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STANLEY MORISON AND OUP

In 1925 the Delegates of Oxford University Press asked Stanley Morison to write a historical investigation into the origins of the so-called Fell types. Forty-two years later, on 12 October 1967, that historical investigation was published. Morison had died the day before. His book – *John Fell, the University Press and the ‘Fell’ types* – was perhaps the finest hand-set book printed at Oxford in the twentieth century.

It is the story of this four-decade project that I would like to tell you.

Today’s media would love this story. As a project, it ran hopelessly over schedule, it was endlessly delayed, suffered major setbacks, was taken up, put down, forgotten, remembered, taken up again, and more. It was dogged by arguments over scope and size, and nearly got lost in an even larger project. A senior member of the team was – to all intents and purposes – sacked. And, as for running over budget, although the later costs of production were exceeded by takings it is hard to believe that the book really made money.

To place the whole project in context we must go back to 1900, to the time when Horace Hart was the Controller of the Press. Hart took it upon himself to bring some order to the Press and it was in his role as a manager that he prepared to his book *Notes on a Century of Typography*. This was a substantial volume in which, basing his survey on the five type specimens that the Press issued in the late 1600s and early 1700s, he displayed all of the ancient typographical material then in the possession of the Press. Hart concentrated on cataloguing what was there, whether it was usable, what state it was in, and whether or not punches and/or matrices were present. It was essentially a manager’s list. Central to the holdings were of course the materials that Bishop John Fell had bequeathed to the Press in 1686. We must say something of those materials.

John Fell was one of the central figures in the establishment of the University Press at Oxford. In setting up the Press in the 1670s he had found it impossible to acquire from English type founders the range of types necessary for a university press of that time printing the sort of books that it would print, and so he engaged Thomas Marshall as his agent to buy, not so much types, as the means for making type: matrices. The result of Marshall's shopping expeditions to Holland was a range of matrices that would allow the Press to cast its own printing types in Roman, Italic, Greek, etc. Marshall had concentrated on the type sizes appropriate for body texts, in other words sizes up to Pica. Fell also brought to Oxford the Dutch type-cutter Peter de Walpergen to cut punches for the larger sizes, in particular Great Primer, Double Pica, and 3-line Pica. Fell's legacy collectively became known as the *Fell types*.

Hart resigned from the Press in 1915 and handed over the reins to Frederick Hall. Hall by contrast seems to have had very little interest in the Fell types, and we find nothing to suggest that anything more was done by way of researching them during that time.

However, things changed considerably when Hall died in 1925 and the baton passed to John Johnson. Johnson was something of an academic *manqué*. He had read Greats at Oxford and become a papyrologist in the Egyptian civil service. His hobby was of course collecting ephemeral printing.

Coincidentally, 1925 was the tercentenary of Fell's birth. The previous year, the Delegates had floated the idea of preparing some form of display of the Fell types to celebrate the anniversary, and Secretary Chapman had made contact with Morison about the idea.

So how did Morison find himself connected to the Press at this moment? What made the Press approach Morison over the anniversary volume?

In 1913, at the age of 24, Morison joined the Catholic publishing house of Burns & Oates. A Catholic since 1908, Morison was at home here and he started work ostensibly as a short-hand typist under Francis Meynell.

Together they designed a number of books, some of which they had OUP set and print in the Fell types. However, for Meynell and Morison, designing books for others to print was just not enough, and so in 1915 Meynell established his own Romney Street Press. Meynell and Morison hand-set the first production, *Ten Poems* by Alice Meynell, in Fell English, two cases of which Meynell had obtained from Frederick Hall. This gave them both their first taste of actually handling type, and in particular Fell.

Morison's lifetime interest in the Fell types had begun, and, in the autumn of 1922, he started another new venture, this time with Oliver Simon, *The Fleuron*, a journal of typography which ran to seven substantial volumes. In 1923, now 34 years old, Morison formally took up the role of typographical adviser to the Monotype Corporation, then two years later the same role for Cambridge University Press, and in 1929 the same for *The Times*. These posts greatly enhanced his reputation and influence, and were a continuing load on his desk for the rest of his life.

Between the end of the war in 1918 and 1924, when Secretary Chapman was thinking through how the range of Fell types might be successfully displayed, Morison therefore already found more than enough to occupy himself. In particular, during this period, he had made a discovery regarding the Fell types which, in Harry Carter's words, 'inclined him to investigate it'. Analysing broadside specimens and various facsimiles, Morison concluded that some of the smaller sizes of Fell type were in fact of sixteenth-century French origin, rather than seventeenth-century Dutch as Horace Hart had concluded earlier. Perhaps as a result of this significant discovery, Morison became party to the plan that was hatching around the table of the Delegates in 1924.

Once the idea had been conceived, matters moved quickly, as they had to if the tercentenary was not to be missed, and in the event an imposing folio *Specimens of Books Printed at Oxford with Types given to the University by John Fell* appeared on the anniversary on 25 June 1925. Using facsimiles of pages from books printed in Fell, Chapman's volume presented the full panoply of the types. Signalling his book's relationship to Hart's *Notes on a Century*, Chapman wrote '... materials for the scientific study of Fell's types are already accessible in Hart. The present collection is less laborious, and its design less ambitious. No more attempt is made to supplement the monumental work of Hart by bringing together examples of the way in which the types were used at Oxford in Fell's own time, in the eighteenth century, and in the period of the modern revival.'

The need for detailed research into the origins of the types did not escape Morison, who presaged his own work to come when he reviewed Chapman's folio in the fifth volume of *The Fleuron* in 1926, noting 'Unfortunately Hart's work, laborious as it was, carried the question of originals no further than the Oxford specimens. For a scientific study of the types we need to compare and identify them with the proofs as they appear in the Specimens issued by the brothers Voskens, Daniel Elsevier and other

Dutch cutters producing at the time of Fell's purchase. It is therefore to be hoped that Oxford will not rest until this inquiry has been completed.'

Chapman hinted that Morison hoped for publication that same year when he wrote to him in July 1925: 'my dear Morison, ... Your Fell book (1) cant be published in 1925 because there is no time (2) musnt be, because it would interfere with my commemorative folio (3) neednt be published in 1925 because it is scientific and will always attract a sufficient public. Dont let the notion sleep, however.' If by 'Your Fell book' Chapman was indeed referring to what was to become *John Fell*, his concern was more than premature. For the scientific study was a task that was to occupy Morison on and off for the next 42 years, to the very day of his death.

The project got off to very slow start, with Morison doing very little on it in the latter part of the 1920s. The first chance to draw together such work as had been done was when Printer Johnson was looking for something to illustrate the Bishop's legacy at an exhibition of the Press's work put on in 1930. The result was a set of five splendid folio broadsheets of specimens of Fell excluding the Exotics, together with a large explanatory broadsheet and a four-page paper by Morison. Writing about these broadsides in 1950, Morison noted the most important result of his work up to 1930: the opportunity was taken to separate Fell Pica Italic from its larger capitals, to combine them with a set of small capitals without lower case, and so to reconstitute a typeface originally cut by Robert Granjon for Christopher Plantin and first used in 1566, thus proving that Oxford possessed the oldest of all surviving italic materials in the original state.

Johnson recognised the importance of the material in the large explanatory broadside and saw the need for making Morison's findings available more widely. He sent proofs of the broadside to Morison adding 'obviously presently you will have to produce a monograph, whether in association with something biographical or not we can determine later. In any case the book will constitute a Printer's specimen, and I (the printing business) should commission it myself in order to be able to control it in every stage of paper and print. The other Fell book was ruined.'

It's hard to know what Johnson meant by 'The other Fell book was ruined.' Was he referring to Chapman's folio? It had been imposing but perhaps did not meet Johnson's exacting standards; indeed, unsold copies had been destroyed. What does seem to be true is that Chapman's original idea for a scientific account seemed to have been largely forgotten, with

Johnson instead hatching ideas for various monographs of uncertain coverage.

But for Morison, it was time for little additional promotional work, and it is hard to imagine his letter to *The Times* finding a place in that organ that today. Titled 'The Fell Types at Oxford, a sixteenth century italic', it ran to 19 column-inches and presented the story so far in a slightly condensed form from the text of the broadside.

By 1931 Johnson was hard at work on his own research into the history of printing at the Press, but an effect of the exhibition was that of re-engaging Morison's interest in the scientific account once more, and he was now trying to unravel the detailed connections between Fell's types and the work of Granjon. The provenance of the Pica Italic had been established and Morison had outlined the case in his letter to *The Times*. Various Fell Greeks and Flowers were also suspected of being from Granjon's hand, and Morison wrote to Johnson seeking some help from the Press's typefounder at that time, Sidney Squires. To help matters on, in 1933 Johnson had working specimens of Fell and accompanying text made up in the form of half a dozen or so copies of a 22 page booklet. This was little more than the 1930 broadsides re-arranged, but it put in place a simple organisation of the matter convenient for the prosecution of further study. This booklet was in turn revised and reprinted in 1936, but reflecting on its production in 1950 Morison himself noted how slow progress had by then become, and he was to do little further work on the project up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Worse still, the project would suffer a major set-back with the destruction of Morison's notes in the 1941 Blitz on London, when his flat was destroyed along with most of his papers and books. It was back to square one.

At the end of the war, in 1946, John Johnson retired and his assistant of seventeen years, Charles Batey, became Printer. The constraints of war-time would continue to affect work for some years, and one of his preoccupations was the re-organisation of the Press. But in 1947, after a year in office, Batey determined to raise the subject of the Fell book with Morison, and arranged for him to receive new copies of the basic materials: a copy of Hart's *Century of Typography*, and a complete set of the 1930 broadsides.

In 1949, Batey visited the Company's offices in America. On his return, he noted how those he had met often sent him off with a little book as a memento. So when he returned to America the following year he determined to reciprocate and cast about for a small gift which he could give in

return. It occurred him that he might print a pamphlet about the Fell Types, and include specimens from the collection. He discussed the suggestion with Morison who thought the idea excellent, so they took down the material originally prepared for the 1930 broadsides and made up a delightful book 'The Roman, Italic & Black Letter bequeathed to the University of Oxford by Doctor John Fell'. This proved to be just the vehicle needed to engage Morison's attention again, and Batey had killed two birds with one stone.

Morison used the book as a vehicle for summarising the state of play: how tradition had it that Fell's types were Dutch in origin, but how an aesthetic argument could be made that the smaller sizes came from a French tradition.

Batey now began to reel Morison in when he sent him his copies: 'Now we can begin to think of the major work? I shall hope to see you soon after I get back from the States and will try to persuade you to give a little of your precious time to it.' That October, Morison acknowledged receipt of further copies of the book, adding casually 'one of these days when you are London we might have a word about the larger project.' Batey jumped at the hint and replied immediately: 'I'm excited by your letter, which suggested your mind has turned again towards your work on the Fell types.' A few days later he was impatiently chasing Morison for a meeting.

Charles Batey had become the third in the role of Printer to try to push the project on. However, even though it had been the air now for two decades, there was still no clear end in view nor indeed any vision of what the final outcome might be. And with Morison working on his own on this one of a myriad of other commitments, it would be hard to get up any head of steam. But Batey would change all this: he had no need for his own projects as Johnson had had, and he could be very single-minded.

He made a key observation: 'Morison believes that we can make progress if we can get the proper help.' The question was whom they could find who could do the leg-work for Morison. Salvation came in the form of John Simmons. Simmons had been in touch with John Johnson some years earlier in the furtherance of his studies on the history of Russian printing, and recently Batey had agreed to print some Fell Great Primer Slavonic for an article that Simmons was publishing. Batey recognised in Simmons a potential collaborator for Morison and broached the idea of working with Morison. Simmons jumped at it and by September 1951 he was on board as part-time Printer's Librarian at OUP.

Not long after, Simmons got wind of the impending departure from the Stationery Office of its Typographic Adviser, Harry Carter. Carter was another extraordinary character. He had taken up law in Lincoln's Inn, and then turned to type design as a draughtsman at the Monotype Corporation, where he learned punch-cutting, and later worked with Oliver Simon at the Kynoch Press and with Francis Meynell at the Nonesuch Press. On the side, he became proficient in many languages including Arabic. Batey and Morison discussed the idea of a new post of Archivist and Curator of Museum at the Press as a way of bringing Carter in. Morison described Carter as a man with a 'combination of talent that, without any exaggeration, ranks as unique in English trade. At least I know of nobody else in this country who is comparable with van Krimpen and Conrad Bauer for knowledge of type design and type production, and with the history of these techniques and associated crafts; also he possesses a wide knowledge of processes. He has had publishing experience, and can write. I do not know what degree he took but he is capable in modern languages and has a natural interest in Orientals and other exotics.' Carter found himself on board.

The focus of the new team of Morison, Carter, Simmons, and Batey immediately became a set of four 'fascicules' that would be printed in a small edition for distribution to those who could provide input on the matter. The fascicules had a common title: *Notes towards a specimen of the ancient typographical materials of the University of Oxford principally collected and bequeathed to the University of Oxford by Dr John Fell*. Note the words 'principally collected and bequeathed by Fell'. No 1 covered types for the Latin and vernacular, Black letter, Roman, and italic; No 2 Greek; No 3 Flowers; and No 4 Exotics. Each displayed the full set of sorts of each size and on the facing page gave one or two short paragraphs on each.

Simmons was given the task of dealing with the Exotics. He had been keen to ensure that all the pre-1718 types were covered: the Slavonic, Cyrillic, Armenian, Syriac, Samaritan, and so on. It was his view that if they didn't put these in the final book, they would never be dealt with. In the final make-up of *John Fell*, however, the chapter on the Fell Orientals covered only the Armenian, Coptic, Samaritan, and Syriac, each of which could in some sense be attributed to Fell or to his influence.

In 1953 the team lacked some basic reference materials: firstly a detailed catalogue of the materials still at the Press: the punches, matrices, moulds, and type; and secondly a list of books printed in Oxford between

1681 and 1713 which would have used Fell types. Preparing these two items would be amongst Simmons's vital contributions.

In August 1953 a summit meeting was held to try to nail down the form and extent of the book. The proposed title for the book was 'The Ancient Typographic Material of the University of Oxford'. No mention of Fell. It was even suggested that types used in early Oxford books but that no longer existed should be covered, though perhaps only in some form of Introduction. More ominously it was agreed that 'The authors have in mind publication in 1955.'

Work on the fascicules proceeded very quickly. The first three were sent out, in 50 copies only, to people whom the team thought could offer input, including Beatrice Ward, Francis Meynell, Bruce Rogers, Brooke Crutchley, John Dreyfus, John Sparrow, Philip Gaskell, Jan van Krimpen, Jan Tschichold, and Oliver Simon. But the hope that the fascicules would generate useful input proved unfounded: replies were gratifying rather than constructive. To Carter's irritation, Brooke Crutchley restricted himself to complaining about three commas that he felt were unnecessary.

One thing was clear from early on: the importance of the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp where so much potentially related material was held, and Carter and Simmons now found themselves furthering their research in the libraries and institutions of Europe, including Enschedé in Haarlem, and the Imprimerie Nationale and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. In Antwerp Carter concentrated on making smoke-proofs of the Plantin-Moretus types as represented by the punches for comparison with the Oxford materials. As Carter himself described it: 'I handled the Plantinian treasures with a boldness that must have alarmed a lesser man than [the Director] Doctor Voet. I took impressions from the punches in soot from a candle flame, and if the face struck in a set of matrices was too small to be distinguished by eye I cast type in it with metal melted over the night watchman's gas ring. I could see the types faces that I knew in old books come alive under my hands.'

Simmons meanwhile visited the Haas foundry in Basel to examine type specimens and founders' materials of the seventeenth & eighteenth centuries which might throw light on developments at Oxford during the same period.

Through the middle of 1954, discussions rumbled on as to whether and how the scope of the book should be limited. In particular, the place of non-Fell material became a serious point of contention within the team. Morison was keen for it to be a Fell volume, though, as Simmons re-

corded, his definition of ‘Fell’ was a Catholic one, including all materials traditionally known as ‘Fell’. Simmons was motivated to see all of Oxford’s collection studied. Carter’s appetite for a wider study had been whetted by the Antwerp materials. And Graham Pollard – a friend of Morison’s who also now came on the scene momentarily – made matters worse by proposing an even larger project of quite impossible scale of which Morison’s book would be just one part. Mercifully, the idea never took root.

The problem of scope worsened and finally Secretary Roberts was invited to a meeting to discuss it, presumably as an umpire. The type specimen issued by the Press in 1693 was determined to be the criterion. Morison’s goal of restricting the scope to types that were associated with Fell seems to have held sway, but with a promise for dissenters of ‘projected volumes’ that would cover the other materials. The book was to be set and printed in Fell, and publication in 1955 was re-affirmed. Perhaps most importantly, the life of Fell was also to be ‘adequately treated’ in the book. This was a major jump in the scope, and one that satisfied Morison’s fascination with Fell’s theology and politics.

On the typographical side, Morison was by now developing the theory that the Fell Pica Roman, Long Primer, and possibly the Brevier, were all cut by Garamond.

Carter summarised the final attributions in 1968:

- The Pica Roman was, in the main, attributable to Claude Garamond of Paris.
- The Double Pica, English, and Long Primer Greek and Pica, Long Primer, and Brevier Italics were the work of Robert Granjon of Paris.
- The Nonpareil Roman & Italic were by Pierre Haultin of Paris.

Crucially, this meant that these Oxford materials dated back to the sixteenth century and to France, not to the seventeenth century and Holland.

The Small Pica Roman & Italic and the Brevier Roman were fashioned by the most eminent of Dutch artists, Christoffel van Dijck, in each case remodelling a French typeface of the sixteenth century. So much for the text sizes.

What of the larger sizes, in particular the Great Primer, Double Pica, and 3-line Pica for which punches existed at Oxford? Gradually it dawned on the team that the shape and workmanship of those punches stamped them as the work of one man and that the same man had cut those for the beautiful music type entered in an inventory appended to the second issue of the *Specimen* of 1695 and there described as ‘Cut by Peter Walpergen’.

This and other clues allowed the team to attribute those larger sizes to that one hand. It was not a hand that Morison liked as Simmons recalled: ‘I said I guessed that Walpergen had been trained in the Luther foundry at Frankfurt “Kicked out of the Luther foundry, possibly,” he said. “No, no: he was not trained at all. He just picked it up somehow. You say he waited on Fell at table. I hope he was a better butler than punchcutter.” After looking at the 3-line Pica specimen, Morison said: “Really, these letters must have been cut as a joke.”’

The team could now write the scientific account of the types, and around the turn of 1954/55 they could well have felt that publication in 1955 was possible.

To support the work on Fell’s own life, another piece of necessary ground work was the preparation of a biography of him, something that none of the team was really placed to do. The task was given to Mr Bill, Librarian at Fell’s college, Christ Church. Simmons was also at work on the massive chronological catalogue of the printing materials still at the Press, cross-referencing it with Hart’s *Notes on a Century*: a grand total of around 2,600 punches and over 6,000 matrices. Confidence was now high enough for Batey to start thinking about details such as the paper that they would use for the book, and in December 1954 the press prepared a trial proof of the first part of the book. Morison now had the bit between his teeth. Two 288 page dummies were made up for him to plan with. Proofs were being exchanged between the parties having been key-boarded and then cast on the Monotype, just a handful of galley-proofs being printed off for comment and correction. As Vivian Ridler put it: ‘it was all set up for Morison so that he could have it easily there. Pretty lavish, wasn’t it? Batey was anxious to do anything to make Morison’s life easier, to get him to get on with the job. For Batey it was a question of no expense spared. He was very anxious to get it out in his tenure as Printer, which I well understood, because it was his baby in a way.’

By mid-1955 Morison was working away on the Flowers section and was getting down to work on the biography of Fell based on Mr Bill’s biographical piece. But his work on the Exotics was being held up as Simmons’s fascicule on the topic was still unfinished. In January 1956, Simmons wrote to Morison about progress on it, though there was precious little to report. House-moving and his bread-and-butter work had made progress very slow. Simmons had found himself very much over-committed and was forced to leave the project. It was a somewhat unhappy parting of the ways. Partly to blame, aside from Simmons’s com-

mitments, was the nagging question as to which of Oxford's materials should be covered under the heading of Exotics. Morison, perhaps better than most, recognised the need for containing the scope of the book if it was ever to be published and in a letter to Simmons ironically noted: 'I'm all for a historical catalogue of all the ancient typographical materials at Oxford (in six volumes). But bear in mind that I shall be 68 next birthday and Charles Batey is due to retire in a short time. Apart from the fact that the Delegates have only committed themselves to the Fell book there are these practical limits to what can be done now.' In the event, production of the fascicule on the Exotics had to be passed to Carter and it was he who appended his initials when it was issued finally in 1957.

Reflecting the new tension in the team as to whether this was a book about Fell and/or his types, the plan was now for a book in two parts. Part 1 would be about Fell, his life, and work. Part 2 would cover the types themselves. Appendices would pick up material ancillary to the two main themes.

By now Morison had realised that the Christ Church Specimen was not the answer to the question of what was a Fell type: it was a convenience but, in his view, did not serve as a hard-and-fast criterion. In the event the final volume described a total of 60 type-faces. 32 were granted the status of 'Fell type' and described in considerable detail in Part Two. Of these, 17 derived from Marshall's purchases in Holland in 1670 and 1672; a further 14 were those cut by Peter de Walpergen in Oxford between 1677 and 1690. All the other 28 type-faces were relegated to brief coverage in Appendix 4.

Limiting the scope of the book served Morison in two ways. Given his journalistic touch, he was 'most anxious that the book should go to press quickly': the project threatened to drag on interminably and he had more than enough to occupy his time. Moreover, he saw it very definitely as a book about John Fell and his bequest, rather than a book about the ancient faces at the Press, and so he was not concerned to prepare a scientific account strictly following in Hart's footsteps. Hart had, of course, not restricted himself in his coverage of the types.

Morison had been determined to get the first draft of Part 1 complete by the end of 1955, and a typescript was indeed delivered to the Press in January 1956, only to be revised that July and again in the October. Simmons said of Morison: 'he would make great leaps that were not justified ... he would get out of hand on issues to do with the Reformation, and there was a need to check what he was up to.' He would stray into theo-

logically mine-strewn ground. It was to be Carter's hand in particular that would keep the book on the straight and narrow.

1957 saw a flurry of progress with Morison's Part 1 going the rounds, Carter at work on the chapter on the Flowers, and Morison producing a draft of the chapter on the Fell Greeks. Batey had Carter scrutinise Morison's work, not least to check for contentious Morisonisms in it, but he was able to report that he now had a chapter which Harry Carter had examined and certified to contain nothing relating to religion or politics.

But by April 1958 the optimism of the year before had dissipated, to be replaced by desperation with Morison once again ill on return from one of his annual trips to Chicago. He was now on the defensive himself about his own progress on a review of Carter's chapter on the Flowers. Work ground to a halt. Sadly Batey was not to see the book published in his time as Printer and now Vivian Ridler succeeded him as Printer, the fourth faced with a task of realising Chapman's ambition. But Morison's illness continued, and in July 1959, in the midst of a national strike in the printing industry, Ridler found himself writing plaintively to Morison:

'Dear Morison, Do you think that when the present struggle is over some way might be found of moving the Fell opus again? I realize that as things now stand it is a matter for you and Roberts, not for me. But I do have a deep interest in getting it out, and even if I am spared, I have only another 19 years to go. I will do whatever I can to help.'

The next few months saw Morison attempting to draw the threads together for once and for all. Things started moving, albeit slowly. It was now late 1959 and Morison made another long trip to North America, writing: 'on my return I expect to find all the book in new, clean (I won't say impeccable) typescript in the condition that the Delegates might feel inclined to accept. At any rate it will be my best ... and last word – almost.' Prophetic words, for his inclination to tinker was undiminished: 'I much need to inspect, would like to borrow in fact, Fell's Bible of 1676. This was a symbolic thing in Fell's life & I now think not enough is said about it in the account of his achievement. When I return, I will finish off, by adding what is necessary about the Bible without any etc etc etc,' This must have caused some smirking at the Press. Ridler wrote 'Thank you for your letter. I'm very glad to know that the end, or the beginning of the end, is in sight, or almost in sight.'

Morison's optimism seemed unrelenting: completion was always just around the corner but finally, on 18 April 1960, a package arrived on Roberts's desk, containing a bundle of 380 pages of copy including 25 gal-

ley proofs and a draft of the Preface. But Morison's covering note could only say that it had been brought to its 'near-conclusion'. 'In summary, the present bundle represents the best I can do with the subject. While I'm sure it can be improved at many points, I am equally sure that nothing more than I can now do will add to its merits.'

In 1961, Morison was paid for his work, or at least for his expenses. Replying to Ridler, Morison made special mention of Batey's persuasion and generosity, especially in obtaining the assistance of Carter and Simmons. 'He made me take up the task and get on with it. I repeat, therefore, it will be exciting when the enterprise comes to completion. ... Do you think there is any chance of your being absolutely finished by the end of ... 1962 and a copy being bound, pressed and dried in time to present to Batey on 22 Feb 1963? It is his 70th birthday and the Fell Book would be an agreeable present I fancy.' Strangely, however, the Press seems to have almost mislaid Morison's bundle or at least not have noticed that it had arrived. And it is some months later that Secretary Roberts had to be reminded that it had been delivered. The ball fell in Printer Ridler's court.

The extent of the bundle proved more than had been expected and cuts were necessary. In January 1963 Roberts reported to Ridler that a fifth reader had read the material and, taking Morison at his word about hacking as necessary, 'I have seized the shears and have excised (a) large sections of history that was dubious, irrelevant or both, (b) surmises, (c) false inferences, (d) repetition and contradictions'. He added 'Morison's Latin is very shaky.'

In January 1964 Ridler presented the final text, save for the bibliography, to Secretary Roberts for passing. The balance was finally struck between a study of John Fell and a study of his types, one perhaps not entirely to Morison's liking, as he hints in the preface:

'The present volume, substantial as it may feel in the hands of the reader is in fact a limited treatment of the formidable seventeenth-century personality: John Fell. Ample though the dimensions of the book may seem, the space given to Fell's writings is markedly less than would be desired by a specialist of seventeenth-century English theological, controversial, and devotional literature. The present book is intended as a contribution less to biography and theology than to bibliography and typography.'

By July 1964 Carter was able to report to Morison a major step in production when he sent a proof of the first sheet of the book asking for his attention to the side notes and the headlines. The production of the book – the casting of type, the hand-setting of the type, and the printing – is it-

self a long story, perhaps one for another talk. Even after considerable additional casting of the Fell English, there was only enough type for 40 pages to be set, proofed, and printed at one time, before it had to be dissed for the next 40.

By the time that printing was complete in June 1967, Morison was very ill. Vivian Ridler recollects:

‘Morison used to go through agonies with Carter. Morison had a very strong journalistic streak in him, he wasn’t an innate scholar, he was rather of the ‘publish and be damned’ school. He reckoned his job was to do some pioneering work. He used to say ‘get it all down and published and let other people come along and go over it.’

When we were doing [John Fell] Morison was – although I didn’t know it at the time – almost on his death bed, and I used to take up the proofs of the last part to his place in London, and hand them over to him. He’d be lying in bed here, and he’d look at the proofs with Harry’s markings on them and he’d say ‘You know, Ridler, the man’s a pedant. The man’s a pedant!’ They were full of things Harry had written in there correcting Morison’s more slap-happy shots.

But it was a wonderful work by Morison of course, particularly as he wasn’t well. The scholarship was Morison’s but Carter did a lot of quiet putting right.

Morison had the book rather on his conscience – he had committed to do it many years before and it was really rather sad that his health, even in those days, wasn’t of the best and it did deteriorate of course . . . he just remained alive enough for me to take him up a bound copy of it and it was most moving to see his reaction to it.

It was certainly the most spectacular of his works, both in size and contents.’

Simmons also remembers the crucial part that Carter’s pedantry had played in getting the work to publication. ‘Morison was brilliant but . . . he was interested in large questions, and he had very strong and somewhat personal ideas in certain regards, and in point of fact Harry had to have a very strong control over his text. But Morison knew his own virtues and didn’t object at all.’

Secretary Roberts fixed the publication date and the launch party for 12 October 1967. But a week before the 12th, he received the news that was probably half-expected. He wrote to Morison: ‘On returning from my sabbatical I found your splendid volume on my table, but accompanied, alas, by the sad news that you would not be able to come to Oxford on the

12th. Without you there will be no celebration here but I shall hope we might arrange something another time. But I would like to thank you (nonetheless because I have not always made your task easier) most warmly for this great contribution to the history of the Press; there will never be another book like it. I am an ignoramus on typographical history but I do know what the achievement of a book such as this means to the Press.'

Although he had, with failing eyesight, seen his greatest work, Stanley Morison died on the day before its official publication on the 12 October 1967. Francis Meynell, who had stood with Morison in front of a case of Fell fifty years earlier, gave a valediction. The supporting exhibition became not just a tribute to John Fell and Morison's book, but to Morison himself. Perhaps the final word can be left to Andy Palmer of the New York office of OUP who wrote with perfect succinctness:

'The Fell is gorgeous. To say more would be redundant, to say less absurd.'