

Printing History News

The Newsletter of the National Printing Heritage Trust,
Printing Historical Society and Friends of St Bride Library

Number 15 † Summer 2007

NEW PRIZE FOR ACCOUNTS OF WORKING IN PRINTING

The Printing Historical Society is very pleased to announce a new annual prize, called 'In the Print: The Donald Milham Award'. The prizes will be awarded for the most useful personal, written accounts of working in the twentieth-century British printing industry. The award is named after Donald Milham, a letterpress machine minder during his career, and has generously been set up by his son and another benefactor. Submissions will go into the Milham Archive at the St Bride Library for study by historians in the future. Entries must reach the Award co-ordinator by 5 November 2007. For further information and entry details, send a stamped addressed envelope to 'In the Print', PO Box 4119, Wells BA5 2UF, or e-mail frobson@mbzonline.net.

EVENTS

Non-Latin typeface design. Conference, Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 September 2007. St Bride Library and the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, University of Reading, are collaborating on a two-day conference on non-Latin typeface design. The conference will comprise a day of talks at St Bride Library and a day of hands-on sessions at the Department of Typography in Reading. Registration fees are £60 for the Tuesday only, and £120 for both days; student fees are £40 and £80 respectively. For further details see the St Bride website at www.stbride.org.

Eric Gill and Ditchling: the workshop tradition. Exhibition at Ditchling Museum, 9 June–7 October 2007. It is 100 years since Eric Gill (1882–1940), letter-cutter, wood-engraver, sculptor and type-designer moved to Ditchling in Sussex. It was here that he spent his most creative years and this exhibition will celebrate this centenary by

exploring how coming to this downland village transformed Gill's life and work. It will examine Gill's importance to the modern art movement in the early twentieth century and show how his philosophy and work-practices lived on in Ditchling through Joseph Cribb (1892–1967), his first apprentice, who arrived with him in 1907.

The exhibition includes examples of Gill's sculpture, wood-engravings, drawings, books, correspondence and archive material seen alongside works of his associates at Ditchling, many by Joseph Cribb. Material is drawn both from Ditchling Museum's collection and from private collections with many pieces never before exhibited. There will be a display of material from the Ditchling Museum's recently acquired Evan Gill Collection. Collated by his younger brother over his lifetime, this substantial collection contains Eric Gill's childhood drawings, correspondence, photographs and books. Many of these were printed by the St Dominic's Press on the Stanhope Press which is now on permanent display in the Museum and used for workshops and practical printing (see *PHN* 10).

This exhibition is curated for the Museum by Ruth Cribb, Joseph's Cribb's great-granddaughter, and Assistant Curator, Sculpture Department, at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The exhibition is accompanied by educational events for adults, children and families. Further details and images may be obtained from Hilary Williams or Janet Cragg on 01273 844744, or by e-mail on info@ditchling-museum.com.

Designer Bookbinders Lecture Series

The following lectures will be held at the Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1 at 6:30 p.m. Admission is £2.50 for students, £5.00 for members and £7.00 for non-members. Nearest tube stations are Holborn and Russell Square.

Extreme bookbinding: preserving a manuscript in Ethiopia by Lester Capon, Tuesday 2 October.

Laser cutting and letterpress by Danny Flynn, Tuesday 6 November. Danny will talk about the books he has made with artist and book-binder Eri Funazaki, the use of laser-cutting technology in both traditional letterpress printing and in commercial work for film and advertising.

Books and stuff: the quiddity of artists' books by Carolyn Trant of the Parvenu Press, Tuesday 4 December. Artist Carolyn Trant talks about her books and making ideas work in organic materials. She will try to bring some real 'stuff' with her.

Designer Bookbinders would welcome suggestions for future lectures. Further details may be obtained from Rachel Ward-Sale or Julia Dummett on 01273 486718 or by e-mail at lectures@designerbookbinders.org.uk.

Journal of the Printing Historical Society

John Trevitt has succeeded Peggy Smith as editor of the *PHS Journal*, and hopes to publish number 11 by the end of 2007. He would be delighted to receive proposals for articles of 'whatever length' on the world-wide history of printing and its allied trades. He may be contacted at Rose Cottage, Church Road, Weobley, Hereford HR4 8SD, telephone 01544 318388, e-mail jj@trevitt.freemove.co.uk.

John Trevitt is a book designer and editor, now freelance after years at Cambridge University Press and Collins, an occasional book reviewer and dealer in old books. Catherine Armstrong (c.m.armstrong@warwick.ac.uk) continues as reviews editor, and Peggy Smith remains Chairman of the Printing Historical Society.

PHS Grants for 2007

The Printing Historical Society is pleased to announce the following grants, made to individuals in support of their research:

§ Paul Dijstelberge, Leiden, The Netherlands: Digital photographs of Dutch type, 1540–1700

§ Rebecca Herman, Leeds: George Baxter Exhibition at the Leeds City Art Gallery

§ Edward Law, Bennettsbridge, Ireland: The nineteenth-century process of anastatic printing

§ Ann Pillar, Womersley, near Guildford: Publicity materials of Ludlow Typograph

§ David Shields, Austin, Texas, USA: The visual origins of the 'grotesque Italian' display typeface

§ Karen Weaver, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA: Anne Ward, eighteenth-century printer in York

Map printing by lithography

In February 2007 a visit to the John Jarrold Printing Museum in Norwich was arranged by Stanley Jones of the Curwen Press. It brought together Stanley Jones, Howard Anderson and Cecil Bye to discuss the procedures of map printing by lithography during the Great War. Howard Anderson of the Western Front Association writes:

The visit to the John Jarrold Printing Museum was arranged as part of a project on Great War maps run by volunteers of the Western Front Association. During the Great War, something like thirty-two million maps were printed by the British, many in Southampton at the Ordnance Survey. They used lithographic presses very similar to the Ratcliff machine at Jarrold's Museum, pulling maps off stone and zinc. Some printing went on in France and Belgium behind the lines but not on such large machines. Some of the maps that still exist are at the Imperial War Museum in London. These are being scanned to make them available on DVD. A website at www.anderh.com/wfa shows some examples.

It was most interesting to see, if not an actual Ordnance Survey machine, at least one of the same type and size, and to be able to speak to those who ran it.

The Ratcliff machine in the Museum came from the Curwen Studio and hence was used for many years for much more peaceful purposes – the work of artists.

Stanley Jones, Curwen Studio Director writes:

The Curwen Studio was founded in 1958 to perpetuate the idea of collaborative printmaking with artists and printers in the creation of original limited edition prints made by lithography. As a subsidiary of the former Curwen Press, it has specialised in this area and now has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its hand-drawn lithography. Using traditional stone, grained zinc and aluminium it also uses modern technologies where appropriate for contemporary artists. The company is situated at Chilford Hall in Linton near Cambridge, moving there, in 1989, from London.

Largely for reasons of space and preservation, it was decided to present the Ratcliff flat-bed offset machine to the John Jarrold Printing Museum at Norwich. It had begun its life at the Curwen Press in 1927, and joined the studio (with its printers) in Tottenham Court Road about 1965, where it formed the focus of the company's edition-printing capacity for artists, until the move to Chilford Hall. Contact is kept between us and the John Jarrold Printing Museum because of our shared interest in fine printing.

Cecil Bye, seen in the photograph (below) with Stanley Jones, beside the Ratcliff press, started work over eighty years ago as an apprentice lithographer, progressing through the process of

lithographic origination on stone and plate to the techniques of colour correction for printing, which are today performed by the computer. Cecil Bye was also able to discuss the techniques used in map-making at the time of the Great War which are still familiar to him.

Thanks were expressed to the many friendly people who run the Printing Museum and who helped make the visit so worthwhile.

Documenting the history of the printing trade

Michael Twyman

Readers might like to know about a clutch of related projects that have to do with the history of the printing trade, three of which are based at the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading. Dr Rob Banham is responsible for a one-year project (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council) to review and document representations of printing and typesetting in films and videos. He would welcome input from others, particularly about little known examples or episodes (r.e.banham@reading.ac.uk, or 0118 378 6399). With Bernard Seward he is also updating NPHT's *Register of printing equipment* (originally compiled by Desmond Field) with a view to making it available on the web. These two projects tie in well with an ongoing oral history project, focusing on the printing and allied trades, which was launched by John



Stanley Jones and Cecil Bye with the Ratcliff Press

Handford and Peter White. It is now under the direction of Martin Andrews with funding from CETL (the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning). In addition, Tony Smith is undertaking a review of printing history websites on behalf of NPHT so that good practice in this field can be identified and passed on to others. Clearly this project relates to the *Register of printing equipment*, but it is hoped that all four projects will feed off one another and lead to a greater awareness of what is available to support those interested in printing history.



COLUMBIAN PRESS IN IRAN

John Handford

During a recent holiday in Iran, I visited the seventeenth-century All Saviour's Cathedral, also known as the Vank Church, in Esfahan. In the cathedral's museum, I was surprised to see, in apparently excellent condition, a British-made Columbian press (above), which, I was told by curator Ms Rima Khachikian, had been in the city since 1844 and was only the third printing press to reach those parts. The manufacturer's plate states: 'Columbian Press | No 96 | Clymer's Patent | Clymer & Dixon | Manufacturers | 10 Finsbury Street London | 1841'.

The Cathedral has been at the centre of the Armenian Christian community in Esfahan for four hundred years, and the press has no doubt helped to preserve the Armenian traditions against the backdrop of religious and political change.



Woodcut device of Andrew Myllar, Scotland's first printer (reduced)

SCOTTISH PRINTING CELEBRATES 500 YEARS OF PROGRESS IN 2008

In September 1507, a patent was granted to 'Andrew Myllar' and 'Walter Chepman' by King James IV, authorising them to set up a printing press in Edinburgh. The earliest known dated output from their press (*The complaint of the black knight*) is dated 4 April 1508.

This is somewhat later than William Caxton's establishment in England, and it is noteworthy that the expertise for the Scottish press came not from England but France. Andrew Myllar – of whom sadly little is known – printed in Rouen prior to setting up in Edinburgh and it is likely that he brought tradesmen and equipment from France.

Celebrations of the quincentenary are being coordinated by the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Printing Archival Trust and the Scottish Print Employers Federation. The aim is to make the celebrations as broad as possible, and 2008 has been designated 'Scottish Year of the Printed Word' by the Scottish Executive. A very wide range of events is planned, right across Scotland, involving libraries, universities, museums, art colleges and many other interested organisations. A key role is being played by the National Library which will have a major exhibition in summer 2008 and also an extensive web feature illustrating how printing spread to different places in Scotland, with examples of the first printed items. The Scottish Printing Industry will also be involved, ensuring

that not only the past but the future of printing is celebrated.

For further information about Scottish printing history you can consult www.scottishprintarchive.org, and for details of the events planned for 2008 see www.500yearsofprinting.org.

Contacts: Brian Hilyard (Head of Rare Books, National Library of Scotland), b.hilyard@nls.uk; Patrick Mark (Chair of Scottish Printing Archival Trust), p.mark@scottishprintarchive.org.

LOUTH MUSEUM PRINTING SHOP

David N. Robinson, O.B.E.

There have been printers recorded in Louth from the eighteenth century, mainly producing handbills and broadsheets, and then books and pamphlets into the nineteenth century. We have examples in Louth Museum archives, along with a large quantity of sale posters donated by a local firm of estate agents. The *Louth & North Lincolnshire advertiser* was printed in the town (a former curator of the Museum was editor) and a founder of the Louth Naturalists', Antiquarian and Literary Society, Richard Goulding, was a printer and publisher of pamphlets, booklets and an annual *Almanack* until the 1940s.

In the early 1990s the remaining printing firm in the town, Allinson and Wilcox (now Allinson Print and Supplies), was clearing out letterpress equipment and gave us a working Arab platen press and quantities of equipment including cabinets, a stone, ink-rollers, wood and metal type and printing blocks. By that time the single gallery Museum, built in 1910, was already overfull, and plans were drawn up for an extension. The Museum closed for three years to build two new galleries, a store and classroom/library, and to refit throughout. The £660,000 scheme was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, national and regional sources, local authorities, charitable foundations and the Society's own fundraising, and the Museum reopened in March 2006.

The scheme gave the opportunity to create a small printing shop display in a corner of the original gallery, lining it with wood panelling made from the old floorboards, to show the printing machinery, cabinets of type, blocks and plates together with posters and other

printed ephemera. Occasional paper and print days are held to demonstrate how letterpress printing was done, with children able to use the wood type. The printing shop display has been co-sponsored by the National Printing Heritage Trust with a grant of £500, for which the Society is very grateful.

OBITUARY

Tom Colverson (8 October 1915–6 April 2007)

Simon Colverson

Tom was born in Liss, Hampshire, the middle son of the village butcher. He was educated at Churcher's College, Petersfield, and following a couple of years working at a Knightsbridge art gallery, he joined Phoenix, a subsidiary of J. M. Dent, at the end of 1935. In 1937 Dent founded the first general book club, Readers Union, and Tom became its production manager. On the outbreak of war, when he registered as a conscientious objector, he moved to Dent's factory in Letchworth, Herts. Later in the war he worked at the firm's London office in Bedford Street. In 1949, Tom was memorably sacked in a taxi in Russell Square for protesting a colleague's incompetence and at the end of that year he joined the Architectural Press. While there he witnessed the building of the South Bank site for the Festival of Britain. After ten years, he had a brief spell at W. H. Smith's advertising agency before moving to Oxford University Press's Mayfair offices in 1961. The high point of Tom's time at OUP was a nine-month spell at the company's branch in Ibadan, Nigeria, at the height of the civil war in 1967. Returning home, he felt unsettled and, through the recommendation of John Randle (now proprietor of the Whittington Press), he began teaching part-time classes at the then London College of Printing. This paved the way, in 1970, for his appointment as senior lecturer on the publishing course at Oxford Polytechnic, now Oxford Brookes. Here he put his lifetime's experience to good use, teaching book production to generations of students, many of whom have made careers in the industry. Tom retired in 1981 and for many years enjoyed an active life in Oxford despite the loss of a leg in 1993. In March 2006 he moved to a care home near his family in Cambridge, where he died peacefully on Good Friday 2007.



Tom Colverson (painting by David Phipps)

Presses Available

The following presses are available for disposal from Derby Museum collections. We would prefer these items to go to a museum or other body accredited by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC). In the event of no interest from such bodies we will consider offers to re-house from other groups and individuals:

1. Lithographic transfer press, *ca.* 1880. Manufactured by Grieg and Company, Edinburgh. Assumed complete, with rollers and litho stones, but in dismantled state. Approximate dimensions 1800 (l) x 1500 (w) x 1300 (h) mm. From A. J. Bott Ltd, Lithographers, Spa Lane, Derby (Museum ref DBYMU 1981-46).



2. Bremner treadle platen press, manufactured by Harrild and Sons Ltd, Fleet Works, London (pictured above). Last used at Derby College of

Higher Education. Complete, fair condition. Approximate dimensions 1200 (l) x 1000 (w) x 1585 (h) mm. (Museum ref DBYMU 1985-9/1).

3. Miehle No. 6 two revolution press, manufactured by Linotype and Machinery Co. Ltd, Altrincham. Last used at Derby College of Higher Education. Dismantled, complete(?). Approximate dimensions 2000 (l) x 1500 (w) mm. (Museum ref DBYMU 1985-9/2).

4. Linotype machine No. 794, serial number 19665, manufactured at Altrincham, 1960s. Castings by Croft Engineering, Bradford. Complete, fair condition. Last used by Bemrose Corporation, Derby, 1990s. Weighs around a tonne. Dimensions 1620 (l) x 1700 (w) x 2300 (h) mm. (Museum ref DBYMU 1996-162/1).

5. 'Simplissimus' desk mounted press, manufactured by BM Co. Complete, fair condition. Dimensions 400 (l) x 400 (w) x 500 (h) mm. (No Museum ref. number).

Those interested should contact Roger Shelley, Principal Keeper of the Silk Mill, Derby Museums and Art Gallery, The Strand, Derby DE1 1BS, on 01332 255308, or ring the general office on 01332 716669, or send an a-mail to roger.shelley@derby.gov.org.

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