

TIME-LINE

- 1600** King's Printing House is based at Northumberland House.
- 1603** James VI of Scotland accedes to the throne of England, Wales & Ireland, and Robert Barker becomes the King's Printer.
- 1603** Immediately following James's accession, John Norton is granted the patent for the office of King's Printer in Latin, Greek and Hebrew.
- 1603** John Norton, Bonham Norton, and John Bill set up a three-way joint-stock partnership to deal in books and other stationary wares at home and abroad.
- 1604** New translation of the Bible (Authorized Version) proposed in January 1604.
- 1604** Robert Barker is granted the reversion of the Latin patent in February, for 30 years from the death of John Norton.
- 1612** John Norton dies in December 1612 and soon after, in January 1613, Bonham Norton is granted the reversion of the Latin patent for 30 years. John Norton's share of the 1603 joint-stock partnership passes to Bonham Norton and John Bill after certain sums of money were paid to Bonham Norton, John Norton's executor.
- 1613** Talks between the Nortons and the Barkers about a marriage between Sara Norton (Bonham's daughter) and Robert Barker's eldest son Christopher.
- 1615** Robert Barker senior is in debt. Bonham Norton and John Bill agree to settle some debts and to be bound with Barker to other lenders. In return Barker assigns some of his landed estates to Norton and Bill as security; these debts become entangled with the King's Printing House (KPH) through the 1615 assignment (see below).
- 1615** The marriage of Sara Norton and Christopher Barker.
- 1615** For the sum of £5,000 Bonham Norton, and John Bill buy into a three-way King's Printing House partnership with Christopher Barker.
- 1616/7** The king's *Workes* is printed in English by Robert Barker and John Bill.
- 1617** A patent is granted to Robert Barker junior on February 11th—this grants him the reversion of the office of King's Printer, for 30 years from the death of his father Robert Barker and his elder brother Christopher Barker.

- 1617** On the 20th November, Bonham Norton and John Bill buy the present and *future* estate in the King's Printing House from Robert Barker senior for £6,500. A separate covenant between Norton and Bill states that if Bill were to die without having any male children 'lawfully begotten', then £2,000 would be paid to Bill's executors—Bonham Norton would then inherit Bill's share of the business. Bonham Norton and John Bill invest heavily in the KPH and build up a stock of books belonging to the office.
- 1617** In December, a fire in Barker's study and library destroys the indentures dealing with the 1617 KPH assignment.
- 1618** In January, Norton and Bill present a petition to Chancery (C2/JASI/N4/57) against Robert Barker, Edward Staines, Thomas Berrington, and John Drue (tenants of Barker's lands). Barker had assigned some of his landed estates to Norton and Bill as security for debts, these debts and assignments are now in dispute.
- 1618** In May Robert Barker presents a petition to Chancery (C2/JASI/B17/56) against Norton and Bill with the hope of recovering his interest in the KPH. Barker claims he had only assigned the King's Printing House to Norton and Bill on *trust*, with the proviso that he could buy back the office, stock and *future* interest in the business at any time within a year and a day from the date of the assignment.
- 1618** Barker's Chancery suit is referred to Sir Henry Savile and Sir Marmaduke Dorrell for arbitration. They conclude at Eton on the 23rd July 1618 that Barker should *either* pay Norton and Bill £15,000 to buy back the office *or* the Barkers should quit their claim against Norton and Bill after the remainder of the £6,500 purchase price due to the Barkers is fully paid.
- 1618** In a letter dated 30th October, Barker apparently agrees to the terms of Savile and Dorrell's arbitration.
- 1619** Barker ignores Savile and Dorrell's arbitration and pursues his suit in Chancery. He obtains a decree (assisted by a bribe of £700) in his favour from the Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon in May (C33/135/1354-56). John Bill was found to be a *bona fide* purchaser of the KPH.
- 1619** Bill consents to buy Bonham Norton's interest in the 1603 joint-stock partnership. An indenture is drawn up on 9th July, 1619. As part of the settlement Bill agrees to pay Norton £5,000 in ten half-yearly instalments between November 1619 and May 1624.
- 1619** In November Robert Barker and Bonham Norton negotiate a new agreement—regarding the KPH, and the terms of Francis Bacon's decree. John Bill's *bona fide* rights to the office of King's Printer are unaffected.

- 1619** In November John Bill exhibits a petition in Chancery (C5/592/24), against Norton and Humphrey Dyson. In his petition he accuses Barker and Norton of conspiring together in a post-Chancery tactical alliance to deprive him [Bill] of his *bona fide* right to the office of King's Printer as granted by Bacon in May, 1619.
- 1620** Barker presents another Chancery petition (not extant) against Norton in February and defaults on his payments to Norton. These payments had been laid down in the November 1619 KPH agreement between Barker and Norton.
- 1620** In August 1620 Bonham Norton is reinstated as King's Printer alongside Bill.
- 1620** In October Francis Bacon's *Instauratio magna* is printed by the KPH, under a John Bill imprint.
- 1620** For a short time in December John Bill is the sole King's Printer.
- 1621** Robert Barker joins John Bill as King's Printer in January and keeps the office until sometime in March, then Bonham Norton replaces Robert Barker as King's Printer, and he and Bill remain as King's Printers from March 1621 until October 1629.
- 1621** In January, John Bill sells part of his assets (from his 1619 purchase of the 1603 joint-stock from Bonham Norton) to the Company of Stationers for their Latin Stock just 18 months after he had bought out Bonham Norton—but this excludes Bill's share of books and printing with 'outlandish [foreign] Stacōners' (see C3/334/73).
- 1621** Bill decides to default on his half-yearly instalments to Norton (part-payment for his purchase of Norton's interest in the 1603 joint-stock partnership). Late in 1621 John Bill brings another Chancery petition (C3/334/73) against Bonham Norton and Humphrey Dyson.
- 1622** In January, Norton attempts to stay Chancery proceedings against him by putting in a cross-petition (C2/JASI/N7/44) against Barker and the latter's agent, kinsman, and sometime arbitrator William Taylor. Barker and Taylor are ordered to court to answer Bonham Norton's charges.
- 1622** In February, Norton is found not to have answered Bill's petition adequately. Consequently he has an injunction (see C33/143/613) awarded against him and his attorneys not to proceed any further with his cause (regarding Bill's outstanding debt to Norton) against Bill.
- 1622** In December Chancery demands a speedy settlement between Norton and Barker, and 'for the peaceable service of his *Maiestie*' a bond (see C33/143/337) is

- awarded to John Bill and Matthew Lownes (see below) to sequester Norton's moiety of the King's Printer.
- 1623** The sequestration of the King's Printing House to Bill and Lownes is lifted.
- 1623** Another Chancery petition *Barker v. Norton* (land assignments).
- 1623** Sir Euball Thelwall is appointed to settle the matter between Barker and Norton. In October, Thelwall delivers his judgement. Barker is to pay Norton £8000 in three years, and Norton's name is to be struck out as King's Printer (see C22/601/28 for details).
- 1625** The KPH moves to Hunsdon House (Norton owns the lease).
- 1626** The terms of Thelwall's arbitration are still unfulfilled. From March 1626 to December 1627 depositions are taken by Daniel Hills and Nathaniel Weston to try and settle the dispute (C22/601/28).
- 1627** In June Bonham Norton and John Bill buy from the Company of Stationers their Latin Stock for £5,000—to be paid out of books belonging to the King's Printing House (see C33/156/920; C22/601/28).
- 1629** On 20th October the Court pronounces on the cause between Barker and Norton. It is ordered that Barker should replace Norton as King's Printer. Barker is to have joint custody of the office and all letters patent with John Bill. Norton refuses to yield and has an injunction served on him. He is confined to the Fleet prison until he performs the terms of the decree (see for instance C33/157/260-61; C33/156/920-21).
- 1629** Roger Norton, one of Bonham's sons, leads a raid on the warehouse belonging to the KPH and removes books and other materials. Roger Norton is ordered to the Fleet but he cannot be found (see for instance C33/146-47).
- 1629/30** Bonham Norton presents a petition to Chancery. It claims that Barker had procured his decree of May 1619 by bribing Francis Bacon. Norton also accuses the present Lord Keeper, Thomas Coventry, of taking similar bribes from Barker. Norton is fined heavily by Thomas Coventry's court, and remains in prison possibly until his death in 1635 (see SP16/169/20,21; SP16/169/5,6,7; SP16/175/123).
- 1630** John Bill dies in May 1630.
- 1635** With John Bill's assigns, Robert Barker continues as King's Printer even after being committed to prison for debt in 1635; he dies in 1645.