

Macdonald and Company (Publishers)

(London: 1942-)

T. T. MacDonald

(London: 1938-1942)



Theodore Thomas MacDonald began publishing cheap hardback fiction under the imprint T. T. MacDonald in August 1938 from offices at Ludgate House, 110 Fleet Street. MacDonald published three-penny books for sale in Woolworth's stores and novels for three shillings and sixpence.

A significant factor in the firm's development was a link with Purnell and Sons, the printing group based at Paulton, near Bristol. MacDonald's first company secretary, S. E. Jackson, was an associate of Wilfred Harvey, Purnell's chairman.

Ambitious to become a mainstream publisher as well as a large-scale printer, Harvey seized the opportunity presented when, at the outbreak of World War II, T. T. MacDonald resigned and had no further connection with the company he founded. Jackson was appointed as a director in his place, and in December 1940 Harvey became joint managing director.

Harvey was able to obtain a surprisingly generous paper allocation under strict wartime rationing, and he had first-class printing facilities available to him from the outset. In July 1942 E. R. H. (Eric) Harvey, stepson of the chairman, became literary director of T. T. MacDonald (although he was away in the army), and J. Murray Thompson, a director of Purnell's London office, became joint managing director with Wilfred Harvey.

In October 1942 the company's name was changed to Macdonald and Company (Publishers), and it moved to 19 Ludgate Hill. The new company secretary, H. E. (Ewart) Taylor, was based at Paulton, and Thompson, with his range

of valuable contacts and publishing experience, was the principal driving force in London.

The first title from the reorganized company appeared on 13 March 1943: *The Britain I Want*, by Emanuel Shinwell, MP. Another early publication was *Selected Verses* (1943), by Gilbert Frankau—the first in a many-volume series of reprints of that popular author's works, followed after the war by three original novels by Frankau.

Macdonald's most notable success was the British edition of American author Kathleen Winsor's historical romance *Forever Amber* (1945). No other publisher had been willing to expend its paper quota for this sensational eight-hundred-page blockbuster. But whatever the literary merits of *Forever Amber*, the novel significantly lifted Macdonald's fortunes and encouraged the company to promote Margaret Campbell Barnes, another historical novelist, into a second, this time homegrown, success. Dorothy Eden, yet another of the company's women novelists, was a writer of best-selling crime fiction. Macdonald has always been remarkable for the variety of its lists. By the end of the war one found the epic novelist John Cowper Powys on the same lists as popular cartoonist Ronald Searle, the novels of Henry Williamson were offered alongside the Macdonald Illustrated Classics. In 1946 Macdonald began publishing *Film Review*, an annual edited by F. Maurice Speed. The firm also produced authoritative aviation books.

Catherine Cookson was forty-four in 1950 when Macdonald accepted her first novel, *Kate Hannigan*; she became one of Britain's best-selling authors. All of her novels and children's

stories are set in and around her native Tyneside. Macdonald also published her autobiography, *Our Kate* (1969). Today, devotees flock to Tyneside from all over the world, and commemorative plaques abound. By 1991, 85 million copies of Cookson's books in seventeen languages had been sold. Her overwhelming success in Britain was reflected by her top ranking year after year in the Public Lending Rights "league table" (the yardstick of popularity with library readers).

Steady development led to progressive moves of the company's London headquarters to 43 Ludgate Hill; 16 Maddox Street; Gulf House, Portman Street; and St. Giles House, Poland Street. During the 1950s and 1960s, Purnell, under the direction of Wilfred Harvey, acquired a succession of other publishing lists—among them Max Parrish, Oldbourne Press, Queen Anne Press (with Ian Fleming among its authors), T. V. Boardman, John Lehmann, Latimer House, and Sampson Low, Marston and Company. Many of the titles on these lists were republished under the Macdonald imprint. The Sampson Low imprint was retained, and the Jane's imprint it brought to Macdonald played a central role in the company's growth and character in the 1970s.

Harvey's expansion of printing and allied interests led to a merger of Purnell with Hazell Sun in 1964 under the name British Printing Corporation (BPC). Macdonald at that juncture was publishing fiction (including science fiction) and general nonfiction, as well as technical, scientific, and educational books. After a dispute regarding expenses, Harvey resigned from BPC in the following year. Even the arrival of the charismatic James MacGibbon failed to arrest losses caused elsewhere in BPC largely by overinvestment in part works. It took the appointment of Ronald Whiting as managing director to steady the firm.

Whiting was brought in specifically to reorganize the Jane's imprint. *All the World's Fighting Ships* had been founded by Fred T. Jane in 1898; his other historic reference annual, *Jane's All the World's Aircraft*, was first published as *All the World's Airships, Aeroplanes and Dirigibles* in 1909—the year Louis Blériot flew across the English Channel. Sampson Low had produced these and all the other Jane's publications from the outset.

Thus Macdonald entered the arena as a general hardback publisher, taking full advantage of

the accumulated backlist, notably Enid Blyton's "Noddy" books. Launched by Sampson Low in 1949, these books have remained—despite fierce denunciation by educationalists and children's librarians—firm favorites with generations of young readers worldwide. Under Whiting the company had its share of other best-sellers. Macdonald and Jane's published Yehudi Menuhin's memoirs, *Unfinished Journey* (1977), and Colleen McCullough's *Thorn Birds* (1980), thus satisfying two very distinct mass markets.

Futura, mainly a paperback imprint, was founded in 1973. Under Anthony Cheetham, this venture proved an immediate success. After a cash crisis and troubles in both staff and labor relations led to the sale of Jane's to the Thomson Group in 1980, Futura moved into Shepherdess Walk in its place, and a merged company, Macdonald/Futura, was founded with Whiting as chairman and Cheetham as managing director.

Even more radical changes have taken place since 1982, when Robert Maxwell took over BPC, which he renamed British Printing and Communication Corporation (BPCC). Most of the Macdonald staff was concentrated into Holywell House, Worship Street; the building was soon renamed Maxwell House. Later the firm moved to Greater London House, Hampstead Road, and still later to 66-73 Shoe Lane—a short distance from T. T. MacDonald's premises in 1938.

In 1987 the parent company became Maxwell Communication Corporation (MCC), with Maxwell Pergamon Publishing Corporation (MPPC) as an intermediate holding company for the publishing division. Macdonald Educational and all the children's books (except the Noddy books) were sold to Simon and Schuster in January 1989. The present-day Macdonald and Company (Publishers) comprises Macdonald hardback books; paperback imprints Futura, Optima, Orbit, Sphere, Cardinal, and Abacus (the last three acquired from Penguin in April 1989); Scribners; and Queen Anne Press (sports titles). The company moved in late 1989 to Orbit House, New Fetter Lane, and in 1991 to 165 Great Dover Street in Southeast London. That year MPPC became Maxwell Macmillan Publishing Corporation.

—David Linton

Manchester University Press (Manchester: 1904-)



The institutional origins of Manchester University Press lie in the charter conferring independence on the Victoria University of Manchester on 15 July 1903. The university had promoted the publication of significant lectures and volumes before 1903, but it is appropriate to regard 1904 as the press's foundation year. The University Publications Committee, chaired by Professor T. F. Tout, was constituted in the summer term of 1904. In the same year the Manchester firm of Sherratt and Hughes was appointed as printers and publishers for the university and rented a cramped room in university property on Burlington Street.

In the 1904-1905 academic year the committee financed the publication of three books, including James Tait's *Mediæval Manchester and the Beginnings of Lancashire* (1904) and Sydney J. Chapman's *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: A Study in Economic Development* (1904). In addition, it published three medical textbooks and thirteen lectures, and sanctioned the use of the university press imprint for eleven further publications. It arranged for book exchanges with some hundred universities and learned societies throughout the world, ranging from the Berlin and Leipzig Academies to Harvard University and the New York Public Library.

In 1906 the press published posthumously W. T. Arnold's *Studies of Roman Imperialism*, with a long memoir by his sister, the novelist Mrs. Humphry Ward, and his colleague C. E. Montague of the *Manchester Guardian*. In its report for 1906-1907 the Publications Committee announced *An Introduction to Early Welsh*, by John Strachan, for publication in 1908; but it was delayed in consequence of legal proceedings taken by Dr. J. Gwenogvryn Evans on grounds of copyright infringement. The case came before the



T. F. Tout, chairman of the Manchester University Publications Committee from 1904 to 1925 and founder of the Manchester University Press

High Court (Chancery Division) in February 1909 and was settled on the third day. Evans's copyright claim was admitted, and the book was well received on its publication in March 1909; a second impression was printed in 1937.

In 1909 the press list included A. C. Bradley's Adamson lecture *English Poetry and Ger-*

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