

Arthur Barker Limited

(London: 1932-1939; London: 1946-1959; London: 1959-1991)

Arthur Barker Limited was founded in July 1932 at 21 Garrick Street, London, by Arthur Barker, who had trained with William Heinemann and with the Book Society. His earliest titles were James Agate's *English Dramatic Critics: An Anthology 1660-1932* (1932) and H. C. Armstrong's *Grey Wolf* (1932), a biography of Turkish president Kemal Atatürk. In its first five years the firm built up a list of which, in retrospect, the star author was Robert Graves. In 1934 appeared Graves's *Claudius, the God and His Wife, Messalina and I, Claudius*, along with works by Naomi Royde-Smith, E. F. Benson, and Anthony Weymouth; a life of Franz Anton Mesmer, by Margaret Goldsmith; and a reprint of Charles Dickens's *The Life of Our Lord*. The firm's first full-time sales representative, E. J. Sloane, joined in December of that year. The senior reader was L. A. G. Strong. In 1935 Barker began to draw attention to his list by issuing monthly bulletins.

Dashiell Hammett's *The Thin Man* was published in May 1935. By 1936 the list amounted to 140 titles, among them books of poetry by Graves and by Laura Riding; verse, however, never became a main feature of the firm's output. Also on the 1936 list were works by Charlotte Haldane, Alexander Woollcott, and Hugh Kingsmill.

In his memoirs the literary agent David Higham records that "in the late 30s Barker lost his independence because Margery Sharp's new novel couldn't be delivered on time," but he gives no further details. The firm was liquidated at the beginning of World War II, much of which Barker spent in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. When he restarted the business he was a sick man; he soon handed over the running of the firm to Herbert Van Thal, while he spent half of each year in Spain. Arthur Barker Limited was reregistered on 8 October 1946 at Castle Street, Edinburgh, the office of the printing firm Morrison and Gibb, which had acquired the firm.

All publishing operations were based at 30 Museum Street, London.

Van Thal was a bookman, author, and editor whose own short-lived firm, Home and Van Thal, had been taken over. The firm kept its general character, but the Van Thal influence was apparent in series such as English Novelists and Museum Street Thrillers. The firm also published westerns and the Blyton Bedside Books. Noel Langley contributed light fiction. In a list not notable for biographies, *Gide* (1951), a study by George Painter, future biographer of Marcel Proust, stands out. The firm was producing more than forty titles a year, by authors including Mickey Spillane, Lillian Roth, and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Barker began publishing *The Bedside Esquire* in 1951.

In December 1954 the firm was acquitted of the charge of publishing an obscene libel in a case arising from H. McGraw's *The Man in Control* (1953). In July 1958 Norma Sykes, an actress known as "Sabrina," brought an action for libel, claiming she was portrayed adversely in Robert Muller's *Cinderella Nightingale* (1958). The book was withdrawn.

In 1959 Van Thal arranged the sale of Arthur Barker Limited to George Weidenfeld. He stayed on to manage the list but soon left because of a personality clash with Weidenfeld. Arthur Barker Limited became a separate imprint of Weidenfeld and Nicolson. The 1990 list was confined to two books on sport, and in 1991 the imprint was terminated.

References:

- David Higham, *Literary Gent* (London: Cape, 1978);
Herbert Van Thal, *The Tops of the Mulberry Trees* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971).

—John Hewish

Barrie and Jenkins

(London: 1965-)

James Barrie

(London: 1947-1957)

Barrie and Rockliff

(London: 1957-1965)



In 1947 James Barrie, the great-nephew and namesake of the playwright, established his own imprint to publish such popular books as Lady Cynthia Asquith's diaries, *Haply I May Remember* (1950), *Remember and Be Glad* (1952), and *Portrait of Barrie* (1954). Asquith, a novelist, had been Sir James Barrie's secretary from 1918 until 1937, and she inherited a good deal of his estate.

In 1957 Barrie Books purchased Rockliff Books, which had been founded by R. H. Rockliff, the publisher of the annual *Theatre World*. Rockliff's art and antique books complemented the belletristic publications of Barrie, then directed by Leopold Ullstein and John Bunting.

In 1965 Barrie and Rockliff purchased Herbert Jenkins, Limited and Hammond, Hammond, which brought the firm P. G. Wodehouse and Radclyffe Hall, respectively. In 1967 Barrie and Jenkins purchased the Cresset Press, founded in 1927 by Dennis Cohen; with this purchase came many distinguished authors, including Arthur Miller, Carson McCullers, Sir John Summerson, and Jacquetta Hawkes, and the Cresset Classics series. The company was then directed by Richard Wadleigh and Christopher MacLehose, with Ullstein remaining as manager.

In the 1960s Barrie and Jenkins began producing distinguished lines of art books and popular nonfiction such as Alexander Werth's *Russia at War* (1964), Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1971), and David Thomson's *Woodbrook* (1974). In 1972 Barrie and Jenkins was taken over first by Communica Europe, then by Hutchinson and Company. In 1985 Hutchinson was taken over by Century Publishing Limited, and Century Hutchinson was formed.

In 1987 Barrie and Jenkins reemerged as a partially independent publishing company by merging with Shuckburgh Reynolds. Barrie and Jenkins still publishes high-quality art and illustrated books, as exemplified by *Irish Gardens and Demesnes from 1830* (1980), by Edward Malins and Patrick Bowe. The firm also publishes general nonfiction and fiction. In 1989 Random House bought Century Hutchinson, forming Random Century.

Reference:

"Who Owns Whom—A Guide to Ownership Change in the UK Booktrade, 1982/1987," *Bookseller* (4 September 1987): 988-989, 991-994.

—Beverly Schneller

"Arthur Barker Limited." British Literary Publishing Houses, 1881-1965, edited by Jonathan Rose and Patricia Anderson, vol. 112, Gale, 1991, p. 35. Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 112. Gale Literature: Dictionary of Literary Biography, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/GFDLLQ160891321/DLBC?u=owu&sid=DLBC&xid=e2ee564a>. Accessed 8 May 2020.