

NEWSLETTER 151

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Another scandalous and malignant priest

This is another extract from The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests, ordered to be printed by the House of Commons in 1643 and which was a dossier of the sins of 100 Church of England ministers whose livings had been sequestered – that is, they had been removed from their livings at the House's insistence. As with the extract in Newsletter 142 this has been contributed by Chris Pond.

'38. The benefice of Nicholas Wright, Doctor in Divinity, Rector of the Parish Church of Thoydon Garnon in the County of Essex, is sequestered, for that he hath not preached above twice or thrice a yeare to his Parishioners, and yet hath presented divers of them, and put them to great charges in the Ecclesiastical Courts, for going to heare Sermons in other Churches when they had none at home, and brought also such Ministers as they heard so preach into trouble; And hath procured the Communion-Table to be set Altar-wise, with stepps to it, and railles about it, and constantly bowed towards it at his coming and going out of the Church, refusing to administer the Sacrament to divers of his Parishioners without any cause, other than his own wilfulnesse, and read the Booke for Sports on the Lords day in his said Church, and preached to maintaine the lawfulnessse of it, by meanes whereof the Lords day hath ever since been much prophaned, by Foot-ball playing and other ungodly practises, and hath deserted his said Cure ever since Palme-Sunday last, and betaken himselfe to the Army of the Cavaleeres, and is in actuall War against the Parliament and Kingdome. And hath brought and continued long under him for his Curate, a drunken, lewd and scandalous person, that hath been indited and found guilty at the Sessions for a common drunkard.'

[**Editor's note:** *The Victoria County History* records another unsatisfactory priest at Theydon Garnon. In 1609 Samuel Searle became rector. He was described as a turbulent man whose offences appeared to include manslaughter and brawling in church. In 1622–23 he was suspected of being an accessory to murder and in 1624 he was deprived of his benefice. However, towards the end of the previous century the parish enjoyed more stability. John Molyneux was rector from 1561 until his death in 1591. He was among the Puritan clergy who emigrated to Frankfurt in the reign of Mary I, and later became Canon of St Paul's and Archdeacon of London in 1559.]

Gernon, Garland, and Garnish

RICHARD MORRIS

Stephen Pewsey's article in *Newsletter 149* on the origin of Cats Brains as a field name, reminded me of Percy Reaney's researches into the place-names of Essex.

Robert Gernon was one of William the Conqueror's supporters who came over with him at the time of the Norman Conquest. The Gernon family occupied a position of much importance in Essex from the Conquest to the fourteenth

century. Robert Gernon was rewarded for his support by a grant of many manors in the county – he had possessions in some 43 parishes! From him was descended Sir Ralph Gernon, who was described as a ‘judge-itinerant’. In or about 1230 Sir Ralph either founded or refounded Leighs (or Leez) Priory.

The family name survives with a slight change in the parish of Theydon Garnon, and is further metamorphosed in some nine farm names in various parts of the county. Of these, three definitely date from the Domesday survey – Garlands in Springfield and Garland’s Farm in Great Maplestead and in Birch. Garland’s Farm in Steeple Bumpstead is mentioned as ‘Gernons maner’ in 1382 and as Garlands or Gernons by Chapman & André (1777).

Among Robert Gernon’s estates was one in Tolleshunt D’Arcy. There is a Garland’s Farm in Tollesbury which we may reasonably conclude owes its name to the original Gernon estate. The old field name in Chigwell of Gallant Acres is a further derivation of Gernon. We should expect the Gernons to appear in Chigwell in view of their possessions in Theydon, Chingford, Leyton and Loughton.

This name developed, according to Reaney, due to the Anglo-Norman interchange of ‘l’ and ‘r’.

Theydon Garnon owes its name to the Gernon family. The manor house would naturally be referred to as Gernon’s Hall, and so it was, but on the modern map it appears as Garnish Hall. This time it is the second ‘n’ that has become an ‘s’, and by 1507 this had become ‘sh’. One location that has retained the original spelling of the family name is Gernon Bushes at Coopersale.

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Harold Curwen and the revival of printing and typography in Britain

TED MARTIN

What connection could there be between tonic sol-fa, the printing and typographical revival in Britain and a former Loughton resident? The answer is the Curwen Press, formerly of Plaistow.

Background

The nineteenth century, in contrast to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, had very few good typefaces for setting text. At the end of the previous century the types of William Caslon and John Baskerville were in vogue and were excellent. In the nineteenth century text type designs became pinched, attenuated and mechanical. This eventually led to the all-pervading ‘Modern’ which many who were at school in the 1940s and 50s would instantly recognise as the type used to set their maths textbooks! The fashion for Modern quickly caught on and the older typefaces were melted down to produce more Moderns. Hansard, the parliamentary printer, was one of the few who stayed true to the earlier designs.

Private presses had started in England in the eighteenth century and they were mainly set up to pursue artistic typography, to produce works which were not suited to the general trade or just for the pleasure of printing.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century things began to change. This improvement had started in a small way in 1840 with the revival of the old face types of William Caslon at the Chiswick Press, a private press, and the trend was picked up by some typefounders (who revived some of their old designs) and some printers, but the use of these types was mainly limited to devotional books. The Chiswick Press also attempted, not very successfully, to copy a fifteenth century type from Basle. This caught the eye of William Morris who used it for two books that he had printed at the Chiswick Press. Morris believed that fifteenth century Venice was the only source for a roman type. He used these types as models for his Golden type used for the books of his own private press (Kelmscott Press), and he was soon followed by others. The lecture Emery Walker of the Chiswick Press delivered at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1883 was a clarion call for the new movement. Also in 1883 Horace Hart was appointed Oxford University Printer: he was another great reformer. In 1900 private presses such as Essex House Press (1898–1910), The Eragny Press (1894–1914), Doves Press (1900–1917), Ashendene Press (1894–1935) were all producing superbly printed and well-designed books.

Generally, the commercial printing trade was not paying much attention to these developments or to type design and, although reform was overdue, the results of such work that was done were inadequate and thought to be unsatisfactory.

Tonic sol-fa

However, the Curwen story goes back to 1841. John Curwen (1816–1880) was a young Congregational minister in his first pastorate when he realised the moral and religious value of hymn singing for his Sunday school children. Having had difficulty in reading music in the conventional way he became interested in the work of Sarah Glover (1785–1867), known as the Norwich sol-fa. In 1841 Curwen was commissioned by a conference of Sunday school teachers to discover a simple way of teaching music and so he modified Glover's system and added to it. He then set up a school and a music publishing business to disseminate his method.

The music publishing business started as the Tonic Sol-fa Agency and in 1863 became J Curwen and Sons. They published music in tonic sol-fa notation and the tonic sol-fa journal. Among the textbooks published was *The Standard Course of Lessons on the Tonic Sol-fa Method of Teaching to Sing* (1858). In the 1872 edition of this book John Curwen completely excluded the standard musical staff and thereby isolated tonic sol-fa from general music publishing – this was to lead to its eventual decline as a method for teaching singing. However, in the nineteenth century, it was very popular and had 315,000 supporters by 1872. It was used throughout the British Isles and Empire and in the United States. It was also widely used by missionaries.

To produce these publications, the J Curwen & Sons printing works was also established in 1863 and this firm subsequently became The Curwen Press.

Enter Harold Curwen

Our Loughton resident was Harold Spedding Curwen who was the grandson of the Rev John Curwen. He was born on 16 November 1885 at Upton Park, the third son of Joseph Spedding and Mary Jane Curwen. It is interesting that the family used his mother's surname with his father's surname becoming a middle name – they were obviously very proud of the achievements of the Rev John Curwen. Harold was educated at Abbotsholm School and while there in 1902–1903 operated a hand printing press. He was then sent to the family firm, J Curwen & Sons, for training in 1904–1905 and after this served one year at a printing works in Leipzig. In 1907 he returned to J Curwen & Sons at Plaistow and also studied design in printing at the famous LCC Central School of Arts and Crafts.

LCC Central School of Arts and Crafts

The LCC Central School of Arts and Crafts was founded in 1896 to further the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. The lecturer in lettering and illumination in 1901 was Edward Johnston (later the designer of the dedicated sans-serif typeface still used today by the London Underground), and, among the students, was Eric Gill, who later designed Gill Sans, the typeface used for all the printing and station signage of the LNER and instantly recognisable as an icon of the 1930s and 1940s. The School was the typographical hot-house that was one of the progenitors of the typographical revival in Britain in which Harold Curwen and the Curwen Press were to play such a part. It is probably true to say that this was a tremendously important part of his training and one which changed him from a competent craftsman to a craftsman with a strong appreciation of typographical design and good printing.

Mechanical composition

At the end of the nineteenth century two main systems of hot-metal mechanical composition came in from America – 'Monotype': composition by casting single characters; and 'Linotype': composition by casting a single solid line of type. 'Monotype' was always the preferred system for books; 'Linotype' was used mainly in newspaper and periodical work. They lasted in general use until the 1970s, when hot metal composition was replaced first by film composition and then by computer-controlled digital composition. Before the 'Monotype' and 'Linotype', the method of setting type by hand had not changed for 400 years.

The movement gathers pace

Harold Curwen became a director of the Curwen Press in 1911. Lithography (then solely a method of printing a limited run of artistic prints from an original drawn by the artist in greasy inks on an absorbent stone) was introduced to the Press in 1908, and Harold Curwen commissioned artists to use this method of printing. He then started a fundamental reorganisation of the Press which led to a complete change in the quality and range of work produced in Plaistow.

The publisher J M Dent approached the Monotype Corporation in 1911 for a new roman and italic type for his Everyman's Library. The type, called Veronese, was based on a fifteenth century design and was probably the first application of a private press style of type to mass-produced books.

In 1913 Gerard Meynell of the Westminster Press wished to publish a periodical aimed at improving commercial printing standards called *The Imprint*. None of the existing typefaces was considered suitable, so the Monotype Corporation were commissioned to produce what was essentially an up-to-date interpretation of Caslon's classic design. This is seen as one of the significant events in printing history: 'after that it became possible to think of mechanical composition as an instrument of creative craftsmanship' (Beatrice Warde). Also in that year Monotype issued Plantin – still a well-used type today. Typefounders were also following the fashion and issuing their own versions of classic designs.

Stanley Morison (who was to have a major role in the typographical revival and who is best known today for his design of Times typeface for *The Times* newspaper in 1932), joined *The Imprint* magazine in 1913. The journal and the job did not last for long but it was long enough for him to learn about printing. Then Morison moved to Burnes & Oates, a Catholic publishing firm run by Gerard Meynell's uncle, Wilfred. While there he met Francis Meynell, the 21-year-old son of the proprietor, Bernard Newdigate and Eric Gill and others who were active in the revival.

In 1916 Monotype started work on a new Caslon fount. It was held up by the war but finally appeared in 1922. Morison wrote about it in *The Monotype Recorder*. Monotype then produced Garamond, based on another classic design from the past. Morison joined Monotype as their part-time typographical adviser and devised his famous programme of new type designs to cover all the foreseeable needs of printing.

Francis Meynell in his autobiography says:

'World War I had shattered the few attempts to bring distinction to commercial printing . . . Only Bernard Newdigate at the Arden Press, Gerard Meynell at the Westminster Press and Harold Curwen at the Curwen Press were offering "style", with the revised Caslon Old Face predominant. In the mass of complicated Victorian dullness which enveloped the printing world one had to have a peering eye to discover their work.'

There was an inspired recruitment decision in 1920 when Harold Curwen employed Oliver Simon and, then his brother, Herbert Simon. This was to have a great impact on printing standards in Britain and overseas and on the fortunes of the Curwen Press.

Oliver Simon started the Fleuron Society in 1922 to show that machine-set books could be as good as the products of the private presses. (A fleuron is the name for a 'printer's flower', an ornament in lead which was inserted into type for decorative purposes.) The society, which consisted of Francis Meynell, Holbrook Jackson, Bernard Newdigate, Stanley Morison and Oliver Simon, held two 'stormy' meetings and then, after a third to wind-up the society, Morison and Simon went off to discuss starting an annual journal under the name of *The Fleuron*. The Curwen Press (or probably Harold Curwen) allowed them to use an office owned the Press which they shared until 1924. The first four numbers of *The Fleuron* (1923–25) were edited by Oliver Simon and printed at the Curwen Press. This publication (and later *The Signature* (1935–40)) had a profound effect on printing and type design and was instrumental in establishing the reputations of both Morison and Simon.

The revival was given continuing impetus by the university presses. Cambridge University Press in 1923 appointed Walter Lewis as university printer. He was an excellent printer who appreciated good typography. Morison

was appointed as adviser to the CUP and, when he succeeded Oliver Simon as editor of *The Fleuron*, the printing was transferred to the University Press. The fifth issue appeared in 1926, the sixth in 1928 and the seventh and final issue in 1930. It has been said that its 'influence on the development of good typography was incalculable' (James Moran).

Michael Twyman has written:

'English typography was undergoing its own quiet revolution, and Stanley Morison, Francis Meynell, Bernard Newdigate, Harold Curwen and Oliver Simon showed their dissatisfaction with the muddle of Victorian and Edwardian printing by reviving a straightforward approach to typography based on the finest examples from the past. Most of the examples they turned to were books, and the lessons learned from book production were applied with great discrimination by the Curwen Press and other quality printers to the field of jobbing work.'

Therefore, it was Harold Curwen's prescience in employing Oliver Simon, his provision of facilities for *The Fleuron*, and his desire to improve the typographical standards and printing quality of his own firm, which contributed greatly to the printing and typographical revival in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s.

The lead given by these pioneers and the university presses was quickly followed by general publishers and printers in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. The exception quickly became the norm and British publishing and printing gained a worldwide reputation for printing and design quality. Technical colleges, such as the London School (later College) of Printing, taught Simon's and Morison's principles to their students and made sure that they understood the history of the printing and typographical revolution of the past 100 years.

Harold Curwen

Harold Spedding Curwen lived in Loughton from 1910 to 1940, first at 4 Spring Grove and later at 'Mansard', Alderton Hill. He married first, in 1912, Rose Blanche Wenner and, second, in 1923, Freda Margaret Simpson and had three daughters. He married again, in 1940, Marie Rasmussen. He retired to Chetnole, near Sherborne in Dorset, and died in 1949. He wrote *Processes of Graphic Reproduction* (1935) and *What is Printing?* (n.d.). Mainly due to his skill and efforts his company gained an international reputation as fine printers.

The Curwen Press

In 1924 Oliver Simon contacted the Royal College of Art and this led to commissions for young artists including Paul Nash and Edward Bawden. During the Second World War the Press produced work for Free France, the Belgian Government in exile and the literary magazine *Horizon*. In 1955, Timothy and Robert Simon (sons of Oliver and Herbert) set up a studio for artists where Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Graham Sutherland, Elizabeth Frink, John Piper and others produced important lithographs. This studio still exists at Chilford Hall in Cambridgeshire.

For the 11th International Printing Exhibition, in 1963, a display of printing mechanisms and printed materials called 'Printing and the Mind of Man' was assembled at Earls Court and the British Museum. On display at the British Museum, number 177 in the catalogue, was Sir Thomas Browne's *Urne Buriall and the Garden of Cyrus* (printed by the Curwen Press for Cassell & Co). The catalogue states:

'The Curwen Press became known, after it passed into the control of Harold Curwen (1885–1949), for jobbing printing of very high quality. Oliver Simon (1895–1956) persuaded Curwen to undertake the

printing of books. In Simon's opinion *Urne Buriall*, printed for Cassells, was one of the finest illustrated books produced at the Press. The illustrations are by Paul Nash (1889–1946); thirty plates were printed in monochrome collotype and water colours were then applied by stencilling. *Urne Buriall* was the last book to be illustrated by this process, one developed by Curwen from the French pochoir process . . .'

The Curwen Press closed down in the 1970s, along with many other household names in the British printing industry, probably because the cost of complete re-equipment for the new technology was prohibitive.

The Bruce Peel Special Collections Library of the University of Alberta purchased the Curwen Press Library in 1984. It includes work from 1919–1956. The University of Wales at Aberystwyth holds the Oliver Simon Collection in the Thomas Parry Library. This covers the output of the Curwen Press and other fine printing from 1920–1950.

Conclusion

Harold Curwen was one of a select band that gave impetus to the revival of typography and printing in this country and he was an exceptional printer: it would be fitting if his achievements could be honoured by a blue plaque in the town in which he lived for 30 years.

From the private press movement, a band of pioneers, the university presses and the Monotype Corporation there came a revolution in typeface design and printing standards from which we have all benefited in the excellent production standards of most modern books and the many type designs now available to us on our PCs.

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