'A DEFINITE CLAIM TO BEAUTY': SOME TREASURES FROM THE RYLANDS PRIVATE PRESS COLLECTION*

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Emery Walker's lecture in November 1888 to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society is a well-known landmark in the history of the English Private Press movement, and all acknowledge that it had a considerable influence on William Morris and the foundation of the Kelmscott Press. John Rylands died on 11 December 1888, and by 1891, when the first Kelmscott Press publication was issued, Mrs Rylands had already appointed an architect, Basil Champneys, to build the library she was erecting in memory of her husband. Naturally, she was also already amassing books to fill the shelves, and therefore she was very well placed to form a collection of English Private Press books, acquiring all the publications of the Kelmscott Press together with many of the publications of the later presses which followed the ideals established by William Morris. Mrs Rylands was guided in her selection by Revd Samuel Gosnell Green, his third son, J. Arnold Green, and by her first joint-librarian, E. Gordon Duff.

From the Library's accession records it can be demonstrated that Mrs Rylands herself acquired all fifty-three of the Kelmscott Press publications: these were retained at her home, Longford Hall, Stretford, and were only accessioned by the Library after her death in 1908. Nevertheless, the Library purchased on its own account six Kelmscott Press publications, the most notable being a vellum copy of Morris's masterpiece, the 1896 edition of Chaucer's Works.1 Inevitably, in Mrs Rylands's declining years, her Librarian, Henry Guppy, increasingly played a part in the selection of Private Press books. However, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that it was the fortuitous combination of events in 1888 followed by the policy adopted in the succeeding two decades that ensured that this Library should have such a rich, outstanding collection of the earliest and most important examples of the English Private Press movement. It is not the purpose of this article to describe in detail the collection which is available in

* The author is indebted to Dr C.W.R.D. Moseley who commented upon an earlier draft of this article.

1 The Story of the Glittering Plain.
2 Book Committee Minutes of the Governors of the John Rylands Library, 11 March 1901.
Manchester, but, rather, to offer information concerning some of the rare and indeed unique items in the collection.

Although Mrs Rylands acquired all of the published works issued by the Kelmscott Press, the Library had to wait some fifty years before it was possible to acquire examples of Morris’s earlier writings which had been published commercially, albeit to his own designs, such as the 1873 edition of *Love is Enough*. However, the one outstanding gap in an attempt towards a complete Morris collection was, until recently, the fact that none of the experimental volumes issued between 1888 and 1890 were available in the Library. Sadly, one of these is still wanting, but in the autumn of 1988 *The Roots of the Mountains* was purchased. It is an unopened copy in mint condition of the special issue on Whatman paper in a tapestry binding, one of only 250 copies. It had been retained in the same family library since publication. In the summer of 1989 *The House of the Wolfings* was purchased, one of a hundred large paper copies printed on Dickinson handmade paper at the Chiswick Press.

For all the major private presses, collections are available of specimens, announcements and other ephemera together with relevant correspondence. That for the Kelmscott Press includes a number of examples of jobbing printing such as the associates’ card of the Deaconess Institution for the Diocese of Rochester, 83 North Side, Clapham Common, the Hammersmith Socialist Society invitations, and several different examples of the scholarship certificates issued by the London County Council Technical Education Board. As Colin Franklin points out, the history of the Press can be traced through the lists of publications occasionally issued, and there are sixteen examples in the Library’s collection: they are dated 30 January, 16 June, 2 July and 1 December 1894, 24 April, 1 July, 19 August and 26 November 1895, 22 January, 1 June and 12 November 1896, 16 February, 28 June, 28 July and 22 November 1897 (not 23 November 1897 as stated by Peterson), and 25 February 1898. Franklin states that the list dated 22 November 1897 is the last list, and it is certainly

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4 Gunnlaug Saga, 1890.


6 The Library’s call number for this collection is R71718.


8 In Golden type. The collection of certificates includes Peterson’s D3.14, one of only twelve copies printed.


true that it includes details of the disposal of the wood-blocks and special ornaments when the Kelmscott Press ceased its activities: however, the list dated 25 February 1898 not only advertises the publication of *Love is Enough* and *A Note by William Morris* on 24 March 1898, but also includes a list of five other publications together with the statement that ‘three hand-presses and the remaining plant of the Kelmscott Press (exclusive of the type and ornaments) will be sold by private treaty’.

One of the later Kelmscott Press productions eluded Mrs Rylands for on 8 September 1897 S.C. Cockerell, Secretary of the Press, wrote: ‘I beg to thank you for your order for a second copy of *Sigurd the Volsung*. I regret that it is quite impossible to get the *Froissart* sheets that were struck of [sic] for Friends. Only 32 were printed, and these were all distributed’. Thus, while the Library has no copy of the sixteen-page fragment, it was possible to acquire one of the 160 copies of the *Two Trial Pages... of Froissart* which were printed on vellum and published on 7 October 1897.

By 30 December 1897, S.C. Cockerell was warning Messrs Sherratt and Hughes, the Manchester bookshop and the Library’s agent, of the impending closure of the Kelmscott Press and asking for pre-payment for future orders ‘in order that the books of the Press may be closed without any avoidable delay’. He adds: ‘I do not think that there is any chance of a vellum set coming into the market. There are only three complete sets at present’. Cockerell was still dealing with stray orders at Hammersmith after the scheduled closure of the Press. On 6 May 1898 he despatched to Manchester a copy of *The Sundering Flood* originally ordered on 19 November 1897 with his profuse apologies for the errors of his agent, Messrs J. & J. Leighton.

Amongst the collection of Kelmscott Press ephemera is an item with a Manchester connection. Morris’s socialist leanings led him to lecture in Manchester on a number of occasions, and Charles Rowley first heard him speak on *Wealth and Riches* at a joint meeting of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts and the Literary Club. Morris was subsequently invited by Rowley to deliver several lectures to the members of the famous Ancoats Brotherhood, and gathered an audience of nearly one thousand working people. Morris returned each year until his death. For an annual subscription of one shilling

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12 Peterson, *Bibliography*, item A50. No second copy was in fact then purchased for the Library.

13 R71718.29.

14 Peterson, *Bibliography*, item D1.8.

15 ibid., item A46.

16 Complete sets of all Kelmscott Press books had been advertised at £500 and £650 in the lists dated 16 February 1897 and 28 July 1897.

17 Peterson, *Bibliography*, item A51.

the several thousand members of the Ancoats Brotherhood not only gained free admission to the winter series of Sunday afternoon concerts and lectures but could also take part in the summer rambles, visits to the Lake District and North Wales, and in the Easter excursions to the Continent. Each Spring a brochure describing the forthcoming programme of events was distributed to all the members, and that for March 1894–March 1895 was designed and printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. The cover consists of the frontispiece used in The Dream of John Ball (1892), with the woodcut designed by Burne-Jones, below which is printed the Levellers’ popular saying ‘When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman’, the text of Ball’s Blackheath sermon at the time of Wat Tyler’s rebellion. The brochure also includes extracts from the works of Tennyson and Ruskin.

It is not in every library that one can find over seventy copies of the same edition of the same work, and when this occurs there should always be a special reason for it. In the Library’s collection of Kelmscott Press publications one title is represented by over seventy copies: it is William Morris’s translation of a thirteenth-century French romance, The Tale of King Floras and the Fairjehane. James and Mary Lee Tregaskis purchased seventy-six copies in sheets of this work and sent them to bookbinders throughout the world, the object being to mount an international exhibition. The instructions to the craftsmen were without restriction save that the cost of the work was expected to be about £2 for each binding and the Eastern binders were specifically asked for examples of native and characteristic workmanship. Of the seventy-six copies in sheets, seventy-three were actually bound: one was returned from Kashmir where no binder could be found, one was lost in an earthquake in Greece, and one Saxon example was destroyed by fire in Altenburg. The collection today consists of seventy-four volumes as one copy in the original Kelmscott Press binding was added before the exhibition catalogue was published. It is interesting to note that neither Ransom with eighty-five copies nor Peterson with seventy-six copies quote the

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19 Peterson, Bibliography, item D5.
20 ibid., item A6.
21 Franklin, Private Presses, 48.
22 The collection of Shakespeare First Folios at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, formed for Charlton Hinman’s collation researches, is an obvious example.
23 Peterson, Bibliography, item A21.
24 This was by no means the first time that Mr and Mrs Tregaskis had attempted to mount such an exhibition, as in 1891 forty copies of Charles Kingsley’s Water Babies were sent to binders in Great Britain and Europe.
26 Ransom, Private Presses, 327.
27 Peterson, Bibliography, 57.
correct total number of exhibits: additionally Peterson gives a wrong date for the closure of the exhibition.  

The International Bookbinding Exhibition opened at the Caxton Head, 232 High Holborn, London WC on Wednesday, 27 June 1894, and immediately attracted great interest with press reports appearing in nearly one hundred publications. A handsome catalogue of the exhibition was published with eight full-colour illustrations and a survey of the collection by Cyril Davenport, the foremost authority of his day, although his work was later to be decried by Howard Nixon. The countries represented in the Exhibition are listed in alphabetical order in the catalogue, and they are (with the number of items in brackets): Algiers (1), Australia (2), Austria (1), Belgium (1), Canada (1), Ceylon (1), China (2), Denmark (1), England (21), Egypt (1), France (8), Germany (6), Holland (2), India (4), Ireland (2), Italy (3), Japan (2), Java (1), Persia (1), Russia (1), Scotland (2), Siam (1), Spain (1), Sweden (1), Switzerland (1), Tunis (1), United States of America (5).

The Daily Telegraph published a lengthy account of the forthcoming exhibition on 25 June 1894. The critic notes:

There is scarcely an example in this interesting collection which does not merit separate remark. It must suffice, however, to call attention to those pieces in which special novelty of design or beauty of workmanship are to be noted. The materials used are, of course, for the most part calf, morocco, vellum and pigskin. But metal, wood, needlework, and snakeskin have also been employed with characteristic results. Curiously enough, it is from a European city whose craftsmen are held in no particular esteem that the most elaborate example of bookbinding in leather has come to Mr Tregaskis. To MM. Fristrup and Andersen, of Copenhagen, belongs the honour of having fashioned . . . a covering of inlaid morocco which easily outdistances all competing in the same field. Thirteen coloured leathers are used in this piece, while the gold tooling is also very fine. Another charming design in morocco mosaic work hails from Stockholm, the prevailing hues being lemon, dark green and white. Mr Tregaskis has not looked for beautiful work at home without finding it. A crushed olive morocco binding, strewn with elaborate designs in gold, entitles Morrell’s of London, to high rank among English craftsmen.

After describing in detail many of the European and Oriental bindings, the writer turns his attention to two examples which have been embroidered: ‘These are Mrs Walter Crane’s reproduction in coloured threads and silks of a design by her husband, and a rich example of Oriental embroidery from Madras, worked principally in gold and silver wire, and freely bespangled.’

28 7 July 1894 instead of 14 July 1894.

29 J. and M.L. Tregaskis, International Bookbinding Exhibition by the Chief Craftsmen from All Parts of the World (London: Tregaskis, 1894). Even this catalogue adds to the confusion over the total number of exhibits as it lists seventy-five items. However, numbers 47 and 67 do not appear in the main sequence, but 67 Spain is added on an erratum slip pasted in after number 75, obviously a late arrival.
In view of the original instructions that no binding should cost more than £2 it is instructive to consider The Standard's comments, published on 26 June 1894, on the finest and cheapest bindings in the collection:

The most costly book in the collection comes from Copenhagen... It cost £21.0.0, and is a magnificent bit of mosaic work; the whole of the design is exquisitely inlaid, in thirteen coloured leathers, calf and morocco, the lines of junction being covered by gold tooling. The cheapest binding comes from Taw Eepin of Batavia. The binding consists of stained leather with flap; tooled in blind, and lined with wood fibre. This cost £2.10.0. The most beautifully-bound book, and the most artistically-designed in the whole, is the work of Morrell, of London. The binding is of crushed olive morocco, gold tooled and inlaid; lettered in gold tooling, with arabesques along the back. On the upper cover is a lily plant with abundant foliage, outlined in gold, the crown of five blossoms inlaid with white morocco. The background is filled in with nebulae of gold dots, and the whole enclosed in a border of dots and leaves. The lower cover bears an open diaper pattern of crowns connected by leafy sprays, within a similar edge to that in the upper cover.

The following announcement appeared in the St James's Gazette for 4 July 1894:

By command of the Queen, Mr and Mrs Tregaskis, of the Caxton Head, High Holborn, took their interesting collection of bookbindings to Windsor Castle yesterday, where they were exhibited in the grand corridor for her inspection. Her Majesty was accompanied by his Imperial Highness the Czarewitch, her Royal Highness the Duchess of Albany, and her Grand Ducal Highness Princess Alice of Hesse.

For this reason the exhibition, after being returned to London, remained open for an extra week, and finally closed on 14 July 1894.

It had always been the intention to sell the collection at the close of the exhibition, preferably as one lot, and an announcement to this effect appeared in The Standard for 26 June 1894. On 11 July 1894 Tregaskis wrote to J. Arnold Green as follows:

May we call your attention to the enclosed press notices which you may not have seen and which we thought might interest Mrs Rylands; they are culled from over 70 complimentary notices we have received. You will observe from one of them that by the Queen's command the collection was taken to Windsor last week for her Majesty's inspection. She expressed herself delighted with the Bookbindings. At this time of writing we have not sold the collection as a whole, altho' about one half has been ordered provided the collection is separated, which however we should greatly regret having to do. We will wire you on the 13th as agreed (?) whether they are available or not, and should be pleased to hear your decision as soon after that date as convenient.

Mrs Rylands purchased the complete collection immediately.

For no press other than the Kelmscott Press is there available in

30 The call number for this letter and the newspaper cuttings is R34554.
the Library a complete collection of its publications, but that of the Doves Press is virtually complete with a total of forty-six titles present: of these, thirty-two are vellum copies. The only major publication the Library lacks is the 1916 edition of Goethe. The collection of announcements and prospectuses for the Doves Press number twenty-two and range in date from 1901, the prospectus for the English Bible, to June 1916, towards the close of the Press. Some of these, and also the Prospice of 1913, bear the brief annotations of the printer, T.J. Cobden-Sanderson. Of interest is his statement in the List of Books in Preparation, 1911–12 that Wordsworth’s Decade of Years, a selection, was to be considered as a single poem; also of note, in the announcement of April 1915, is his justification for publishing in wartime the poetry of Goethe.

C.H. St John Hornby’s Ashendene Press is represented in the Library by twenty-seven volumes of which twenty-one are vellum copies. St John Hornby’s own bibliography lists forty publications of the Press apart from lists and other ephemera. However, a number of the earlier volumes and a few of the later books were not available for sale, and therefore it is not surprising that the Library has failed to obtain a complete set. Nevertheless, the Library does have a copy of the 1920 edition of Henry James’s Refugees in Chelsea which was reprinted from the Times Literary Supplement of 23 March 1916, and written to help the local Chelsea Committee raise funds in America to start an industry for crippled Belgian soldiers. None of the fifty-six copies was available for sale, and presumably St John Hornby sent a copy to the Librarian, Henry Guppy, in recognition of the latter’s involvement in the restoration of war-damaged Louvain University Library. Other examples of Ashendene Press ‘books not available for sale’ to be found in the Library’s collection include Four Tales by Oscar Wilde, 1924, of which the seventy-two copies were printed for Rosamund M. Hornby’s tenth birthday and signed by her, and Poems Written in the Year 1913 by Robert Bridges, of which ninety-one copies were printed in December 1914, and, of these, fifty copies were presented to the Poet Laureate. The Library received one of the remaining forty-one copies, a copy with the initial letters in both red and blue. On 2 July 1915 St John Hornby wrote to Guppy: ‘I have just printed a small edition, for private circulation only, of Robert Bridges’ Poems, 1913, and I am sending you a copy for the j.r.l. as I thought

31 Ransom, Private Presses, 254, item 48. The four ephemeral, or possibly non-existent, items also wanting are 253, item 38 and 254, items 49–51.
32 The call number is R71711.
33 Ransom, Private Presses, 253, item 13.
35 ibid., 100, item 7
36 Ransom, Private Presses, 206, item 37.
37 ibid., 205, item 30.
you might like it to place with the other books from my Press'.

In addition to the collection of books printed by the Ashendene Press, the Library also possesses a collection of ephemera, announcements and lists, a total of thirty-one items ranging in date from 1901 to 1933 and illustrating the history of the Press. It is perhaps not surprising that the first twelve books listed by Ransom are not to be found in the Library as only one of these was available for sale. However, the Library does possess a copy of the 1901 edition of *The Revelation of St. John* together with the announcement of its publication, beautifully set in Horace Hart’s Fell types. The announcement also includes details of the forthcoming publication of Dante’s *Inferno* ‘for which I am having cut a new fount of type, modelled closely upon an old 15th century fount, a very noble type’. This is Subiaco type, originally projected for use by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, and the influence of Walker and Cockerell shows in the fact that St John Hornby used it continuously up to 1925.

As well as obtaining one of the thirty copies for sale of the 1901 *Apocalypse* the Library obviously showed appropriate interest in acquiring a copy of the forthcoming Dante, for, on 24 February 1901, St John Hornby informed Guppy: ‘I am sending you, as promised, a proof, on vellum, of my new type’. Actually, two examples were received for the new Dante, a proof on vellum and a proof on Japanese vellum. This latter is printed on one side only and consists of the text of page 30 together with the woodcut at the head, but without the initial C and the decoration before Canto Quinto. Below the page number St John Hornby had written in red ink ‘Specimen page of “Inferno”, but it will be printed on English handmade paper, not on Japanese. The cuts have been re-drawn and cut on wood. There will be 13 of them in the book’. Henry Guppy must have been reasonably impressed as he placed a standing order for a vellum or paper copy of all publications of the Press to be supplied to the Library’s agents, Messrs Sherratt and Hughes.

In November 1920 St John Hornby issued a brochure announcing the forthcoming publication by the Ashendene Press of Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. On 27 November 1920 he wrote from Shelley House to Henry Guppy as follows:

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38 The call number is R39100. This is one of the few letters from St John Hornby in the Library which have been typed; curiously, while St John Hornby has altered in his own hand the P of Press from lower to upper case, the j.r.l. remains uncorrected.
39 The call number is R71719.
41 ibid., 204, item 13. This is the last book printed with the Fell types.
42 ibid., 204, item 14.
43 Leaf d1, pages 17–18.
44 This is R71719.4.
45 R71719.19. ‘The printing of this book which was begun in 1913 and interrupted by the War is now nearing completion’.
FIGS. 1–2.
Pencil sketch and ink design for the initial bloomer Q for the opening of the Athanasian Creed in the Essex House Prayer Book, showing the mouth of Hell (R35293, 29)
FIGS. 3–4.
Pencil sketch and ink design for the opening of the Commination prayers in the Essex House Prayer Book (R35293, 78–9)
FIGS. 5–6.
Pencil sketch and ink design for the initial bloomer O for the American edition of the Essex House Prayer Book, showing President Theodore Roosevelt (R35293, 88–9)
FIG. 7.
Pencil sketch for the portrait of Charles Simeon in the Essex House Prayer Book, with C.R. Ashbee's notes (R35293, 99)
... Your appreciation of my work... is very pleasant coming from a judge of fine printing like yourself. I have not yet had an order from Sherratt and Hughes, but I will see that a paper copy of 'Boccaccio' is reserved for you. There is a great run on these private press books just at present, and I sold out almost the whole edition by the first post after sending out the prospectus, which only went to a very few people. I am keeping back a certain number of copies for a few days for old subscribers to my books.

Though I am sorry you should not have a vellum copy, I am rather relieved, as there are twice as many people wanting them as I have copies for disposal. Personally I think I like printing on good paper best. Modern vellum is not like that of the XVth century Italian MSS. 46

Despite St John Hornby's views on the subject, Guppy continued to insist on the supply of a vellum copy of each title if at all possible. However, there were difficulties in fulfilling this demand with one work printed by the Ashendene Press, 47 for on 12 March 1924 St John Hornby wrote to Guppy:

My edition of 'Faerie Queene' for which you have subscribed for a vellum copy for the John Rylands Library will shortly be issued, but I regret to say that there will be some delay in sending your copy, as in process of binding it it was found that two of the sheets (though printed 15 months ago) got smudged. This must be due to there having been too much grease (?) in these two sheets, which prevented the ink ever drying. It is the first time I have ever known such a thing happen. The consequence is that I have to reset and reprint these two sheets for your copy. This will take time, as vellum sheets dry slowly and must not be bound too soon after printing. I am very sorry for the delay. 48

It was on 15 September 1924 that St John Hornby was able to write:

I am sending you during the next few days the long delayed vellum copy of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' of which I had to reprint some sheets.

As I shall be away in Italy for the next few weeks, perhaps you will kindly put off paying for the book until the middle of October. 49

The Essex House Press, manned by former employees of the Kelmscott Press, was a communal project centred on the Guild of Handicraft, but reflected the personality of C.R. Ashbee. Both Ransom 50 and Cave 51 are rather lukewarm in their descriptions of the publications of this Press. The Library possesses thirty-eight items printed first at Essex House and later at Chipping Campden, and of these twenty-three are vellum copies. For the Essex House Press the collection of prospectuses and other ephemera numbers twenty-three

46 R71719.21.
47 St John Hornby, Descriptive Bibliography, 78, item 32.
48 R58056.2.
49 R58056.3.
50 Ransom, Private Presses, 41.
items ranging in date from June 1901 to May 1906. One of the earliest announcements available for that masterpiece The Prayer Book of Edward VII is dated December 1901 and mentions such features not proceeded with, as green vellum bindings with gold block designs and clasps. Also announced in December 1901 was the association of the Essex House Press with the London Survey Committee for the publication of such items as The Old Palace of Bromley issued in 1902 (not on Essex House paper). In February 1903 the announcement for The Parentalia of Sir Christopher Wren also contains an advertisement for the Essex House Bindery which accepts orders ‘through any bookseller’ for books to be bound ‘in specially prepared designs in various leathers, and also in ebony, rose, and holly wood and in silver with enamels’. The invitation to the private view of the second annual exhibition of the Guild of Handicraft at their new gallery at 67A Bond Street on 20 November 1903 draws attention to the fact that ‘A feature of the Exhibition during the first few days will be the vellum presentation copy of the King Edward VII Prayer Book bound by Miss Power at the Guild’s Bindery, from Mr C.R. Ashbee’s design. This copy, however, will be withdrawn after the first few days for presentation to His Majesty’. The 1904 announcement of the publication of The Last Records of a Cotswold Community, a study of old field sports, is accompanied by versions of the frontispiece, showing Dover’s Hill where the Cotswold Games were played, the blocks being by Edmund New. A New Proposal Made by the Essex House Press to its Patrons and Subscribers indicates that the Press:

\[\ldots\text{is prepared to take special orders from private individuals for hand printing of the finest sort}\ldots\text{. This suggestion has been made to meet the wishes of some collectors of books and other works of art, desirous of having interesting catalogues of these printed; and also because of the fact that it appears undesirable at present to increase the output of books, but rather to wait for a while and then do another large piece of work.}\]

The standard was to be that associated with the printing done by the Essex House Press for the London Survey Committee, and the Press was also proposing ‘to print for private use of their owners, short accounts of interesting or historic country houses’. In the autumn of 1905 the Press issued a complete list of publications still in print, and Ashbee suggests that they ‘would make exceptional and welcome CHRISTMAS PRESENTS’. The Guild of Handicraft regularly held exhibitions at the new Bond Street Gallery, and the invitations to private views, available in the collection, are addressed to Gordon Duff, former joint librarian of the John Rylands Library.

52 The call number is R72129.
53 R72129.5.
54 R72129.8.
The undoubted masterpiece of the Essex House Press is *The Prayer Book of King Edward VII*. Planned during the final years of the reign of Queen Victoria, it was completed in the autumn of 1903. The work was intended to be the twentieth-century equivalent of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer often known as *The First Book of Edward VI*. The publication was illustrated by about 150 cuts and borders designed by C.R. Ashbee and engraved by Clemence Housman and W.H. Hooper; however, many of the initial bloomers had first been used in the 1901 *Psalter*. Two versions of the text were prepared, one of which was destined for the American market. Four hundred paper copies were offered at twelve guineas, and nine vellum copies were sold at £40, a special copy on vellum being presented to King Edward. The Library possesses both a paper and a vellum copy together with copies of *A Key to the Principal Decorations in the Prayer Book of King Edward VII*. Crawford draws attention to the fact that all the illustrations were by Ashbee, and continues: ‘The original drawings were in pencil and probably in the light and sketchy style . . . some of them were worked over in ink by Robert Catterson-Smith to adapt them to the simpler tones of wood-engravings’. However, Crawford rather doubts whether any substantial collection of the original drawings now exists. A volume with a manuscript title-page (lettered in white ink) reading *Original Drawings and Designs for the Prayer Book of King Edward VII by C.R. Ashbee* was acquired by Mrs Rylands around 1904 and accessioned in the Library after her death in 1908. This stout quarto, bound by Annie Power at the Essex House Bindery in the traditional style of half leather with wooden boards, contains some 125 leaves, and ninety-nine of these have one or more drawings and designs on them. In all, there are 221 items, of which eighty-two are pencil drawings, 122 are ink designs and seventeen are proofs. Alternatively, it can be described as designs for thirty-nine full pages together with twenty-one portraits, 115 initial bloomers and forty-six ornaments and borders.

The volume opens with the design of the frontispiece followed by a portrait, head and shoulders of King Edward VII. The inked design for the title page bears the note ‘This is to be cut out’ where the central text should be. A pencil drawing on squared paper of Queen Elizabeth I,

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58 ibid., 267, item 38.
60 ibid., 459, notes 78 and 96.
61 Little is at present known about this transaction, and it would appear unlikely that the Ashbee Journals, now at King’s College, Cambridge, contain material which would shed light on it.
Archbishop Parker and Edward VI is arranged on the page as in the printed version of b1 recto, with a note on the type area. An additional note on Parker reads ‘he has grey hair – not whiskers CRA’. The inked designs for Groups One to Eight of the Processional Pictures bear no names for the first four, but names have been added in pencil for the last four. A note on Group Seven indicates that Newton was taken from Kneller’s portrait, and on Group Eight notes give the sources for the portraits of Seabury, Newman, Colenso, Pusey and Kingsley together with the additional note ‘Queen Anne has been finished!’

Pencil sketches and inked designs of monks chanting and puritans reading precede a long section of drawings and designs of initial bloomers. There are six alternative As, ten Bs, two Ds, four Es, one F, five Gs, seven Hs, eight Is, three Js, six Ls, five Ms, one N, fourteen Os, two Ps, two Qs, one R, two Ss, eighteen Ts, one U, one V and ten Ws. In general, the use of each design is noted by listing the number of the Psalm under each bloomer. One of the most interesting, however, is the pencil sketch and ink design for the O which contains the portrait of President Roosevelt, which was only used in the American version of the text. Sketches and proofs of the signs of the zodiac precede twelve leaves devoted to ideas for the lay-out of pages 14–18 of the text, the Proper Lessons and Proper Psalms. There are two different drawings for the heading to the Service of Holy Communion, and three designs for the marriage of Christ and his Church. Crawford is correct in his view that the design for the opening of the Commination prayers is one of the most strikingly successful of Ashbee’s drawings, and the pencil sketches of Shimei and King David show how the artist developed his ideas. The pencil sketches for the eight groups of Processional Pictures also illustrate this point, and they are accompanied by separate portraits of Fisher, More, Tyndale, John Wesley and Mandell Creighton. In the pencil sketch for Group Seven, under Butler Ashbee has written ‘I’m so tired of these blessed bishops, please finish him off!’ with the additional instruction by the side of the figure of Butler ‘clench his fist’. Two portraits of Victoria show the Queen facing in different directions, and there is also a portrait of King James II. The volume ends with a cardinal’s hat with one tassel, a portrait of Bishop Benjamin Hoadly who, according to Ashbee, ‘was crippled, and always preached kneeling’, and a pencil drawing of Charles Simeon facing in the opposite direction from that to be found in the printed version.

62 The pencil sketches for the eight groups occur much later in the volume.
63 For pages 12 and 13 in the text.
64 The impressive opening of the Athanasian Creed showing the mouth of Hell.
65 Page 206 in the text.
66 Page 242 in the text.
67 Page 257 in the text.
68 Crawford, Ashbee, 392.
69 ‘A cardinal’s hat has 15 tassels’, notes Ashbee.
In the space of this article it is not possible to list all the drawings and designs, but it can be assumed that the volume contains items relating to virtually the whole of the illustrative material to be found in *The Prayer Book of King Edward VII*. Furthermore, Ashbee's own comments and instructions are on many of the leaves, and therefore the research potential of the collection is very considerable.

The Library has substantial holdings of books printed by the early private presses, but regrettably over the last sixty or seventy years the financial situation has been such that it has been possible to acquire only representative items from the later private presses. Nevertheless, the Library's collection consists of an impressive display of some of the most attractive books published in the twentieth century. The collection includes twenty titles issued by the Vale Press, of which thirteen are on vellum; ten titles from the Eragny Press, all but one on vellum; over seventy of the publications of the Dun Emer and Cuala Presses including all issued up to 1928; sixteen volumes from the Riccardi Press; seventeen Gregynog Press books; and twenty-seven Golden Cockerel publications. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to maintain a consistent acquisitions policy for the publications of the modern private press movement, but, in general, items are obtained not only because they are fine examples of printing, but also because the subjects of the texts are of particular relevance to research collections already to be found in the Library. In this way a number of items have been acquired which have been printed by the Lion and Unicorn Press, the Rampant Lions Press, and similar presses.

In addition to the collections of announcements and specimens of the major private presses, which have already been described, smaller collections are also available for a number of other private presses including the Beaver, Brooks, Dun Emer/Cuala, De La More, Favel, Golden Cockerel, Gregynog, Nonesuch, Pear Tree, Shakespeare Head, Stourton, Vale, Vine (1920 vintage), Wellwood and Woodlands Presses. American private presses are represented by the announcements and specimens of the Acorn, Bentley, Condé Nast, Elston, Merrymount, Pynson and Roycrofters Presses, and there are also some splendid examples from the German Bremer Press. Most of these presses are represented in the Library by at least one or two of their publications, and in some cases, such as the Shakespeare Head Press, by rather more.

That times were becoming increasingly difficult financially for the John Rylands Library in the 1920s and 1930s can be illustrated by the fact that Henry Guppy had to turn down an offer of a complete set of the publications of the Brooks Press of Wirksworth, Derbyshire. Ransom lists twelve books printed by F.W. Brooks between 1899 and 1927,\(^\text{70}\) and draws particular attention to *The Life and Times of the

Evans Family (1927), the story of the aunt and uncle of George Eliot.\textsuperscript{71} An unsigned letter dated 24 September 1928 and addressed to The Librarian, Dan Rylands Library reads:

We ought to have brought to your notice some time ago any special books printed in Derbyshire, but we have not had any application from you regarding these books, but we feel sure you would like to possess a set whilst a few remain. In a short time these will be unobtainable.

The literary contents is of especial value to youth, and you will notice each edition is strictly limited and PRIVATE PRESS EDITIONS. Our terms are 25\% off . . . carriage extra.

P.S. We believe this to be the only Private Press set of books printed at any time in the County.\textsuperscript{72}

Unfortunately, Guppy was unable to accept this offer and had to be content with preserving the brochures and specimens which had been sent.

Elmer Adler, the very wealthy President of Pynson Printers of New York,\textsuperscript{73} had been corresponding with Guppy throughout most of 1921 and 1922 concerning the Library’s publications on the history of printing and also about the collection of rare books available in Manchester. Adler showed particular interest\textsuperscript{74} in the Library’s copy of Henry VIII’s Assertio Septem Sacramentorum (1521),\textsuperscript{75} ‘because it happens to be a book printed by Richard Pynson, and also because I have in my own library a copy of the paper edition’.\textsuperscript{76} Earlier, on 9 June 1922, Adler had written to Guppy: ‘. . . you may be interested to note where my interest in printing has led me, and I enclose herewith a copy of our announcement of this press.\textsuperscript{77} I should be very glad to send you some examples of our printings if you are sufficiently interested’.\textsuperscript{78} Guppy was certainly interested in the publications of this press, but had to be content with items which were donated, including Walter Dorwin Teague’s brief account of the work of Richard Pynson.\textsuperscript{79}

Disappointing as it was in the inter-war years that the Library increasingly had to rely on gifts for additions to its Private Press Collection, nevertheless some important and beautiful books were acquired in this way. An example comes from the Shakespeare Head Press, which was founded in Stratford upon Avon by A.H. Bullen in 1904 but which was run from 1921 onwards by Bernard Newdigate for

\textsuperscript{71} ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{72} R72130.16.
\textsuperscript{73} Ransom, \textit{Private Presses}, 159–60.
\textsuperscript{74} John Rylands Library Correspondence File, 16 September 1922.
\textsuperscript{75} STC13078.
\textsuperscript{76} The Library’s illuminated vellum copy was presented, with his own autograph annotations, by King Henry to Louis II, King of Hungary, and the binding bears the arms of Pope Pius VI.
\textsuperscript{77} The Pynson Printers.
\textsuperscript{78} R72130.54.
\textsuperscript{79} R72130.52.
Basil Blackwell. In this later period the Shakespeare Head Press was in many ways the equal of the Golden Cockerel and Gregynog Presses, and in the 1930s Newdigate wished to print Malory's *Morte Darthur*, edited by Sir Adrian Mott. It was eventually decided to base the text on the second printed edition, that issued by Wynkyn de Worde in 1498, and reproduce the complete series of woodcut illustrations. The only surviving copy of this edition is in this Library and lacks twenty-two leaves. On 4 March 1932 Bernard Newdigate wrote to Henry Guppy:

> Many thanks to you and your photographer for your promptness in sending the rotographs of the first Three Books. They enable us to go ahead. Will you please ask him to send us bromide prints of the wood-cuts to the first Three Books, enlarged to 5½ inches wide. We are rather tempted to use the illustrations of the edition and are proposing to make a few experiments in that direction. They would no doubt require re-drawing.

> We shall be able to set the missing pages from Sommer, and to check it by rotos of 1485, which we shall be able to borrow from the Clarendon Press, as they have an edition of 1485 in preparation.

> I forgot to say in my last letter that we gladly agree to presenting a copy of the book when it comes out to the John Rylands Library in acknowledgement of your generosity in allowing us to use rotos of your copy. I send you a specimen trial page which we made some time since, but the size is not yet definitely settled.

It would appear that it was originally intended to print an edition of *Morte Darthur* as a folio with the text set as one column. The specimen trial pages, numbered 34 and 35, measure 395mm. by 255mm. with a type area measuring 250mm. by 150mm. as compared with the corresponding pages, numbered 4 and 5 in the finally printed edition, measuring 250mm. by 170mm. with a type area set in double columns measuring 173mm. by 122mm. A complete change of plan seems to have taken place as soon as Newdigate saw the rotographs supplied by the John Rylands Library, when it was decided to publish something which would reflect as closely as possible the size and design of Wynkyn de Worde's edition of 1498. The Shakespeare Head Press edition was completed on 13 December

81 STC802.
82 The Bodleian Library, Oxford, has two leaves of this edition.
83 The photographer was almost certainly Ronald Hall who became Keeper of Printed Books in 1949 and was the John Rylands Librarian from 1963 to 1970.
84 Wynkyn de Worde's original woodcuts are 5½ inches wide, and have been reduced to 4½ inches wide in the Shakespeare Head Press edition.
86 STC801. The Library possesses one of the two surviving copies of Caxton's *Morte Darthur*.
87 R72130.62.
88 R72130.61.
89 Of the Byrthe of Kyng Arthur.
1933, and the final pages give an account of the work involved in using the John Rylands copy for the edition.\textsuperscript{90}

The opening paragraph of the final publication of the Kelmscott Press, William Morris's \textit{A Note on his Aims} (1898),\textsuperscript{91} contains a statement which can be applied with equal force to the Private Press Movement as a whole:

I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have \textit{a definite claim to beauty}, while at the same time they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters. I have always been a great admirer of the calligraphy of the Middle Ages, and of the earlier printing which took its place. As to the 15th century books, I had noticed that they were always beautiful by force of the mere typography, even without the added ornament with which many of them are so lavishly supplied. And it was the essence of my undertaking to produce books which it would be a pleasure to look upon as pieces of printing and arrangement of type.

The Rylands Private Press Collection is outstandingly rich, particularly for the earliest period. The last decade of the twentieth century will witness the centenary of a number of important events which mark the history of the movement. Not only is it intended that during this decade there should be at least one major public exhibition displaying the Library's Private Press treasures, but also it is hoped that every opportunity will be taken to encourage the best use of the Library's relevant research materials.

\textsuperscript{90} Sir Thomas Malory, \textit{The Noble & Joyous Boke Entyled Le Morte Darthur} \ldots from the Unique Copy \ldots now in the John Rylands Library at Manchester (2 volumes, Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1933).

\textsuperscript{91} Peterson, \textit{Bibliography}, A53.