

Early days in the Galley Club

By Leonard Chave, Hon. Life Member

My first contact with the Club was in 1956, when I joined the Overseas Editorial Department of OUP, London, as production assistant to Tim Wilkinson, who was its current Secretary. Of course, he made sure that I attended meetings, which were held at Monotype House in New Fetter Lane, usually preceded by gathering in the Printer's Devil opposite. The Club was at that time the meeting ground for everybody in book printing and production who was anybody, including such luminaries as Hugh Williamson, James Moran, Kenneth Day, Beatrice Warde and many others whose names will be found in the elegant membership list printed by Mackays of Chatham that I donated some years ago to the Club's archive collection. 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. Another feature of those early years was visits to suppliers, such as paper mills, inkmakers, blockmakers, etc.; it was considered that it was part of a production assistant's training to see such things at first hand.

One person who took me under his wing was John Linnell, representative for three printers including Novello and Latimer Trend, who was a member of the Club before the War, and instrumental in re-founding it post-war. Unfortunately no records seem to have survived of those days, and it is not known when the Club was originally founded and when it was revived. There was no Archivist to make sure that documents were preserved, but in the Kenneth Day archive in the library of Stationers' Hall there is one survival: a leaflet recording a 1937 river trip from Westminster to the Ship Hotel at Greenwich, where they dined on such things as *Mutton Quads*, *2nd Colour Salad*, and *Coffee, Pott Quarto*. The Admiral on that occasion was Bruce Rodgers, the famous American designer of Monotype *Centaur* among other things. A poem, hand set and printed by participants, enshrined some of the names of those on board (surnames only), and among them are those of Beatrice Warde, one of the Harrison family, Ellic Howe, Christopher Bradshaw and Ashley Havinden, showing how many of the celebrated belonged to the Club. A Xerox copy of this was passed by me to the club Archives.

At the AGM of 1957, the reigning committee resigned and was replaced by a quintet of new brooms. Kenneth Day (production director of Ernest Benn, and an author of books on printing subjects) as Chairman, Harold Hunter as Secretary, Tom Colverson and James Wood (of Kitcat the binders, remembered for their legendary Christmas parties at the Westbury Hotel) – and as Treasurer an inexperienced production assistant, who was known by the retiring Secretary to be rather numerate. Numeracy was not always a strong point in production departments then!

Harold Hunter was an outsize character in both form and abilities. His principal occupation seemed to be marketing Whiley's gold leaf, but he had several other irons in the fire. To me he was a profound influence, and a good friend, who instilled in me a degree of self-confidence that was sorely lacking at the time, except under the day-time influence of my mentor, Tim Wilkinson taught me all he knew, to the stage where once in ten discussions over the capabilities of the Monotype caster, I would win. Harold was sure that the status of the Production department in publishing was far too low, and did all he could to raise it. The committee met in his small office, and our discussions were always punctuated by glasses of the good wine he provided. At that time the funds of the Club were more than ample, and it was decided to throw an evening party at the Folio Society. This was a great success, though none of us knew (except perhaps Harold) what happened to the mountain of beef sandwiches left at the end. I had the privilege of rescuing Beatrice Warde from the doorstep of Folio, where she was uncertain how

to gain entry; her biographer tells me it must have been the only time when she was not in command of any situation. After two years, this committee resigned, to give others a chance to guide the fortunes of the Club.

In 1957, the Wynkyn de Worde Society was 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. I left London in 1959 for the Clarendon Press at Oxford, filling a vacancy caused by the poaching of a number of OUP staff by Robert Maxwell for his Pergamon Press. I found Oxford a far less lively publishing place than London, with no organisation to bring people together, and too far distant to allow evening trips to the Galley Club. So with the help of Eric Buckley, production director of Pergamon (and later the Printer to the University) and Harold Hunter the Galley Club (Oxford) was formed. My name had to be kept out of this, because Clarendon would have regarded this as trading with the enemy, but I was the one who attended a committee meeting in London, when we asked permission to name ourself after our distinguished origins. The chairman at the time was David Dickson, who spent most of his production career at Pitmans, though this may have been at the time he succeeded Hugh Williamson at Heinemanns for a year or two. Like most Oxford bookish organisations, it eventually expired, and has not been replaced, as far as I know, by anything similar.

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. I know the feelings of such loss: as Hon. Archivist of the Wynkyn de Worde Society I have tried in vain to discover what happened to the committee minutes from December 1971 to December 1983, despite pursuit of surviving Secretaries.

The origin of the Club's name comes from the days of hot-metal typesetting, when the newly-cast type was placed on long metal trays ('Galley's') for proofing prior to reading, and eventually for make-up into pages.