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Francis Burges' "Observations on printing" 1701

Stoker, David

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tel: +44 1970 62 2400
email: is@aber.ac.uk

Francis Burges's 'Observations on printing' 1701.

Francis Burges assumed that, if he was going to be remembered, it would be for having introduced the trade of printing to Norwich, in 1701.¹ Following his death, aged thirty, in November 1706, his widow Elizabeth commissioned a monument in St Andrew's church porch which described him as Norwich's first printer.² She also continued to operate her husband's business and in 1707 printed *A true description of the city of Norwich*, which repeated the claim.³ In fact they were both wrong, and the researches of Thomas Tanner in the Norwich Diocesan archives and of Thomas Hearne in the Bodleian Library would soon afterwards demonstrate the existence of an earlier Dutch printer, Anthony de Solempne, operating in the city between about 1568 and 1572.⁴

Yet Burges is memorable for two of the publications which emerged from his press 'near to the Red Well', during the latter part of 1701. One of these was the first issue of the *Norwich Post* in November, which is believed to have been the first English provincial newspaper.⁵ The other was an octavo pamphlet of about twenty pages entitled *Some observations on the use and original of the noble art and mystery of printing* (hereafter *Observations on printing*), which sold for two pence and is the subject of this article. This was both written, and printed, by Burges and appeared on 27th September, shortly after his arrival in the city, and which he believed to be the first item ever to printed in Norwich,

Burges is not now known as a historian of printing, and his pamphlet contributes little to our knowledge of the origins of his trade, but it is of some bibliographical importance nevertheless. It was one of the earliest published accounts of its subject in English⁶ and

¹ Francis Burges was the son of a London cleric, who was bound apprentice to the London printer Freeman Collins 7 November 1692, and obtained his freedom 4 December 1699. (D.F. MacKenzie, *Stationers' Company apprentices*, 2v, (Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1974-8). For an account of the establishment of his press see David Stoker, 'Printing at the Red Well: an early Norwich press through the eyes of contemporaries' in *The mighty engine: the printing press at work*, edited by Peter Isaac and Barry McKay, (St. Paul's Bibliographies/Oak Knoll, 2000), 29-38.

² John Chambers ed. *A general history of the county of Norfolk*, (Norwich, 1829), 1176.

³ *A true description of the city of Norwich*, (Norwich, E. Burges for Robert Allen and Robert Kilbourn, 1707). The statement that Burges introduced the trade to the city appears in most early eighteenth century histories and descriptions of the city prior to 1740.

⁴ See David Stoker, 'Anthony de Solempne: attributions to his press', *The Library* - Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, 6, ser. 3, (1981), 17-32.

⁵ For further details see G.A. Cranfield, *The development of the provincial newspaper press 1700-1760*, (Oxford, 1962), and R.M. Wiles, *Freshest advices: early provincial newspapers in England*, (Ohio, 1965).

⁶ Prior to Burges, there was some discussion of the origins of printing in English, notably in later editions of John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, and in the preface of Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick exercises: or the doctrine of*

predates the great debates on the origins of printing with moveable types, both in Europe as a whole, and in England, that took place during the first half of the eighteenth century.⁷ The work also demonstrates the state of knowledge of, and prevalent attitudes to the history of printing at a time of fundamental change to the regulation of the book trades in England. Unlike James Watson's *History of the Art of Printing*, of 1713,⁸ Burges' work was not a translation of a Continental tract, and appears to have been compiled from a range of British and European sources, albeit in a confused and haphazard way. It also represents an interesting attempt at justifying the introduction of the trade to a provincial audience, at a time when there were few presses outside London. Above all, it is of interest because as one of the minority of items printed by the Red Well press during its early years which has apparently failed to survive.⁹ The work was certainly published in 1701, and may even have warranted a second edition as it was again advertised by Burges in 1705 with a slightly different title (including the word Usefulness rather than Use).¹⁰ However, no copy has been recorded during the last 175 years..

In 1745 the antiquary William Oldys wrote of Burges and his work;

The author of this little piece was Mr. Francis Burges, a printer, who first carried that art and mystery to Norwich: but, meeting with small encouragement, and great opposition, (as if he had brought an additional expence to the city,) he published this, by way of apology.¹¹

This statement was not entirely accurate. Although Tanner's and Hearne's discoveries remained unpublished,¹² further references to the first Norwich press had appeared in Francis

handy works applied to the art of printing, (1683). The only published work specifically on the subject was Richard Atkyns, *The original and growth of printing*, (1660) and (1664), which was a little more than an attempt to demonstrate the Royal prerogative of granting monopolies for printing.

⁷ These are discussed Adrian Johns, 'Faust and the pirates, the cultural construction of the printing revolution' in *The nature of the book*. (Chicago, 1998), 324-79.

⁸ James Watson, *The History of the Art of Printing*, (Edinburgh, Watson), 1713, which was a translation of, Jean de, La Caille, *Histoire de l'imprimerie et de la librairie, où l'on voit son origine & son progrès* (Paris, 1689).

⁹ This statement is based on more than thirty years of looking for a copy of Burges' tract in library catalogues, private collections and bookshops. The author would be delighted if he were to be proved wrong in this respect.

¹⁰ Copies of the work were first advertised in Humphrey Prideaux's, *Directions to church-wardens*, (Norwich: printed and sold by Fra. Burges, 1701). It also appears as one of a number of "Books Sold at the Printing-house near the Red Well in Norwich" advertised in George Raymond's, *A seasonable and serious perswasive to the great and necessary duties of Christian loyalty*, (Printed and sold by Fra. Burges in Norwich, 1705).

¹¹ *The Harleian Miscellany*: 148-151.

¹² They were communicated to John Bagford and noted in his manuscript collections relating to printing about 1709/10 (BL Harleian Ms 5910 II f.147, and Ms 5906 f.57.)

Blomefield's *History of Norwich*, published in parts between 1741 and 1745.¹³ Secondly, Francis Burges had received encouragement in his venture from several of the senior Cathedral clergy prior to his establishment of his press, and their patronage soon afterwards.¹⁴ He appears to have quickly formed trading links with both local and metropolitan booksellers, and his publications were listed in the *Term Catalogues*.¹⁵ He may have been seeking to justify his innovation to the Mayor and Corporation, who were more suspicious and only began to employ his press and newspaper for official notices in the the latter part of 1702

Burges began his essay by reflecting upon the recent spread of printing to the provinces, and answering a series of hypothetical objections to the introduction of his trade to Norwich, concluding "as to libels, I'll take care not to meddle with such".¹⁶ A second section extolled the usefulness of printing to mankind, by spreading knowledge and counteracting the forces of superstition. This ends with a paragraph recording the introduction of printing to England by "Simon Islip in 1471" noting that

Printing was for many Years accounted the King's Prerogative as much as Coining:
But in Process of Time it became a free Trade

As such, he is rejecting the central message in account of the origins of English printing given in Richard Atkyn's *The original and growth of printing*, which was then given growing credence following its acceptance by Anthony á Wood and Joseph Moxon.¹⁷ Instead he adopts a position which would accord with his professional background in the Stationers' Company.

The largest section of Burges' *Observations on printing* gives a confused account of the rival claims of the cities of Mainz and Haarlem, and those of Gutenberg, Faust and Coster for the invention of moveable type, whilst also noting also the early use of woodblock printing by the Chinese. At one point he repeats virtually the same story from Adrian de Jonge (Adrianus

¹³ Francis Blomefield's *An Essay towards a Topographical History of Norfolk* (Fersfield, Norwich and Lynn, 1739-73), II, 210. The part containing this reference was published in late 1741 or early 1742.

¹⁴ Within the first six months of operation Burges press had produced works for the Cathedral authorities, the Bishop's Chaplain and the Archdeacons of Norwich, Suffolk. See Stoker, *Printing at the Red Well*, 97-100.

¹⁵ Edward Arber ed., *The Term Catalogues*, 3v. (1903-6).

¹⁶ So long as he had a monopoly on printing in the city he seems to have largely avoided controversial publications. However shortly after his death there were three competing presses, followed by many accusations of seditious or improper printing., see David Stoker, "The establishment of printing in Norwich: causes and effects 1660-1760, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, VII, 1977. 94-111.

¹⁷ Moxon, *Mechanick exercises*, and Anthony á Wood *History and antiquities of the University of Oxford*, 1674.

Junius) about the idea for printing having come from letters cut in sap-wood making an impression on a handkerchief, and applies it to both Coster and Gutenberg. Nevertheless, the account does demonstrate a wide range of background reading. The essay concludes with Burges' mistaken note:

The first day that ever printing was at Norwich, was Saturday, September 27, 1701, and this was the first book that was every printed and published here.

Followed by an advertisement for two items in the press.

Sometime after the first publication of *Observations on printing*, a copy was in the hands of John Bagford who was collecting materials for his own history of printing. It may have been sent to him by his friend Thomas Tanner, the recently appointed Chancellor of the Diocese of Norwich, who also took an active interest in Burges' fledgling press.¹⁸ Bagford transcribed several excerpts from the text and preliminaries into one of his manuscript volumes, in January 1706/7, noting, wrongly, that the author had died that month.¹⁹ Yet the work was not used or referred to in the compilation of Bagford's own 'Essay on the invention of printing' in 1707.²⁰

Substantial parts of Burges's text were however used, without acknowledgment, in 'An essay on the original use and excellency of the noble art and mystery of printing' by an anonymous writer in the *Weekly Register* for 9 September 1732. This was published to coincide with the appearance of Samuel Palmer's *History of printing*.²¹ The compiler copied about three quarters of Burges' text verbatim, but disguised its origin by reversing the order in which two of the sections appeared, and also by inserting a number of additional paragraphs from the

¹⁸ Stoker, 'Printing at the Red Well', 29-38. Tanner had earlier sent Bagford a Combination paper from the press, listing preachers at the Cathedral from 2 November 1701, saying that it was the first item printed in Norwich (Norfolk Preachers appointed ...), Harleian Ms. 5910, volume 2 fol. 151.

¹⁹ Harleian Ms. 5910, volume 2 fol. 152.

²⁰ John Bagford, 'An essay on the invention of printing, with an account of his collections for the same, by Mr Humfrey Wanley', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* Vol. 25, (1707), 2397-2410. According to T.F. Dibdin, *Bibliomania* (London, 1876), p.326, Wanley was responsible for the 'Essay' as well as the 'Account', see also P. L. Heyworth, *Letters of Humfrey Wanley*, (Oxford, 1989), 244-6.

²¹ *Weekly Register* CXXXVI., 9 September 1732, [1-2], and S. Palmer *A general history of printing*, (London, 1733). Palmer does not however appear to have had access to, or known about Burges' pamphlet when compiling his work.

preface to Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick exercises*, (1683),²² together with a few sentences of his own.

Bagford's collections for the history of printing were acquired by Edward Harley after his death, and then, presumably, were sold together with the other printed books from the Harleian Library, to the bookseller Thomas Osborne in 1742. Burges' *Observations on printing* is not individually noticed in the catalogue Harleian library compiled by Samuel Johnson, William Oldys and Michael Mattaire, under the section 'Miscellan. Ad artem Typog. Quarto and Octavo',²³ possibly because it was considered to be too slight. The tract was however selected by Oldys for inclusion in the *Harleian Miscellany* of 1745.²⁴ He reprinted two out of the three sections of Burges' text, omitting the material which related only to Norwich, but gave a brief description of the whole work. He also seems to have modernised Burges' language, capitalization and use of italics for example by substituting 'says' for 'saith'. The *Harleian Miscellany* was reprinted with additional notes by Thomas Park between 1808 and 1813.²⁵ Park added four brief footnotes to Burges' text and further modernised the accidentals of the text, but made no substantive changes. There is no evidence that he saw a copy of the original pamphlet, which had presumably been dispersed during one of the various Harleian Library sales between 1745 and 1748.

Another copy of Burges' work was in the hands of the Norwich author, bookseller and printer, Richard Beatniffe towards the end of the eighteenth century. Beatniffe gives a detailed description of the work in the fifth edition of his *The Norfolk tour* (1795), including information from the first section not previously published in the *Harleian Miscellany*.²⁶ Beatniffe died in 1818, and seven years later proposals were issued to expand his popular historical accounts into a new *General history of the county of Norfolk*, intended to convey all the information of a Norfolk tour, to be edited by the antiquary John Chambers. When this work eventually appeared in 1829 it included yet further substantial excerpts from Burges work (presumably taken from Richard Beatniffe's own copy). Fortunately Chambers

²² Moxon, *Mechanick exercises*.

²³ *Catalogus bibliothecae Harleianae*, 5v. (1743-5), vol2. p.959. Atkin's *Original and growth of printing* (1664) and Watson's *History of printing* (1715) are however both listed.

²⁴ *The Harleian Miscellany: or, a collection of scarce, curious and entertaining pamphlets and tracts*, . ed. W. Oldys 8 vols. (London, 1745), III. 148-151.

²⁵ *The Harleian miscellany ...* (London, Printed for J. White, and J. Murray [etc.] 1808).

²⁶ Richard Beatniffe. *The Norfolk tour*, 5th ed. (Norwich, 1795). There is an error in pagination, and the description occurs on a second sequence of pages 113-4, following page 122. Beatniffe had been unaware of Burges' work when he compiled the fourth edition in 1786.

concentrated on the local material and therefore supplied much of the remainder of first section, which had been omitted by Oldys.²⁷ However his excerpts also introduced further mis-spellings – most notably Burges’s name, which is given throughout as Burgess.

John Chambers (or his anonymous contributor) appears to have been the last person to describe Francis Burges’ Observations using an original copy. The work is subsequently noted in Henry Bohn’s edition of William Lowndes’ *Bibliographers manual*,²⁸ and a bibliographical reference and brief account was included in Bigmore and Wyman’s *Bibliography of printing*, (1880),²⁹ but both of these seem to have been taken from the *Harleian Miscellany*. All subsequent references and descriptions of the work appear to come from the same source.

Taken together, the accounts and transcriptions of Francis Burges’ Observations by John Bagford, the anonymous essayist in the *Weekly Register*, William Oldys, Richard Beatniffe, and John Chambers cover virtually the complete text and the preliminaries, and can be used to reconstruct the original document. There are some words missing and a few passages which may have been rephrased, but the content is probably otherwise complete. Most usefully, John Bagford recorded page references with his quotations, which assist in determining the original order and providing a framework for the whole. The only discrepancy is that the work is described as being an octavo pamphlet either seventeen or twenty pages in length, by Oldys and Bagford respectively. This may be explained by a title page, with a blank verso followed by seventeen pages of text, and a page containing an advertisement.

The object of this article is therefore to publish a reconstituted and annotated version of Burges’ work, discussing the origins of his statements, and showing how it was adapted for use in 1732. The text has been compiled in the following way:

Title, concluding note and advertisement: Bagford and Chambers
'On the usefulness and Original of Printing' Bagford and Chambers
'Several Observations for and against Printing' Chambers and Oldys
'Concerning the Usefulness of Printing' Oldys and *Weekly Review*
'Concerning the Original of Printing' Oldys and *Weekly Review*.

²⁷ Chambers, *A general history of ... Norfolk*, 1286-7.

²⁸ William Lowndes’ *Bibliographers manual of English literature*, (London, 1858).

²⁹ F.C. Bigmore and C.W. Wyman, *A bibliography of printing*, 2 v., (1880), I., 95. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no subsequent description of the work.

John Bagford's eccentric and inconsistent spelling has been regularised, and his manuscript contractions such as 'y^e' have been expanded. In a few instances, where there is some doubt over Bagford's meaning, this has been noted in the text. Likewise Chambers' misspellings have been corrected. Most editorial problems occur in the sections entitled 'Concerning the Usefulness of Printing', and 'Concerning the Original of Printing, where there are a large number of accidental discrepancies, together with a few substantive ones. Spellings, capitalization and the use of italics have been taken from the essay in the Weely Review since these appear to coincide more closely to Burges' practice in other works and the text in the Harleian Miscellany has clearly been modernised by Oldys or his editor. However, substantive differences follow the later text and the variant readings are noted in the footnotes. Some substantive alterations were clearly added when Burges' text was adapted for re-use, but others might have appeared in the original work and have been overlooked by Oldys

Where a passage has been paraphrased, as opposed to transcribed (principally by Richard Beatniffe) this is noted in the footnotes. The footnote references added by Thomas Park in the second edition of the Harleian Miscellany are designated <Park>, otherwise all notes are from the present editor. Textual material in square brackets has likewise been added by the editor, except for references to page numbers which are all taken from Bagford. Unfortunately it has not been possible to identify all of Burges' sources. Several of his quotations are unspecific without any identification beyond a phrase such as "the poet" or "a late author". Even in those instances where he names a source – such as Henry Billingsley's *Brachy-martyrology*, Burges appears to have been quoting from memory rather than directly from a printed text.

Some Observations on the Use and Original of the noble Art and Mystery of Printing.

By F. Burges.

Norwich: Printed by F. Burges living near the Red Well, and sold by Tho: Goddard,³⁰ in the Market Place in Norwich: 1701. Price 2d.

[page 1] On the usefulness and Original of Printing

A Printing House was never here before: its great use and excellency as well in Norwich as in London where it has been above 200 yeares and where now is about threescore Printing

³⁰ Thomas Goddard was a bookseller in Norwich from 1695 until 1751. After Francis Burges' death Goddard founded his own press and newspaper, David Stoker, 'The Norwich book trades before 1800 - a biographical directory', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, VIII, (1981), 79-125.

House.³¹ I likewise observed, when at London, how usefull it was to a[n] [a]bundance of Traders in divers respects,³² concluded this a fit Place or as able to mantain a Printing House as Exeter: Chester: Bristoll: or Yorke & co.³³ And that it being an Honour, as well as an Advantage to the Place where it comes, doubted little, of its exception [acceptance?], it greatly promoting Trade, and the Nature of printing being to Resume and when so, to publish it to every ones advantage.

Several Observations for and against Printing

Printing breaks not in upon any other Person's Property,

The Trade is of great Use in a Trading-Place,³⁴

It is a great Means to promote Piety.³⁵

It is a certain Method to do Good to several other Trades; because, under the Printer, the Bookseller, Bookbinder, Joiner, Smith, &c. may hope to reap Advantage.³⁶

Printing never was in Norwich before, and if it were a fit place for it, there would have been one before now;³⁷ and besides, there cannot be that dispatch made as at London, where one book may be put to two or three, or more printing houses.³⁸

Why so many are botched, one house differing from another in their printing characters and method of working; but upon any occasion I'll undertake to dispatch business as soon, well, and cheap as if sent to London.

³¹ This figure corresponds with the sixty master printers in London listed by Michael Treadwell, 'London printers and printing houses in 1705', *Publishing History*, VII, (1980), 5-55.

³² Bagford has 'a Bundance of Traders'

³³ Samuel Darker, who introduced printing to Exeter in 1698, was an apprentice of Freeman Collins at the same time as Francis Burges. Thomas Tillier was a printer in Chester from c.1688, William Bonny, formerly of London introduced printing to Bristol on 24 April 1695, and John White was printing in York from 1680-1716.

³⁴ In 1701 Norwich was both the largest provincial city and manufacturing centre in England, described by Macaulay as "the chief seat of the chief manufacture of the realm".

³⁵ The main supporters of the establishment of Burges' press were senior members of the Cathedral clergy – notably Humphrey Prideaux Archdeacon of Suffolk, John Jeffery Archdeacon of Norwich and Thomas Tanner, Chancellor of Norwich (see Stoker, 'Printing at the Red Well').

³⁶ In 1696, five years prior to Burges' arrival there were four known booksellers, two bookbinders and no printers in Norwich. By 1706 there were seven known booksellers, three bookbinders and three printers. (Stoker, 'The Norwich book trades before 1800'). Moxon describes the work of joiners and smiths in relation to the operation of a printing house, *Mechanick exercises*, 252-3, and 396-7.

³⁷ See above note 3. Prior to the lapse of the 1662 Act for preventing the frequent abuses in printing (14.Car.II. c.33.) in 1695, provincial printing outside Oxford, Cambridge and York was illegal.

³⁸ The use of two or more printing offices to undertake a single work was not uncommon, Philip Gaskell, *A new introduction to bibliography*, Oxford, 1972, 168.

Printing such small impressions will be expensive in Norwich, and so discouraging to customers, and the gain small.

[...] If a house or room is to Let at London, presently a printed bill, in large characters, is got though they want but one; and the like they do on other trivial occasions.

The Press may do more mischief than good, by putting people at variance in publishing of libels.

[...], and as to libels, I'll take care not to meddle with such.

That this place will not vend an impression of any large book, though never so ingenious and useful.

But Norwich may vend an impression, or two, or more, as has been lately experienced.³⁹

That Paper is not to be bought so cheap as in London., and the trouble and expense of sending them there will dishearten author and bookseller

[page 5] Paper fit for printing may be bought cheap at the paper Mills at Tabram within four miles of Norwich,⁴⁰ and the expense of sending books to London so cheap, as to leave a profit sufficient for any reasonable person.

[page 6] Concerning the Usefulness of Printing.

This (says a late Author) is so plain to all discerning Men, that I need say the less : This illustrious Art being sufficiently known to be the great Propagator and Diffuser of all useful Knowledge : For since the Art of Printing was found out, (which is not yet 300 Years) all Sorts of Learning have been more diffused and cultivated, than in a thousand Years before : And what great Advances, and mighty Progress is daily made in finding out abstruse Secrets, and discovering the hidden Mysteries of Art and Nature, those that are conversant among Books do very well know : And all this is justly to be attributed to this incomparable Art of Printing, which gives Men such an Advantage of communicating their Thoughts to each other, in a plain and easy Manner, as the Ages, before this Invention were ignorant of. And therefore Erudition and Learning, the Improvement of all the Works of Nature, and the

³⁹ In the twenty years prior to Burges' arrival (1681-1700) more than fifty books were identified in their imprints as 'printed for' or 'sold by' Norwich booksellers. Several of these were quite substantial productions, such as John Collinges' *The intercourses of divine love betwixt Christ and his church*, 1683, which had more than 900 quarto pages.

⁴⁰ William Paultlock operated a paper mill at Taverham near Norwich until his death in 1711 (*Norwich Gazette* 25th August 1711).

Perfection of all Arts and Sciences, are the genuine Effects of this noble Mystery, and an evident Demonstration of its Usefulness, as well as its Excellency.

‘Tis by the Art of Printing that we come to know the Lives and Actions of the renowned Worthies of the first Ages of the World ; whereby those Things, that were transacted five thousand Years ago, are as familiar to us, as if they had been done but Yesterday. ‘Tis Printing that does immortalize the Memory of antient Heroes, and transmits their Actions to the End of Time.

And it is in Respect of its Usefulness, that *Polydore Virgil* stiles it, ‘A Divine Benefit afforded to Mankind ;⁴¹ and therefore Cardan tells us, ‘That it is an Art inferior to none, either for Usefulness or Wit; far out-doing the most dextrous Writer, both for Neatness and Expedition: For one Press can dispatch more Business in one Day, than the swiftest Writer can transcribe in a Year or two.⁴² On this Account also, Petrus Scriverius calls it, ‘Palladium, Præsidium, & Tutelam Musarum, & omnis Doctrinæ; that is, The Fortress, ‘Garison, and Defence, not only of the Muses, but of all Literature whatsoever.⁴³

This noble Mystery has illustriously shewn its Usefulness in the Assistance it has given to the Propagation of the true Religion ; having banished that Cimmerian Darkness that had overspread the Face of the Earth, and caused the glorious Light of the Gospel to shine forth with a resplendent Lustre, by the Printing that incomparable Treasure of a Christian The Holy Scriptures. Before the Finding out of this illustrious Art, the Epistle of St. James was thought a mighty Penny-worth, when purchased for a Load of Hay ; whereas now both the Old and New Testament may be bought for five shillings.

[page 8] But it is not by Printing of the Holy Bible only, that this noble Art and Mystery (for so it was stiled by Queen Elizabeth, when she did it the Honour to go and see it)⁴⁴ has been

⁴¹ “This noble art was first to print letters in tin lead and other mixt mettall, ‘tis a divine and heavenly invention” Polydore Vergillus, *A pleasant and compendious history of the first inventers of the most famous artes, misteries, laws, customs and maners in the whole workd*, (London, 1686), p.100.

⁴² Girolamo Cardano

⁴³ Petrus Scriverus, *Laurecrans voor Laurens Coster von Haarlem, eerste Vinder von de Boeckdruckery, etc*, Haarlem, 1628.

⁴⁴ I have not been able to identify any documentary reference to a visit to a printing press by Queen Elizabeth, however, the phrases used bear some similarities to a passage in *The London printers lamentation, or, the press opprest, and overprest*, (London, 1660), p.2. “Let us come to the Reign of the glorious Queen Elizabeth of ever blessed memory: And then we shall plainly and perspicuously her Majesties great Love and Royal affection to Printing and Printers; who for the sake of them & it so far descended from her Royal Thron as that her Highness not only made several Gracious grants unto them for better maintaining their poor, but also graciously

serviceable⁴⁵ to Religion, but also by emitting many other good Books and useful Tracts into the World, whereby the Errors of Popery have been discovered and confuted, and the Way of Truth made known. Hence says N. Billingsley, in his *Brachy-Martyrologia*.⁴⁶

'The Gospel-Light appear'd not very clear,
'Until Fourteen-hundred fiftieth Year,
'Wherein God pleased to unbosom Night,
The Art of Printing being brought to Light.⁴⁷

Another ingenious Author to the same Purpose says:

'The noble Art of Printing found
'No sooner, but it Rome did wound ;
'And ever since, with nimble Ray,
'Spreads Knowledge to a perfect Day.⁴⁸

Lastly, This Art of Printing was first brought into England by Simon Islip, in the Year 1471, at the Charge of King Henry VI.⁴⁹ Whence Printing was for many Years accounted the King's Prerogative as much as Coining : But in Process of Time it became a free Trade.⁵⁰ The first Printing-Press, in England, was set up by the fore-named Simon Islip, in Westminster-Abbey, London ; and Printing first used there by William Caxton. And its being first set up in

recommended (for the special encouragement and better subsistence of the Master Printers) the Regulation of that Mystery, and the Professors thereof, to the Right honourable and Judicious, the Lords of her Majesties most Honourable Privy Council.

⁴⁵ Bagford has 'farnisable'

⁴⁶ Nicholas Billingsley, *brachy-martyrologiae* or, a breviary of all the greatest persecutions, (London, 1657), p.164. Section V 'The persecutions of the church of England'.

⁴⁷ Quotation not identified.

⁴⁸ "These lines must have been quoted from memory, or they could not have been so much misquoted. In Billingsley's book they stand thus: 'The Christian world appear'd not very clear, 'Until the fifteen-hundred -eighteenth year,' & c_ But Billingsley was evidently wrong in ascribing the invention of Printing to this period, and Burges was nearly right.' <Thomas Park, p.155>.

⁴⁹ "This was the assertion of Stowe, but it is disproved by Mr. Oldys in his life of Caxton in *Biog. Brit.*" < Park, p.155.> The reference is to John Stowe's *The survey of London*, (London, 1618) p.895 which describes the Almonry of Westminster Abbey thus "And therein Islip, Abbot of Westminster, erected the first Presse of Booke Printing that ever was in England, about the yeere of Christ, 1471. W. Caxton, Citizen of London, Mercer, brought it into England, and was the first that practised it in the said Abbey, after which time, the like was practised in the Abbeys of S. Augustine at Cant. S. Albons & other Monasteries." Stowe's *Annales* (London, 1615) p.404, says printing was brought to England about 1471 by William Caxton but does not mention Islip. Burges however confuses Simon Islip (d.1368), Archbishop of Canterbury, with John Islip (d.1532) Abbot of Westminster, 1500-1532, although neither man could have been involved with the introduction of printing to England.

⁵⁰ Richard Atkyns had endeavoured to assert that printing was a Royal prerogative in *The original and growth of printing*, (1660) and (1664), and *The Kings grant of privilege for sole printing common-law-books defended and the legality thereof asserted*, (1669).

a Church occasioned all Printing-Houses in England to be called Chapels, which Name they retain to this Day.⁵¹

Concerning the Original of Printing.⁵²

It would certainly redound very much to the Dishonour of Printers, if the Original of this noble Art should not be transmitted to Posterity ; since it is by Printing alone that the earliest Actions of Antiquity are brought down to the present Age: For this Art, by multiplying Books hath multiplied Knowledge and brought to our Cognizance, both Persons and Things vastly remote from us, and long before our Time ; which otherwise had perished in Oblivion, and been as Things which never had a Being.

I have therefore endeavour'd, in this short Essay, to rescue from the iron Teeth of Time, the Original of this noble Mystery, which gives Immortality even to Learning itself, and is the great Conservator of all other Arts and Sciences.

And yet, to whom the World is indebted for this excellent Invention, we do not certainly know : This being one of the *Inventa Adespota* of the Masterless Inventions, of which the only Reason that can be assign'd, is,

Laus veterum est meruisse omnis præconia famæ,

Et sprevisse simul. –

Brave Men more studious were, in former Days,

Of doing Good, than of obtaining Praise.

That it is a Teutonick Invention, is agreed upon by most Voices. Hence the Poet sings,

O Germania ! Muneris repertrix,

Quo nihil utilius dedid Vetusta ;

*Libros scribere, quae doces premendo.*⁵³

Which may thus be paraphrased :

⁵¹ Moxon supposes the term chapel “was originally conferred on it by some great Churchman or men”, but Davis and Carter point out that in their edition that *La Chapelle*, “as a collective for the fully-qualified workmen in a printing office occurs in the records of the Plantin-Moretus house at Antwerp early in the seventeenth century (*Mechanick Exercises*, 323 and 383

⁵² ‘An Essay on the original Use and Excellency of the noble Art and Mystery of Printing’ in the *Weekly Register*, 9 September 1732, begins at this point.

⁵³ Unidentified.

*O noble German ! Author of this Gift,
(Which ev'n to Heav'n itself thy Fame does lift)
Antiquity ne'er yet divulg'd that Thing
Which did more Profit unto Mankind bring ;
Or unto learned Labours more incite,
Since thus by th' Press, thou dost large Volumes write.*

But whether Higher or Lower Germany shall have the Honour of it, is yet a Controversy undecided : And in the Upper-Germany, whether *Mentz* or *Basil*, or *Strasburg* ; for all these do not only challenge it, but contend no less for the Birth-place of this noble Mystery, than the Graecian Cities did for the Cradle of Homer. (Which, by the Way, is no small Indication of the just Value which the World has of it, since there is such Striving for the Honour of it Original.) The general Voice is for *Mentz*, and that one John Guttemburg, (or Fust, or Faustemberg, as others term him) a Knight and Citizen of that City, was the true Father and Inventor of this Art, about the Year 1440. And that the Occasion of it was, his having cut the Letters of his Name out of the Bark of a Tree, which was green and full of Sap, and afterwards putting them into a fine Linnen Handkerchief, the Letters impress'd upon the Linnen their own Characters : This first inspir'd him with the Thoughts of making Characters of Metal, that might make an Impression upon Paper, which he afterwards effected.⁵⁴ This is strongly affirmed by the Citizens of *Mentz*, saith *Polydore Virgil*, *Lib. ii. Cap. 7 de Invent. Rerum* : And for Proof hereof, they produce a Copy of Tully's Offices, printed in Parchment and preserved in the Library of *Augsburg*, having this Memorandum at the latter End of it: 'Præsens *M. Tullii* Opus clarissimum, *Jo. Fust, Moguntinus* Cives, non Atramento, Plumali Canna, neque Ærea, sed Arte quâdam perpulchrâ, Manu, Pueri mei, sceliciter effecti : Finitum Anno 1440. die quarto Mens. Feb.⁵⁵ In English thus 'I *John Fust*, Citizen of *Moguntia*, have happily effected the present most illustrious Work of Mark Tully ; performed neither by Pen and Ink, nor Brass, but by a certain Art, purely by the fair Hand of my Son Peter Gersheim : Done in the Year 1440, on the fourth Day of February. This is cited by *Salmuth*, in his Annotations on *Pancirollus*,⁵⁶ who stands stiffly for Germany (his own Country) in this Point

⁵⁴ This is clearly a confusion of Gutenberg with the legend of Coster at Haarlem, as related by Hadrianus Junius. See below note ?.

⁵⁵ Polydore, Vergil *De inventibus rerum*, book 2 chapter 7. The first edition of Vergil's work (Venice 1499) identified, a German named Peter as the first printer. However by the 1524 edition, *Liber adagiorum, de inventoribus rerum* (Basle) this statement had been altered to read John Gutenberg

⁵⁶ Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De officiis*, [Mainz] Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer, 1465.

: And also cites another Argument from the Library of Francfort, wherein an old Copy of the Decisions of the Rota are kept ; at the latter End thereof it is said, That it was printed in Civitate Moguntiaë Artis Impressoriaë Inventrice & Elimatrice prima ; that is, In the City of Moguntia, being the first Inventa and Refiner of the Art ‘of Printing.⁵⁷

[page 15]

But, notwithstanding all these Evidences for High-Germany, yet Hadrianus Junius, a very learned Man of the Low-Countries, is as stiff on the other Side for Haerlem, making that the Birth-place of this noble Art. This Junius (in his History of the Netherlands)⁵⁸ tells us, That one Laurence John (others call him Lawrensz Janz Koster) a Burger of Note and Quality in the City of Haerlem, was the first Inventa of it;⁵⁹ in the Year 1430,⁶⁰ and saith, That he made Letters first of the Barks of Trees, (as was before said of the other) which being set and ranked in Order, and put with their Heels upwards upon Paper, he made the first Essay and Experiment of this Art: At first he made but a Line or two, then whole Pages, and then Books, but printed on one Side only : Which Rudiments of the Art, Junius says, he saw in the Town.⁶¹

And then to turn John Gutemberg, or Fust, or Faustus, quite out of Doors, he gives us this further Account: That after this, the aforementioned Laurence John made Types or Characters of Tin, and brought the Art to further Perfection daily: But one John Faustus (though he proved Infaustus to him)⁶² who was his Servant and had learned the Mystery, stole away all the Letters, and other Utensils belonging to the Trade; and, after several Removes, set up for himself at Mentz, making as if he were the first Inventa of it; (whereas, if what Junius says

⁵⁷ Guido Panciroli, *Rerum Memorabilium ... illustrati per H. Salmuth* (Amberg, 1599). An English edition entitled *The history of many memorable things lost, which were in use among the ancients and an account of many excellent things found, now in use among the moderns, both natural and artificial.* Written originally in Latin, by Guido Pancirollus; and now done into English, and illustrated with a new commentary of choice remarks ... from Salmuth's large annotations ... To this English edition is added, first, a supplement to the chapter of printing, shewing the time of its beginning, and the first book printed in each city before the year 1500. London : Printed for John Nicholson, and sold by J. Morphew, 1715.

⁵⁸

⁵⁹ At this point the author of ‘An Essay’ in the Weekly Register inserts nine paragraphs copied from the Preface to *Mechanick Exercises* (with minor amendments) beginning “The learned Dr Wallis of Oxford...” and ending with “At Haerlem, some other Places in Holland, ...”

⁶⁰ Hadrianus Junius, *Hadriani Ivni Hornani ... Batavia. In qua praeter gentis & insulae antiquitatem, originem, decora, mores, aliaque ad eam historiam pertinentia, declaratur quae fuerit vetus Batavia, quae Plinio, Tacito, & Ptolemaeo cognita; quae item genuina inclytæ Francorum nationis fuerit sedes.* Lvgdvni Batavorvm, ex officina Plantiniana, apud F. Raphelengium, 1588

⁶¹. The *Weekly Register* ‘Essay’ inserts the phrase “in the Year 1430”, at this point.

⁶² Faust = lucky.

be true, he had only stole it from Laurence John) and the first Book, he printed there, was the Doctrinal of one Alexander Gallus, which he printed in the Year 1440.

[page 15] This is further confirm'd by Hegenitz⁶³, who saith, that the House of Lawrence John is yet standing in the Market-place of Haerlem, with this Inscription in Golden Letters over the Door :

Memoriæ Sacrum

Typographiæ Ars, Artium Conservatrix, hic primum

Inventa, circa Annum MCCCCXL.⁶⁴

That is,

Sacred to Memory.

The Art of Printing, the Preserver of Arts, was first invented here, about the Year MCCCCXL.

And underneath, these Verses:

Vana quid Archetypos & Præla Moguntia jactas?

Haerlemi Archetypos prælaque nata sciis.

Extulit hic, monstrante Deo, Laurentius Artem ;

Dissimulare Virum hunc, dissimulare Deum est.⁶⁵

Which I have thus paraphras'd :

Moguntia, Why do you thus vainly boast

Of Archetypes, and Presses, at your Cost,

Whereas at Haerlem they were first, thou know'st.

There to Laurentius first, inspir'd by Heaven.

⁶³ Bagford has Heyentz

⁶⁴ The name Hegenitz is given by both Oldys and the author of the 'Essay' in the Weekly Register. Bagford gives the name Heyents. Neither of these names has been identified, but the quotation is translated from Petrus Scriverius Laure-crans voor Laurens Coster van Haerlem, Eerste vinder vande boeck-drukery, (Haerlem, 1628), q4 verso.. The inscription should read Memoriæ sacrum. Typographia, ars artium omnium conservatrix, hic primum inventa M.CCCC XXIIIX. With thanks to Dr Lotte Hellinga for identifying this and the next quotation. The quotation was again given in, Marci Zuerii Boxhornii Theatrum, sive Hollandiæ comitatus et urbium nova descriptio, etc , (Amstelodami, 1632), but with the date 1440 rather than 1428.

⁶⁵ These verses are given on the engraved frontispiece of Scriverius Laure-crans voor Laurens Coster. The reference is to Nicolaus Serarius, Moguntiacarum rerum ...libri quique, (Mainz 1604).

The Knowledge of this noble Art was given :

To rob the Man, who did this Art reveal,

Is a like Crime as 'tis from Heav'n to steal:

Thus I have given the different Pleas of both Parties ; yet will not pretend to determine which is in the Right, but leave the Decision to the Reader's Judgment.⁶⁶

But this is certain, That, tho' the chief Honour is due to the Inventers, yet that Perfection and Beauty that Printing is now arrived to, is very much owing to them that came after ; many in the present Age having not a little contributed thereto ;⁶⁷ here in England, where it is at as great Perfection as in any Part of the World. And it is as true as strange that, where Printing was invented, the Art is almost lost, and did never there arrive to any great Perfection.

Printing has been in China, above Two thousand Years; but their Way is so vastly different from the Method we use in Europe, that no Comparison can be made between them, the former having so many Boards, as they have Pages in their Book, on which their Characters are carved, one representing (or standing for) a Man, another an House, &c, as they have Occasions to place them; and of these Characters they have such great Numbers, that few of them know the one Half; they not making Use of four and twenty Letters to make Words, as is used here.⁶⁸

This Way of the Chinese was not heard of, till within these very few Years.

It is well known of the Turks, That they have not the Learning, the Art in Trades, or War, as their Neighbours the Germans; and the chief Reason is, they have not Printing among them,

⁶⁶ At this point the author of 'An Essay' in the Weekly Register inserts four paragraphs copied verbatim from the Preface to *Mechanick Exercises* beginning "After these two places ..." and ending with "Soon after William Caxton."

⁶⁷ At this point the author of 'An Essay' in the Weekly Register substitutes the following for the remainder of the text "among whom I cannot but particularly mention the late Bartholomew and Alan Voskin of Amsterdam, the late Mr. Thomas Grover, and the present ingenious Mr. William Caslon of London, Letterfounders, who have merited very much by their indefatigable Labours to promote the Honour of this Art. But to conclude, It now remains that I say something as to its Use and Excellency."

⁶⁸ This paragraph is paraphrased in *Beatniffe* thus: "Printing is said to have been known in China, above two thousand years; but having no letters to make words, their method is so different from what is practised in Europe, that it scarcely deserves the name of printing. They have as many boards, as they have pages in the book, on which their characters are carved, one representing a man, another a house, &c, and of these characters they have such a multitude, that few of them know the one half."

which they will not suffer; for Fear, as is thought, it should undermine their false Religion, and plant Christianity in its Stead.⁶⁹

Note The first day that ever printing was at Norwich, was Saturday, September 27 1701: and this was the first Book that was ever printed and published here.

Advertisement⁷⁰

Two Bookes now in the press in Norwich, and are to be sold by Thomas Goddard, bookseller, Market-place, Norwich, 1701;.

A summary View of the Holy Scriptures, as the Records of True Religion, and as the Instrument which God uses for making me truly religious, &c. &c. by Jo. Jefferies D.D. Archdeacon of Norwich.⁷¹

The Church Catechism Analyzed, Explained and Improved, &c. &c. the first part. Recommended to the Rich to bestow among the poor.⁷²

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_ The Weekly Register inserts the words “in the year 1430’ at this point.

_ The following paragraphs weres inserted into the ‘Essay’ in the Weekly Register at this point in place of the next paragraph:

But after some Time he left off Wood, and cut single Letters in Steel, which he sunk into Copper-Matrices, and sitting them in Iron-Molds, cast single Letters of Metal in those Matrices. They also say, that his Companion, John Guttenburg, (or Fust, or Faustus, as some call him) having learned the Mystery, stole his Tools away while he was at Church, and with them went to Mentz in Germany. And there set his Tools to work, and promoted his Claim to the first Invention of this Art, before Koster did his, (whereas, if what Junius says be true, he

⁶⁹ This observation may have come from Humphrey Prideaux, author of *The true nature of imposture displayed in the life of Mohamet*, 1723, who was one of the first supporters of Burges’ press. Movable brass type and printing devices were in use in Islamic Spain in the fourteenth century Dr. K. Ajram, *The Miracle of Islamic Science*, 1992 Appendix B.

⁷⁰ Chambers says that these were “Among the advertisements at the end of Burgess’s pamphlet”, but Bagford only records the one advertisement..

⁷¹ John Jeffery, *The religion of the Bible: or, a summary view of the Holy Scriptures, as the records of true religion; ...* Norwich: printed by F. Burges, for T. Goddard, in the Market Place Norwich; and for A. Baldwin, London, 1701. ESTC t122813.

⁷² *The church catechism analyzed, explained & improved*, Norwich: printed by Fr. Burges for T. Goddard, [1701]. Not in ESTC

only stole it from Lawrence John and the first Book he printed there, was the Doctrinal of one Alexander Gallus, which he printed, Anno 1440.

To prove this, they say that Rabbi Joseph (a Jew) in his Chronicle, mentions a printed Book, that he saw in Venice, in the Year 5188, according to the Jewish Account, and by ours the Year 1428, as may be read in Pet. Scriverus.

They say much of a Book intituled, De Spiegel, printed at Haerlem in Dutch and Latin; which Book is yet there to be seen: And they alledge that Book the first that ever was printed; but yet say not when this Book was printed.