



# NewSPRAT

Newsletter of the Scottish Printing Archival Trust  
Issue No 5



**Falkirk** had expected to open its Callendar House museum – which will include a small printing workshop set-up of the 1820s period – by the end of 1997 but this has not proved possible. Plans now are for an opening as early as possible in 1998.

**Nairn** print museum opens. Tim Honnor, proprietor of the recently opened Piccolo Gallery and Old Printing Shop, 90 Harbour Street, Nairn (tel: 01667 454508) invites all interested in 'our printing past' to visit his premises when in the Morayshire area. He has a fine Albion (1845), a Furnival platen (c.1880) and an Arab platen of 1910 vintage as well as a large Swiss proofing press, general artifacts and wooden type displays. He is also interested in print items (or books) that are for disposal. The Gallery, is open weekdays from 11am–5pm (closed Mondays) and from 12pm–5pm Saturday and Sunday.

**Museum of Scotland** It is understood that, despite previous information to the contrary, the new Museum of Scotland project for Edinburgh's Chambers Street will, after all, have a printing presence. The Industrial Section will have a focus on 'Printing and Bookbinding' but this is likely to be modest due to restrictions of space resulting from architectural considerations and will have no reference to ancillary trades or to publishing. There will, however, be an additional 'Papermaking' section. The exhibition is expected to be 'object-based' using items from the Museum's collection and will not include any explanations of processes or historical perspective.

**Edinburgh's** Council hopes the Heritage

next-door Acheson House. Instead of traditional artifacts' display visitors would be welcomed by characters from the City's history and some of the crafts and trades for which Edinburgh has been famous, including printing, would be highlighted. Lottery principals were, it is understood, being asked to fund a feasibility study into the project.

## SIHS Revamp

The Scottish Industrial Heritage Society (of which SPRAT is a member) has taken steps to revitalise itself. Dropping attendances at meetings and a general lack of enthusiasm forced an in-depth examination of its aims and structures under Chairperson, Carol Whittaker, subsequent to analysis of the results of a questionnaire to members inviting comment on the Society's role. Carol, employed by Falkirk Museums, is currently involved in the Callendar House project which will, when ready (possibly 1998), include a small printing museum.

A meeting in June considered an excellent response from members, and a reconstructed committee is already intent on a reconstruction of the SIHS practices and procedures. A News Sheet has already been produced and distributed ('Issue No 1 of September 1997') and the Editor is working on a new format for the Newsletter which is due to appear twice a year.

The SIHS now has a web site which can be visited at:

<http://members.aol.com/sihs/>

The Scottish Industrial Heritage Society was formed in the early 1980s, from two

Layman's Guide to the Printer's Anatomy  
This illustration appeared on a Nelson family member's Christmas card some years ago. Artist unknown.

## New Museum Developments

**Dundee** Heritage Trust advises that a feasibility study by consultants is currently under way to assess the potential for a museum devoted to the city's journalism and printing industries. If acceptable to the authorities, it will occupy the remaining 25,000 square feet at Verdant Works and utilise the collection of equipment donated by DC Thomson. The Report was expected to be completed by Christmas 1997 for consideration in the New Year.

About 50% of the site at the Works has now been restored and opened to the public with the second major phase of exhibitions relating to the city's textile history.

**Crieff** plans for a printing visitor centre

## 'Once Upon a Time':

### *Tales of the Typesetters*

There were many worthies in the Printing Trade in Edinburgh in the old days of handsetting and piece work. There were, for example, the 'Count', the 'Weeper', the 'Wolf' and the 'Fighting Temeraire'. As to how they got these sobriquets no one could really tell, but they were known in all the Printing offices in the town.

The 'Weeper' belonged to Ayr and when anyone mentioned Burns's name he was dissolved in tears and would murmur 'Puir auld Rabbie, the Edinburgh folk treated him badly'.

It is said that once, when three of these worthies applied for a start in one of the best known shops after a good dram, the overseer cut them off by telling them 'We want steady men' to which one of them replied, 'Ye'll have tae apply to the wax-works then'.

When Neill's office was in the Police office close in the High Street – a huge tenement that overlooked the Cowgate – some of the comps used to slip out for a 'hauf' in a pub at the foot of the close. One very cold morning one of these comps shouted up to one of his fellows asking him to throw down his overcoat. The comp obliged but in the coat's descent the wind opened out the sleeves and a woman screamed 'There's a man committed suicide frae the Printing Office'. The Cowgate was black with people in a couple of seconds while its comp owner was inside the pub enjoying a good glass of whisky.

The 'Count' was the daddy of them all. A great glutton for food he was known to eat a whole half loaf for his 'piece'. His fellow workers got him in a restaurant one day and plied him with innumerable pies, bridies and similar items. After managing to devour over a dozen of these tasty bites, he suddenly got up and said, 'Well boys, I'll have to leave you now. This is Burns's birthday and the wife's got in a big haggis and a goblet of tripe'.

A younger comp who was continually on the books was sent to a Dalkeith firm and in one whole day's work could only show a couple of stickfuls' setting. The overseer was dumbfounded and retorted,

'Look here, ma mannie, ye'll no' dae for here. I'm drying ye up the nicht.' 'Oh, but', said the comp, 'ye'll need tae give me three days!' 'Three days', said the overseer, 'I'd like to gi'e ye sixty days!'

## SPRAT Collection Storage

It was agreed at SPRAT's December 1997 meeting of Trustees to accept the offers of the Museums Division (Department of Recreation, City of Edinburgh) and Napier University to accommodate the books, papers and various artifacts which make up the collection and which are presently stored at the premises of the Hon Secretary. This will ensure that the contents are suitably housed in regard to temperature and weather proofing. Appropriate terms and conditions have been concluded with Helen Clark, Edinburgh's Keeper of Social History who is also a Trustee of SPRAT. It is expected that, in the main, books, manuals and other papers will be kept at Napier as an adjunct to its Edward Clark Collection while practical printing items and other artifacts will be held at one of the City's storage annexes. Accessibility by SPRAT representatives and others will be ensured by arrangement.

Stocks of SPRAT publications in the *Reputation for Excellence* series are also now being stored at Napier University's Craighouse Campus for the reasons given above. Small stocks will continue to be held, however, at the Hon Secretary's address for the supply of future orders of all titles.

## Edinburgh Typographia

*NewSPRAT* Issue No 3 referred to a gift received from the Edinburgh Room of the Central Library in Edinburgh of a number of copies of the Typographia's Annual Reports which make fascinating reading. Excerpts were included in the issue but it was admitted that we had been unsuccessful in finding out more about the organisation which started as the 'Edinburgh Branch of the British Typographia'. Its existence covered the period c.1888–1939. Further research has been carried out involving the Archive Section of Heriot-Watt University and the Library of Napier University which, while not explaining fully the significance of the body

does trace its growth through what was Heriot-Watt College up to its Printing Department's move to and absorption by Napier College. We are particularly anxious to determine what happened to the Typographia's Library which appears from its listing to have been of some substance. The Trust would welcome any information which would add to our knowledge of the Typographia and the whereabouts of its Library. It seems that printing classes carried on by the Typographia (a voluntary body) were transferred to the Heriot-Watt College in about 1908, it being realised that printing education and training could be advantageously carried out in the college and, with the assistance of the Master Printers' Association, it was thought desirable to develop a complete printing school for the teaching of all phases of book production. The Typographia did, however, continue to function, providing (into the 1930s) an annual series of lectures in the Heriot-Watt College.

## Nelson Bicentenary

The House of Nelson celebrates this event in 1998. Thomas Nelson and Co became world famous for its pioneer work in the fields of cheap editions, educational publishing and books for the young. The two sons of the founder (William and Thomas) extended the scope of the reprint trade after 1835 from their Hope Park works in Edinburgh where they were able to carry out every process of book production. The firm moved from there to its Parkside site in 1878 after a disastrous fire. The printing element of the company was bought over by Morrison & Gibb in 1968 when the factory and offices were razed to allow the erection of the present-day offices of Scottish Widows.

The publishing arm of the original company is still in existence and operates from offices in the Home Counties.

## Request for assistance

Are you, or were you, involved in the printing industry? If not, perhaps someone you know is, or was, and could help us in our research for suitable artifacts, memorabilia of all kinds – particularly photographic, company histories and other material – and stories of interesting times and individuals.

## The Edward Clark Collection Project

Most readers of *NewSPRAT* will be aware of the Edward Clark Collection. It is a unique collection of books, journals, manuscripts and slides held at Napier University. It illustrates and describes the history and development of printing and publishing from the invention of printing to the present day. The Collection represents an international resource for scholars of book printing history. Napier University Library was successful in securing funds to catalogue and conserve the collection.

This article concentrates on the cataloguing of the collection.

Since a comprehensive catalogue is the key to maximising the use of such a collection, the aims of the project are:

- to produce a detailed, accurate, bibliographic record for every item in the collection
- to classify each item
- to make sure these records are widely accessible

The existing catalogue is valuable as a checklist and a reference book, but is no longer comprehensive and does not provide the multiple access points that an automated catalogue can offer.

Work began on the project in the middle of April 1996. The first stage involved becoming familiar with the collection, discerning how and why the collection is used and understanding what information a user of the catalogue wants.

The material is being catalogued to internationally recognised standards onto Napier University Library's Dynix catalogue.

Since users of research collections are often just as interested in the book as a physical artifact (as in the content of the book) it was decided to concentrate on cataloguing the material in the most detailed way, offering users access by elements of physical description as well as content. As many physical features of each item are being recorded, this may include the binding of a work, the paper specification or typeface used, and any bookplates or provenance markings. All

## The Jones Boy: Honour for George W. Jones

The latest issue of the NPHT Newsletter (No 19, July 1997) reports that the famous printer/typographer (1860–1942) has had his achievements commemorated by the installation of a plaque on 30 April 1997 in Upton-upon-Severn. It is placed on an exterior wall of Upton's Primary School which he attended between 1865 and 1871, which he left at the early age of eleven after being orphaned. It appears that the commemorative plaque came about as the direct result of researches by Lawrence Wallis for a book being published under the title *George W. Jones, Printer Laureate*.

It is not generally known that Jones, who went on to become 'the best all-round printer Great Britain has ever produced' (in the assessment of a leading international critic) spent a short period of his working life in Scotland. Leaving Leicester in February 1888 he went to the Edinburgh Cooperative Printing Company which at that time employed some eighty people and operated seven cylinder and two platen presses. (It is understood that the firm's proprietor had, earlier, fallen out with the principals of the Cooperative Society (SCWS as was) causing them to establish a large printing house in Glasgow to service their requirements and thus leaving the press in Edinburgh short of work.) Jones was approached as someone who might be able to fill the business shortfall and he was put in charge of a special department for 'Artistic Work' producing a number of specimens of work in this genre while with the firm which changed its principal name at this time to the Darien Press.

In addition to his normal commercial duties, Jones formed a branch locally of the British Typographia and initiated classes for typography in conjunction with the University Preparatory Institute which were given in the lecture hall of Minto House with nearly 100 students attending. (Editor's Note: Excerpts of printed items from the Typographia Annual Reports of these classes have previously appeared in *NewSPRAT*. See also separate Typographia item in this newsletter issue.)

He mounted an exhibition of fine printing in January 1889 as a way of stimulating interest in students among whom was William Maxwell who was later to become Managing Director of the famous Edinburgh book printers R & R Clark Limited.

Jones departed from Edinburgh to London by the middle of 1889 for reasons unknown.

(Editor's Note: *NewSPRAT* wishes to acknowledge *Professional Printer* Volume 38 Number 3 ('George W Jones [1860–1942]: A preliminary study of his life and work by Lawrence Wallis') as a source of information for this item.

those bodies and persons connected with the production or history of a volume, such as former owner, printer, engraver, binder and paper manufacturer, are being recorded. All provenance markings on a volume such as stamps, annotations, bookplates and signatures are being described. A virtue of the original catalogue are the typographical notes prepared by Harry Carter, who was the archivist to the Oxford University Press; these are being included (or a summary) in the records.

Each item is being allocated a Dewey decimal classification number. This gives a subject access to the collection that was previously unavailable as the existing catalogue was arranged largely in chronological, alphabetical order. During the course of cataloguing correspondence has been found hidden between leaves of

books. Often these letters, written by the author, printer or publisher of the work, shed light on the history of the book's production. At present these are being catalogued on a separate database with the other manuscript material in the collection.

Almost half of the whole collection has now been catalogued with, at last count, over 3,000 records having been created. These are available on the Napier University library OPAC. With the library catalogue available over the Internet

(<http://www.napier.ac.uk/depts/library/clark/ecchome.html>)

scholars worldwide will be able to search the collection's holdings. Use of and interest in the collection has already increased as a result of the on-line catalogue. (Contributed by Sarah Forbes)

