



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS NEWSLETTER

June 2019

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MEETING RECALL

Graham Moss and the Language of Letterpress

On 3rd June 2019, at The Oxford Retreat, Graham Moss of the Incline Press spoke to a packed crowd on the language of letterpress. An equal measure of time was spent on Graham's own experiences in his early days, starting in the late 1960's at Express Printers, a "rat shop" off Whitechapel tube station, with that of the use of printer's language in everyday parlance, or lack thereof. Anecdotes of bashing vermin with coal shovels and the smell of paraffin in the morning abounded and it was these early learning days, under Dick the comp and Ben the machine hand, where and from whom Graham started to learn the language of the job.

From here, Graham took to a number of specific examples of terms used and terms misused. This was not the occasion for a full description of printer's jargon from Caxton and beyond, but rather those interesting examples of parlance which is purportedly derived from printers. "Manicule", "typo", "upper and lower case", and "mind your p's and q's", amongst others, were all given a thorough examination and proved wanting. What Graham was really seeking to prove was that phrases which may be used today, particularly following the computer revolution, although they may have a reference to printing only do so in a fantastical way, as such terms were never used in the manner that is suggested. I was surprised to learn, according to Graham, that no printer's parlance has ever made its way into everyday vernacular, as naval language has, for example.

In my opinion, though, the most interesting example of language in letterpress was on Graham's mentioning of the term "grass", which has no use today, but was intended to mean typesetting done today to be laid aside for use in an undetermined future. The most familiar use of the term, Graham expounded, was in the title of Walt Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass' (1855). Whitman was a comp himself and the title denotes leaves of the book that Whitman composed over a long period of time. I found this particular example most interesting and a moment of research since appears to suggest that the first presentation of this theory goes back to the 1920s/30s, when Clifton Furness wrote on the subject, but it is not commonly repeated by other Whitman scholars.

GUILD MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings will be held at The Oxford Retreat in central Oxford at 7:30 for 8:00pm. There is parking nearby in Worcester Street or Gloucester Green Car Parks, with easy access to buses, trains, and the Park & Ride buses.

1st July: Sophie Mortimer: 'Sophie's Sketchbooks.'

Sunday 28th July: Picnic at Richard Lawrence's workshop (details overleaf).

August: No meeting.

2nd September: Paul Kershaw: 'Grapho Editions.'

7th October: Ed Maggs: 'An object that will stand and will not move.'

Saturday 2nd November:

Wayzgoose: see over for details.

2nd December: A.G.M.

3rd February 2020: Simon Lawrence:

'40 Happy Years at the Fleece Press.'

Other speakers planned for 2019/20:

Richard Falkiner, Graham Twemlow.

NEW MEMBER SNIPPET

Carl Middleton: I was first introduced to printing whilst studying at Cambridge School of Art. As students we were left to experiment with an unruly collection of wooden display type and a large FAG proofing press. I was bitten by the letterpress bug and propelled this interest during my Masters degree at London College of Printing. I was lucky enough to be able to purchase a large Soldan and have shoe-horned it into my workshop in Somerset. I generate compositions of language, phrase and abstract shape – very short editions, printed with exaggerated typographic styling.

<http://www.121-121.org/>

P.T.O.

Graham is always a wonderful speaker. A combination of his lack of pretension about printing, his anarchist outlook and his years as a teacher generally, always make for a personable, humorous and educational romp. It is not unsurprising therefore, that Graham's talk ended with his own booming rendition of 'Song in Praise of Printing', full of printer's jargon, accompanied by a copy printed by him. For those who missed out, I did take a recording of it, replete with the attending members' own vocal contribution to the song's choruses. Not a single attending member was left feeling... (ahem)... out of sorts. *James Freemantle*

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Wayzgoose: Almost 60 tables have now been booked. If you have yet to pay for your table, please contact Miles before the end of July to secure your discount. As tables are limited, there will soon be a waiting list.

Picnic: Please note that the picnic on Sunday 28th July will be held at Richard Lawrence's workshop (50 Hurst Street, East Oxford, OX4 1HD) rather than his home as previously advertised. Usual form: 12pm onwards bringing some sort of food or drink to share. Attendees will be welcome to view the workshops and their contents (printing, linocut, etc).

A Show of Hands: If you're contributing to this exhibition and haven't already contacted Miles about the Guild bundle, please do so as soon as possible.

—BRACE THE SPACE

Anyone who missed the degree exhibition by students at the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at Reading University can now view some of the work online: <https://embrace.the.space/>

PRINTMAKING EXHIBITION

The Dulwich Picture Gallery is currently hosting an exhibition on printmaking: Cutting Edge: Modernist British Printmakers. The focus is on the British artists from the 1930s from the Grosvenor School of Modern Art. Open 10:00-5:00 Tuesday to Sunday. Free for Friends of the Dulwich Gallery, general admission £16.50.

SUMMER EXHIBITION

The type case, right, was spotted as part of an exhibit at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition. Is it a comment on the imminent demise of letterpress printing, or the obsolescence of books? If anyone has a catalogue of this year's exhibition, I'd be interested to know the value assigned to such a piece. *Editor*

PRESS WANTED

Is anyone able to help Luke Wade, a young print-maker currently based in Brixton, to find a suitable **intaglio** press? He is moving to Bristol in August and would like to continue printing there, using a small etching press of some sort. Ideally, Luke is looking for a press that weighs less than 40 kg (100 lb) with the bed removed. If you can help, please contact Heather Haythornthwaite by email: heatherhtt@mac.com or by telephone: 07702269972.

