

Printing History News

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

Number 19 † Summer 2008

Alan May's one-pull wooden press

Readers of *PHN* will know of Alan May's reconstruction of a one-pull wooden screw press, and the television documentary 'The machine that made us', hosted by Stephen Fry, which was shown on BBC4 and BBC2 this spring. The building of the press was sponsored by Wavelength Films, the makers of the television programme, who also held an event at the British Library on 6 May. Here the press was demonstrated by Alan and Martin Andrews (of the University of Reading, pictured right and below; Martin is on the left). The event was very well attended. Clips from the documentary were shown, introduced by Patrick McGrady, the film-maker, and the demonstration was preceded by short talks by Alan and John Man and followed by a question-and-answer session. As previously, the press printed beautifully. A detailed account of the building and operation of the one-pull press can be found in the latest issue of the *Journal* of the Printing Historical Society (New Series 11, 2008, pp. 65–89). The press is now at the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading, where it will be used both for teaching and further research.



Alan May and Martin Andrews prepare the one-pull press for action at the British Library on 6 May

Donald Milham Archive

Rob Clayton

With the delivery of the Donald Milham Archive to the St Bride Library in June, and with the matching archive almost completed for the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading, this completes the first year of the Award project.

The second year of the project begins on 1 June, with 5 November as the final date for entries. *PHN* readers are invited to submit entries, providing they were in or associated with the British printing industry. For information on the Award and its background, see the piece in *PHN* 15. For an entry form and further details please send a stamped addressed envelope to In The Print, PO Box 4119 Wells, Somerset BA5 2UF, or contact the co-ordinator of the project by e-mail on frobson@mbzonline.net.

EVENTS

Oxford Guild of Printers' Wayzgoose

The Oxford Guild of Printers will hold its biannual 'Wayzgoose', a fair for printers and collectors of fine printing, at the Langdale Hall, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6AB, on Saturday 5 July 2008, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is free. Stalls will be held by fine and private press printers, specialist booksellers, bookbinders and suppliers of type, paper and other printing sundries; printers will also be selling second-hand type, printing equipment and unwanted stocks of paper. There will also be several societies and organizations at the Wayzgoose, including the Friends of St Bride Library. Witney is easily accessible by car or bus from Oxford, and there is ample parking in the town centre, where there are also



numerous places to eat and shop (including antique and book shops). For more information, or to book a stall, please contact Paul W. Nash, 8 Fairfield Drive, Witney, Oxon. OX28 5LB. Tel: 01993 774130. E-mail: paul.w.nash@virgin.net

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. Season tickets are also available for four lectures at £9.00 for students, £18.00 for members and £26.00 for non-members (or for all eight lectures in the annual series the prices are £18.00, £36.00 and £52.00 respectively). The nearest tube stations are Holborn and Russell Square. The organizers, Rachel Ward-Sale and Julia Dummett, welcome ideas for future lectures or any suggestions for improvements to the format of the series. Please telephone 01273 486718 or e-mail lectures@designerbookbinders.org.uk.

'Bound for higher things': the experience of the Rampant Lions Press in designing edition bindings for fine books by Sebastian Carter, Tuesday 7 October.

The invisible binder by George Kirkpatrick, Tuesday 4 November. 'Where have you been hiding all these years?' is a frequently asked question to which George will give an answer, illuminated by slides of his binding-related work over more than forty years.

PRINTING HISTORY CONFERENCES

Letterpress: a celebration will be held by the Friends of St Bride, at St Bride Library, Fleet Street on Friday 7 November. Letterpress printing can be messy and slow. It usually requires a lot of room, and there are considerable constraints on layout, colour, artwork and type. Yet three decades after becoming commercially obsolete, letterpress is gaining in popularity with enthusiasts around the world. Type and presses change hands weekly; technique and materials are avidly discussed online; and in the field of graphic arts, as much as in fine printing, it is a good

time to be exploring letterpress. Why do people want to get involved, how do they get started and how do they make a success of their efforts? Join us at St Bride Library to review and discuss the phenomenon of letterpress in the twenty-first century.

Print Networks and Texts, Ma(r)kers, Markets will be held between 22 and 24 July 2008 at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln. The importance of understanding the materiality of texts, their circulation and their reception is now well established. This conference brings together two long-running and regular conferences which have contributed significantly to the recognition of book history as an important intellectual field. The conference combines the twenty-fifth Print Networks conference and the third Texts, Ma(r)kers, Markets conference. The interdisciplinary nature of book history is well reflected in this combined conference which brings together a range of people interested in the production, circulation and consumption of texts, including literary critics, historians, booksellers and librarians. Ranging from the Renaissance to the digital age, the conference promises to be stimulating and exciting. Further details and a draft programme can be seen at www.bishopg.ac.uk.

British printed images to 1700, will hold a conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum on Friday 12 and Saturday 13 September 2008. Following the very successful first conference of the British Printed Images to 1700 project, held at Birkbeck College in July 2007, there will be a further conference at which innovative research on various aspects of early modern printed images will be divulged. The following papers will be given: Margaret Aston, *Symbols of conversion: proprieties of the page in Reformation England*; Justin Champion (Royal Holloway), *Decoding the Leviathan: doing the history of ideas through images 1651-1700*; Lorri Anne Ferrell (Claremont, California), *Grasping knowledge: tactility and kinetics in early modern 'how-to' books*; Malcolm Jones (Sheffield), title to be confirmed; John King (Ohio State), *Reading the woodcuts in Foxe's Book of martyrs*; Angela McShane (V&A) *Top knots and lower sorts: print and promiscuous consumption in the 1690s*; Gill Saunders (V&A), *'Paper tapestry' and 'wooden pictures': printed decoration and the domestic interior*

in Tudor and Stuart England; Kevin Sharpe (Queen Mary), *Images of Oliver Cromwell*; Ben Thomas (Kent), *Noble or commercial? The early history of mezzotint in Britain*; and Alexandra Walsham (Exeter), *Reliques of the past: printed images and antiquarianism in early modern England*.

The conference will also include an exhibition of books and prints from the National Art Library, a 'new researchers' session' at which research by graduate students will be revealed, a round table discussion of printed images and their milieu, and an exposition of recent work on the database of the British Printed Images to 1700 project. For details and registration, contact j.banham@vam.ac.uk, n.ghadar@vam.ac.uk or m.hunter@bbk.ac.uk.

Friends of St Bride AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of St Bride Library will be held in the Faringdon Room at the St Bride Institute at 6:30 on Tuesday 8 July. Members of the Friends, and anyone interested in supporting the Library, will be most welcome.

CURIOUS READINGS

Paul W. Nash

This is the first article in a proposed occasional series of historical readings from printed and manuscript sources relating to printing, publishing and book-manufacture. Richard-Gabriel Rummonds has made a very thorough collection of technical extracts, chiefly from printing manuals, in his *Nineteenth-century printing practices and the iron handpress* (2004). However, it may be interesting to collect some of the more ephemeral extracts on the same and related subjects, examples of descriptions and illustrations taken from popular and children's literature which, while far from scholarly or technical, may be useful for the light they cast on these processes, and on the public understanding (or otherwise) of how books were printed, assembled and disseminated. Such extracts may also give pleasure for the language used, and the use of language, whether it be bold, convoluted, partisan, antiquated, inaccurate, profound or elegant.

The first series of extracts comes from *A popular dictionary of facts and*

knowledge, for the use of schools and students by 'the Rev. S. Barrow'. This is a pseudonym of Sir Richard Phillips (1767–1840), a prolific publisher and author of popular, scientific and controversial works, on whom there is a reasonably good article in the Oxford *DNB*. He was also, during an early phase of his publishing career in the late eighteenth century, a printer, so his knowledge of the profession came at first hand, though it remains uncertain how close his understanding of type-founding and other aspects of book-manufacture may have been (the same may perhaps be said of a great many printers).

Phillips's *Popular dictionary* first appeared in 1827, and further editions followed in 1829, 1830, 1831, 1838 and 1842. All are in duodecimo format, and are illustrated with numerous small wood-engravings, crudely executed but very typical of the cheap illustration of the period and, in their own way, very charming. The text reflects both the beliefs of the day, and the author's own prejudices and fancies. There are very curious articles on 'electricity' and 'gravity', for example, and Phillips's vegetarianism can be seen in his description of spiders as being 'as cruel as man himself to the animals which they catch for food' and of the oyster as 'having feelings like other animals, [and] ought not to be roasted alive, as is the too common practice'.

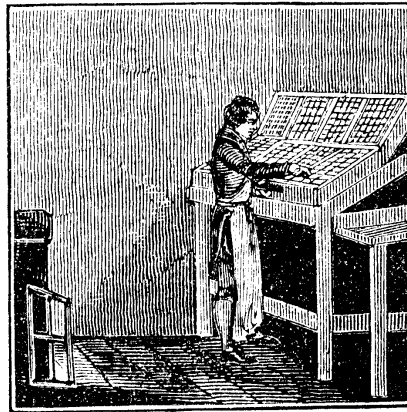
The extracts which follow are taken from the 'Fifth edition, with additions and corrections' printed for William Edwards in 1838 (this is the latest edition to which I have access). When an article is accompanied by a wood-engraving, this has been reproduced, slightly enlarged. I have made very few annotations to the individual extracts, leaving further interpretation to the reader.

BOOKBINDING, a very ingenious art, by which printed sheets are folded, gathered, pressed, sewn together, shielded with mill-boards, and covered with leather, which is variegated, lettered, and ornamented.

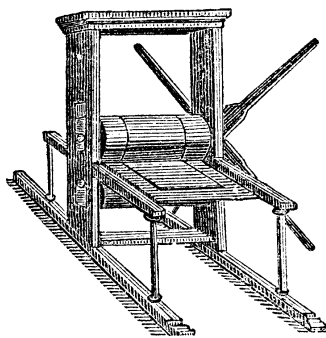
BOOKSELLER, an intelligent person who trades in books, whether printed by himself, or by other persons.

COMPOSITOR, the person who arranges types into words and pages, in a printing office. He usually stands at a pair of wooden cases, in the divisions of which the different letters are deposited, and he ranges them in a small metal frame, called a composing

stick, with such rapidity, that a page of this work may be composed in four or five hours. The operation is not altogether mechanical, for much intellectual skill, and grammatical knowledge, are requisite in the introduction of proper stops and divisions of words, and in adjusting the lines. The lower case contains the small letters, and the upper one the capitals and figures. The lines are transferred from the composing stick to a small frame, which, in the engraving, lies on the upper case [*I cannot see this in the accompanying wood-engraving, which may have been substituted for the intended image*]; and are afterwards made up into pages, then into sheets, corrected, and worked off at press.



COPPER-PLATE PRINTING, an art practised by means of what is called a rolling-press. The engraved plate is covered with ink, made of oil and lamp-black, then cleanly wiped on the smooth parts, and laid on wet soft paper, and on being passed between two cylinders with great force, the impression of the engraved part is perfectly transferred to the paper.



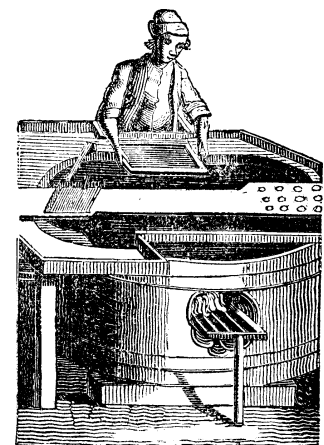
ENGRAVING, the art of producing representations on hard surfaces of metal or wood, which, when reversed, may, by means of ink and a printing-press, be transferred in desirable numbers to paper. For this purpose

copper has generally been used, and is wrought or etched with a tool, and the lines completed with aqua fortis, or nitric acid. But latterly mixed metals, not subject to the corrosion of oil in printing, or steel, have been introduced; and engravings on wood have been revived with useful effect, because capable of being incorporated with types, and worked with them.

INK ... Printers' Ink is a composition of oil and lamp black, with various ingredients which the makers keep secret. The best French ink is made by Didot, but is much inferior to the well-known ink made by Griffiths, in London; and which has afforded so many admirable specimens of fine and permanent typography.

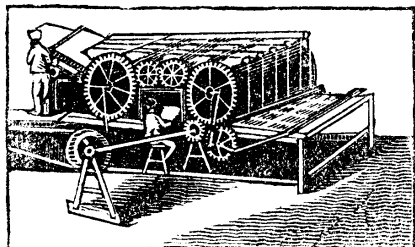
PAPER, a useful manufacture of linen rags, and, latterly, of linen and cotton; brown first made in England about 1558, and white 1690.

PAPER-MAKING, an art by which fibrous and other materials are so combined as to form different kinds of paper. The engraving represents the vat, in which the materials are in a pulpy liquid, and the man is in the act of dipping the mould, which is the size of a sheet of paper, made of fine wire, into it. The liquid drains through the wire, leaving the pulp in a consistent form, after which it is gradually dried, picked, and pressed, by a succession of women and children. There are above 600 paper-mills in Great Britain, and about 2½ millions of reams made annually.



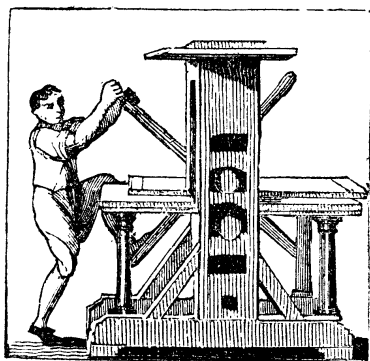
PRINTING, an art as applied to books; first practised about 1440, at Haerlem and Mayence, but previously exercised in the engraving of seals, and in the making of playing-cards, the first book-printing being in carved or engraved pages of wood, called blocks, and the impression taken on one side.

Moveable types were afterwards invented, and subsequently brought to the highest degree of perfection for clearness and beauty of proportion, by Caslon in London, and Millar of Edinburgh; and these have lately been used to cast solid pages, or stereotype. The engraving represents a machine worked by steam.



PUBLISHER, one who buys manuscripts and gets them printed for public use.

ROLLING PRESS, the press used by copper-plate printers for taking impressions by pressure between rollers, after the engraving is imbued with ink.

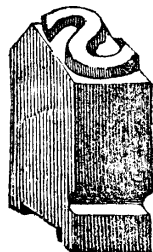


STEREOTYPE, whole pages of solid type cast from moveable ones.

TYPE FOUNDER, an artisan who casts types with great rapidity.



TYPES, the letters used by printers, cast in lead, antimony to harden it, and some copper and brass; the simple invention of moveable separate types was one of the most important ever made by man.



[This last seems a very curious image, showing a sans-serif sort (uncommon at this period) with, apparently, an inclined face]

Journal of the Printing Historical Society

With the publication of number 11 of the new series earlier this year the editor, John Trevitt, acknowledges the need for an index to numbers 1-10. Members with access to the scholarly and comprehensive index to the first series, compiled by Paul W. Nash and published in 2005, will recognise its importance.

Call for a volunteer: John Trevitt would be very pleased to hear from anyone prepared to tackle this work, and will happily send a sample of the first series index to anyone interested. Please contact John Trevitt at Rose Cottage, Church Road, Weobley, Hereford HR4 8SD. Tel: 01544 318388. E-mail: jj@trevitt.freeseve.co.uk.

PUBLICATIONS

New book on Emery Walker

The Emery Walker Trust has recently published *Emery Walker: printer of pictures*, by Alan Crawford. The book is the text of the ground-breaking talk Alan gave at a Trust conference in 2005. It is a letterpress edition with seven illustrations and an illustrated jacket, and was printed by Andre Chavez of the Clinker Press in Pasadena in an edition of 100 copies, each signed by the printer. Fifty copies are available from the Trust at £65.00 each. To purchase copies please contact

the Trust at Walker's House, 7 Hammersmith Terrace, London W6 9TS. See www.emerywalker.org.uk.

Ephemera conference proceedings

The latest issue of *RBM: a journal of rare books, manuscripts, and cultural heritage* (vol. 9, no. 1, Spring 2008) has recently appeared. It is devoted to papers delivered at a conference held in Baltimore in June 2007 by the Association of College and Research Libraries (a division of the American Library Association) on the theme 'From here to ephemerality: fugitive sources in libraries, archives, and museums'. Further details, and subscription rates, can be found at the ACRL website at www.ala.org/ala/acrl/.

SMALL AD

Early lithographed books: a study of the design and production of improper books in the age of the hand press, with a catalogue, by Michael Twyman (Farrand Press, 1990): copies for sale while small stock lasts. £5.00 each, if collected by hand in central London; otherwise £10.00 including UK postage/packing by post. E-mail: dalrymple.research@yahoo.co.uk.

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