



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

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# NEWSLETTER

February 2013

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## Meeting recall

Victoria Stevens of the Oxford Conservation Consortium spoke to us this month about a conservation project she undertook for Christ Church, Oxford. A very rare and beautifully printed 1619 edition of Remmelin's *Catoptrum Microcosmicum* had been left badly damaged, with staining and tears to the pages and a wrinkled parchment binding which was causing further damage to the text-block.

After a quick run through the ten agents which lead to the deterioration of books, Victoria reminded us that, unlike Queen Victoria's dresses (which will never be worn again), early printed books still need to be fit for their purpose, ie. reading, following any conservation process.

Remmelin intended his book as an instructional manual for medics at a time when laws forbade the dissection of human bodies. In addition to a finely engraved title page, the three anatomical diagrams contain sections which, when folded back, reveal the intricacies of human anatomy. Each of the diagrams contains eight printed sheets which were then cut out and layered to form the final product. The book was so expensive to create that later editions were less and less detailed, and thus mere curiosities by comparison.

The modern 'ethic' of book conservators (Miles' interest in which was the impetus for this month's talk) does not take aesthetics into consideration, with the main focus being on the stabilisation of materials to prevent further deterioration. In the case of the *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*, Victoria's brief included a certain amount of 'prettifying' so that the book would be fit for display at the end of the process. To this end, many hours were spent meticulously cleaning the pages then re-sizing the paper to strengthen it, dyeing slips of Japanese paper to replace losses, and re-humidifying the parchment to reduce wrinkling. Victoria's slides showed the book before and after conservation as well as some of the techniques used. I'm sure I wasn't alone in thinking that all those hours of work were worth the end result.

Many thanks to Victoria for such an educational and interesting evening.

## Eynsham Bookbinding Workshops

One day workshops (Saturday 16th February, repeated on the 23rd): make a simple, single-section notebook with marbled paper covers and a hand-printed label. Two day workshops (Saturdays 2nd and 9th March): make a traditional, half-bound case binding with rigid board-covers.

Contact Arthur Green for further details (email: arthurgreen@yahoo.co.uk or phone: 07921 457 174). No experience necessary. Cost: £65 per day.

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## Guild meetings

Unless otherwise noted, the meetings are held at the Bell in Charlbury, at 7:30 for 8:00 p.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.

### Monday 4th March

Clive Hurst of the Bodleian Library will talk about the recently purchased Cheney Archive. The OGP contributed a modest sum to the appeal.

### Monday 8th April

Lida Cordozo Kindersley 'Set in Stone' (NB This is the second not the first Monday of the month).

### Tuesday 7th May

John Randle: *Vance Gerry and the Weather Bird Press*. For those members who missed it, John will give a re-prise of his Alan Hancox Memorial Lecture given at the Cheltenham Literary Festival in 2012.

### Thursday 30th May

Visit to the Wormsley Library, arranged by the late Dr Simon McMinn and described by him thus:

## Note from member Paul Hatcher:

The Maidenhead Branch of the British Printing Society is holding an open day at Fleet, Hampshire, on Saturday 16 February 2013, 10 am - 2pm. All welcome. Some tables may still be available, contact Bob Edwards 01252 615439 for details.

## Papermaking equipment for sale

Frances McDowall, of the Old Stile Press, has decided to give up papermaking, and would like to sell her equipment. She has a full workshop, with everything the amateur might need for papermaking by hand, including a Peter Gentenaar stainless steel hollander, a hydraulic press (for wet use), a large screw press for dry pressing, three moulds and deckles of different sizes (two with OSP watermark), a pulp vat, a trolley that raises and lowers posts of paper for moving around the room, a drying rack which hangs from a ceiling, and other sundries including some raw materials for making plant papers.

Frances would like to sell the workshop and studio contents together, and invites offers around £5,000 for the whole. If you are interested, or would like further details, do please contact Frances directly at:

Frances & Nicolas McDowall  
The Old Stile Press, Catchmays Court  
Llandogo, Monmouthshire NP25 4TN, UK  
Phone: 01291 689 226  
frances@oldstilepress.com  
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## Notes from the Chairman

Following discussion both in Committee and at the AGM the Guild is donating £500 to the Cossar Press Restoration Project. Its final destination and usage is in the hands of the National Museums of Scotland but I have asked Helen Williams, Hon. Sec. of the Scottish Printing Archival Trust to keep me informed. For more information see their website:

[http://scottishprintarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Cossar\\_Press\\_Appeal.pdf](http://scottishprintarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Cossar_Press_Appeal.pdf)

I have been contacted by Asif Faizy <a\_faizy@yahoo.com> in Mumbai, India who is trying to restore a HPL Littlejohn Proofing Press. He's looking for information on rollers and would like to find a manual. If anybody thinks they could help please contact him.

Peter White's 'Printing on Show' project has an extended deadline. Contributors may deliver to him at the next meeting on March 4th. The alternative is to post to him. (Because I didn't know the dimensions of a DL envelope the size restriction has been increased to A5.) It's not too late! Have a go!

## A note from the Membership Secretary

Thank you to all those people who have paid their membership so promptly. There are still a few outstanding and I would be pleased to receive these soon. Many thanks.

Wormsley is the country house at the top of the Chiltern scarp beside the M40 that was the home of Sir Paul Getty, heir to an oil fortune. He built a library specifically for his book collection - a castellated fort with a classical Doric portico next to the main house. The library is beautifully furnished and air conditioned. The books are the greatest collection of illustrated books and special bindings in private hands, similar in quality to the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and collected, with the help of unlimited funds, over his lifetime from the age of sixteen. The collection was accumulated with the aid of Maggs and is now in the hands of Bryan Maggs who conducts tours for private parties on a regular basis. It includes the earliest English manuscript (c. ad 640), numerous highly illustrated medieval books, and some stunning bindings from 16th to 20th centuries. Details will follow. Numbers will be limited to 30. Please contact Miles Wigfield to book.

### Monday 3rd June

Martyn Ould (Old School Press): *Daily Life at the 18th-Century Oxford Bible Press: The Witness of the 1772 Large Quarto Bible.*

### John Thackray: New Member

I'm a Bath based graphic designer and printer who was introduced to letterpress printing a couple of years ago while at University. It was here that I caught the printing bug. I now have a small studio called the Garden Press where I produce cards and invitations in short runs on a Peerless No.1 press.