



OXFORD GUILD OF PRINTERS

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# NEWSLETTER

October 2011

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## Meeting recall

Barry McKay: *Some books in my life*. The perseverance that I showed in persisting with my plan to visit Barry McKay in Appleby in Westmorland, even after finishing up in Edinburgh rather than Carlisle on my journey south from Orkney, paid off. It did so not least because the detour from the M6 is not onerous, Barry does have books for sale, and Appleby is delightful, but much more because he agreed to come and talk to us. I'd been told that he was 'always very good value' and indeed he was, talking for almost twice the allotted time.

Barry's enthusiasm for most things bibliophilic was quickly apparent as he reeled us from one anecdote or observation to another. He told us of an early job with Blackwell's, being appointed by Sir Basil himself largely on the basis of his prowess as a rugby scrum-half. He showed us a 1598 woodcut of a bookseller with bound books on his shelves thereby seeming to refute the suggestion that books were not sold bound till much later. He marveled at the stiff-upper-lip fanaticism of Shackleton who published *Aurora Australis*, the first book to be wholly written, illustrated, printed and bound (in quarter husky-hide and tea chest) in Antarctica. A copy had sold for £850 in the 1970s; £75,000 recently at auction. We saw a photo of an unrecognizably youthful Barry and an immediately familiar profile of John Randle printing a keepsake with a table-top Albion at Blackwell's Fyfield Manor, incidentally quite the poshest second-hand bookshop I've ever visited. We heard of Barry's barely-suppressed excitement on being offered an early printed leaf which revealed the 1510 watermark of John Tate, England's first paper-maker. He showed us an example of provincial printing with 'the ugliest typeface ever conceived' and last used by Cheney's (the purchase of whose archive the OGP has just contributed to).

Barry encouraged us to make a detour to the Midlands Hotel, Morecambe, to see the Eric Gill mural. (Free parking if you buy a drink.) We saw the letter in which Van Krimpen had been very rude about Bruce Rogers. Most of us probably have a copy of John Ryder's *A suite of fleurons* but not one with Beatrice Warde's inscription. Nor do we have lavatory paper printed with typography by Stan Greer. ('Never again!') Barry admitted that he had refrained from advising the Appleby

## Guild meetings

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

**Monday 7 November**, *Film-night: 'Making faces'*. See overleaf.

**Monday 5 December**, the Guild's Annual General Meeting at The Bell, 7:00 for 7:30 p.m. Drinks will be served. To be followed at around 8:00 by a pre-Christmas entertainment by Paul W. Nash who will present his infamous *Impressions of Printers*. Nash will examine what makes a good impression, and will summarise the whole of the twentieth century (in private press terms) in a series of risible performances.

There will be no event or *Newsletter* in January (our winter holiday).

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## Small ad

**Type cabinet wanted.** Cases not important. Anything considered. If you can help please contact Christina Kingsmill on 01386 840278 or sixhq@mac.com.

P.T.O.

Chained Library Committee – the three volumes of Fox’s *Book of martyrs* with all images of the Pope defaced – of the true value of their charges, for fear they would immediately sell them. He closed with his particular interest in bookbinding, showing examples of his own exemplary work – but by then things were becoming a little blurred. I’ve used the word ‘reeled’ advisedly: by the end I felt as if I’d been ‘stripping-the-willow’ along a whole river bank, but had relished every step of the way.

Miles Wigfield

## Chairman’s message

Your committee is due for re-election at the AGM (to be held at 7:30 p.m. on Monday 5 December). I have been given notice of the retirement of both Paul Nash as co-editor of the *Newsletter* and of Louisa Hare as Events Secretary. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Paul and Louisa for their generous and unstinting service to the Guild. Paul has promised to return at a time in the future when he is less busy, but in the mean time if any of the membership feel inclined to come forward with a view to serving on the committee I would be very glad to hear from them.

Miles Wigfield

## November meeting

Film night: *Making faces*. Jim Rimmer, the Canadian graphic designer who died just after the filming of *Making faces*, was prolific. He had 200 typefaces to his name before he retired. He then concentrated on typesetting as well as letterpress printing and linocut illustration. Much loved and respected, Rimmer’s personality comes across in this 45-minute film as we are led by him through the entire process from designing to casting a new typeface. The face in question is Stern, named after the American fine-press printer Christopher Stern. Rimmer designed the face both for letterpress and digital technology. His considerations over the dual use are interesting and the camera work is of a high order. I hope you will join us on 7 November.

Louisa Hare

## Other events

**Treasures of the Bodleian.** Exhibition running 30 September to 23 December at the Bodleian Library. Open Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Saturday 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Sunday 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Free entrance. The Library describes the exhibition thus: ‘On display are some of the Bodleian’s rarest, most important and most evocative items, from ancient papyri through medieval oriental manuscripts to twentieth-century printed books and ephemera. They include Magna Carta, the Bakshali manuscript (first evidence of the concept of zero), Handel’s conducting copy of *The Messiah*, Shakespeare’s First Folio, one of the earliest medieval illustrated manuscripts of Dante’s *The divine comedy*, hand-written drafts of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and Robert Hooke’s *Micrographia*, *The book of curiosities*, an illustrated medieval Arabic manuscript, among others. The items are arranged into broad themes: the classical heritage; mapping the world; the sacred word; the animal and plant kingdoms; works of the imagination; the sciences of observation and calculation; historical moments in time. Members of the public can give their thoughts on which of the library’s treasures should be put on permanent display in the Weston Library, when it opens in 2015.’

## And not forgetting ...

**The Fine Press Book Fair.** The 2011 Fair will be held at Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane, Oxford, on Saturday 5 (11:00–6:00) and Sunday 6 November (10:00–5:00). Some eighty fine and private presses will be exhibiting, offering books and second-hand printing equipment, as will specialist booksellers, trade-suppliers and a range of societies. As usual, there will be a programme of talks on the Sunday. Admission is by catalogue (price £5.00), valid for both days. Many members of the Guild will have stalls. For further details please see [www.fpba.com](http://www.fpba.com).

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**Against the grain.** The Society of Wood Engravers 74th annual exhibition is now on at Art Jericho, 6 King Street, Oxford OX2 6DF (down Cardigan Street off Walton Street). The exhibition will be open Wednesday to Saturday until 22 October, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Entrance is free. On display (and for sale) will be examples of wood-engravings, woodcuts and linocuts by members of the Society from the UK, Europe, USA and around the world.

**Holly Drewett: Invisible cities.** Exhibition of prints and drawings at the Mirror Gallery, South Hill Park Arts Centre, South Hill Park, Ringmead, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7PA. Saturday 3 December 2011 to Sunday 29 January 2012, open 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. (Sundays and Bank Holidays 11:00 a.m.–10:30 p.m.). Opening reception 4:00–6:00 p.m. on the first day. All Welcome. Free entrance. The exhibition includes prints in a variety of media.