

“Ned Sherrin had the assembled company engrossed with non-stop anecdotes from his varied career”



Above: Derek Albiston
Below: a cast of characters for monotype faces on casting/setting machines

As well as being the 500th anniversary of the first printed work published in Scotland (Caxton's effort was 31 years earlier), next year will mark a significant anniversary for one of the longest established publishing industry social groups: The Galley Club. The name originates from the days of hot-metal typesetting, when the newly-cast type was placed on long metal trays, known as galleys, for proofing prior to reading and, later, for make-up into pages.

In 2008 it will have been 75 years since the first meeting of this lauded and applauded club in a small room over a pub in 1933. To place this event in your historical consciousness, it was the same year Adolf Hitler became Chancellor in Germany; the Bauhaus School in Berlin closed; Eric Gill was in his sculpting period; the first *King Kong* appeared on the screen starring Fay Wray; the first singing telegram was sung in New York; and Sir Michael Caine was born (not a lot of people know all that).

The framework of the club is built round a monthly programme of meetings from October to June. Guest speakers are invited to talk informatively on their specialist areas in the trade, to an audience which is drawn from all areas of the printing and publishing industry and allied trades. The membership includes publishing people of all departments – printers, distributors, designers,

The evening venue has changed over the years, most recently moving from the curious old boys' club atmosphere of the English Speaking Union in Mayfair to the more informal surroundings of The George Pub, opposite The Law Courts on The Strand. With recent refurbishment, this venue has evolved to create a convivial ambience for members, guests and speakers alike.

Leonard Chave, Hon Life Member, has fond memories of some of the early years: “My first contact with the Club was in 1956, when I joined the Overseas Editorial Department of OUP in London, as production assistant to Tim Wilkinson, who was its current Secretary. He made sure that I attended meetings, which were held at Monotype House in New Fetter Lane, usually preceded by a gathering in the Printer's Devil opposite. The Club was, at that time, the meeting ground for everybody who was anybody in book printing and production, including such luminaries as Hugh Williamson, James Moran, Kenneth Day, Beatrice Warde and many others.

“The speakers were equally distinguished. I remember talks by Hugh himself and J H Mason, who made paper in a small mould, using a Kenwood mixer as a beater. Other features of those early years included visits to suppliers, such as paper mills, inkmakers, blockmakers, etc. It was considered part of a production assistant's training to see such things at first hand.

“In 1957, the Wynkyn de Worde Society was

The type set

Social networking is all the modern rage, but for print and production people it began 75 years ago with the Galley Club. Derek Albiston reports

typesetters, paper suppliers, freelancers – and the range is continually changing and expanding. Equally, the variety of speakers is reflected in this eclectic mix and members are encouraged to bring along interested guests for the occasion.

The list of speakers who have presented to the club over the decades is fascinating, as it highlights important players from contemporary industry and provides insightful pointers to the topics of the era. For the informed publishing industry-watcher, a read through the following list of past speakers is illuminating, without need of further comment: Christina Foyle, Claire Rayner, Jeffrey Archer, Frank Delaney, Leslie Thomas, Harold Evans, Leo Cooper, Naim Attallah, Jonathan Dimbleby, Ned Sherrin, Eddie Bell, Richard Charkin, Tony Chard and Paul Carr have all addressed the Galley Club. The demise of the Net Book Agreement, advances in CD-Rom, copyright, on-demand printing, recycled paper, literary agents, self-publishing, censorship, blogging, and more, have all been debated vociferously.

Ned Sherrin, who died last month, had the assembled company engrossed with non-stop anecdotes from his varied career as author, broadcaster, and producer of shows such as the groundbreaking *That Was The Week That Was*. Sadly, most of what he regaled the audience with that night is unrepeatably – you had to be there. More recently, The Friday Project's Paul Carr blogged enthusiastically about his evening at the Galley Club, and Lida Lopez Cardozo Kindersley of the Cardozo Kindersley Workshop (creators of unique artefacts with their skilful stone-cutting methods) enthralled the audience with a first-class presentation which ranged from the idiosyncracies of Eric Gill and the skills of the apprentice, to a demonstration of the tools of a letterform engraver.

formed with 57 founder members, many of them members of our Club. Some kept up joint membership, but others were lost to the Galley Club for good. One other piece of historical lore (or romance) concerns the records of the post-war Galley Club. It is said that whilst in the charge of Maxwell Martin, a suitcase containing them found its way into the Thames and a watery grave.”

Nowadays, the Club committee is reviewed at each AGM, and currently hails from publishing ownership, management, editorial, production, promotion and marketing, pre-press, printing and distribution sales. Excursions to places of particular interest include Lambeth Palace Library, where they store a priceless collection of books (including the Gutenberg Bible), dating back over the centuries, and the Getty Picture Library, which houses a wonderful collection of historic images. Another memorable trip was to News International's 'Fortress Wapping'.

The Galley Club is also active with the Annual BTBS Charity Walk, and has inspired the foundation of The Galley Club of Sydney, Australia, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. As well as the popular speaker evenings and excursions, the annual programme is traditionally punctuated with other significant dates for the diary, with a very successful quiz night in February, a summer party, and a fashionably late 'Christmas' party held in January each year. Next year will see the added bonus of the 75th Celebratory Party which will be held at a special venue in June.

Derek Albiston is a publishing professional who has 30 years' experience working in the publishing and printing industry and is now employed in the UK by Dutch company Krips – part of the Sheridan Europe printing group. For more Galley Club information, meeting dates and application details, visit: <http://www.galleyclub.co.uk>

