

MARY SORENE: Good afternoon everybody. As you know, our President, Richard Ward, cannot be here this afternoon and so I volunteered (and never volunteer!) to give a talk, not on his behalf, but in his stead. I thought I would take as my theme:

The IPS – Past, Present and Future

I have taken it from THE STORY OF BRITISH SHORTHAND by E. H (Harry) BUTLER
Published in 1951

In chapter XXIV on page 223 (I say that just in case anybody ever looks it up) that chapter is called "SHORTHAND SOCIETIES" he explains how only two societies ever received the support of a "Society" until the middle of the nineteenth century, and that since then, practically every system of shorthand that has been pushed by its author has announced the formation of a society, an organization for its writers.

John Byrom was the first to form a Shorthand Society, which met weekly at his lodgings, and he has left, in his Journal, a record of his learned opening address. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find that.

Byrom not only believed in himself, but he collected a body of believers. They formed a shorthand society; they had periodical meetings, and addressed each other as 'brothers in shorthand.' Byrom was greeted as Grand Master, and he pronounced a solemn oration at their first gathering. Its preparation during two or three previous weeks is noted in his journal. He takes the highest possible tone. He humorously traces back his art to the remotest antiquity; he intimates that Plato probably used shorthand to take down the conversation of Socrates, and finds shorthand even in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The meetings of the shorthanders, as they are called, naturally took place at taverns, and they formed a kind of club after the fashion of the day. Byrom took five guineas from each aspirant to the art, and a promise not to divulge the secret. They had apparently very pleasant meetings, and diverged from shorthand into discussions of politics, theology, free-will, and things in general. The society seems to have done its duty in loyally spreading its president's fame. Great men became his pupils. The most famous in early years was Lord Chesterfield; Horace Walpole afterwards took some lessons. His warmest friend was the amiable philosopher, David Hartley, who cordially supported him in efforts to raise a subscription for a publication of his method once and for all.

In 1742 Byrom obtained an Act of Parliament which gave him the right of publishing and teaching shorthand for twenty-one years which I have in another booklet that I have but which I do not seem to have with me now, but I will include it when the article is published on our website later.

(643)

Anno decimo quinto

Georgii II. Regis.

An Act for securing to *John Byrom*, Master of Arts, the sole Right of publishing, for a certain Term of Years, the Art and Method of Short-hand, invented by him.



Whereas John Byrom, Master of Arts, and fellow of the Royal Society, hath by long and studious Application invented, and is willing to publish, a new Method of Short-hand, by the uniform Practice whereof, that useful Art, being reduced to the most easy, compendious, copied, and regular System, may be rendered more extensively serviceable to the Publick: And whereas by an Act made in the Twenty first Year of the Reign of King James the first, intituled, An Act concerning Monopolies and Dispensations with penal Statutes, and the Forfeitures thereof, it is provided, That the said Act shall not extend to any Letters Patent, or Grants of Privilege, or, for, or concerning Printing: And whereas by an Act made in the Eighth Year of the Reign of Queen Anne, intituled, An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by vesting the Copies of printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned; it is enacted, That the Authors of Books shall have the sole Right of printing and reprinting the same, during the Terms by the said Act limited: And whereas, though the Inventions of useful Arts deserve at least equal Encouragement, yet the said John Byrom cannot, by the Authority of either of the said Acts, effectually

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secure

644 Anno Regni decimo quinto Georgii II. Regis.
 secure to himself the Benefit of the said Invention, which
 is liable to be divulged surreptitiously and imperfectly,
 otherwise than by Printing, and cannot conveniently be
 published by Printing only; be it enacted by the King's
 most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Con-
 sent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Com-
 mons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the
 Authority of the same, That the said John Byrom, his Ex-
 ecutors, Administrators, and Assigns, shall, from and after
 the Twenty fourth Day of June, One thousand seven hun-
 dred forty two, have the sole Liberty and Privilege of
 publishing the Method of Shorthand, by him invented,
 for the Term of One and twenty Years.

This Act is
 commuted
 from Year 44.
 1742. for 41
 Years.

For every Per-
 son offending
 against this Act.

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid,
 That if any Person, during the said Term of One and
 twenty Years, before Publication of some Treatise, con-
 taining the said Method, shall be made by the said John
 Byrom, his Executors, Administrators, or Assigns, shall
 teach by Word or Network the said Method, in whole or in
 part, without the Consent of the said John Byrom; his
 Executors, Administrators, or Assigns, or if any Person
 shall at any time, during the said Term of One and
 twenty Years, without such Consent, by Writing,
 Printing, Engraving, Etching, or any other Device,
 publish for Sale, sell, or expose to Sale, or cause to be
 so published, sold, or exposed to Sale, the said Method,
 or the Alphabet, or Rules thereof, in whole or in part,
 such Person shall, for every such Offence, forfeit and
 pay to the said John Byrom, his Executors, Administra-
 tors, or Assigns, the Sum of One hundred Pounds, to
 be sued for and recovered by him or them respectively, by
 Action of Debt, in any of His Majesty's Courts of Re-
 cord at Westminster, together with full Costs of Suit.

And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid,
 That this Act shall be deemed a publick Act. 3

F I N I S.

Plate 2. Act of Parliament of 1742 granting protection for John Byrom
 shorthand method.

This is taken from The Court Reporter by Harry M. Scharf (One-time Careers Officer, Institute of Shorthand Writers) as published in The Journal of Legal History September 1989. The whole of the booklet is published on the BIVR website with the statement:

“This article is copied with the kind permission of both Harry Scharf and the original publishers, as noted here: 18/02/2003 via e-mail ‘We are pleased to grant you permission to use the article, free of charge, provided you grant acknowledgement of its source. Amna Whiston Publicity & Rights Executive Frank Cass Publishers.’”

Continuing from Harry’s book, the first nation-wide club of this nature to be established was in connection with the Pitman system and the suggestion came from Thomas Allen Reed who, on 28th December, 1842, wrote the inventor from Bristol -

An idea was suggested to me a few days since, which, if carried into effect, would, I think, tend to the general good: It is, that you should introduce, by letter, some of your friends, whose time is not fully occupied, to other friends, in different places, thereby establishing a correspondence between Phonographers in different parts of the Kingdom. This method of interchanging ideas, would, I think, afford some gratification to those who have a stock of leisure at hand; and, more especially, to learners of the science.

Shorthand as a science!

Therefore, this letter appeared in *The Phonotypic Journal* for February, 1843, and was immediately acted upon, for the next month saw the publication of the first *list* of members of the newly-constituted "Phonographic Corresponding Society."

It contained twenty-seven names and addresses, and those who were prepared to undertake the correction of exercises sent through the post, with no financial reward, were marked by an asterisk. By the end of the year, there were three hundred members, and it continued to grow in strength during its existence.

After seven years' progress, it was renamed The Phonetic Society and certificates of membership were issued. For some years, its only official was its Secretary - Isaac Pitman - but in 1854, when its numbers had swelled to about four thousand five hundred, Mr. George Dawson became its first President. From time to time, Pitman consulted the organization on proposed changes in Phonography. The Society continued to exist for fifty years, and only ceased upon its founder's retirement from the "Phonetic Institute," as Pitman called his Bath headquarters.

This is a photograph from the internet of Thomas Allen Reed.



I mention him in particular, not just because he is in Harry Butler's work, but because he was not only a signatory to the IPS but also to the Institute of Shorthand Writers (now the BIVR). His is the only name I can recognise.

The firm of T A Reed still exists to this day in 2014.

Again, continuing from Harry's book he writes that before the demise of the Phonetic Society, however, the National Phonographic Society had been formed (31st October, 1890) and in 1894 the National Society of Shorthand Teachers sprang into being. Four years later that body, the N.P.S. became the **Incorporated Phonographic Society**, (so that is where we start, four years after 1894) which is still in existence, so hale and hearty and so flourishing that it will be carrying on fifty years hence - remember, Harry Butler wrote this in 1951 - and so it has.

Finally Harry writes that the storm blew itself out, leaving behind a solid society of teachers (now the Society of Certificated Teachers of Pitman's Shorthand and of other Commercial Subjects) and the IP.S., which, since its formation, has been meeting without fail every Thursday evening at the Cripplegate Institute in Golden Lane except for the period of the Second World War, when it met at St. Bride's Institute, in whose shadow lies the tomb of James Weston, the rival of John Byrom, the founder of the first shorthand society.

Harry wrote that there have been, during the years other organizations for professional shorthand writers. In Britain there are three – and this is in 1951 - the Institute of Shorthand Writers practising in the Supreme Court of Judicature, (now the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters) the Association of Professional Shorthand Writers (known as the northern Association) and that ceased operations some time in the 1990s and the Association of Official Shorthand Writers Ltd which was actually a firm of shorthand writers and that ceased to be an entity on its own when it amalgamated with another firm in the 1990s.

Professional shorthand writers have for long realized the benefits to be obtained, in their unique sphere, from banding together, and a century ago (from 1951) there existed the Society of Practising Shorthand Writers. Although today they are represented by three societies, it is to be regretted that a number of them remain outside the organizations.

There now exist just the two the IPS and BIVR.

As Harry Butler wrote, the IPS used to meet at Cripplegate College. At one stage, however, during the 20th century there were groups of the IPS meeting throughout the country and indeed the world. Gradually they all ceased bar the one meeting at Bishopsgate Institute.

That concludes my excerpts from Harry Butler's book and so I come to the present and the future.

During the last few years we have had fewer and fewer people attending. In December last year until July this year sadly we had no visitors on Thursday evenings.

We made one more valiant effort trying a more modern approach. With John Dawson's help we set ourselves up as a group called "Stenosparkle" advertising our meetings at Bishopsgate Institute via an on-line group called "Meetup". We gave this a six-month trial. This brought no actual visitors though a couple of people did send messages of support. When the decision was taken not to renew our membership of Meetup **they** advertised for someone else to take it over and one person emailed me to beg us to keep the Thursday evenings going as she would like to return – at some time.

Sadly, we had to take the difficult but realistic decision to cease meeting at Bishopsgate. We have however continued our move into the 21st century by setting up on-line dictation sessions run by the Chair. These are clearly advertised on our website – which we have up-dated and which is now up and running as I speak. I will be updating it with archive material in the next few weeks.

We have had three people attending our on-line weborial dictations and I expect there to be a greater take-up once the new website has been up and running.

In our website we clearly give our history as referred to earlier in Harry Butler's book. How, towards the end of 1872 seventeen enthusiastic writers of Pitman's Shorthand (Phonography) held a meeting in Tachbrook Street in London's Pimlico. At that meeting the Phonetic Shorthand Writers Association started.

1890 On 31st October at a well-attended meeting held in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, the National Phonographic Society was formed. This appears to have led an independent existence for four years.

1894 The Phonetic Shorthand Writers' Association and the National Phonographic Society amalgamated to a limited extent.

1898 In that year the two bodies dropped their separate titles and formed a joint society under the name of The Incorporated Phonographic Society. The date on the Memorandum of Association is 19th July 1898.

We had a celebration in 1998 for our Centenary which most of us here probably recall.

On-line I discovered this archive from the University of California about "Leaves from Notebook". It is a notebook of Thomas Allen Reed and you may find it here:

<https://archive.org/stream/leavesfromnotebo01reediala#page/146/mode/2up>

This actually shows the leaves of his notebook and in shorthand with the transcript beneath "How I learned Shorthand".

He begins that it is more than a quarter of a century ago. "I was not quite in my teens" when he received the usual amount of schoolboys education.

IRIS COX: It is very clear shorthand.

MARY SORENE: Oh, very much so. Near the end he says:

"It has often been urged as an objection to Phonography that its many minute distinctions of form are incompatible with great speed in writing. And the singular mistakes sometimes made by young and careless Phonographers would seem to give force to the objection. The system, however, should not be judged by the performances of those who *scrawl*, but by the results of careful and expert manipulation; and, so estimated, it stands without a rival among stenographic systems."

At the very end of that book is an advertisement for "The Phonetic Journal" which costs "One penny". He is advertising that.

What I also have here is the list of the local representatives in the UK and abroad. It just shows how many branches there were at one stage.

I have also brought a copy of the Centenary Certificate sent to us by Companies House in 1998. That came completely unasked for as something they did at that time.

I also found in our archives a version of our Memorandum and Articles of Association, as amended in 1911. Although amended it gives the names of those who started the IPS and the first name is Thomas Allen Reed. As I said, his name also appears in the Institute of Shorthand Writers as one of the founder members.

The last thing I have to hand out is a souvenir of the 70th anniversary of the IPS "1872-1942". The reason I am giving you a facsimile of it is because it actually gives more history of the IPS. I will also put that on to our website.

Therefore, that is the IPS, the past, the present and the future.

JOHN DAWSON: You say the IPS met throughout the Second World War?

MARY SORENE: Yes.

JUNE HARRIS: St Brides was also badly hit.

MARY SORENE: I think there may have been the odd occasion when it did not meet. That is the end of the talk and I hope I have not taken too long and I hope it was reasonably interesting.

MEMBERS GENERALLY: Yes, it was very interesting.

JOHN DAWSON: Are you answering any questions?

MARY SORENE: I am not sure I have any answers.

JOHN DAWSON: It says here on this list: "*Founded in 1972 as the Phonetic Shorthand Writers' Association. Incorporated in 1898.*"

MARY SORENE: Yes, I see that. It was several years after its foundation that it was actually Incorporated and registered with Companies House.