



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

NEWSLETTER

May 2014

Editor Liz Adams 07813 807 453

Chairman

Miles Wigfield 01285 750662

Vice-Chairman

Richard Lawrence 01865 424594

Treasurer

Michael Daniell 01865 510378

Membership Secretary

Christabel Hardacre 01608 654004

Meeting recall: Nick Sanford and the Engraved Stationary process at Smythson's

Nick is an old friend and an accomplished one. He has moved my Demy Albion with the minimum of grunting or drama, he has turned boxwood rounce handles for both my Albion presses which are 'fitter for purpose' than the originals ever could have been and, if I wanted him to, he could make me a five-barred gate. Until his talk to a very select (eight Guild members) group on May 6th I hadn't realised how accomplished he was and how he has applied his ingenuity, dexterity, and inventiveness to the Smythson operation.

Smythson occupies the upper echelons of bespoke stationary suppliers producing "top-dollar" stationary, printed using the die-stamp engraving process. Nick interestingly suggested that the technique might have developed by accident from the habit of silver and goldsmiths taking 'proofs' of the progress of their engraving onto, for example, a cup to show their customers. At any rate he thought there were barely four or five competent practitioners of the engraving art still at work; the industry had overcome this by developing a digitalised etching process, involving a flurry of acid baths and rotating discs. A good engraver could cut perhaps two wedding invitations a day; the new process: more than thirty plates a day...

Nick's talk was illustrated not only with stills: the work-horse of the industry, a Waite & Saville hand fed dye-stamping press, first made in 1906, the firm now in liquidation leaving perhaps 40 such presses in operation in the country – but also short movies. We saw, for example, the skilled technique of hand-gilding bevelled edges – a secret Nick had had to travel to the States for and effectively buy – and including his home made sanding drums which prepared the bevelled surface for gilding.

I have always tended to describe Smythson to those who've never heard of them as "the place where you choose the colour of the tissue paper lining for your hand-made envelopes": well, there the ladies were, making about 130 per minute. Gold leaf letter stamping onto leather products (£7 a letter) has increased its turnover from £1/4m to £1m enhanced in no small measure by siting the press and its operator in their Bond Street showroom.

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.

Wednesday 28th May: Visit to Madresfield Court, near Malvern.

Monday 2nd June: Ian Mortimer: 'Printing that can really only be done on a hand press – and an Albion for preference'.

Monday 7th July: David Wakefield: Typographer: Letterpress printer.

Sunday 10th August: Picnic at Coneygar Lodge, Quenington, GL7 5BZ.

Monday 1st September: Patrick Randle of Nomad Press.

Saturday 11th October: Wayzgoose at Oxford Brookes.

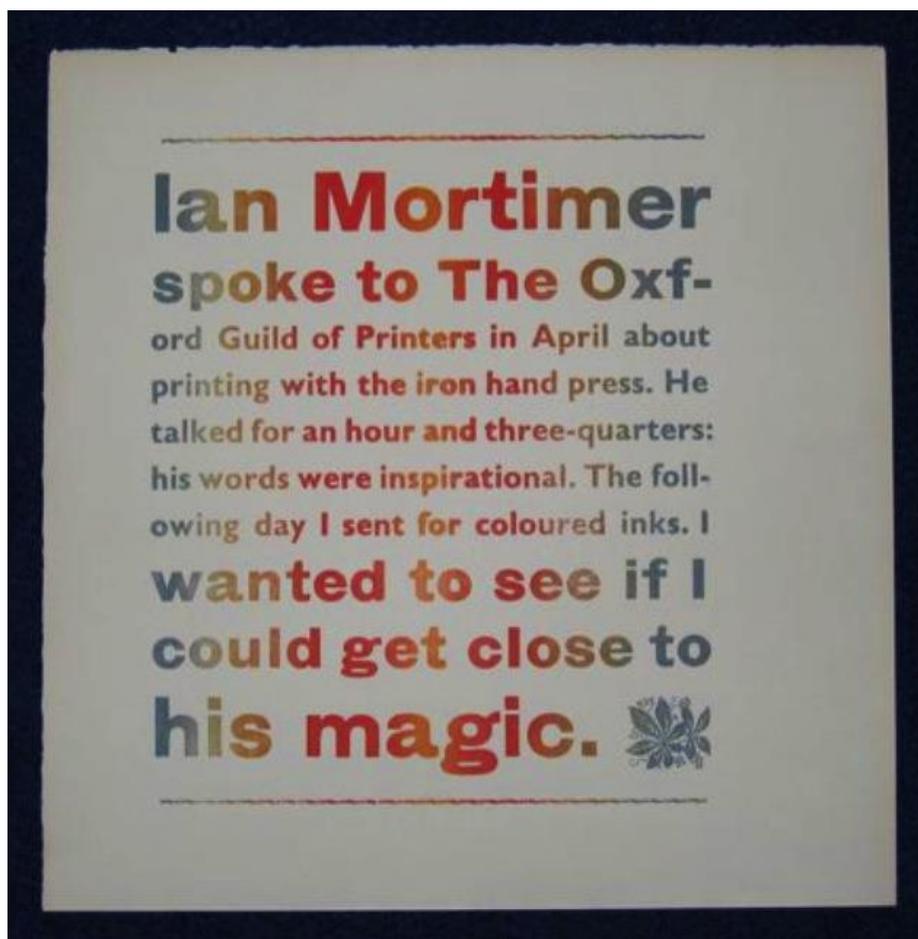
In the last few days Nick has been 'head-hunted' into another challenging and exciting printing concern. I've no doubt they will manage it, but it is intriguing to consider how Smythson will manage without him.

Miles Wigfield

Notes from the Chairman:

Look, No Bytes! a talk by Ian Mortimer on Monday 2nd June in which he will consider the sort of printing that can really only be done with a hand press and preferably an Albion at that.

Ian last talked to the Guild about 10 years ago. He had the following effect on me:



I would urge any of you not to miss this further chance to hear the doyen of the Albion press scatter his pearls of wisdom.

Madresfield Visit Wednesday 28th May: The list for this visit has now closed (24th April *not* May!) and all those who have expressed an interest should have heard from me directly. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Unidentified cheque: We had a cheque for £30 at the Fine Press Book Fair from someone called 'Manttan.' We're not sure what this was for nor, indeed, from whom it came. Can anyone help?

Monday 3rd November:

Miles Wigfield: 'Letterpress printing with some reference to T.E. Lawrence.'

Monday 1st December:

A.G.M. followed by Chip Coakley & the Jericho Press.

Notes from member Nick Birchall:

Firstly, I am searching for information on a No.1 Cropperette by H.S. Cropper & Co., Great Alfred Street, Nottingham.

I need details of what the wooden feed and delivery tray looked like and their fixing to the press.

Also insight into the mechanism which holds the paper in place during printing. All of these items are missing from this press which I am restoring. For photos see <www.flickr.com/photos/nickgraphic/13925071714/>

Secondly, I have an ambition to mount a rescue mission, the aim of which is to liberate an Albion Press, printing types and associated letterpress items from a cellar in Derbyshire. I need help in setting up a "Kickstarter" fund-raising project (or similar) to pay the present owner.

I would appreciate any constructive advice on this area as fund raising is all new territory to me. Email: nickgraphic@yahoo.co.uk

