

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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Golden Jubilee: 50th Season

World exclusive!

One does not normally associate the term 'World exclusive' with the LDHS *Newsletter* and whilst the term in this context might be hyperbole, I think we have certainly stumbled upon quite a significant discovery.

The background to this is a bit complicated. If you are into classical music, you may have heard of Norman Del Mar, a famous conductor who died in 1994. He was a regular conductor at the Proms and an author of several books on music. His son Jonathan is also a musician in his own right (both Norman and Jonathan have entries on Wikipedia if you want to find out more about them), particularly noted for having produced new editions of Beethoven's works. As well as being a musician, Jonathan Del Mar shares my interest in vehicle registrations and as a result I know him quite well. Someone else who is interested in vehicle registrations, although perhaps not to the same degree as Jonathan and myself, is Peter Haseldine, husband of LDHS committee member and expert on Buckhurst Hill's history, Lynn Haseldine-Jones.

This all started when Lynn, Peter and I were talking over our coffee and mince pies after December's LDHS meeting. Somehow Jonathan's name came up in conversation and Lynn said his parents were married in Buckhurst Hill. She told me later that she had found this out from a website giving details of the descendants of John Somervell. (From a bit of Googling it seems John Somervell, who died in London in 1840, was the father of another John Somervell who founded the K Shoe Company.) Norman Del Mar and Pauline Mann married at Buckhurst Hill Congregational Church on 24 January 1947. When I next wrote to Jonathan, I mentioned that I had discovered that he had local links.

In his reply Jonathan wrote a bit about his early life in the area and included the following: 'In St John's Parish Church, Buckhurst Hill,* there is, in the porch [we later discovered this was a mistake as the stone is actually in the Lady Chapel], a commemorative stone by Eric Gill to my uncle John Mann who died aged 4.' I e-mailed Jonathan's comments on to Lynn. She replied that this was probably quite a significant discovery as the church apparently did not know the attribution of the memorial as it was referred to in a leaflet, but there was no reference to it being by Eric Gill. She knew of the memorial and had thought it could well have been produced by someone eminent – she had wondered if it was by Epstein.

In case you are not very familiar with Eric Gill, as I was until quite recently, he is, of course, perhaps most famous for having created the Gill Sans typeface.

Wikipedia indicates that as well as being a typeface

designer, he was a sculptor, stonecutter and printmaker. He seems to have lived what might be described as a somewhat Bohemian life. Famous buildings where his sculptures can be found include the London Transport headquarters at 55 Broadway, the BBC at Broadcasting House, the People's Palace in East London and the Midland Hotel, Morecambe, a famous art deco building.

The memorial is to Johnnie Mann, the brother of Pauline Mann who was born on 16 May 1921 and sadly died on 28 November 1925 from osteomyelitis. It depicts Johnnie dropping a toy train and reaching up to take a hand, symbolically leaving his toy train behind and reaching up to take the hand of God. Eric Gill was



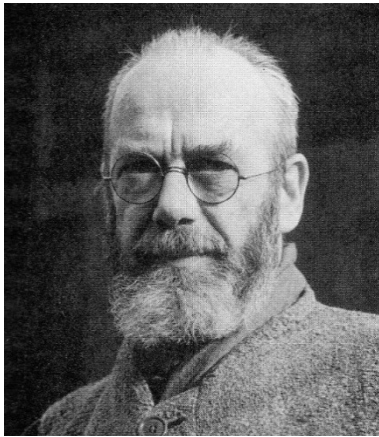
a close friend of the Mann family.

The monument reads:

JOHNNIE
MANN
DIED 28 NOV
1925 AGED
4 ½ YEARS
~
TO SEE THE
BEAUTY OF
THE LORD &
TO ENQUIRE
IN HIS TEMPLE

My Googling had revealed that there was an Eric Gill Society, so I naturally contacted them. In 1964 Eric's brother, Evan, had published a list of his inscriptions and this had been updated with further ones added in 1994. Joe Cribb of the Society wrote saying: 'Evan says that there are three drawings for the monument surviving. He implies that they are in St Bride's Printing Library in

Central London [just off Fleet Street]. The first two drawings are dated 8.9.28 and the third 1.2.29, so it is likely that he executed the monument early in 1929 at his workshop at Pigotts, near Speen in south Buckinghamshire [near High Wycombe]. At that time his main assistant was my great uncle Lawrence Cribb, who probably also worked on the carving with Gill.' They described my find as an 'important discovery'.



Eric Gill

If you want to go and see this memorial, at the time of writing the church is closed for refurbishment, but it is due to be re-opened towards the end of this year. The church has other features of interest to see, including Victorian stained glass windows by James Powell and Sons and memorials to the Buxton family.

Normally, discoveries of historical significance are the result of diligent research in libraries or archives. In this instance, however, I have quite accidentally stumbled upon something quite significant by effectively being in the right places at the right time. This discovery would not have been made without someone else's diligent work, however. Had Lynn not spent so much time researching Buckhurst Hill's history, the importance of what Jonathan Del Mar told me may have not been realised.

We hope to give some more publicity to this discovery shortly. Not least the Eric Gill Society wants to inform its members. Be assured, however, that you saw it first in the LDHS *Newsletter*!

* The Parish Church of St John, Buckhurst Hill, was built in 1838 as a chapel of ease but did not become a separate ecclesiastical parish until 1867. St John's National School was also built in 1838. The lord of the manor gave a site next to the church; the building cost £209, most of which was donated by the church congregation.

JOHN HARRISON

Eric Gill (1882–1940)

Eric Gill was born at 6.30 am on 22 February 1882 in Brighton, the second child of the large family of the Rev Arthur Tidman Gill, the son of missionaries, and his wife Rose, a former concert party singer. Gill said he had a very happy childhood of which he had affectionate memories. He was the elder brother of MacDonald 'Max' Gill (1884–1947), a well-known graphic artist. In 1897 the family moved to Chichester. Gill studied at Chichester Technical and Art School, and moved to London in 1900 to train as an architect with the practice of W D Caroe, who specialised in ecclesiastical architecture. Disliking

his training, he took evening classes in stonemasonry at Westminster Technical Institute and in calligraphy at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, where Edward Johnston, creator of the London Underground typeface, was his tutor. He gave up architectural training in 1903 hoping to become a calligrapher, letter-cutter and monumental mason.

Gill married Ethel Hester Moore (1878–1961) in 1904, and in 1907 they moved to 'Sopers', a house in Ditchling, Sussex, later to become the centre of an artists' community which Gill created. In 1913 he moved to Hopkin's Crank at Ditchling Common, two miles north of the village.

While at Ditchling he started producing sculpture, his first successful piece was 'Mother and Child' (1912). With his friend and collaborator Jacob Epstein, he planned to construct in the Sussex countryside colossal human figures to be a modern Stonehenge as a 'contribution to the world', which seemed to need much photographing of nude adults and children in the planning stage and which never got beyond that stage. Gill's friendship with Epstein was close but only lasted for a short time.

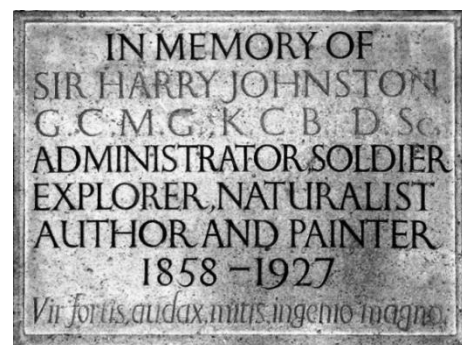
In 1914 he produced sculptures for the Stations of the Cross in Westminster Cathedral and in that year met Stanley Morison, the typographer, who, like Gill, was a Catholic. After the war, together with Hilary Pepler and Desmond Chute, Gill founded The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic at Ditchling.

When he was commissioned to carve a war memorial for Leeds University, Gill caused controversy by producing a frieze depicting Jesus driving the money-changers from the temple – showing Leeds merchants as the money-changers: Gill believed that the 'money men' were one of the main causes of the war. The frieze is at the Michael Sadler Building at the University.

In 1924 he moved to Capel-y-ffin in Wales, where he set up a new workshop. He soon tired of Capel-y-ffin, feeling it had the wrong atmosphere and was too far from London, and thus from most of his clients.

In 1925 Gill designed the **Perpetua** typeface, with the capitals based upon monumental Roman inscriptions, for Stanley Morison, who was then typographical adviser to the Monotype Corporation.

An example of Gill's personal cutting of Perpetua typeface can be found in the nave of Poling church in West Sussex, on a wall plaque commemorating the life of Sir Harry Johnston (above). (This paragraph and the one above are set in Perpetua.)



In 1928 he moved to Pigotts at Speen near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire where he set up a

printing press and lettering workshop. He took on a number of apprentices.

The Perpetua design was followed by the **Gill Sans typeface** in 1927–30, which started life as a shop fascia design for the bookseller Douglas Cleverdon and probably owed something to Edward Johnston's earlier design for the London Underground in which Gill was involved at an early stage. (This paragraph is set in Gill Sans.)

In the period 1930–31 Gill designed the typeface **Joanna** which he used to hand-set his book, *An Essay on Typography*. (This paragraph is set in Joanna.)

In 1928–29, Gill carved three of eight relief sculptures on the theme of winds for Charles Holden's headquarters for the London Underground at 55 Broadway, St James's, and a statue of the Virgin and Child for the west door of Marlborough College chapel.



The North Wind by Eric Gill at 55 Broadway.
Photograph © Andrew Dunn, 29 September 2004.



In 1932 Gill produced the Prospero and Ariel sculptures (left, photo: Mike Knell, Zürich) and others for the BBC to be placed on Broadcasting House in London. He was commissioned to produce a sequence of seven bas-relief panels for the facade of The People's Palace, now the Great Hall of Queen Mary University of London, opened in 1936; in 1937 he designed the background of the first George VI definitive stamp series for the Post Office; and, in 1938, produced 'The Creation of Adam', three bas-reliefs in stone

for the Palace of Nations, the League of Nations building in Geneva.

In this period he was made a Royal Designer for Industry, the highest British award for designers, by the Royal Society of Arts and became a founder-member of the newly established Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry.

The Art Deco Midland Hotel, built in 1932–33 by the London Midland & Scottish Railway to the design of

Oliver Hill, included works by Gill. For the project, Gill produced: two sea horses, modelled as Morecambe shrimps, for the outside entrance; a round plaster relief on the ceiling of the circular staircase inside the hotel; a decorative wall map of the north west of England; and a large stone relief of Odysseus being welcomed from the sea by Nausicaa.



One of two sea horses at the Midland Hotel, Morecambe,
by Eric Gill

Eric Gill's type designs include: Perpetua (1926); Gill Sans (probably his most famous face, 1927–30); Perpetua Greek (1929); Golden Cockerel (for the Golden Cockerel Press, 1929); Solus (1929); Joanna (1930–31); Aries (1932); Floriated Capitals (1932); Bunyan (1934); Pilgrim (recut version of Bunyan, 1953); Jubilee (aka Cunard, 1934).

When Jan Tschichold redesigned Penguin Books in 1947–49, he specified Gill Sans for book titles on covers, and for branding Pelican books. In the 1990s, the BBC adopted Gill Sans for its house typeface.

Gill published many essays on the relationship between art and religion and a number of erotic engravings. He was known as a deeply religious man, mainly following Roman Catholicism, but his beliefs and practices were not orthodox. His diaries describe various (deviant) sexual activities in great detail and this aspect of his life was not known until the 1989 biography by Fiona MacCarthy – an earlier biography by Robert Speaight made no mention of it.

Gill died of lung cancer in Harefield Hospital, Hillingdon, in 1940 and was buried in Speen churchyard in the Chilterns, near Princes Risborough, the village where his last artistic community was based. His papers and library are archived at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at the University of California, Los Angeles.

When the revelations about Gill's private life were known, his personal and artistic achievements were reassessed and this seems to have 'left his artistic reputation strengthened'.

A local example of Gill's work for a church is the foundation stone of St Barnabas, Walthamstow, which is in St Barnabas Road, E17 8JZ. The church also contains

stained glass by Clayton and Bell (1903), and an oak rood by W D Caroe, Gill's architectural trainer (1921). It is also thought that Gill was responsible for a statue of Mother and Child on the south side of the nave in St Andrew's Leytonstone (E11 1JD).

TED MARTIN

Eric Gill and Edward Johnston

By March 1898 Edward Johnston had . . . arrived in London and was introduced to Harry Cowlshaw who introduced him to W R Lethaby.

Lethaby was principal of the newly formed Central School of Arts and Crafts in Upper Regent Street; he had been a friend of William Morris and helped to start the Arts and Crafts Movement . . .

Lethaby had decided that he wanted to start a class for lettering. Whilst Johnston wanted to be a student in that class, Lethaby had recognised his gift for calligraphy and decided that Johnston should run the class and teach lettering and illumination . . . In 1899 the pioneering evening class in lettering was held at the Central School and was very successful: in the first week there were seven students – the next week 16. Among Johnston's early students was Eric Gill, who was subsequently to design his own sans-serif typeface which was adopted by the LNER and was a staple of the British printing industry for over 40 years. In his *Autobiography* Gill writes:

'I went to Edward Johnston's class of writing and lettering . . . It was through Edward Johnston that I finally threw off the art nonsense of the Chichester art-school . . . I won't say that I owe everything I know about lettering to him . . . but I owe everything to the foundation which he laid.'

...

In 1902 Johnston leased chambers at 16 Old Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, where he was later joined by Eric Gill . . .

1912 was a busy year. Johnston moved his family to Ditchling in Sussex but, unlike Eric Gill, who had moved there in 1908 and who had an attractive Georgian house called Sopers, the Johnston's had moved to a rather ugly villa on the outskirts. However, Johnston and Gill began to collaborate again and later Gill was involved with the early stages of the design for the Underground typeface which was commissioned by Frank Pick in 1916 . . .

The sans-serif letters were based on the proportions of classical roman capital letters. These designs had a tremendous impact, especially in Germany, and Eric Gill often said that this design was the precursor of his own, more famous, Gill Sans typeface.

In 1935 Johnston wrote in a letter as follows:

'The only thing of mine for mass production which is fairly (i.e. truly) representative is the Block Letter Alphabet . . . for the Underground Railways . . .

I might add that this design appears to have become of considerable historical importance (in the world of Alphabets). It is in fact the foundational model of all *modern, respectable* block letters – including those painted on the Roads and Signs for Motorists and Eric Gill's v. popular sans serif Type.

From: 'Underground' typographer: Edward Johnston (1872–1944) by Ted Martin in Newsletter 195

Gill Sans

In his work for 'Monotype' Morison intended that there should be a good selection of classical typefaces before introducing modern designs. He felt that these modern faces would best come from someone who was a practical engraver, and this, of course, was Eric Gill (1882–1940). One of the first typefaces commissioned by Morison from Gill was Perpetua in 1926 and it was used commercially for the first time in 1929. In 1930 Gill designed Joanna for the Caslon Foundry and this was bought by the publishers J M Dent and later produced by 'Monotype' only for Dent's use. The trade did not get it until 1958.

Gill Sans³ came about through the friendship of Morison and Gill with a young bookseller, Douglas Cleverdon. Morison had designed catalogue covers for Cleverdon and Gill sketched out some lettering for his shopfront. It was as a result of Morison seeing this lettering that Gill was commissioned to produce Gill Sans. But perhaps an earlier influence on Gill had been Edward Johnston. In 1899 the pioneering evening class in lettering was held at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London by Johnston and was very successful: and Eric Gill was among Johnston's early students. Johnston designed the famous sans-serif typeface which was adopted by the London Underground Railways and later by London Transport and is still used today. Gill's sans-serif was adopted by the LNER and was a staple of the British printing industry for over 40 years.

It was introduced . . . in the 1930s, several variations being commissioned. It quickly became the type of government and railways in the 1930s and 1940s . . . and went into the early days of British Railways. Gill Sans Bold was used for the covers of Penguin books in the 40s and the type was in regular use in printing until the 1960s when it was supplanted by Univers and Helvetica. It has been revived as the BBC's house typeface, which is appropriate as Gill carved the Prospero and Ariel figures at the entrance to Broadcasting House in Langham Place, London.

From: Stanley Morison 1889–1967: a different Essex man, by Ted Martin in Newsletter 193 and from 'Underground' typographer: as above.

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