

# Printing History News

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

Number 25 † Winter 2009

## NPHT Friends

Friends who pay their annual donation by cheque are reminded that renewal is due on 1 January. The annual minimum is still only £10.00 (the Treasurer's contact details are noted on page 4). This can be Gift Aided. Instead of paying by cheque, Friends are invited to pay by banker's order, and forms for this, or Gift Aid, can be obtained from Dr D. Nuttall, Langdale, Pulford Lane, Dodleston, Chester CH4 9NN.

*If you are not already a Friend of the National Printing Heritage Trust, could we invite you to join and so support our work?*

## ST BRIDE EVENTS

**Designing information before designers: print for everyday life in the nineteenth century.** Exhibition held 11 to 29 January 2010 (open Monday, Tuesday and Friday 12:00–6:00 p.m., Wednesday 12:00–9:00 p.m., Thursday 2:30–6:00 p.m.). Illustrated talk, Thursday 14 January at 7:00 p.m. (plus exhibition preview from 5:30), in the Bridewell Hall, St Bride Foundation. Exhibition free; talk £7.00 (concessions £5.00, Friends £3.00). Paul Stiff, Paul Dobraszczyk and Mike Esbester suggest that many interactions of everyday life in the nineteenth century were conducted through, and recorded by, ephemeral printed documents. Victorian 'information design', done before the emergence of professional designers, is an intelligent but little-known ancestor of modern graphic design.

Their project explores three themes: time and travel; selling and buying; and questions and answers. They analyse the artefacts for evidence of production and dissemination, and, especially, reception. They are based at the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, University of Reading, and together work on 'Designing information for everyday life, 1815–1914', a research project supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

## Justin Howes Memorial Lecture

Claire Bolton will speak on *Zainer's imperfect impressions: fifteenth-century printing methods*. Tuesday 23 February 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Bridewell Hall, St Bride Foundation. Admission is free but by pre-booked ticket only. Claire will consider how the earliest printers achieved (or failed to achieve) the difficult task of getting impressions of inked type on paper, evenly, clearly and repeatedly. She will illustrate how some of the various faults and imperfections found in early printed books provide clues to fifteenth-century printing methods. Claire Bolton has worked for more than thirty-five years as a letterpress printer – researching, writing, designing, hand-setting the type, printing pages on a hand-press, and binding books in limited editions at her Alembic Press. A few years ago she decided to put her practice into theory and began to research fifteenth-century printing practices. Her resulting PhD thesis will be published by the Oxford Bibliographical Society in 2010.

## Films of printing and typesetting

A handlist of films showing printing and typesetting, compiled by Dr Rob Banham in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, University of Reading, is available to download from the St Bride website ([www.stbride.org/library/collections/films](http://www.stbride.org/library/collections/films)). The majority of the 240 films listed show the typesetting and printing of books and newspapers but the production of other printed items is also documented, as are more unusual processes including the application of Benday tints (pictured right, in response to Julius Stafford-Baker's piece in *PHN* 24), Bright Type, Cronapress, and Orange Colour Key. Almost 100 of the films are available to view by appointment at Reading University (e-mail [r.e.banham@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.e.banham@reading.ac.uk) or telephone 0118 378 6399).



*Stills from The art and technique of photo-engraving (c. 1950), showing the application of a Benday tint to a printing plate. 1) Stopping out areas not to have the tint applied; 2) inking the Benday screen; 3) fixing the screen to the shading machine; 4) transferring the tint to the plate using a burnisher.*

## The National Printing Heritage Trust: twenty years old

Derek Nuttall

The month of October 2009 marked the twentieth anniversary of the formation of the National Printing Heritage Trust, although the formal launch did not take place until April 1991. It was whilst sorting and ordering the correspondence files of the Trust, prior to their deposit at St Bride Library, that it occurred to me that a brief account of the past twenty years might be of interest to the Trust's 'Friends' and to others who have supported it. However, it is necessary to go back a further twenty-six years – to October 1963. This was when *The British printer* published two articles, one by the late James Moran and the other by myself. Although written completely independently they appeared under the heading 'The case for a National Museum of Printing' (*British printer*, vol. lxxvi, no. 10, pp. 63–69). What prompted these articles was a combination of the recent exhibition, 'Printing and the mind of man', staged at the 1963 IPEX, and the growing realisation that great changes were about to be made to printing technology and that the days of letterpress supremacy were fast drawing to an end. Perhaps it will not come as a surprise that the same issue of *British printer* contained a major article on 'Computers in the printing industry'.

Regretably, whilst many in the trade expressed their support for a museum devoted to the long history of printing, such an institution has yet to be realised. The ensuing years were far from fruitless, however. One important development was the formation of the Printing Historical Society, of which James Moran was first Chairman. Another was the opening, in 1982, of the John Jarrold Printing Museum, in Norwich (see page 3), a fine collection that has the potential to form the core of a national museum of printing.

In November 1987, *The professional printer*, the journal of the then Institute of Printing, printed my article on the desirability of establishing a national museum of printing. This was reprinted in the *Museums bulletin*. This article appears to have stimulated interest in the museum world and elicited responses from Watford, Liverpool, Manchester and Bradford,

and others, all potential locations which had been, or still were, major centres of the printing industry. The Science Museum expanded its space devoted to printing and papermaking, the new Manchester Museum of Science and Industry took over the National Paper Museum and incorporated it with a large display of printing and papermaking, and printing workshops were set up at both Blists Hill and Beamish Open-air Museum.

By mid-1987, there was an interesting development. I received a letter from Peter Whittaker, Chairman of Whittaker Compugraphics, drawing attention to his personal collection of line-casting machines and expressing the hope that the future of this superb collection might form the basis of, as he put it, 'a hot-metal printing techniques museum'.

The NPHT really owes its formation to Peter Whittaker who, sadly, died shortly before it was founded. The Trust eventually came about as a result of a completely unexpected development. In October 1987 a letter was received from Mark Harrison, of Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, with a printed heading 'National Museum of Printing and Publishing'. With it was a prospectus for setting up this museum at Titus Salt's huge empty mill at Saltaire. A further letter, in November 1987, stated that a 'charitable foundation' would be formed. On 25 February 1988, Mark Harrison arranged a meeting at an hotel at Adel, on the outskirts of Leeds, to launch his project. I attended this meeting in the company of Peter Whittaker, following a visit to his collection of line-casting machines which were then housed at his home. The meeting was well attended, especially by representatives of many Yorkshire printing firms, including Jerry Holbrook of *The Yorkshire post*. At the meeting there was general enthusiasm and a considerable amount of financial support was either given or promised. However, Peter Whittaker and many others were not convinced that Harrison would be able to get his proposals off the ground. Although a small Steering Committee was elected, it never met. Apparently a charitable trust was set up, but as 1988 came to an end, nothing further was heard about the proposed museum or its funds.

In December 1988 Peter Whittaker proposed that a national printing trust should be formed and suggested that the Trustees should be Sir Gordon

Linacre, Michael Passmore, James Mosley, Tom Pindar, Harry Roach (*Guardian* newspaper), William Sessions, Rev. Eric Chambers, Frank Barlow (*Financial times*), Peter Whittaker and myself. This proposal may well have come to fruition if Peter had not died suddenly early in 1989. His company, under its new chairman, encouraged me to take up Peter's idea and the next few months were occupied with sounding out possible trustees. Offers of help started to arrive, including from Professor Michael Twyman (University of Reading), Dr Richard Hills (one-time Director of the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry), Michael Passmore (Chairman of Passmore International), James Mosley (Librarian at St Bride), Richard Russell (Institute of Printing), Rev. Eric Chambers (UMIST), Desmond Field (John Jarrold Museum) and Tony Nightingale (British Printing Industries Federation).

As a result of this positive support, an invitation was sent out in October 1989, to the above as well as to others who had expressed an interest, to a meeting to be held in Chester on Wednesday 24 January 1990. A sub-committee was formed to draw up 'Standing Orders'. By the end of May a draft of the Trust Deed had been approved by the Charity Commissioners. Following this, a second meeting was held at the St Bride Institute, on Thursday 11 October 1990, at the invitation of James Mosley. Its purpose was to approve the Deed of Trust, to set up a board of eight Trustees and to plan the next stages of publicising the Trust and obtaining funds. This work took over a year, but during that time many firms and organisations in printing and its related industries made generous donations 'to prime the pump', the largest being £1,000 from Oxford University Press. Other support, in the form of free use of rooms for meetings, came from the BPIF, the Stationers' Company and the St Bride Library, and Bamber Gascoigne agreed to become the Trust's Patron.

The official launch was arranged for Monday 13 April 1992, and was held at the then BPIF headquarters at 11 Bedford Row.

A second part of this account will appear in a future issue of *PHN*, and will start with details of the launch, the first Trustees, the setting up of an Advisory Committee and some of the projects, both financial and practical, that have been carried out since the Trust's formation.

## JOHN JARROLD PRINTING MUSEUM

Desmond Field

In the last report on the progress of the John Jarrold Printing Museum (*PHN* 10, Spring 2006) the Museum had been involved in its third change of location since its inception in 1982.

After a brief occupation of part of the old bindery area, the staff were involved in yet another series of moves of the entire contents of the Museum to await the completion of a new location, found for us on the Jarrold site, beside the river Wensum.

The alternative site was previously the old engineers' office and workshops. Extensive renovation was needed before the final move was possible. The building now proudly bears the wrought-iron plaque of the John Jarrold Printing Museum (right).

In 1996, Michael Twyman carried out in-depth interviews with Dennis Avon, Cecil Bye and Cliff Gibbs, three key figures in the development of quality colour lithography at Jarrolds in the 1950s and 1960s. All have since died, Cecil Bye just a few months before reaching his 100th birthday. These historic recordings are safely deposited in the archives of the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication at the University of Reading.

Visitor numbers continue to hold up throughout the year, many making special journeys to come and see us. Visitors have included people from as far away as South Africa and Australia. We are pleased to be able to offer them such an opportunity. The genuine interest shown is greatly rewarding to all concerned.

A close liaison has been formed with the Norwich University College of the Arts. This is a dynamic, modern and creative community providing art, design and media education from a campus at the heart of the city. During term-time groups of students regularly visit the Museum for an introductory look at the craft of printing. Some take away ideas for further study.

The Museum is in discussion with the College about the possibility of a joint enterprise to improve the descriptive display notices in the museum with the aim of making visits more informative.

The Jarrold Museum website (at [johnjarroldprintingmuseum.org.uk](http://johnjarroldprintingmuseum.org.uk)) has attracted considerable interest from enquirers in many parts of the country

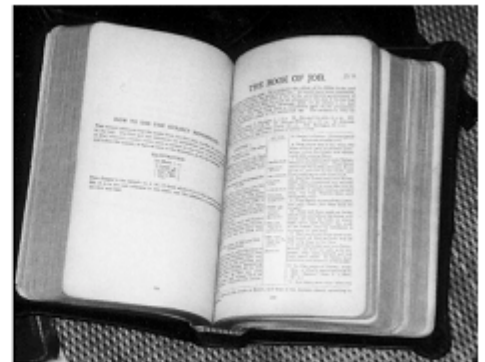


*Entrance of the new John Jarrold Museum building*

and overseas, and prospective visitors have been able to arrange visits and offer items of interest to the Museum. The Museum library has benefited from gifts of books from retired craftsmen and others, and it is now home to some 2,000 books covering the history, craft and fine art of printing. The bindery staff are able to spend

some of their time practising their craft with conservation and repair of Bibles and other deserving tomes, as seen in the photographs below.

The continued support and interest of the present members is a constant source of encouragement and the comments in the visitors book a fitting tribute to their enthusiasm.



*Repair of a Bible in the Museum's bindery: before and after.*

## HLF award for Ditchling Museum

Ditchling Museum, founded in 1985 by the Bourne sisters, has been awarded a 'first round pass' by the Heritage Lottery Fund for its project to tell the story of Ditchling's artistic community. The project will include conversion of a cart lodge into a new entrance, while refurbishment of the present Victorian school

buildings will provide improved collection stores, display areas and spaces for education and research. Ditchling has, in particular, strong connections with the traditions of print, lettering and weaving. Eric Gill and his teacher Edward Johnston lived and worked in the village, as did Hilary Pepler, founder of the St Dominic's Press. The original Stanhope press used by Pepler is now in the Museum's collection, as are many

items printed on it, including *Vegetable dyes* (1916) by Ethel M. Mairet, another of Ditchling's influential twentieth-century craftspeople. The recently-acquired Evan Gill Collection, comprising Eric Gill's letters, drawings and correspondence, adds an important resource to the Museum's archive relating to Gill and the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, which he founded in 1920. The Collection also includes work by artists Frank Brangwyn, Louis Ginnett and Charles Knight. For further information please see the Museum's website at [www.ditchling-museum.com](http://www.ditchling-museum.com).



## Bailiffgate Albion

The Friends of Bailiffgate Museum at Alnwick have obtained Lottery funding for the restoration of its Albion press (above). It is due to be back on show in February 2010, and will be used for teaching and demonstrations. The Friends are seeking volunteers with experience of working an Albion press. If you can help, please contact the James Etherington at the Museum, 14 Bailiffgate, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 1LX. Tel: 01665 605847. E-mail: [Ask@bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk](mailto:Ask@bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk).

## Donald Milham Archive

With the 2008 and 2009 archives now lodged in the St Bride Library (and at Reading University), the Donald Milham Archive is complete, and accessible for present and future historians. Over a two-year period retired members of the British printing industry were invited to write down their personal experiences of change during the last half of the twentieth century. Entries came from all sources, including the widow who took over the running of a small letterpress shop following the loss of

her husband. Her determination to continue was supported by staff and customers, and the company continued to thrive. As her family grew up, they joined the business, and at the time of her entry she was still able to help out during busy periods.

A union leader recounted in vivid detail the 'Battle of Wapping', when the fight against new technology and working practices was finally smashed by a pitched battle with the police, and the resultant loss of several hundred skilled jobs. A common subject was the long-standing tradition of London apprentices; on the completion of their apprenticeships, they were typically 'banged out' by the craftsmen, daubed with ink by the ladies in the bindery and then deposited on the streets of the City.

Over eighty entries were received and covered virtually all the printing techniques in use during the period, from collotype, then nearly at the end of its useful life, to colour printing for the emerging packaging industry, with offset-printed cans, and flexo- and gravure-printed films and foils. Soon the skills of the compositor took second place to the scanner and the computer, and with the introduction of the digital printer it was the end of an era.

Virtually all sectors of the printing industry were covered. Compositors were often the most articulate, in particular those employed in the larger book-printing houses. Management was well represented with excellent entries from members of the newspaper and magazine fields.

## New PHS members

The Printing Historical Society is pleased to welcome the following new members, who joined during 2009:

Mr Sioki Androniki, Thassaloniki, Greece  
 Dr Diane Booton, Brookline MA, USA  
 Mr Peter Wilson, Normandy Park, WA, USA  
 Mr Peter Houghton, Telford

## HOT METAL TYPECASTING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

There are still a number of commercial (and private) firms in Britain which cast type using Monotype equipment, mostly for use by small and private presses. Among the private operators, the Alembic Press of Claire and David Bolton (see page 1), runs Monotype

composition and super-casters, as does John Randle's Whittington Press. Three commercial typesetters have so far been identified (and are listed below). The editor would be pleased to know of any others within the UK.

**Gloucester Typesetting**, Stan Lane, Unit 23E, Bond's Mill, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire GL10 7RG. Tel: 01453 825 623. Stan will cast texts or founts, and is currently undertaking work for the Folio Society (among many others).

**Speedspools**, Harry McIntosh, 385 Queensferry Road, Edinburgh EH4 7AG. E-mail: [machot@supanet.com](mailto:machot@supanet.com). Tel: 0131 336 2849. Harry is the inventor of the 'Mactronic' typesetting system, which can run a Monotype machine from a digital or word-processed file.

**Hell-Box Letter Foundry**, Letterpress Works, 1 Nelson Terrace, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8LB. E-mail: [letterpress-works@gmail.com](mailto:letterpress-works@gmail.com). Tel: 01795 590928. Undertakes some casting of texts, founts and borders, and also runs Linotype machinery.

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