30 for 8:00p.m. The Bell serves food (as well as drink, naturally) and some members have taken to dining there before meetings. If you would like to order food in advance to avoid the rush, please contact Lidia Dhorn on 01608 810278.

3rd February

Tim Honnor of the Piccolo Press. Details to follow.

Monday 3rd March: Peter Baldwin: The Delos Press and Philippe Jaccottet.

Monday 7th April

Martin Andrews: Fox Talbot Photographer.

Hatch Show Print in London:

Fans of Nashville's *Hatch Show Print* will want to get to London before the 14th December for an exhibition of stunning posters, *Nashville Calling*. *Hatch* has been printing for more than 130 years and is still a thriving business. Drawing on archival material as well as recent works, the exhibition is on at Chelsea Space, 16 John Islip Street, London SW1P 4JU (Tuesday to Friday 11:00-5:00, Saturday 10:00-4:00).

Subscription Renewal

The subscription of £15 for 2014 is due on 1 January. Please confirm that the entry in the membership list issued in June 2013 was correct and that you agree to your details being included in the 2014 membership list that will be sent only to members. The *Newsletter* will be sent by email unless you indicate otherwise.

EITHER: Transfer £15 to the Oxford Guild of Printers account:

Sort code: 20-98-48

Account number: 40680400

And send an email to hardacre@greenbee.net to say that you have done this and give the unique wording that you have used on the payment.

OR: Send a cheque for £15 made out to the Oxford Guild of Printers to:

Christabel Hardacre
OGP Membership Secretary
10 Fossey Drive
Moreton-in-March

*Membership for those who
joined after 1 June 2013 runs
until 31 December 2014 so no
payment is due.*

Ephemera on Show:

Peter White is again going to mastermind this collective printing endeavour. Each member will receive a collection of all submitted items of member's printing. We now have 112 members, so 120 copies to be delivered to Peter by the end of February. There were twelve contributors last year. Let's have two dozen this year! As I said earlier this year: "there will be Guild members who will think themselves accursed that they lay abed and failed to print something for this bundle."

Oxford Guild of Printers A.G.M. — 2.xii.13

Chairman's Report:

1. 'Printing on Show' 12 members contributed. Well received. Thanks to Peter White for organising this.
2. Chipping Camden Wayzgoose organised by Louisa Hare. A small but well attended affair with much bonhomie; the Guild attracted several new members.
3. Visit to Paul Getty's Wormsley Library. The full complement of 30 members attended. Insufficient superlatives.
4. Inaugural Picnic hosted by Liz Adams at the University College Boat House. 15 members attended, one swimming in the river. More bonhomie.
5. The Oxford Fine Press Book Fair. ca 19 Guild members had tables. OGP table busy. The inaugural OGP Private Press Prize - cheque for £100 - went to Rosemary Roberts of the Celtic Cross Press. Thanks to judges: Liz Adams, Susan Allix & Christabel Hardacre.

Treasurer's Report: See attached sheets. The Guild is 'in funds' and no increase in subscriptions is required this year. The accounts were adopted: proposed by Simon Haviland, seconded by Peter Wilson.

Election of Officers: All members of the committee agreed to stand for re-election (but see Website Manager). Once again it was suggested that 'fresh blood' would be advisable. Jane Russ indicated here willingness to be involved and this will be pursued. The website management has been handed over to Phil Treble who has been co-opted onto the Committee. Brian Clarke has been thanked for his input.

Any Other Business

1. Website — see above.
2. Picnic — repeat. Date to be confirmed in August. The Chairman offered to host it.
3. Wayzgoose — the intention is to hold it again at Oxford Brookes, for one day in October. Date to be confirmed.
4. Private Press Prize — to be repeated in 2015. The committee will discuss whether to increase the number of prizes and whether to arrange some sort of exhibition of entries.
5. Newsletter distribution. To continue without change to the present arrangements.
6. Visit suggestions. There was some enthusiasm for returning to the Wormsley Library but it was felt better not to go back so soon.

The meeting closed in pleasurable anticipation of Michael Daniell's talk: "Any Old Iron".

A note from the Chairman:

Tim Honnor, who is coming to speak to us in February: don't miss it, is currently editor of 'Small Printer' and plans to publicise the Guild and its website in the January issue. Where will it all end, I ask myself?