

WORKS DIARY

August—September 1961

STAFF

G. R. White and T. J. Straw (Machine) and D. E. Rowlands (Composing) went on to double day shift.

E. H. Wright (Composing) retired from the Firm after 37 years' service and Mrs A. A. Wilkins (Office) after 18 years' service.

Ave David Eaton (Composing)
Christopher Barnard (Casters)

PLANT

Vertical Miehles nos. 31 and 33 were sold and two more Krisson make-up galleys were bought. Patching boards in Room B were wired up and a trolley for slip galleys was made and is being tested.

Vending machines for tea, coffee, confectionery and cigarettes were installed.

The fire doors were removed from the top of the Composing room stairs, the clock case on the front of the Works was repaired and in the Works Lane the hedges were cut back to give a clear view for traffic on the bends. Further progress was made in the alterations in the office area.

GENERAL

Two apprentice meetings were held, one the regular two-monthly forum and the other an introductory session for new boys joining the Firm as prospective apprentices.

THE PRODUCTION COMMITTEE

Twentieth meeting—Thursday 14 September

After the last meeting, Messrs Stears, Finlayson, Higgins and Clarke stood down from the Committee and, following the latest elections, the new members of the Committee are as follows:

Office : H. R. Neves Machine : A. Bulmer
Composing : B. M. E. Moore Warehouse : C. W. Cole

MINUTES REDUCED TO SECONDS—Among the points discussed at the twentieth Production Committee meeting were: the shortage of galleys; inadequate cutter and mitting machine on imposition stones in Room A; not enough rack space for comps on DDS; problems of moving and reducing type cases; difficulties of cleaning warehouse machines; the need for a 'no parking' notice at the end of the Works lane; readers on second revise should make a separate note of where their marks are; banana skins, other food and pieces of metal are still being thrown in the waste paper bins, which is very dangerous and unnecessary; request for a third tea machine.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY

REACTIONS TO THE PRICE INCREASE have been strong and unsympathetic. This is understandable, since increases in costs—mostly accounted for by rises in cost-of-living, pension and NHI payments and the new wage rise—have forced us to raise our prices to all our customers by about 10%, or 2/6d in the £, without our being able to offer any tangible benefits in return. Their feelings can perhaps be pictured by imagining your own reaction if the Firm knocked 10% off your wages without offering any compensation.

We print this month excerpts from letters from five of our important customers replying to our official notification of the price increase, all of which speak for themselves and make distressing reading. The volume of work placed with us by these customers is nearly half our total turnover. We are reserving detailed comment on these and other very serious implications of the price increase until next month, when we should know more about what specific developments we must expect.

In the meantime, do please read carefully these sobering reactions from customers who between them pay us annually a sum equivalent to the whole of our wage bill. It is worth remembering, too, that other printers up and down the country have been receiving similar letters from customers similarly shocked by the steep rise in printing costs. One letter refers to the twelve increases since the war. These have in fact totalled 140% cumulative from 1946 to 1961 (during which time the working week has reduced from 45 to 41 hours), as the following table shows:

Date	Percentage increase	Cumulative increase	£ 100
January 1946	6%	6%	106
November 1946	12½%	19½	119.25
(43 hour week commenced)			
April 1948	5	25½	125.2125
January 1950	5	31½	131.473
July 1951	12	47	147.541
July 1951	additional 5 (17)	54½	154.481
October 1952	" 5 (22½)	61	161.054
April 1955	5	69	169.107
January 1956	10	86	186.018
June 1956	further 10 (20)	103	202.928
September 1959	7½	118	218.148
(42 hour week commenced)			
September 1961	10	140	239.962
(41 hour week commenced)			
	88½	140	

We have had similar letters and reactions from our customers on every one of these twelve occasions. Many jobs, of course, we have actually lost—'Scouter', 'Chez Nous' and 'Look about', for instance, since the last increase—but more serious, although less obvious, have been the efforts made by customers to cut their printing bills by economising on the quantities they order.

The Gresham Press



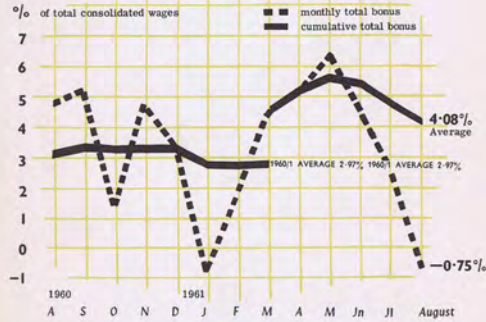
1961 September Bulletin

Volume 2 Number 9

THE SHARE OF PRODUCTION PLAN

Results for August 1961

Year 2 Month 5—13, working days 2 pay days



The month's figures

TOTAL BONUS	Nil
Payout percentage	Nil
Cash loss	£ 62

The Reserve account

Balance at 31 July	£ 407
Debit for August	£ 62
Balance at 31 August	£ 435

Many developments, publishing projects and plans for expansion have been killed at birth by considerations of price—and although we have not seen the work actually go, we have nevertheless suffered a severe loss of potential business because the work has never actually come. Competition now is keener than ever since the war, and so it is getting tougher to get new work to fill the gaps left by the retrenchment and economies of our established customers. The only real answer to these problems is to boost our productivity, so that increased costs are matched and covered by increased production and the customer is therefore getting more for his money at the same time as the worker gets more for his labour. This is a fundamental necessity of good business and job security. Otherwise, it is the old story of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Please do not be misled into thinking that we are kicking up a lot of fuss over nothing, or that Unwin Brothers must be exceptionally disorganised. Neither idea is true. It is simply that nowadays, as a matter of policy, we publicise the Management's worries and problems. In doing so, of course, we lay ourselves wide open to criticism, not a little of it way off the beam—but we think it is right that the staff should know some of the basic facts of business life. It is often difficult for us to know just what needs to be explained—or where to start—because running a big business in these days is highly complicated, and it is not at all easy to get a balanced, fair picture when so very many factors, often battling and conflicting in themselves, have to be weighed up.

SHOP TALK—It is perhaps not just coincidence that the Plan results showed a deficit, albeit a small one, in August, the month before the wage increase.

Holidays, together with the slackening of effort which seems inevitably to precede them, account in part for a deficit. And with all three holiday weeks falling this year in August, which is very unusual, there was not all that much production time left in which to earn a bonus at all. Spoilages, too, were unusually heavy—and we have noticed in past years that the spoilage and the accident rates both tend to rise significantly in the period before the holidays. When concentration on the job strays, even for a moment, the result may well be weeks in hospital, a smash or a spoilage.

These holiday troubles, however, were not the only reason for a deficit, for work has been slackening off very noticeably in recent weeks. Again, this is partly a seasonal thing—publishers, too, go on holiday and so ease their normal pressure on the printers. However, another factor has undoubtedly contributed to the reduction in new work recently, and that is the reaction which always accompanies an impending price increase. Publishers, editors and print buyers all seem to hang fire, wondering what the increase will be and what measures—reprisals, one could say—they will take to cut their printing bills down in return.

RETROSPECT—This month saw the 50th anniversary of the first airmail flight in Britain (from Hendon to Windsor), and the Graham White Company, whose planes ran the early airmail service, has been in the news. It seems an appropriate time therefore to publish the photographs and events recorded in Retrospect III in this issue.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTARY—continued

WAGES BULLETINS—The second Wages Supplement, containing the rates and conditions for women and girls as well as the apprentices to both this and the first one, has just been published.

Probably very few people have settled down to read all the wages information from cover to cover, but this was not really the intention in publishing the two supplements. They are there more as a record than for bedside reading, and to provide a common reference for staff and Management alike. All this information has never before been assembled together and if the result looks complicated, this is unfortunately unavoidable—and the original trade agreements are even worse!

The first wages supplement had a number of minor discrepancies, and the punctilious may wish to correct the following points:

p. 7 paragraph headed Apprentices, last line—for 'column 7' read 'column 8'
p. 11 line 2—for 'below' read 'on previous page'
p. 16 line 5—for 'top of the next page' read 'bottom of this page'

SOME CUSTOMERS' REACTIONS

to our notification of the price increase from 1 September

From The Institution of Electrical Engineers

Seeing that our printing expenditure represents a substantial proportion of our annual income, this considerable increase in charges, as you must be aware, presents a serious budgeting problem, and I have no doubt whatever that the responsible committees of my Council will be compelled to investigate more closely the question of reducing the quantity of matter to be published, in order to offset, if not wholly then certainly in part, this further substantial increase following upon previous successive increases during the last few years.

One outcome of the necessary investigation to which I have referred could well be a decision to undertake internally more composition work, by means of IBM machines, as has been adopted for 'Science Abstracts', and to put out the offset litho printing for tender so that the fullest possible advantage of adopting this method would be secured on economic grounds alone. However, the extent to which this procedure could be developed might well be limited, and the emphasis in order to achieve more economy would no doubt remain in the field of reducing the extent of our published material.

From Allen & Unwin Limited (following an exchange concerning responsibility for the cost of an imperfect copy)

Meanwhile may we draw attention to the price increase of last year and those threatened for this September. Were we not to receive more efficiency from printers and binders in return for these savage rises? If so, why are you not inspecting your machining and binding more carefully?

LOOKING AHEAD

THE 40-HOUR WEEK—The ballot on what the hours of work should be when the 40-hour week is introduced in September 1962, showed an overwhelming majority in favour of 7.45 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. each day, and the Firm is pleased to confirm these officially.

PROCESS DEPARTMENT—Ever since the Empress litho perfecter started running we have increasingly felt the need to have our own camera and plate-making departments rather than depending upon trade suppliers, which is expensive and frustrating. Accordingly, we are pleased to announce that Mr G. R. Bean will be joining the Firm as Process Overseer in a few weeks' time. His brief will be to set up from scratch and then run a process department in which we can do all our own camera work and make all the plates, both large and small, which we need. This will naturally take several months to install, but we hope to be producing at least some plates by the end of the year.

IBM 3000—For the first time in their history, IBM have put a temporary halt on deliveries of a system—in this case the IBM 3000—because of a technical trouble. (The actual problem is that the 'read feed' unit has been built to tolerances which will not accept the wide variations in card thicknesses which have been found in practice—as any printer knows to his cost!) As a result this equipment, which was to have been installed next month, will not now come in until the spring, by which time a new unit will have been designed, tested and made. There are now 80 of the machines on order in this country and 2 000 in Europe—an unprecedented volume of orders for a completely new mechanical accounting system.

VENDING MACHINES—The two new tea and coffee machines in the composing room and the machine room and the snack machine by the old jobbing machine room seem to be a great success and have prompted the installation of a further tea and coffee machine in the canteen.

FUTURE BULLETINS—There never seems to be enough space in the Monthly Bulletins for all the articles and information which we have in mind, but some of the staff may be interested to know that the following are on the stocks for future issues: fully illustrated explanations of our new imposition plans and of the Cartoprint system; provocative articles on 'The Apprentice Scandal' from The Observer and on the meaning of Profit, from the Reader's Digest; a remarkable statement of policy on automation and the unions, published as an advertisement by the Amalgamated Lithographers of America; some facts and figures on the changes in letterpress machines and shift work which have been taking place during the last few years; and some further articles in the 'Retrospect' series.

NEXT MONTH'S RESULTS of the Share of Production Plan will be announced at the twenty-first meeting of the Production Committee to be held on Wednesday 18 October.

From The Royal Institution of Naval Architects

I am asked to write and express the protest of my Council at receiving your circular of 16th August 1961, indicating yet another and very substantial increase in printing costs. This is the **twelfth** increase in costs since the war.

It is noted with dismay that, as usual, this is due to 'a considerable pay rise' demanded by the Trade Unions and granted with apparent disregard for the interests of others, or for those who are expected to foot this bill.

These continually recurring increases of pay, with no corresponding increases of productivity to show for them, cannot be for ever absorbed, or passed on to members of this Institution by way of higher subscriptions. Such higher costs must therefore now begin to rebound on to those responsible for demanding them and those responsible for accepting them.

Consequently a point has now been reached when my Council will be forced to consider a curtailment of all kinds of printing work or arranging wherever possible for its production by other methods.

From the Royal Institute of British Architects

I was horrified to receive your letter giving details of proposed increase in printing charges, to be effective from this autumn.

It is quite impossible for us to face these increases without obtaining a fairly large number of tenders from other firms.

This year the deficit on the Journal will be higher than ever before and this sorry state of affairs is arrived at paying your current charges. In these circumstances a substantial increase is quite out of the question and if alternative and cheaper means of printing the Journal cannot be found, reductions all round will have to be made.

It is not with any pleasure that I dictate this letter as the pleasant relations existing between us all are very much valued here.

From Penguin Books Limited

We are in the process of getting together all the necessary information and will only then be able to decide where our work can be most advantageously placed, but I should like to point out that the increase proposed by you is the highest to date. It would appear therefore that it will be most difficult for us to accede to your recent request for further work.

We may have to ask you to let us have the monads you hold on our account so that any future reprints could be placed elsewhere. I should be very sorry indeed to make such a request but I fear that your increase, allied to the already rather high prices charged by you, might prevent us from putting through necessary reprints of some titles.

RETROSPECT—III

Old Woking's First Aeroplane

Our photos show the first aeroplane to land in Old Woking—about 1910—when Graham White (late Sir Graham White) came down in his Farman biplane in the field next to the recreation ground. The main plane was damaged by trees in landing and girds from our bindery went over to the aeroplane and sewed on canvas patches to repair the tears. Graham White got off again later in the day. There was no lack of willing helpers to hold the machine back by the tail plane until the engine got up enough revs to make the run. The machine just cleared the trees towards Fishers Farm.

Two things are interesting: the fashions in feminine dress and hair styles—and the absence of a policeman.

