



# PHILATELI-GRAPHICS

Quarterly Publication of the Graphics Philately Association

Volume 40, Number 2 • Whole Number 157 • April 2018

ISBN 9739-6198

**Special Issue: From our UK members, Part 2**



## The British Library and Its ‘Treasures’

*Wendy Buckle*

In 1753 the British Museum Act was passed, which founded the first national museum in England. It incorporated for the first time the collections amassed by Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), President of the Royal Society; Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631), antiquarian; and Robert (1661–1724) and Edward Harley (1689-1741), first and second Earls of Oxford. To these collections was added the Royal Library, a personal gift of King George II, and the King’s Library, the collection of George III. Between them, these “foundation collections” formed the basis of the Library of the British Museum.

The British Library was established by an Act of Parliament in 1973. It brought together a number of library bodies into a single organization, including the Library of the British Museum. The premises, opened in 1998, occupy a site next to St. Pancras Station in London (fig 1). The history of this striking building is a story in itself. Britain is not good at embracing new architecture, and the project suffered criticism, delays, political interference and a major cut in funding. However in 2005 it was recognized by being given Grade 1-listed building status, something rarely awarded to modern architecture.

One of the main public features of the building, near the entrance, is the Sir John Ritblat Gallery, which houses the “Treasures of the British Library,” a display of over 200 items. Arranged under various headings are some of the rarest and most important works held by the Library, many of which came to it from the foundation collections of the British Museum. Most of these



1. *The British Library.*

sections would delight members of the GPA, being focused on our collecting interests. Any part of the display is liable to be changed, so anyone visiting there may not see everything listed in this article. However there is a good chance that some major works described below will be on display.

The display nearest the entrance is “Literature.” It includes the only medieval surviving manuscript of *Beowulf*; the most important poem in Old English; the manuscript of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*; and the manuscript *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*, Lewis Carroll’s

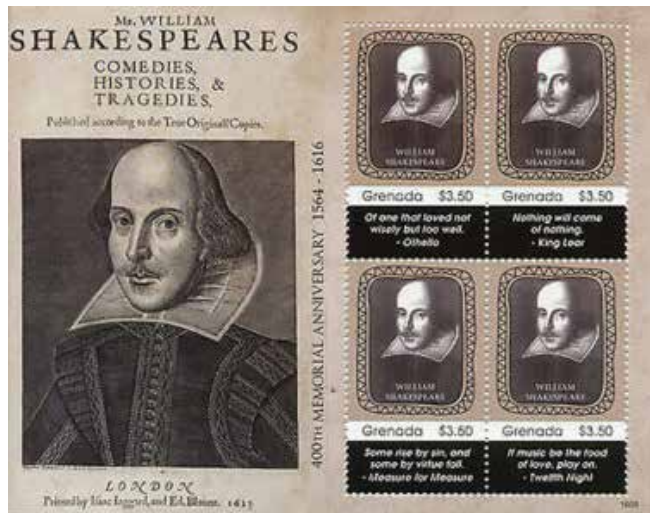
*cont. on pg 16*

## THIS ISSUE

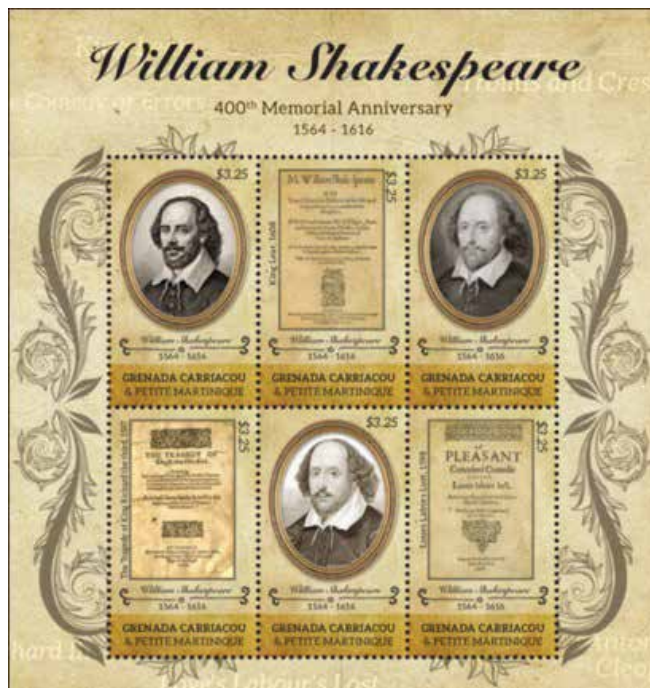
<b>The British Library and Its ‘Treasures’ . . .</b>	<b>13 &amp; 16 – 19</b>
<b>GPA News . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The Death of Martha Jane Zachert . . . . .</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>How Perkins Bacon ‘mined their assets’ . . . . .</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The Griffin as Printers’ Symbol . . . . .</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Printing, Part 1, <i>Printing</i> . . . . .</b>	<b>20 – 21</b>
<b>New Issues of Graphic Interest . . . . .</b>	<b>22–24</b>

cont. from pg 13 .

hand-written story which was later published as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. William Shakespeare has his own dedicated showcase, which includes the Shakespeare First Folio, published in 1623, seven years after his death (figs 2 & 3). It contains 36 plays, of which eighteen had never previously been published. It's from the First Folio that we get first sight of *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night* and



2. Grenada, 2016 [Sc4151a-d].



3. Grenada Grenadines, 2016 [Sc2959a-f].

*Macbeth*. It is also one of the only sources of a portrait of Shakespeare.

You might want to head for the “Printing” section. “Printing in the East” starts with the *Diamond Sutra* (China 868 AD) and the *Million Charms of Empress*

*Shotoku* (Japan 764 AD). After other early examples it moves on to “Printing in Europe” which starts with the Gutenberg Bible, printed in Mainz in 1455; the earliest full-scale work printed in Europe using movable type (figs 4 - 6). Twenty complete copies and 28 partial copies are known to have survived: 36 on paper and twelve on vellum. The British Library has one of each, both complete. Most of the surviving copies have hand-illuminated decoration. Early printers follow, including



4. Germany, Johannes Gutenberg, 2000 [Sc2068].



5. Germany, First Day Cover, Moveable type honoring Gutenberg, 1983 [Sc1392]. One of two 1983 German EUROPA stamps.



6. Croatia, First Day Cover, Moveable type honoring Gutenberg, 1997 [Sc324].

William Caxton (figs 7 - 9). He had learned the trade in Cologne, and on moving to Bruges printed the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* in 1474, followed by *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*. In 1476 he returned to his home country and set up a press in the precincts of





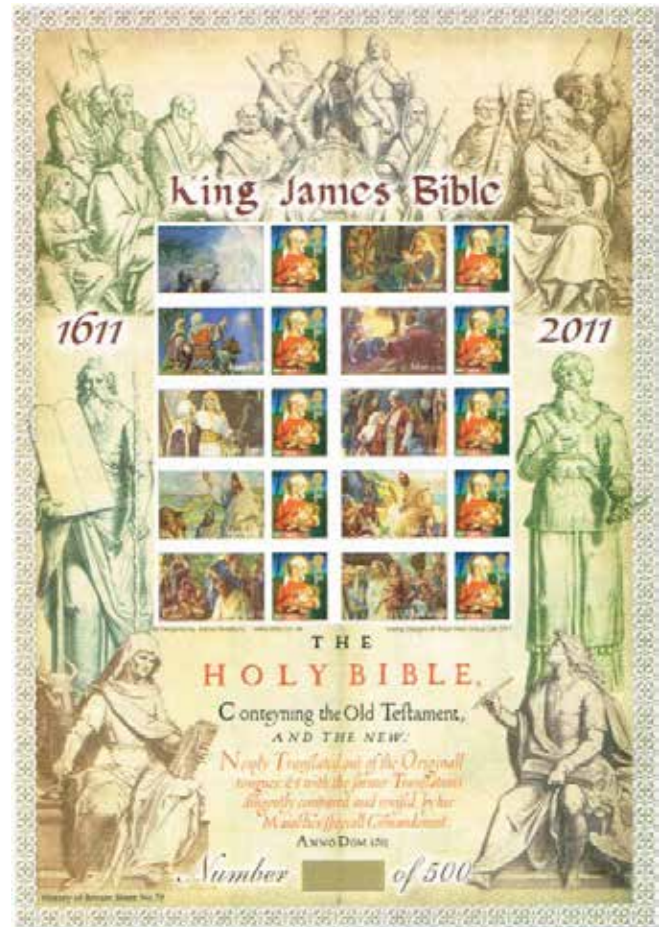
Great Britain honors William Caxton. 7. Top left, 2008 [Sc2555d]. 8. Top right, Special cancel celebrating Caxton's printing of *Mort d'Arthur*, 1985. 9. Bottom, 500 years of British printing are commemorated with Caxton set of four, cancellation shows Caxton's printers device, a trademark flanked by the letters *w* and *c*. The 8½p stamp shows a woodcut from *The Canterbury Tales*; the 10p an extract from the *Tretyse of Love*; the 11p shows a woodcut from *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*; and the 13p a 16th century wood cut of printshop and press. 1976 [Sc794-797].

Westminster Abbey. The first book published in England was *Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosphres*. Also in that year came the first edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* written nearly a century earlier. Of the 90-odd books printed by Caxton, 74 were in English of which twenty were his translations. While almost none of them are read today, there are few which have stood the test of time, including Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

"Sacred Texts" covers both printed and manuscript works from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Those interested in illuminated manuscripts are well served in this section by beautiful works from various cultures, including the Sherborne Missal, made about 1400 and whose borders include delightful illustrations of 48 different identifiable birds. From the East comes the *Memoirs of Babur*, founder of the Mughal Dynasty. The major English-language Bibles (manuscript and printed) are shown: translations by John Whycliffe



10. Top left, Special British cancel honoring John Whycliffe's translation of the Bible, 1984. 11. Top right, Special cancel commemorating the King James Bible. 12. Below, Sheet marking the 500th anniversary of the King James Bible, 2011. [Sc2975b]

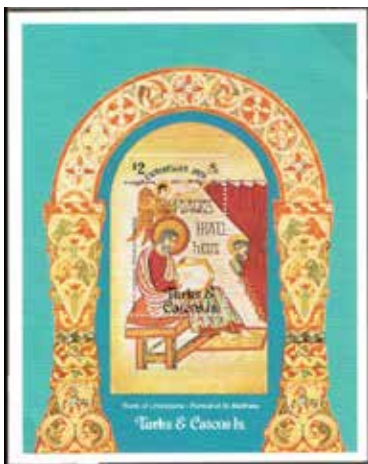


(1382-1388) (fig 10), William Tyndale (Geneva, 1526) and Miles Coverdale (1539), plus the first edition of the King James, or Authorized Version, published in 1611 and designed to be used in churches rather than for private devotion (figs 11 – 12). Many of us use phrases from this work, perhaps without realizing it. If for instance you refer to someone with "feet of clay" or claim *cont. on next page.*

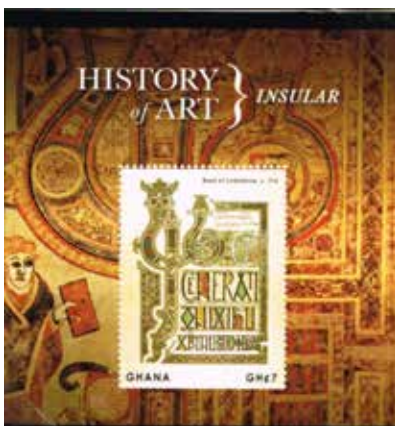
that by their action they “reap the whirlwind,” you are quoting from one of the great works of English literature.



13. Special British cancel commemorating the 1300th anniversary of the Lindisfarne Gospels, 1998.



14. Turks & Caicos, 1979 [Sc417]. Lindisfarne Gospels. St. Matthew with his symbol of an angel. Each of the Evangelists is shown as an author-scribe.



15. Ghana 2013. Lindisfarne Gospels. Initial page of St. Matthew, with the words “Liber generationis Iesu Christi” i.e. “The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ.” [Sc2752]

But classifications can be a bit fluid. That great masterpiece of Celtic art, the Lindisfarne Gospels, is found not under “Sacred Texts” but “The Art of the Book,” the single biggest section in the room. Made in Northumbria around 698 - 720 AD (figs 13 - 15), it was written and illuminated by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, and bound by Bishop Aethilwald of Lindisfarne. Each of the Gospels is preceded by a page showing the Evangelist with his symbol, and followed

by a ‘carpet page,’ then the major initial page and opening words. Written in Latin, around 950 AD it was translated into Old English by Aldred of Chester-Le-Street, who added a word by word gloss between the lines, making it the oldest surviving translation of the Gospels into the English language.

Adjacent to “The Art of the Book” is one display stand of “Bookbinding.” While some of these items came from the Royal Library, the majority came as a bequest to the Museum of the collection of Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode (1730 – 1799), the first English collector of books which had been bound for the French patron Jean Grolier.

The section headed “Historical Documents” includes the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (mid-eleventh century) and Lady Jane Grey’s Prayerbook (1554). But pride of place – in a room set aside for its display – is the Magna Carta, signed by King John in 1215 in the face of the threat of rebellion by the English barons who had been taxed exorbitantly to pay for the French wars (figs 16 –18). Only four copies of the Magna Carta survive: two in the British Library, and one each at Lincoln and Salisbury Cathedrals. Only three of the original 63 clauses remain on the statute book, but its influence has been immense, not least in the USA. Among other things it greatly influenced Thomas Jefferson in his drafting of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and there are



16. Above, Great Britain, 1999, Magna Carta. [Sc1866]



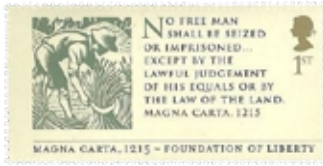
17. Right, Millenium cancellation Magna Carta.



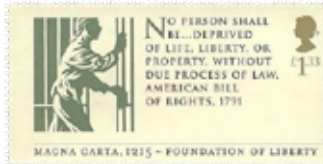
18. USA, 1965. Magna Carta, 1965. [Sc1265]



echoes of the Charter in the United States Bill of Rights of 1791 (figs 16 – 18). It has inspired drafters of modern documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1953) (figs 19 – 21).



19. Great Britain, 2015. Magna Carta series with excerpt from the Magna Carta. [Sc3403]



20. Great Britain, 2015. Magna Carta series with excerpt from American Bill of Rights. [Sc3406]



21. Great Britain, 2015. Magna Carta series with excerpt from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2015. [Sc 3407]

Other sections of the Gallery are Music, including manuscript scores by Handel, Mozart, Elgar and the Beatles; Science, including Leonardo Da Vinci’s Notebook; Art and Science, including works by Michelangelo and Durer; and Maps and Views, with the great cartographers. Augmenting some of these displays are extracts from the National Sound Archive, where you can listen to music, drama, poetry, oral history, and recordings from the natural word. If you find yourself in London this is a tourist site not to be missed.

References:

British Library (2016) Souvenir Guide  
 British Library web pages <https://www.bl.uk/>

## How Perkins Bacon ‘mined their assets’

Malcolm J. Givens

As well as being interested in the design and printing of stamps, I have a preoccupation with the processes that lead to the making of printing plates. Below I illustrate material dealing with how Perkins Bacon ‘mined their assets’ by modifying and using the engraving already done and paid for by previous clients.



Above, Issued Tasmania and Ceylon stamps



Right, Progress proof of the Ceylon stamps



Left, Scan of Progress proof converted to monochrome. Below, Enlargement to help make clear that the word TASMANIA is still just visible in the frame. Look for the right hand vertical strokes of the “M” and “A” of Tasmania that are visible above the center of postage.

