



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

# NEWSLETTER

September 2010

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## Editorial

Members will be sorry to hear that Jean-Claude Peissel has recently suffered a detached retina and will, I am sure, join me in wishing him a speedy recovery from the operation which took place in early September. He hopes to return to co-editing the Guild's *Newsletter* shortly. In the meantime, I pass on an idea of Richard Lawrence's, mentioned at the film show held on 6 September (see below for a 'recall'). Why not, he said, make a paper drying rack with cheap clothes-pegs screwed (or even nailed or tied) to a wooden batten, or several battens connected together with wooden cross-pieces? Finally, I must apologize for the rather cramped typography of this issue. This is due to the positively enormous amount of information available this month . . .

## Meeting recall

Somewhere in Wisconsin there is a small town with a vast echoing, 30,000 square foot factory managed by a loyal caretaker, the future of which is in question. The film *Typeface*, a prizewinning documentary, deals with the fate of this building and its contents: a million or more wood letters. It opens with archival photographs of city billboards of the 1880s – the heyday of Hamilton, the manufacturer in question – posters covering the sides of tall buildings, letters several feet tall, the louder the better. John Hamilton was avaricious and bought up four or five rivals then doubled the price of his wood letter. A display of some of the pre-takeover work at the Newberry Library in Chicago was one of the highlights in a good film.

By now, if you are still reading, you can tell that the title *Typeface* is a loose one. The production and release of the film have been aimed at as wide a public as possible. The DVD includes a gallery of Hamilton inspired posters, including one printed at the Incline Press. You might like to visit the website. *Typeface* will undoubtedly play an important role in revitalising this enormous letterpress resource. It shows us what is being done on the ground and perpetrates an enthusiasm for letterpress. Lingering shots of flatbed rollers inking up introduce classes, a lot of which are given by Dennis Ichiyama both to 'workshop' customers and to students from Perdue University, Indiana where he teaches Graphics to a high level. His own abstract work with letters is covered. There are open days at the Hamilton Wood Type Museum (as it is now called) when some of the old hands demonstrate their skills on the pantograph and in the finishing room. We join the visit of a group of young graphic designers who are more than delighted to drive the two or three hours from Chicago. It is an inspiration to them, especially since they have put together a letterpress co-op as relaxation from their computer screens. Another teacher demonstrates the use of polymer plates, by way of broadening the view of letterpress in general. Sadly, some of the finer points of letterpress are given little attention. The glimpse we do get is of the second generation printshop of the Moran brothers in Minnesota where some good work is done. This is particularly heartening as it is now Jim Moran who is running the Museum and using the wood letter to print posters. Hamilton's would make a great Guild outing, just a shame it is a little bit far. *Louisa Hare*

## Guild meetings

Meetings are held at the Bell in Charlbury, and start at 7:30 for 8:00 p.m.

**Monday 4 October** *Voices past and present.* Peter White presents choice extracts from the audio recordings of the Oral Histories of Printing Archives at Reading and Oxford.

**Monday 1 November** *Fine paper today* by John Purcell.

**Monday 5 December** *AGM and Christmas event.* Details to be announced.

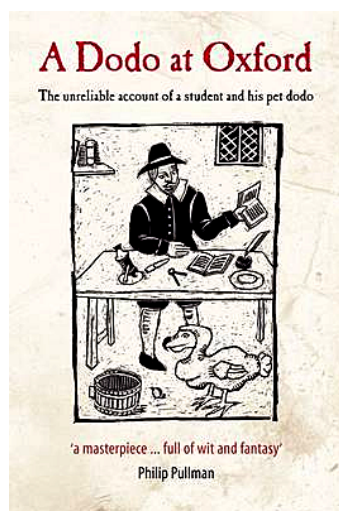
## Other events

**Oxford Dodo.** Paul Luna, Head of the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading will speak as part of a panel discussion at Blackwell's bookshop, 48–51 Broad Street, Oxford, on Wednesday 13 October at 7:00 p.m. The subject will be *A bird considered* (1695), a book apparently describing the last surviving specimen of the dodo, written in the form of a diary by an Oxford student and printed at the University Press shortly after its revival by Bishop Fell (and apparently set in the 'Fell types'). The only known copy of the book is said to have been found in the Oxfam bookshop in St Giles in 2008, and bought for a paltry sum. The book has been re-published in facsimile, with annotations, by Michael Johnson, as *A dodo at Oxford* (the front cover is pictured overleaf). Copies will be available after the panel discussion (which will also feature David Shirt, ornithologist

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and lexicographer, Clive Hurst of the Bodleian Library, and the book's editor, Michael Johnson). Can the book be genuine? If it is a modern spoof, is it well done, from a typographical point of view? Where is the last dodo to be found – between the pages of this book, on the panel, or in the audience?

Tickets cost £2 and can be had from the Customer Service Department, Second Floor, Blackwell's Bookshop, Oxford. Telephone 01865 333623.



## Beatrice Warde Memorial Lecture

**Researching Excoffon and the Fonderie Olive:** *type as document* by Sébastien Morlighem. St Bride Library, London, Tuesday 26 October, 7:00 p.m. This year marks the centenary of the birth of Roger Excoffon, arguably the most famous and innovative French type-designer of the twentieth century. For the 2010 Beatrice Warde Memorial Lecture, Sébastien Morlighem will share his research on Excoffon as an introduction to the forthcoming book *Roger Excoffon et la Fonderie Olive*. Admission is free, but please book in advance at [www.stbride.org/events](http://www.stbride.org/events) or by telephone on 020 7353 3331.

## Letterpress conference at St Bride Library

**Forward thinking.** A one-day letterpress conference will be held at St Bride Library on Friday 19 November 2010. Tickets cost £75 (£60 for Friends of St Bride), concessions

at £30 (£25 for Friends). The day will be packed with talks, demonstrations and discussion, celebrating new ideas and practice.

The following is from the St Bride website: 'Letterpress, we were once told, was a thing of the past. Yet, now it is very clearly the focus of renewed enthusiasm. Interest in setting types by hand continues to grow, with an increase in letterpress activity further fuelled by an ongoing concern with visual authenticity. For many, letterpress offers something beyond straightforward graphic reproduction. It offers the means to create hand-made objects of worth. But to what extent are we still looking backwards rather than forwards? Much contemporary practice certainly seems to have settled into something of a retro-groove. In the midst of all the nostalgia, there are people who offer alternatives to this potential dead-end, reinventing their practices and working in more exploratory ways.' For further details, and booking, please see the website at [www.stbride.org](http://www.stbride.org).

## Printing courses

**A one-day course** on Vandercooks and letterpress printing will be held on Saturday 1 October at Spike Island in Bristol. Guild Vice-President Richard Lawrence and Alex Brookes from the USA will be presiding. Further details of the venue can be found at [www.spike-island.org.uk](http://www.spike-island.org.uk).

**Family printing workshops.** A series of two-hour workshops in the history and practice of printing will be held at the Bodleian Library between now and the end of the year. The workshops are open to children of eight years and over, accompanied by an adult, and *vice versa*. For further details and timetable please see [www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/exhibitions/forthcoming\\_events](http://www.ouls.ox.ac.uk/bodley/about/exhibitions/forthcoming_events).

## Printmakers Council exhibition

**Out of Print?** An exhibition by the Printmakers Council will be held at South Hill Park Arts Centre, Ringmead, Bracknell RG12 7PA from Sat-

urday 11 September to Sunday 7 November 2010. Open daily 9:00 a.m.–11:00 p.m., Sundays 11:00 a.m.–10:30 p.m. Admission free. The exhibitors consider the theme of textiles and recycling, and the use of found materials to print from as well as onto, and present new work by Cos Ahmet, Dawn Cole, Eleanor Havsteen-Franklin, Paul Hawdon, Carole Hensher, Tessa Holmes, Chris Mercier, Glynis Porter, Kitty Reford, Kate Sully and Dionne Swift. Further details can be found at [www.southhillpark.org.uk](http://www.southhillpark.org.uk).

## Small ads

**Wharfedale available.** Gwyn Evans writes: 'I wish to dispose of a handfed Wharfedale machine. Until recently I was MD of a family printing business in Chester (established by my great-grandfather in 1840); the Company bought the Wharfedale new in 1937. It was last used around fifteen years ago and is now stored in a ship's container behind the premises; the access is very easy. The new owner wants the container emptied and moved, so there is some degree of urgency. I am not looking for payment, I just want it moved and used.' For further details, or to home the press, please contact Gwyn Evans in Chester on [gwynandjan.evans@hotmail.com](mailto:gwynandjan.evans@hotmail.com).

**Equipment wanted.** Saint Bride is continuing its efforts to set up a letterpress workshop, and there is a draft programme of courses being put together beginning in October. In connection with this, Saint Bride is looking for a cylinder proof press and various other bits of equipment. If you have spare letterpress equipment of any sort, do please think of offering it to Saint Bride. Details and contact information can be found at [www.stbride.org](http://www.stbride.org).

**Private press books 2004–2007** is due to be published in September. It consists of 221 pages describing more than 500 books and 180 secondary sources, with a full index and 37 reproductions of images or pages from the books. Copies will be available from the editor, Paul W. Nash, at £10 for Guild members (at the next few Guild meetings).