

Catalogue Review

By James Fergusson

LONG LIVE local historians. The in-depth study of a single community is worth any number of grandiose big pictures. Colin Higgins (1953-2008) was a collector of books that had anything to do with County Durham. He was a pharmacist who had his first job at Boots in Crook; later he worked for Glaxo-SmithKline at Barnard Castle. And he started collecting at the age of 11, not just books, but also manuscripts, ephemera (posters, cigarette cards), pictures, silver and glass. When he died Anderson & Garland, the Newcastle auctioneers, paid tribute to his 'magnificent obsession'. Magnificent for them – and magnificent for all local collectors, as the material he had so thoroughly collected is now returned to the market.

John Turton Antiquarian Books (1-2 Cochrane Terrace, Willington, Crook, Co Durham DL15 0HN: 01388-745770) make their own obeisance to Higgins in a handsome new catalogue, 'A Tribute to Colin Higgins: Durham topography'. 'Colin was not only a customer but a good friend,' writes Turton:

We first met in 1980 when he visited to view local material from stock. It was immediately apparent that he was passionate about the county, and especially the city, of Durham. This passion never waned over the next 28 years ... In his book-collecting he was omnivorous; the complete price-range was on his menu and he was always decisive about what he did or didn't want to buy.

Turton's catalogue

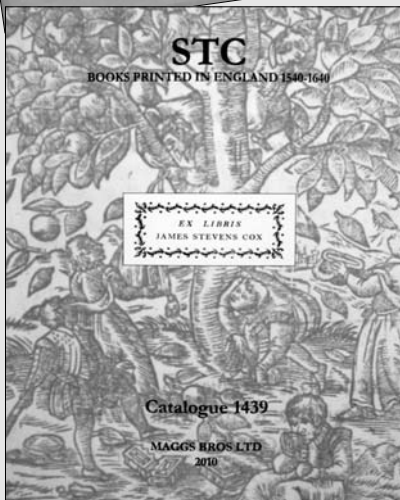
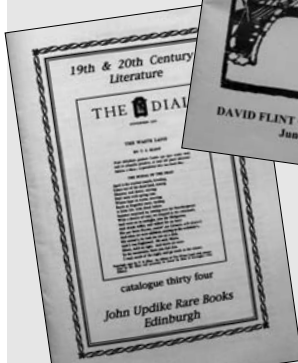
comprises material sold at public auction, items reserved for Colin for imminent or future purchase and books/ephemera directly from his family.

Selectively and seductively illustrated, it runs to 456 items, from a group of posters

and broadsides relating to the 1844 miners' strike to the souvenir handbook for the jubilee celebrations in 1934 for Wooley Terrace Methodist Church. There is satisfaction in its depth, charm in its detail; there's drama – cholera outbreaks and colliery disasters – but, mostly, there's the steady pulse of ordinary life, a manual of police regulations from 1892, a book of statistics from the North Yorkshire and South Durham Cricket League, 1893-1947, parish histories and tide tables, archaeology and place-names, rules of P. Fair's Circulating Library, Bishop Auckland ('Subscribers ... may change the Books once a day but not oftener'), an 1813 newspaper prospectus, lists of the Lambton Hounds. Between Tyne and Tees all English life is distilled. Every local politician and constituency MP should read this catalogue.

Michael Graves-Johnston (54 Stockwell Park Road, London SW9 0DA: 020-7274 2069) draws his authority from further afield. The virtue of his thick, 400-item catalogue 100, 'Western Africa' (cover price £10), is, again, a close focus. The subject being a larger one, prices are heftier and notes longer. Here are Henri-Baptiste Grégoire's *An Enquiry concerning the Intellectual and Moral Facilities, and Literature of Negroes; followed with an account of the life and works of fifteen negroes and mulattoes, distinguished in science, literature and the arts, in the American translation of 1810, £4,500*, Sir Richard Burton's *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome; with notices of the so-called 'Amazons,' the grand customs, the yearly customs, the human sacrifices, the present state of the slave trade, and the negro's place in nature* (1864), £2,500, and – 'a work of genius' says Professor P.E.H. Hair – the Rev S.W. Koelle's *Polyglotta Africana; or A Comparative Vocabulary of* ►

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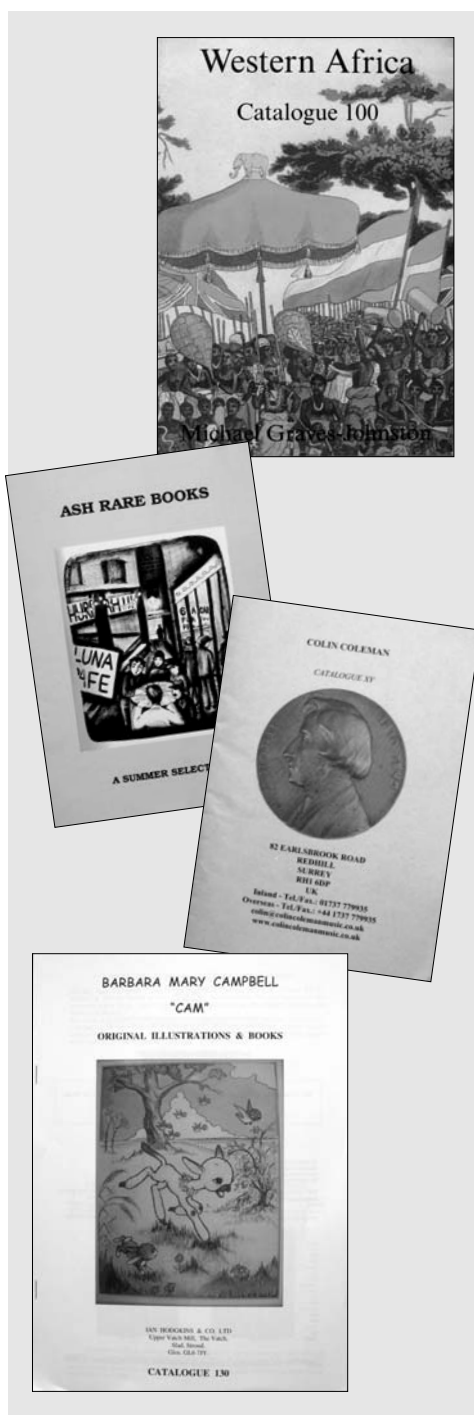
nearly *Three Hundred Words and Phrases in more than One Hundred Distinct African Languages* (1854), £1,500. But here too is a mass of small information and life-improving anecdote. If you want to know about Akan gold-weights, Hausa superstitions, Scripture exercises in the Bullom language, the tobacco pipes of Accra and Shai or anything Ashanti, the misbehaviour of slave-ship captains, the Benin Massacre or the flora of Liberia; or how in the mid-1920s an ex-MP for Oxford City drove a Jowett proudly from Lagos to Khartoum – then Michael Graves-Johnston's is the catalogue for you.

James Stevens Cox (1910-1997) was not a pharmacist but a hairdresser – at least initially – and himself a considerable local historian, the author of *A History of Ilchester* (1958). Maggs Bros (50 Berkeley Square, London W1X 6EL: 020-7493 7160) have been looking after his collections for some years, publishing their first catalogue of them, 1350, 'STC & Wing: books printed in England 1500-1700 from the library of James Stevens-Cox (1910-1997)', in 2003. That one made 170 pages and 410 items; the latest, 1439, 'STC: books printed in England 1540-1640 from the library of James Stevens Cox (1901-1997)' (note the disappearing hyphen), makes 144 pages and 191 items. It is a piece of scholarship in the antique mode, a record of individual books as they surface perhaps for the last time. How many of these 191 will be consigned to institutions? All 58 STC-sigla copies in 1350 – those only located as 'Stevens Cox' in STC – went, Maggs tell us, to Ohio State University Library. There are four more in 1439, and all of those are now on the way to Ohio. So hail and possibly farewell to some old books with happy provenances: Sir Thomas More's *Workes* (1557) in the copy of Sir Anthony Fortescue, comptroller of the household of Cardinal Reginald Pole, £8,500; John Twyne's *De Rebus Albionis, Britannicis atque Anglicis* (1590) 'carefully annotated' by William Lambarde and used by him in the second edition (1596) of his *Perambulation of Kent* (1576 – characterized by the *ODNB* as the 'earliest county history': another local history triumph), £12,500; Ben Jonson's copy of Pausanias' *Periegesis* (1613 – one of the earliest country histories, a prototype

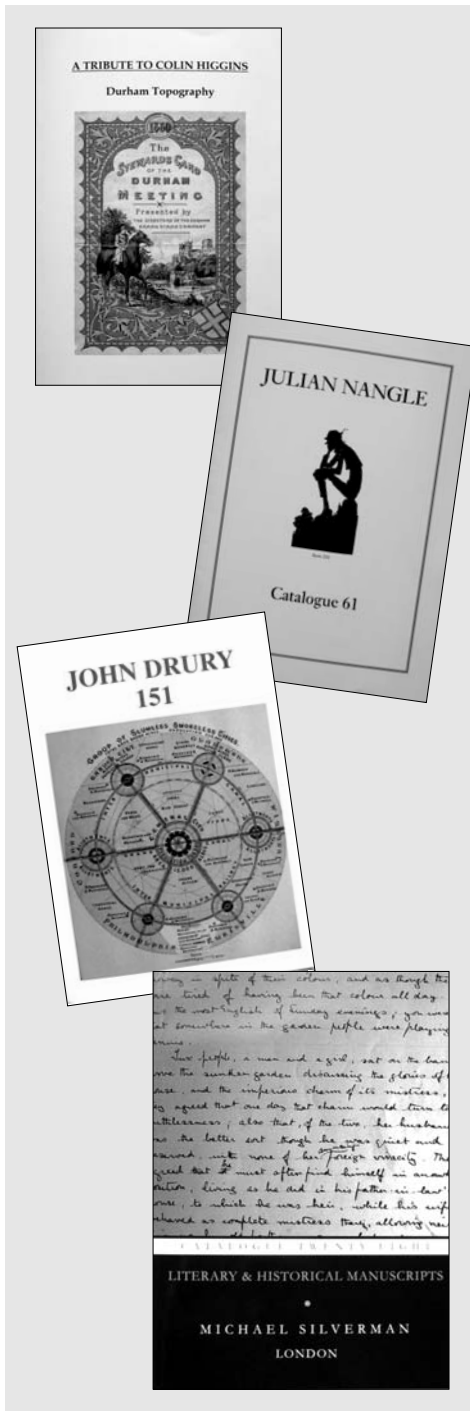
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antiquarian tour guide), £6,500; Francis Godwin's *Rerum Anglicarum Henrico VIII. Edwardo VI. et Maria Regnantibus, Annales* (1616) in the copy of the first Viscount Scudamore, dedicatee of the English translation of 1630, and 'heavily annotated for a new edition that was never published', £22,000; Samuel Purchas's *Pilgrimes* (1625) in a copy sometime in the chained library at Queen's College, Oxford (presented to the college in 1629 and probably disposed of as a duplicate in 1938), £90,000; and John Ruskin's copy of John Blaxton's classic *The English Usurer* (1634 – the 'usurer' of the title mysteriously twice misspelt by Maggs), £3,800.

Michael Silverman (PO Box 350, London SE3 0LZ: 020-8319 4452), 28, 'Literary & Historical Manuscripts', has a literary rather than a topographical bent. It gathers 100 items – letters, poems, novel fragments, articles, receipts – from John Evelyn in 1702 (writing to a topographer, £4,500) to Ted Hughes in 1970 (inscribing *Crow* with a poem, £5,500). How much does it matter to the price of a manuscript if it has already been printed? Laurence Sterne's letter to the Rev John Blake of December 1858 has been printed 'with errors & the omission of four lines', £7,800; Thomas Gray's to James Brown, 25 October 1760, announcing the death of King George II, appears apparently mistake-free in the edition of Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, £7,500; James Boswell's to Thomas Coutts, 3 September 1787, asking him to stay at Auchinleck, was not included by Chauncey Brewster Tinker in the *Letters*, £3,750 – but then a lot has happened to Boswell studies since 1924; Lord Byron's four letters to Giorgio Vitali, June–July 1823, on his imminent departure for Greece, are not collected by Leslie Marchand, £45,000, but then they are oddities, neither being in the author's hand nor written in English (so to what extent are they his?); James Joyce's to Carlo Linati, 19 December 1919, is written in Italian, like Byron's, but in the author's hand – yet printed by Stuart Gilbert only in English, £12,500; while Nigel Nicolson never saw Virginia Woolf's five letters to Mrs Raymond Fisher, June–November 1940, accompanying an essay, 'Thoughts on ▶



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Peace during an Air Raid', £30,000. Brimming with original material, this is a catalogue to read and to keep.

Sophie Schneideman's catalogues are bright and provocative, presented with colour and *éclat*. Her most recent, 9, 'Private Press & Illustrated Books, Bindings, Calligraphy, Artists' Books, Prints & Photobooks' (from Sophie Schneideman Rare Books, 331 Portobello Road, London W10 5SA: 020-8354 7365), is packed with pictures and ripe with temptation, darting from Golden Cockerel to Gwasg Gregynog, Reynolds Stone and McKnight Kauffer to Gordon Craig and John Piper, Sangorski & Sutcliffe to Elizabeth Greenhill. The notes are merry and exuberant; she is quite capable, even, of giving private-press books a good name. Her cover, appropriately, is topographical – an image from Whittington's startling 2009 *pièce de résistance*, Leslie Gerry's *Portmeirion*.

Miscellanies abounded in the book-fair month. Among them came John Drury Rare Books (Strandlands, Wrabness, Manningtree, Essex CO11 2TX: 01255-886260), 151, 'Miscellaneous Books, Pamphlets, Broad-sides and Manuscripts ca. 1605-1898', offering an 18th-century vet's manuscript notebook with the ownership inscription of William Blenkarn, 1796, £500, and Ebenezer Howard's *To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform* (1898), a 'landmark book in the history of modern town-planning and the concept of the garden city', £3,000; Ash Rare Books (43 Huron Road, London SW17 8RE: 020-8672 2263), 93, featuring Anthony Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* (1869) in William Woolsey Yardley's copy, £1,000, and a complete run of Ian Hamilton's *The Review*, 1962-72, £250; and Heywood Hill (10 Curzon Street, London W1J 5HH: 020-7629 0647), 1002, a 'selection from stock' including 'books from the library of Miss Elizabeth Winn' without, alas, ever explaining who Elizabeth Winn is or was, beyond (parenthetically) that she was a cousin of Joyce Grenfell and a great-niece of Nancy Astor. Winn was also Nancy Lancaster's niece and painted by Duncan Grant, but surely she deserves biographical treatment, however modest, in her own right? Her books are left to tell their own story, and it leaves one wanting to know more.

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Ian Hodgkins & Co (Upper Vatch Mill, The Vatch, Slad, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 7JY: 01453-764270) issued two single-subject catalogues, both of illustrators. 129, 'Beatrix Potter', ran to 145 items, from early editions of the Peter Rabbit books to jigsaw puzzles, painted silks, EP records and Beswick figurines; a complete 17-piece Grimwades tea service, c1922, claiming the highest price, at £2,500. 130, 'Barbara Mary Campbell "Cam": original illustrations & books', 49 items, had original illustrations for 'Cam's 1944 *Barbara Lamb*, among others. Campbell was born in 1913 and died, say Hodgkins, in the '1980s'. Was she so obscure in death? Might she be the Barbara Mary Campbell who died in Norfolk in 1984?

Other specialist booksellers' catalogues received included:

Children's: Gill Bilski (4 Sheepfold Lane, Amersham, Bucks HP7 9EL: 01494-433895), 98, offering 1,828 items and 'I have a massive backlog of books waiting to be listed'; Deverell Books (86A Memorial Road, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3LA: 0117-961 6234), 9, with only 57 items but every one of them illustrated; David Flint (30 Barn Lane, Oakley, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG23 7HT: 01256-781413), 76, 'Children's and Illustrated: the ephemeral and unusual'; Robin Greer (The Old Chapel, Front Street, Chedzoy, Somerset TA7 8RE: 01278-425682), 140. **Fantasy:** Fantastic Literature (Simon & Laraine Gosden, 35 The Ramparts, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8PY: 01268-747564), F10, June 2010.

First Editions: Julian Nangle (11 Fordington Green, Dorchester DT1 1LU: 01305-261186), 61, including Patrick Leigh Fermor's *Mani* (1958) with a 'wonderful signed and decorated inscription', £495, and 33 Seamus Heaney items; Tindley & Chapman (4 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE: 020-7240 2161), 29, including an 'excellent' copy of Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925), £850,

and Osbert Sitwell's autobiography, all five volumes inscribed to Walter de la Mare, £250; John Updike Rare Books (7 St Bernard's Row, Edinburgh EH4 1HW: 0131-332 1650), 34, featuring Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (first trade edition, de luxe issue, 1902) in dustwrapper, £21,000, and William Morris's lectures *Signs of Change* (1888) inscribed to Georgiana Burne-Jones, £3,450.

History: A.P. & R. Baker (The Laigh House, Church Lane, Wigtown, Newton Stewart DG8 9HT: 01988-403348), 304, 'Archaeology & History'; Bennett & Kerr Books (Millhill Warehouse, Church Road, Steventon, Abingdon, Oxon OX13 6SW: 01235-820604), 160, 'Middle Ages & Renaissance', including Icelandic books from the collection of Desmond Slay (1927-2004), Professor of English Language and Literature at Aberystwyth; Francis Edwards (The Old Cinema, Castle Street, Hay-on-Wye, via Hereford HR3 5DF: 01497-820071), 117, 'Naval Military and History', including 63 military lectures, articles and offprints, 1889-94, bound in five volumes for the historian Col G.F.R. Henderson, £600, and Reserve Major Vladeta M. Bogdanovitch's *The Truth about March 27, 1941* (1943) inscribed to Winston Churchill 'In memory of the biggest day of our new National History', £60.

Medicine: Dr Bernard Dixon and Kath Adams (130 Cornwall Road, Ruislip Manor, Middlesex HA4 6AW: 01895-632390), 21, 'Science and Medicine'. **Music:** Colin Coleman (82 Earlsbrook Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 6DP: 01737-779935), xv, including Victoria's *Motecta Festorum* (1585), £18,500, Milhaud's *Désespoir* (1909) inscribed 'à ma très sympathique interprète Marthe Boyer', £325, Ravel's *Concerto pour piano et orchestre* (1932) inscribed to Louis Aubert, £1,850, Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge Noire* (1937) inscribed to Suzanne Roche, £650, and *West Side Story* (1959) inscribed dashingly by Leonard Bernstein, £275. ■

Catalogues for review should be sent to:

James Fergusson, 39 Melrose Gardens, London W6 7RN

E-mail for correspondence: jamesferguson@btinternet.com

The contents of some of these catalogues can be viewed online at www.sheppardsconfidential.com