

Printing History News

The Newsletter of the Printing Historical Society and
Friends of St Bride Library

Number 55/56 ☆ Summer/Autumn 2017

An apology – and a plea

Many of you will have noticed that we did not publish a Summer issue of *Printing History News*. The reason is simple: we did not have sufficient copy to fill two pages, let alone four. The few events that were to be publicised in the Summer issue therefore passed by unannounced, for which we apologise to their promoters.

Printing History News relies upon a constant and regular stream of news items and short articles to be fed to the editor, so please do send along anything that you feel might warrant inclusion within these pages. Thank you.

AGM report 2017

On Wednesday 5 July, while tennis-players were labouring in the heat of the third day of Wimbledon, the Society's 2017 Annual General Meeting was held across London in the somewhat cooler surroundings of the St Bride Institute.

In their reports, both the Society's Chairman, John Hinks, and Hon. Secretary, Francis Cave, emphasised that the past year had not been an easy one. The Society still lacks a permanent Treasurer and a plea was again made for a volunteer to step forward. The Society's financial reserves came briefly under pressure for a period during the early part of 2017, in part due to the recent success of the Society's publishing programme, which had resulted in the publication of two issues of the *Journal* and two monographs in the space of a few months over last autumn and winter. Fortunately, that pressure was relieved by the positive response from members to the subscription increase in January 2017, and by an unexpected surplus from the highly successful conference on twentieth-century printing history held in Dublin at the end of March (see report in *PHN* 54).

Also on a more encouraging note, the AGM formally agreed the proposed establishment of a new membership category, Supporting Member, which will enable members who wish to do so to make an explicit contribution to the Society's grant-awarding and other charitable activities. In anticipation of this decision, a small number of members have already made donations to the Society with their 2017 subscriptions; their generosity will be acknowledged in one of the 2017 issues of the *Journal*. On the assumption of an improving financial position, the AGM agreed that the Society's grants programme, which had been temporarily suspended this year, should be resumed in 2018.

The AGM also heard about plans for the next in the successful series of 'interactions' workshops organised by Dr Caroline Archer and Professor Michael Twyman. On Friday 8 December, a group of printing historians and cartographic historians will explore areas of common interest. Anyone interested in participating in this workshop, which is by invitation only, should contact Dr Archer at caroline.archer@bcu.ac.uk.

The serious business of the AGM having been dispensed with, those present were treated to a fascinating and entertaining talk by Michael Knies, Special Collections Librarian at the Weinberg Memorial Library, University of Scranton, Pennsylvania, on the impact of American printing technology transfer on Britain in the Victorian period. The talk focused in particular on the (frequently questionable) antics of typefoundries on both sides of the Atlantic during the latter part of the nineteenth century, when pirating of typeface and ornament designs was rife both in this country and in the USA, having been made much easier by the invention of electrotyping.

National Printing Heritage Committee

The NPHC of the Printing Historical Society (the successor to the National Printing Heritage Trust) now meets twice a year, to pursue the same aims as the Trust, namely grant-giving and lobbying in support of printing's heritage and the establishment of a national printing museum.

The most recent meeting was held on 16 May, when it was reported that the Committee's funds were healthy, and that no applications for grant-funding had been received since the previous meeting (a page on the PHS website reporting the work of the committee and announcing the availability of grants is now a desideratum). The next stage in pursuing a national printing museum for the United Kingdom will be to prepare an application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant for a feasibility study; this will be discussed further at the next meeting, due to be held in October.

Important notice to PHS members and subscribers who have not paid 2017 subscriptions

Individual members and institutional subscribers have mostly paid their 2017 subscriptions some while ago, but there are still a number who have not yet paid. If you are in this category, your membership will lapse following this mailing, which means that you will not automatically receive future issues of *Printing History News* or the Society's *Journal*. With the exception of subscriptions from new members, any subscriptions received from now on will be treated as subscriptions for 2018.

Individual members in Britain who pay by bank Standing Order are kindly reminded to ensure that the amount they pay annually has been updated to the new subscription rate, which is £37.50 for full individual membership.

Journal of the Printing Historical Society

The Summer 2017 number of the PHS *Journal* has just been published, and it is hoped to issued it to members with this newsletter. Essays include Nicolas Barker on 'Johann Borne: An Eyewitness to the Invention of Printing', Vaibhav Singh on 'From Handwritten Copy to the Printed Page in Devanagari: Investigating the curious case of Friedrich Max Müller' and Dominique Lerch on 'The Simons, Father and Son, Engravers and Lithographic Printers in Strasbourg (1802–1881): A high point in French lithography'. Also included is an obituary of Michael Turner, former President of the PHS, and reviews of recent books in the field.

The winter number (No. 26) is due to appear in December and is likely to contain an annotated facsimile of *Complete Instructions for the Management of Cowper's Parlour Printing Press of 1839* (the first English manual for amateur letterpress printers), Ray Williams on 'A Publishing History, and Curiosities of the Letterpress and Lithographic Printing, of William Hellier Baily's *Figures of Characteristic British Fossils* (1867–75)' and Michael Twyman on 'Charles Hullmandel's Stones at Kingston Lacey', as well as several shorter pieces and reviews. A number of other essays are in hand, but contributions and suggestions for contributions from members of the Society are always welcome.

Since early 2017, the *Journal* has been up to date in its publishing schedule and it is hoped to continue in this manner until 2020, when the second series will be twenty years old. Thereafter a new (third) series is proposed, and the Editorial Board will consider this option and make a formal proposal at the Annual General Meeting in 2019.

St Bride Library catalogue

The St Bride Library catalogue has a new link: <http://stbridefoundation.soutron.net/Portal/Default/en-GB/Search/SimpleSearch>.

This is a stand-alone catalogue (unlike the old one which was integrated with the Guildhall) and is under the control of the Library, so that they can add and edit records.



Baskerville Society Small-Grant Scheme 2017

The Baskerville Society is delighted to announce the launch of a new small-grant scheme. Applications are invited from scholars, independent or affiliated, who are either engaged in research connected to the printer and typefounder John Baskerville (1706–75), or whose work covers printing history or print culture of eighteenth-century England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France.

The scheme will offer grants of up to a maximum of £250 for immediate research needs such as, but not limited to, permissions for images, subsistence and travelling expenses to libraries or archives, and costs of attending conferences relevant to your research, especially if you are giving a paper. The deadline is 30 September 2017.

Notification Grants awarded will be announced in the autumn at the launch of *John Baskerville: Art and Industry in the Enlightenment*, published by Liverpool University Press.

Application details can be obtained from Professor Caroline Archer-Parre (caroline.archer@bcu.ac.uk).

Brad Stephens' scrapbooks

I am looking for information on the whereabouts of three scrapbooks assembled by Brad Stephens. Brad Stephens is a bit of a mystery, even though he was a key figure in American graphic design promotion from 1910 to 1960. He was the editor of the original *New England Printer*, the original *Print* and most importantly of *Direct Advertising* (later known as *DA*). The latter ran from about 1913 to some time in the late 1970s. He retired from editing it in 1964, I think. Other than that, he ran his own firm which handled advertising for paper companies.

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Poster printing and textiles

Ten years ago, while performing a conservation condition survey of a substantial collection of letterpress-printed theatre playbills in the University of Michigan's Special Collections Library, I came across several examples of large letters that have distinct impressions of textile in the ink in them. At the time, I assumed that the type was carved from wood and a textile was glued onto the surface, either before or after fashioning the letter. The image below shows that different textiles were used (these patterns are not to be confused with the underlying wove pattern in the thin paper).

At the recent symposium, 'Objects of Study: Paper, Ink, and the Material Turn' at the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Elizabeth Savage presented a paper about a similar texture in English incunabula, especially the colour printing inks of the *Book of St Albans* and *Chronicles of England* of c.1486.

In the case of the playbills, I think that the increased surface area afforded by the cloth meant that more ink could be 'pulled' from the ink rollers over the large letters in one pass on the clamshell press, and thus the smaller type in the forme would not be over-inked. Exactly why this technique may have been used in either or both of these examples, printed almost 400 years apart, is still under consideration and experimentation, and we would appreciate hearing from anyone who has observed this on other printed works.

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Detail showing two types of textiles covering wood type. Playbill for *Bertram, or the Sicilian Pirates* at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, dated 27 September 1862.

Traditional printing at the Print Show 2017

Visitors to this annual showcase for the latest in printing technologies will be delighted to see, for the second year running, a stand devoted to traditional printing techniques. ‘Traditional Print Masterclasses’ last year was generally regarded by visitors as one of the best stands in the exhibition, and this year sees the return of most of last year’s traditional print exhibitors.

The Grange, located in Shropshire, puts on regular residential workshops teaching letterpress printing, book-binding, marbling and other skills. Last year’s fully working Clyde treadle platen attracted much attention, and we are assured that an equally interesting press will be displayed this year.

Signature Bindings is a small family business based in East Yorkshire. Managed by Glenn Malkin, the business is built upon his passion for good quality books, traditional binding techniques and a belief that high quality, professional and friendly service and great value are the key to a strong and successful business.

The St Bride’s stand last year was very busy with letterpress printing demonstrations, and it will be good to have them back this year with, undoubtedly, some fine printing equipment.

Kluge International also have a space booked on the Traditional Print stand, so if you enjoy seeing the old crafts and equipment alongside the new, do come along.

Venue: The International Centre, Telford; dates: 11–13 October. Website: <http://theprintshow.co.uk/>.

Comic-printing history

PHS member Guy Lawley gave a paper on the history of comic printing and colour separation (1890s–1970s) at The Eighth International Graphic Novel, Comics and Bandes Dessinées Conference 2017, in June at the University of Dundee. Guy writes:

‘As part of my PhD at Central Saint Martins, London, I am researching the history of colour separation techniques used in the American comics industry, a subject previously overlooked. The historic “look” of the American comics, with their characteristic limited CMYK colours, flat tints and visible dots, inspired the Pop paintings of Roy Lichtenstein in the 1960s, and is still seen in advertising and design today.

‘It is occasionally remarked, not inaccurately, that the printing of American comics – by the cheapest possible four-colour rotary letterpress, on the cheapest possible newsprint – essentially did not change from the 1890s to the 1980s. By contrast, in Britain, from the first appearance of the *Eagle* in 1950, many comics used full-colour artwork, colour-separated by photographic means. American comics continued to use black-and-white artwork, with a limited range of colours added by “mechanical colour separation” until change eventually came in the 1980s and 90s. My research has shown that there were three distinct periods when different colour separation techniques were used. As a result, the printed comics looked quite different too, especially to any curious-minded reader who looked at the dots through a magnifying glass.



Superman (1941) shows the ‘Golden Age’ lined tints, hitherto invisible to comics historians, it seems.

‘In the so-called “Platinum Age” of comics, c. 1897–1938, coloured comics were found only in Sunday newspaper sections. Their colour production used the nineteenth-century Ben Day technique, previously established in lithographic printing (and worth looking up in Michael Twyman’s splendid *History of Chromolithography*).

‘In 1934 a new format of comic appeared, the monthly “comic books”, and they needed a faster, cheaper means of mechanical colour separation than the old mechanical tinting. Luckily, Craftint Multicolor came on the market in that same year, a technique that gave most comics during the “Golden Age” (1938–56) a unique appearance, with pale tints (25% value) now composed of dots and darker tints (50%) of lines. Comics historians have failed to notice the lines before now, despite these being the formative years of *Batman*, *Superman* and *Wonder Woman*.

‘By the time Roy Lichtenstein was copying comic book panels in the early 1960s there were no lines to be seen, as their colour separations had changed again. The new method used liquid “opaque red” to paint – onto three separate acetate sheets for each colour. This acetate method was used through the “Silver Age” of comics, 1956–70, which gave us *Spider-man* and the *Avengers*.

‘Lichtenstein more or less copied these dots, in hugely enlarged form, on his Pop canvases, though (among other changes) he further simplified the colour scheme of the comic books.

‘I hope some other PHS members might share some of my enthusiasm for this and other forgotten aspects of twentieth-century printing – see my blog at www.legionofandy.com.’



'Printing Colour 1700–1830: Discoveries, Rediscoveries and Innovations in the Long Eighteenth Century'

Eighteenth-century discoveries in archives, libraries and museums are revealing that bright inks were not extraordinary. Artistic and commercial possibilities were transformed between rapid technical advances around 1700 (when Johannes Teyler and Jacob Christoff Le Blon invented new colour printing techniques) and 1830 (when the Industrial Revolution mechanised printing and chromolithography was patented). These innovations added commercial value and didactic meaning to material including advertising, books, brocade paper, cartography, decorative art, fashion, fine art, illustrations, medicine, trade cards, scientific imagery, texts, textiles and wallpaper.

The saturation of some markets with colour may have contributed to the conclusion that only black-and-white was suitable for fine books and artistic prints. As a result, this printed colour has been traditionally recorded only for well-known 'rarities'. The rest remains largely invisible to scholarship. Thus, some producers are known as elite 'artists' in one field but prolific 'mere illustrators' in another, and antecedents of celebrated 'experiments' and 'inventions' are rarely acknowledged. When these artworks, books, domestic objects and ephemera are considered together, alongside the materials and techniques that enabled their production, the implications overturn assumptions from the historical humanities to conservation science. A new, interdisciplinary approach is now required.

Following from 'Printing Colour 1400–1700', this conference will be the first interdisciplinary assessment of Western colour printmaking in the long eighteenth century, 1700–1830. It is intended to lead to the publication of the first handbook of colour printmaking techniques in the late hand-press period, creating a new, interdisciplinary paradigm for the history of printed material. Abstracts for papers and posters are encouraged from historians of all kinds of printed materials (including historians of art, books, botany, design, fashion, meteorology, music and science), conservators, curators, rare-book librarians, practising printers and printmakers, and historians of

collecting. It may also be of interest to those who work with rare-book and print collections.

The registration fee is waived for speakers and poster/object presenters, and transport and accommodation are provided to speakers regardless of their location. This conference is sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.

The conference is to be held on 10–11 April 2018 at Senate House, London. Object sessions: 12 April 2018 (London collections).

Abstract deadline: 1 October 2017, via bit.ly/PC1700-1830.

'Pictures in the Fire'

The nineteenth century was a great time of change and upheaval in commerce and industry. One of those industries which changed drastically was the printing industry. By the middle of the century the mass media was a burgeoning market, and as people became more literate, so did their sensational appetite for more reading materials such as books, newspapers and ephemera.

One company which capitalised on this growing commercial industry was The Camden Press, commonly known as The Brothers Dalziel. The Brothers Dalziel originated from Northumberland and came from a very large family of eight brothers and four sisters. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century the family moved from Newcastle to London to set up their own engraving workshop, The Camden Press.

They were certainly not the only engraving firm at this time, but the wealth of information and the abundance of archival material they left behind enable us today to see the wonderful array of people they worked with and the engraving work which the Brothers undertook during the 60 years the engraving firm ran for.

Douglas Downing has uncovered some remarkable stories about the origins of the Brothers Dalziel; along the way he has created some new stories, and this is what he will discuss during a talk he will give at the St Bride Foundation on 30 November at 7pm.

Tickets £8–12.50 (online box office closes at 6pm before the event).

Bolton on Zainer

Claire Bolton's book *The Fifteenth Century Printing Practices of Johann Zainer, Ulm, 1473–1478*, published by the Oxford Bibliographical Society in conjunction with the Printing Historical Society in 2016, has proved popular and is on the brink of passing out of print. Anyone interesting in acquiring a copy is advised to order one from the OBS (<http://www.oxbibsoc.org.uk/>) as soon as possible. The Society is at present considering a reprint. If this goes ahead, a notice will appear in these pages.

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