



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

NEWSLETTER

September 2013

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

Meeting recall: Tribulations of a Publishing Bookseller.

It's a shock to realise that I first came across Stone Trough Books over 15 years ago when *Praise from the Past* by Rupert Hart-Davis was published. The proprietor of this press, George Ramsden, was more elusive and it was many years later before I actually met him. In the interim it had become apparent that Stone Trough Books persistently published books of idiosyncratic, literary and generally charming merit and further were designed by someone who had an astute eye for paper, typography and binding. I was delighted therefore when George agreed to come and talk to the Guild.

He started in the book trade, initially working with John Samaurez-Smith at Heywood Hill. Those were the days when there were actually customers who came into the shop. He saw publishing as a creative activity which was preferable to "mouldering" as a book-seller. He thought catalogues were key and should not be regarded as ephemeral and proceeded to describe several of the more significant: Glen Byam Shaw's Library including his Sassoon collection; Walter Lewis & Stanley Morison; Pilkington's (Sotheby's Chairman) books on Portugal and Spain; Sir Oliver Millar's (Surveyor of the Queen's pictures) books on the 17th Century; an Edward Johnston Album with an introduction by Justin Howes; an A.J.A. Symons anniversary catalogue; Edwin Smith & Olive Cook. An early attempt he described as an "article which looked very cheap but wasn't..."

He was acquainted with Hart-Davis and through him came to publish *George Lyttelton's Commonplace Book*. "My best book" he thought. Bibliography was prominent amongst his publishing activity: Michael Jaffé's Library & Archive, a Christopher Logue Bibliography and, most substantial of all, the catalogue of Edith Wharton's Library. This was a drawn-out, often fraught endeavour involving several visits to Sir Alan Clark's home at Saltwood. On one occasion when money had been mentioned the MP commented: "That wouldn't buy me a pint of shrimps at Wilton's".

It was not a surprise to hear that George always made a point of sitting over the printer's shoulder: all his productions evince such attention to detail. *The Times Deceas'd* probably came to light because the author, Tim d'Arch Smith, had caught his eye with a well-written obituary in the 'Times'.

Whimsical, diffident, self-deprecating with a wry sense of humour and an unerring literary taste, George discoursed, displayed and entertained in a way that was wholly delightful.

Miles Wigfield

Notes from the Chairman

OGP Picnic: The inaugural OGP picnic was held at the beginning of August. Liz Adams kindly hosted the occasion at her striking home above University College's Boathouse. It was jolly good fun, there was good food to eat, one member and his family swam in the Thames and there were printed keepsakes. I hope we can repeat the event next summer.

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.

7th October: Anthony Eyre of The Letter Press, Cirencester: *From Hammersmith to the Cotswolds: an old printing route.*

2nd & 3rd November: Oxford Fine Press Book Fair. No meeting on Monday 4th.

2nd December: The AGM will be followed by a talk by Michael Daniell, *Any Old Iron?* in which he will salvage memories of letterpress, particularly those who offered advice when he bought his first press.

4th February: Tim Honor 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.

OGP Private Press Prize:

Don't forget to submit to this prize (£100) which will be judged during the Fine Press Book Fair in November. Entries (letterpress, 8+ pages, published since the last fair, and costing £50 or less) should be handed in to the OGP table during Saturday morning. You do not have to be an exhibitor at the Fair. I would accept postal entries but contact me first. I'm grateful to the three judges who have all volunteered: Liz Adams, Susan Allix & Christabel Hardacre.

A note from Simon Small-wood:

I am investigating the possibility of having some new chases cast for my Model No. 3 press and have made one part of the pattern which still needs a bit of tweaking. I also have to make a separate pattern for the internal space so they won't have to be machined. I had a long chat to the MD of a local foundry and still have some homework to do, but he said they would cost in the region of £30 each to cast. If anyone would be keen on purchasing a chase for their own press please get in touch by email (srsmallwood@mac.com).

Eynsham Bookbinding Workshops:

There are still some places available on the September book-binding workshops. Contact Arthur Green for more information (arthurgreen@yahoo.co.uk or 07921 457 174).

A note from Andrew Judd:

Does anyone have any Ludlow matrices to sell? I am particularly keen to extend the Garamond and Caslon I have, but anything would be of interest. I am also keen to complete my 18 point Eusebius Light with a couple of lower case 'z'.

John Smith of The Old Forge Press has provided the following obituary:

JOHN CHENEY

John Cheney, who died on July 26th aged 83, was the last in the line of master-printers of that name who had developed the family firm over some 250 years. A genial man who saw the best in people and treated them well, he was remembered by employees as 'one of the best bosses you could hope to have in a printing firm'.

Like all the best employers he'd learned his trade on the shop floor, starting by pulling proofs on the firm's *Albion* or *Harrild no. 1* cylinder press. A talented well-informed painter, he forged links when running the London office, with a number of galleries whose catalogues *Cheney & Sons* continued to print for decades. On taking over as manager, he indulged his love of type by supplementing the range of classic founders' and *Monotype* book-faces in the comp-room with an enlightened selection from the continental foundries. The fifties and sixties had been the high peak of letterpress and one of our members, on a later *Guild* visit, said of that comp-room, 'it's just like *Curwen!*' By the mid-nineties, with failing health and no successor, family or staff, prepared to take over running the business, he sought a buyer who would maintain the tradition of high quality printing produced by an enthusiastic, happy workforce. Sadly the merged *Cheney Classic Press* proved short-lived.

John's love of theatre, inspired by the young *Banbury Grammar School* master later known as *Anthony Burgess*, was to be life-long, as were his generous contributions to charities and the local community.

The founders and early members of the *Guild* remember him as a valued friend, ever supportive of their aims and aspirations.

JRS13

A note from Christina Kingsmill:

Wanted please, a forme (chase? Ed.) for my press which has a bed size of 12" x 18" (anything from one third of that size to that size would be great). Please contact me by phone or email (01386 840278 or sixhq@mac.com) if you have one you're willing to sell.

A note from Tim Honnor:

Just to let you all know that the BBC2 documentary on printing a newspaper in the WW1 trenches went out at 9pm on Wednesday the 11th September. It is rather special as the BBC loaned both my Arab Treadle Press and my Model 3 Victorian Hand Press for the film. And I taught the cast how to use them and helped print the paper. (It should be available on **BBC's iPlayer** for the following 7 days. Ed.)