



MAGGS BROS. LTD.

ONE OF THE OLDEST ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSHOPS, MAGGS BROS. Ltd, TO REOPEN AT NEW PREMISES ON BEDFORD SQUARE



Staff of Maggs, outside 48 Bedford Square. Far right: Ed Maggs

Maggs Bros Ltd., antiquarian booksellers by appointment to the Queen, is delighted to announce that it is to re-open at new premises on **Wednesday, 24th May 2017**.

In a bold declaration of confidence in the future of the rare book trade and in bricks and mortar, Maggs, one of the oldest established antiquarian book dealers in the world, have purchased the freehold of a handsome Georgian townhouse in Bloomsbury, at 48 Bedford Square. The re-opening follows their departure in November 2015 from 50 Berkeley Square, where they had been based for almost 80 years. During the interim period, they have been operating from their retail shop in Mayfair, at 46 Curzon Street, which they intend to keep on, providing a less formal point of contact, including on Saturdays.

Bedford Square was completed in 1776, the year of the American Declaration of Independence, and is one of the finest and most unspoilt Georgian cityscapes in London. No. 48 is an important building in the history of feminism: it was formerly the home of Bedford College, the first higher education institution for women in Britain, founded by the anti-slavery campaigner and philanthropist Elizabeth Jesser Reid; the novelist George Eliot attended, as did Kate Dickens, daughter of the novelist, Lady Byron, widow of the poet, and Barbara Bodichon, the artist and founder of Girton College.

By the time of its purchase by Maggs, the building had acquired a layer of unsympathetic modernisation, which has now been largely rectified. The restoration of the building will have taken the best part of a year, and incorporates furniture and signage from earlier incarnations of the firm, including furniture commissioned for their penultimate premises at Conduit Street and for 50 Berkeley Square.

Uriah Maggs, who, incidentally, first worked as a footman on Gower Street, within sight of Bedford Square, founded Maggs in 1853. Since then successive generations of the Maggs family have owned and worked for the company. In an innovative approach to succession issues, in the 1990s the family transferred a majority stake in the firm to a trust, and this approach has helped ensure the firm's continued vigour and independence. The family maintains a significant interest in the firm and remains fully involved: the present Chairman is Bryan Maggs, who is also the curator of the Wormsley Library, founded by the late Sir Paul Getty and now owned by his son Mark. Bryan joined the firm in 1953, took over the Early English department on the premature death of his father in 1959, specialising *inter alia* in fine bookbindings. In addition to his expertise in historical bookbindings, Bryan is also a very distinguished bookbinder himself, and was described by the great Bernard Middleton as "*by far the most accomplished British amateur binder of the twentieth century.*"

The Managing Director is Ed Maggs, and Ed's son Benjamin, the sixth generation of the family to be a bookseller, is one of the company's many highly knowledgeable specialists. Their staff of twenty includes experts in the history of voyages and exploration; early printing; mediaeval manuscripts; modern fine printing; literary and historical manuscripts and archives; literature of all periods, including Classical literature, Modern First Editions and Irish literature; Chinese and Japanese culture; human sciences; food and wine; and book arts including bookbinding.

Maggs works closely with many of the world's greatest institutional libraries, as well as with private collectors at all levels. The firm is traditionally discreet, but has a rich history of involvement in some of the most important book sales.

In addition to the sale of rare books, maps, manuscripts, incunabula and modern first editions, 48 Bedford Square will also host a series of exhibitions throughout the year. These commence in July 2017 with two shows on two very different 20th century subjects:

To Aqaba: to mark the centenary of the capture of Aqaba by the irregular forces of the Arab Revolt, led by T.E. Lawrence, "Lawrence of Arabia", Maggs will present a small exhibition of T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt, featuring both loan material and items for sale. The exhibition will include material never seen before, with original artwork, letters including an extremely rare note written by Lawrence in the field ordering up more weaponry, original photographs taken by Lawrence during the campaign, the map he carried with him on his pioneer trip through the Middle East in 1909, and material from his later life, including important copies of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

E. W. Pinxit: a loan exhibition of artwork by the great novelist Evelyn Waugh. His initial ambition was to be an artist and he produced many excellent illustrations for his own work and others, uniquely combining the then profoundly unfashionable Victorian with the Jazz Age aesthetic. Maggs believes it

will be the first such exhibition devoted to this fascinating and important part of Waugh's creative life. It will coincide with the publication of the first volumes in the *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* by Oxford University Press, and will precede an exhibition in late August and September at the Bodleian Library titled *City of Aquatint: Evelyn Waugh's Oxford*.

Says Ed Maggs: “*We're tremendously excited about this move. It has been a great challenge, first to excavate and sort out the extraordinary layers of material buried in the catacombs of 50 Berkeley Square, to restore this wonderful new building, and to occupy it. I hope it will look as if it's been effortless, but there's been a lot of very hard work and very good faith gone into this project.*

I can barely believe that we have pulled it off so successfully. 50 Berkeley Square was a wonderful home with a special place in rare book culture, and 48 Bedford Square will be a worthy successor. We will keep our foothold in Mayfair with our stylish bookshop in Curzon Street, as well as our large suburban warehouse, and from these three locations we will continue to handle the best rare books and manuscripts and work with the nicest collectors and librarians; at Bedford Square we will be able to offer a very personal service in the most beautiful of surroundings, Curzon Street will offer a pleasant and approachable retail environment (open on Saturdays!), and we will continue to enhance our internet presence at maggs.com.

The last 20 years have seen unprecedented change in our world. Both the purpose and perception of books and manuscripts have changed profoundly, as have their marketplaces. The tectonic shift that has challenged our trade is entering a mature stage: the drift of the two continents of text and object, sometimes colliding, sometimes moving apart, is beginning to settle down. The coming years are going to be tremendously interesting. There's a burgeoning culture of collecting and interpreting material among youngsters these days, which is based on a need to find new ways of looking at the world, of finding new ways to interpret both the past and the present. The firm has a really strong cadre of young booksellers working here now, and the combination of their enthusiasm with the experience of us oldsters bodes extremely well.”

The opening will be marked by various private parties, and on 25th May, in conjunction with Rare Books London, Maggs will be hosting a colloquium titled *Tattered remnants of lost civilizations, or fixed points in a shifting world?* where writers, collectors, and librarians will discuss the current state of the various book trades.

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Notes to Editors:

Maggs Bros.' notable transactions and relationships include:

- The *Codex Sinaiticus*, one of the earliest and most important Bible manuscripts, negotiated by Maggs from the Soviet Government and bought by the British Museum in 1933, for £100,000.
- Two Gutenberg Bibles, the first printed book.
- The sale of Napoleon's letters to Josephine to the French Government.
- The sale of the library of the Comte de Chambord (King Henri V of France).
- They were the principal advisers to the exiled King Manuel II of Portugal in forming one of the greatest libraries of Portuguese and Latin American books and manuscripts.
- The celebrated collection of Napoleonic material formed by his doctor, which notoriously included Napoleon's mummified *membrum virilis*.
- The purchase in 1976 of the manuscript account of one of the most famous voyages ever made, namely Captain William Bligh's open boat journey after his crew mutinied, on behalf of the National Library of Australia.
- In 1998, the company set a record for the most expensive printed book ever sold, acquiring a copy of the first book printed by Caxton in England, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, on behalf of a private client for 4.2m pounds.
- They acted for the National Library of Ireland in their acquisition of a partial manuscript of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in the year 2000, the first significant James Joyce manuscript to return to Dublin.
- The personal library of the Nobel prize winning playwright Harold Pinter, sold *en bloc* to a private collector in 2009.
- The sketchbooks of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, the brilliant sculptor, killed in the First World War, sold to the Tate in 2010.
- The Perry Scroll, the most remarkable and beautiful contemporary record of the first significant contact between the United States of America and Japan, sold to the British Museum in 2012.
- The sale of the famous Schroder collection of manuscripts of Rupert Brooke and his associates to King's College Cambridge in 2015, to mark the anniversary of the poet's death in the First World War.
- The papers of Thomas Manning, early traveller in Tibet, which included the first representation of the Dalai Lama. Bought in 2015 by the Royal Asiatic Society.
- The identification of the Haslinger Breviary, a liturgical manuscript which has on its endpapers a 15th century fishing tract containing the earliest known collection of fly-tying patterns, sold to a major North American institution in 2016.

