



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

NEWSLETTER

June 2013

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Visit recall: Wormsley Library 30 May

A lucky group of members and spouses visited Sir Paul Getty's private library housed in a purpose designed building described by a *New York Times* critic as 'a mongrel structure [with] Doric columns here, crenellation there, a round tower elsewhere'. Once inside though, a gothic splendour of an open plan display area with a galleried 2nd floor presents itself. The library adjoins the 18th century estate, deep in the Buckinghamshire countryside. Wormsley's own publicity claims the library to be 'one of the finest private collections in the country'. But surely it is the finest private library in the UK.

Sir Paul, described in the obituary in *The Guardian* as '...an eccentric gent of the shires', acquired the estate in 1986 at a time he was putting his life back together after years of drug and alcohol abuse. The library was begun in 1989, created with the assistance of the knowledgeable antiquarian book dealer Bryan Maggs. It was Bryan Maggs who welcomed us and, with his enthusiastic assistant, Nick Peate, availed himself for questions throughout the two hours we spent at the library. The theme of the library, Maggs explained, is 'the Art of the Book' — expressed through printing, illumination, calligraphy and bookbinding.

Bryan and Nick had specially selected books for us to peruse — arranged in grouped themes. From medieval illuminated manuscripts to early printing — including the first printed edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, published by William Caxton in 1476 — to Sheila Waters' magnificent calligraphic manuscript of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. Examples of fine bookbinding, too, were in abundance, with flamboyant 20th century designs by Paul Bonet and Pierre-Lucien Martin — and one Nick Peate pulled off the shelves to show some of us by, according to Nick, the greatest amateur bookbinder in the country, the modest Bryan Maggs.

I noted at least four OGP members proudly pointing out examples of fine printing from their respective presses.

What a great afternoon! The Guild should make this an annual pilgrimage to ensure as many members as possible visit the library. In her review of the 1999 Pierpont Morgan exhibition of books from the library (*The Wormsley Library: A Personal Selection*) the *New York Times* art critic, Roberta Smith, stated: 'Nearly all the these items are sure to delight or enlighten, and quite a few may inspire speechless awe'. My thoughts entirely.

Graham Twemlow

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 meet-ings. If you would like to order food in advance to avoid the rush, please contact Lidia Dhorn on 01608 810278.

Monday 1st July

'Linotype- the Film' presented by Graham Moss.

Sunday 4th August

A new venture: the OGP Picnic. Liz Adams will host a picnic gathering at her home on the banks of the Thames in Oxford. Details overleaf. (No meeting on Monday)

Monday 2nd September

George Ramsden: *Stone Trough Books: 'Tribulations of a Publishing Bookseller'*.

Monday 7th October

Anthony Eyre of *The Letter Press*, Cirencester.

2nd & 3rd November

Oxford Fine Press Book Fair. No meeting on Monday 4th.

2nd December AGM

4th February

Tim Honnor of the *Piccolo Press*. Details to follow.

P. T. O

Meeting recall:

Martyn Ould gave a fascinating talk on 3 June *Banging out the Bibles: printing bibles by the million at OUP in the 1770s*. He is a major contributor to the massive 4-volume *History of the Oxford University Press* which is to begin publication in the Autumn. His main chapter is on the Printing House in Hawksmoor's elegant Clarendon Building but he has discovered so much unexpected data that he has permission to develop this into four volumes which he will print at The Old School Press. What a well-qualified man he is for this challenge, coming from the computer world into being one of our leading private presses, and now a fine researcher and author on Oxford printing history.

The Oxford University Press was two businesses in the 18th century: the Learned Press (academic printing) in the western half and the Bible Press (mass production of bibles and prayer books) on the east. Each had its own composing and machine rooms and Martyn's very detailed research is based on the wages volumes 1769-72, and also a longer range of bill books. These show that compositors and press crews were true journeymen of piece-work who came and went, day by day. His main questions were: how much would a compositor set and be paid in an average week; how many worked on a given text at any one time, and was this full or part-time? For machine crews, two to each of nine wooden presses: how many impressions per crew each week; their average weekly pay; how many crews on a work at one time; and their combinations?

There are forty-four compositors named for bible work but only a few at any time. Their job was to reset by the page as type got worn on a limited number of titles: the smaller ones in large quantities. On learned books, short runs in many languages, compositors were organised into companionships ('ships') under a clicker, but their rates included distributing type before setting it. If people came and went as they did, where else did they work and live? Minds boggle. Martyn is also working on the puzzling use of press-marks on printed sheets.

Martyn's work is mainly without precedent so this OUP History is fathering some fascinating research into printing history.

Richard Russell

N.B. There is a Museum in the main Press Building, with access from Great Clarendon Street. It records the fascinating printing and publishing history of the OUP. Open to the public by appointment: telephone 01865 556767.

Glastonbury Free Press:

A project is underway to produce the annual Glastonbury Festival newspaper on a 1954 Original Heidelberg OHZ-S cylinder press using slugs from a 1960 Intertype C4 linecaster. The organisers are especially keen to meet letterpress engineers, printers and typesetters who'd like to join their team for the newspaper project. They're also still looking for various print-shop components, and are interested in any letterpress resources you can contribute. Please contact Richard Lawrence for further details: email: pinkmilkfloat@googlemail.com: or telephone 07580 770 883.

OGP Picnic: 4th August

Please join us from noon on the 4th of August for the inaugural OGP picnic at the University College Boathouse. Bring your own picnic fare (to share or not as you please). Tables, chairs, and tea-making facilities will be provided. The boathouse is located behind the Oxford Spire Four Pillars Hotel on the banks of the River Thames — **it's a bit of adventure to get to, but worth the effort!** Please contact me if you are able to come and I will send details (by post or email) of parking and how to get to the boathouse. There is limited parking next to the building for those with mobility issues, as well as a lift to the upper floor. Email: juxonpress@gmail.com

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

Monday 7th April

Martin Andrews: Fox Talbot Photographer.

New member snippets:

Pat Walker:

Although I am retired, I am a novice Letterpress printer having discovered the discipline only 2 years ago. Since attending a short Letterpress course at Central St Martins School of Art I am completely hooked on the subject. I print cards and stationery on an Adana 8x5 or a 5x3. I like the John Ryder comment in *Printing for Pleasure ... "once you have printers ink on your hands, you will find that the ink sinks into your veins"*.

John Walker:

I am a painter and printmaker living in Dorset and so somewhat distant both from the core practice of the Guild, (indeed I do not use a press) and from Oxford. Many examples of my work can be found at johnwalkerart.co.uk. I should be delighted to hear from any member of the Guild who might like to incorporate any of my work in one of their publications.

Book offer:

OGP member Tony Clark has kindly offered copies of his book, *Bookbinding with adhesives*, to any member who sends him a cheque for £3.00 made out to the Red Cross, and a self-addressed, padded D1 envelope with £1.20 worth of stamps on it. The book is available on Amazon, but not at such a generous price!

Please send to:

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