



50 YEARS OF PRINT

A SOUVENIR OF THE

50TH
ANNIVERSARY

OF THE FOUNDATION OF

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM & SONS LTD.,

11th NOVEMBER, 1889.

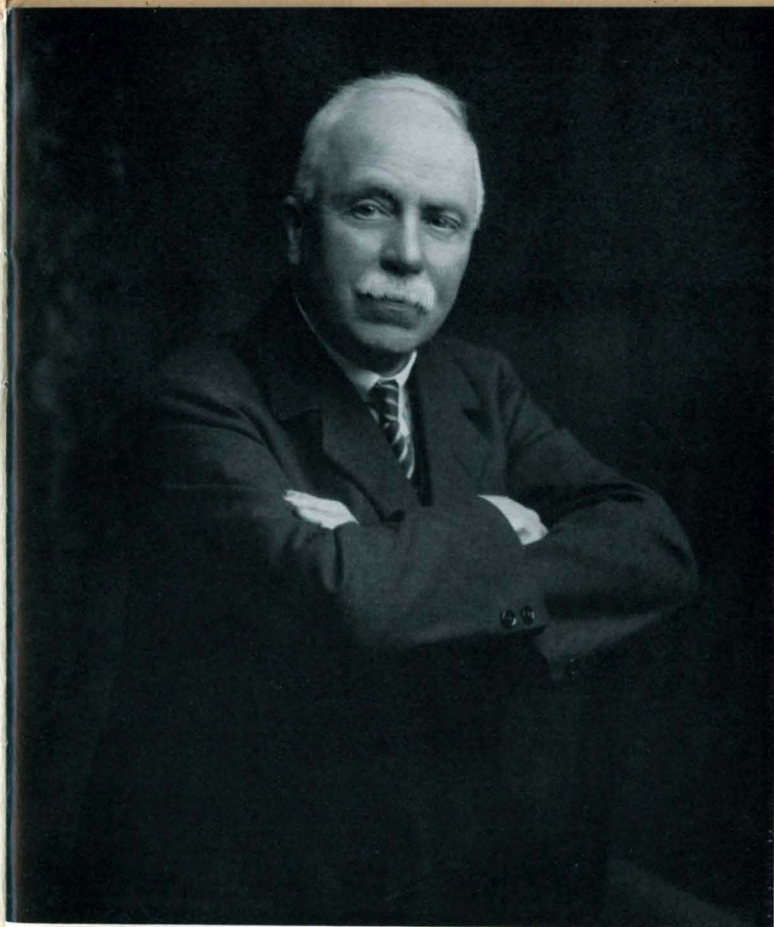
Longbank Printing Works
ALVA,
SCOTLAND.

THE PERSONAL TRADITION

THE semi-jubilee of the late Mr. Robert Cunningham's career as a Master-Printer, which should have been celebrated in November, 1914, passed almost forgotten in the midst of the catastrophic events of that winter. To-day, the business has attained its fiftieth birthday with the world again in the ferment of war ; but a few months previously its founder had passed away. The failing health of his latter years, which robbed him of the congratulations so richly his due, also spared him the ordeal of facing for a second time the convulsions of trade produced by an international crisis.

Mr. Cunningham was born at Barrhead, Renfrewshire, in 1861. At the age of twelve he became apprentice to a printer in that town, and thence he transferred a few years later to the Glasgow University Press (Robert Maclehose & Company), then situated in West Nile Street, where he completed his apprenticeship, worked as a journeyman compositor, and was promoted to the post of reader, with the responsibility of checking for press the many important books handled by the firm.

He had thoughts of starting business on his own account. On the Glasgow autumn holiday of 1889 he paid a visit to Clackmannanshire. The little town of Alva, nestling at the foot of the Ochil Hills, attracted him ; a few weeks later, in November, he set up his printing press and small stock of type in a shop at the west end of the main street.



THE LATE MR. ROBERT CUNNINGHAM (1861-1939).



MR. GILBERT FARM CUNNINGHAM.

THE business grew and flourished—far beyond the most sanguine hopes of its founder. Its progress and capabilities are dealt with on a later page of this booklet. Here we must pay tribute to the tireless energy, the adventurous spirit and the boundless enthusiasm of the man who made its development his life work. He had to cope with many obstacles which no longer handicap the business man in these modern times. Travelling was no easy matter in the nineties; distances which the motor car traverses to-day in a few effortless minutes, then had to be covered in arduous hours on a bicycle. These limitations did not deter Mr. Cunningham from making his personality and his business ability known to an ever-widening circle. He quickly overstepped the bounds of Clackmannanshire; explored central Scotland; and eventually established contacts all over the British Isles.

One of his earliest acquaintances in Alva was a namesake of his own, the late Dr. William Love Cunningham, who some ten years earlier had begun medical practice in the town, and whose sister Mr. Cunningham married in 1896. He often paid tribute to the inestimable value of the confidence, the encouragement and the co-operation of his wife and brother-in-law throughout all the years that followed; to them also the business owes a deep debt of gratitude.

THE present Directors are the two sons of the late Mr. Cunningham. Both entered the business at the beginning of the Great War, when abnormal conditions probably gave them earlier and fuller technical training in all departments of the printing trade than might otherwise have been possible.

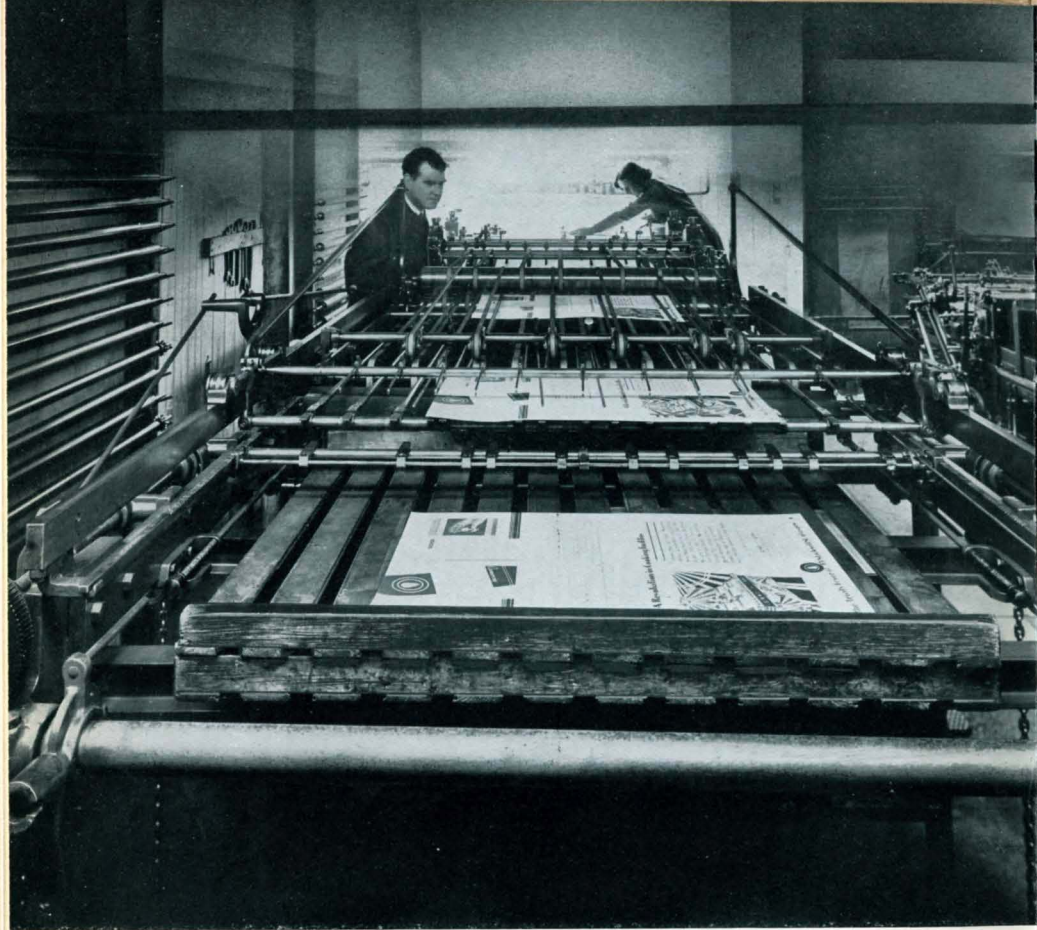
Mr. Gilbert Farm Cunningham (born 1900) spent the latter months of the war on military service, and after the Armistice was engaged in army educational work. Thereafter he completed interrupted studies by graduating as Bachelor of Arts with first class honours at the University of London.

Mr. John Patrick Cunningham (born 1901), in addition to his practical experience, was for many years associated with the production of advertising literature and commercial art in London, activities which are closely interwoven with the service rendered by the printing trade in these days.

The Directors endeavour to preserve that personal contact and supervision which have been characteristic of the business since its foundation ; at the same time maintaining plant and equipment in the front line of modern development, so as to produce the best quality product in the most economical manner, and thus continue the tradition of progress so long and worthily established.



MR. JOHN PATRICK CUNNINGHAM.



A VIEW OF ONE OF THE LARGE TWO-COLOUR
LETTERPRESS MACHINES.

FIFTY YEARS' DEVELOPMENT

THE first home of the business now housed at Longbank Works, Alva, was in a small shop at 176 Stirling Street, opened on 11th November, 1889, which bore the legend "Alva Printing Office." The front portion was devoted to the sale of books and stationery; behind were installed one platen machine and some cases of type. The venture was regarded by the little weaving community of that day with curiosity, and by not a few with mingled scepticism and amusement, and the feeling that its life would be a short one.

Business came in, however, with surprising rapidity, and after the first few months its success was sufficient to justify a move to more central premises at 124 Stirling Street, where a novelty was introduced in the way of lithographic printing, a process which Mr. Cunningham found suited to the needs of new customers whom he had made outside Alva itself. By 1893 it was necessary, in order to accommodate the increased plant, to erect a workshop behind the Stirling Street premises and to install an engine to drive the heavier machinery. Then, to justify the extension, his products, daily growing more ambitious, were successfully offered to consumers at a still greater distance, for whom the name of Alva was rapidly acquiring a new association.

DURING the next few years work was obtained from an ever widening clientele. By 1898 another move was necessary. An old weaving shed known as Longbank Works, lying almost on the slopes of the hills which rise steeply above the town, was taken over, and here, it seemed at the time, there was ample room for future expansion. A year or two later Mr. Cunningham made his home in the adjacent dwelling-house known as Nethercraigs.

Each year brought more business, and more machinery was needed. Larger printing presses were installed; binding plant was added; and before long the factory, once too large, was becoming congested. In 1907 a new two-storey building was erected beside the old one, and this was further extended in 1910. About that time paper-ruling was added to the activities of the business. In 1911 a big step forward was made with the installation of "Monotype" automatic type-setting machines; and in 1913 the lithographic department was augmented with one of the first rotary offset machines in Scotland. The semi-Jubilee of the business was approaching, and everything seemed fair for the future; then came the thunderbolt of war. Within a few weeks more than half the male staff had gone on active service, and those who remained had to combat the difficulties and disorganisation of those years.

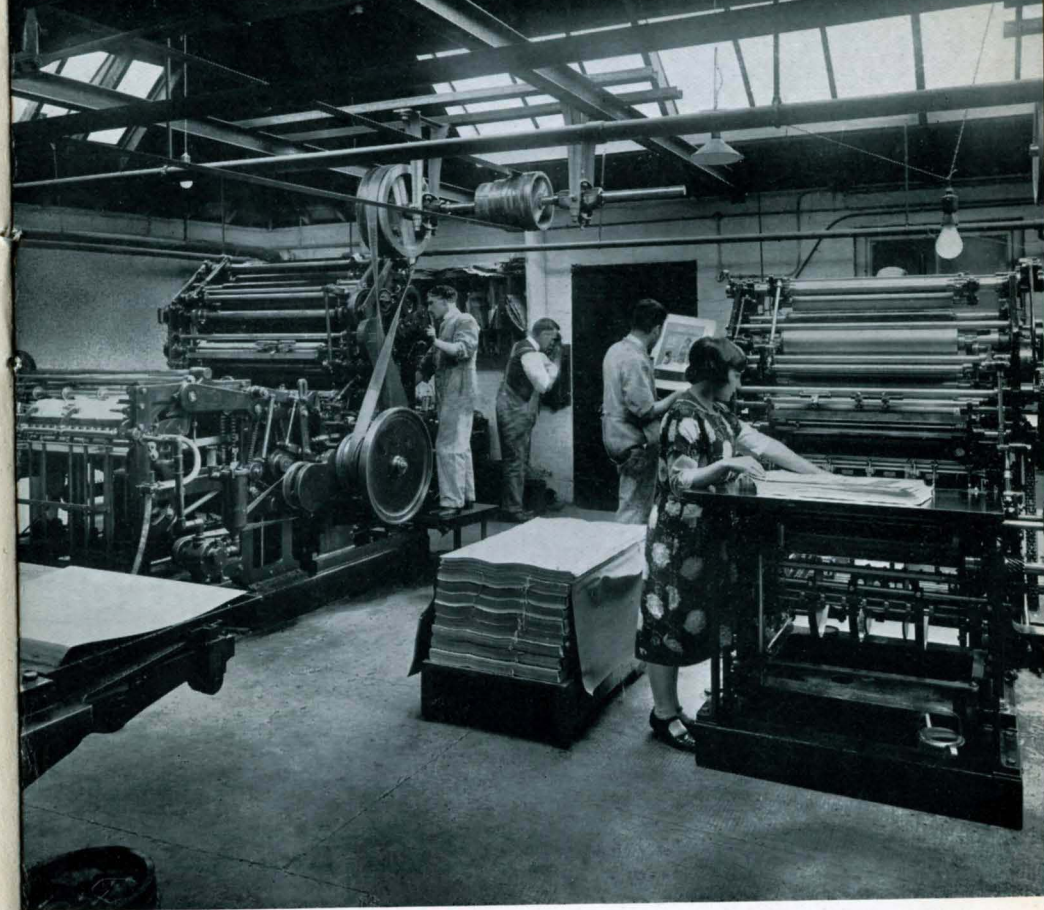


WITH the advent of normal times in 1919, and the return of a large number of men from service, the management adopted the policy of bringing the entire plant thoroughly up-to-date; very little of the machinery which was in action then is still in the works to-day. Two-revolution printing presses replaced older models in the letterpress machine room. New and faster lithographic plant was installed. There were additions to the paper-ruling and binding machinery, some of it the first of its kind in Scotland. Two extensive building schemes were undertaken in 1924 and 1927, and these more than doubled the floor-space available and there have been other frequent structural alterations from time to time.

Another new development took place in 1931, when the first two-colour letterpress machine was installed, enabling work involving several colours to be turned out with greater speed and accuracy. Its success led to the installation of a second machine two years later. In the case room the Monotype plant was entirely renewed and the type-setting resources of the business put in the first line by the installation of a "Super-Caster." Right up to the present day there has been a constant renewal and replacement of equipment in every department to enable the needs of the times, with their ever-increasing demand for speed and quality, to be met.

NOR have other factors in the production of good work been neglected. A staff of highly-trained operatives, many of them originally apprentices in Longbank Works, has been built up, and all work is carried on strictly in accordance with Trade Union conditions. Some years ago a two-shift system was introduced to add further to rapidity of output. About the same time the Company were the pioneers of the district in the provision of a canteen for the comfort of employees, and the introduction of a contributory superannuation scheme, to assist their retirement at the age of 65, besides making provision for those who should reach that age before the benefits of the new fund could become available. On the executive side, the office is provided with a thoroughly modern system of records, and with the newest aids to accurate and efficient management.

One of the most important elements in the production of modern printed publicity is the preliminary work of preparing suggestions and lay-outs, the provision of art and copy service: ensuring, in short, that the work shall not only be well-printed but also well-designed and effective. In this department also Longbank Works is thoroughly up-to-date, and its studio is equipped to meet the needs of customers in the efficient and artistic planning of their printing.



ROTARY OFFSET MACHINES IN THE LITHOGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT.



A VIEW IN THE BOOKBINDING DEPARTMENT.

TO-DAY, unfortunately, like everyone in business, we are facing a very uncertain future, although at the moment of writing our productive resources are more than fully employed. Already the effects of scarcity of material, with consequent increases in price are making themselves felt, and the quality of many products is also suffering. The mobilisation of the nation's man-power for war is beginning to have its effect on industry and already not a few of our operatives have answered the call to arms, while others are preparing to do so. Many of the activities of peace are suspended entirely, while others are drastically curtailed or restricted. We cannot tell whether the struggle will be long or short, or what we shall have to contend with during its course; but we approach what must assuredly be a difficult period with the resolve to do everything we can to meet the needs of our customers, as promptly, as economically, and as efficiently as possible.

Our stocks of material have already enabled us to help them by postponing the need for price advances; and our purchasing policy is constantly directed towards the same end.

We trust that together we can weather the storm, as we did in 1914-1918, and at an early date resume the arts of peace in a brighter and happier world.

SCENERY AND SURROUNDINGS

THE name of Alva intrigues many of our customers ; one of them once told us that it had an exotic sound. Its geographical situation seems to puzzle many, so that a brief description may be of interest.

Few towns in Scotland enjoy such striking natural advantages as this little burgh of 4,000 inhabitants, combined with a central situation, and easy means of access from all parts of the country, being 38 miles west-north-west of Edinburgh and 33 miles north-east of Glasgow. It lies in Clackmannanshire, the smallest in area, but by no means the least populous of Scottish counties, in the most beautiful part of the district known as the "Hillfoots," which stretches for many miles along the southern slopes of the Ochil Hills. Immediately behind the town the hills rise, steep and imposing, to a height of over 2,000 feet. To the south the "clear winding Devon" makes its leisurely way through fertile fields to join the Forth. The countryside is richly wooded, and the town itself is compact and well laid out.

Alva has long been associated with the manufacture of textiles, which is the staple industry. Its Scotch Tweeds, Knitting Yarns and other woollen products have a world-wide reputation. It is, moreover, proud of its municipal independence, possessing a Town Council and a Provost, and being indeed locally distinguished by the complimentary title of "the model burgh."



ALVA FROM THE SOUTH.



LOOKING WEST FROM THE ENTRANCE TO ALVA GLEN.

THE country surrounding Alva is of great interest, both scenic and historic. From the higher parts of the town or from the slopes of the hills, there is a magnificent view. Eastward is the Devon Valley with the Fifeshire hills in the distance. To the south is Alloa, the county town, a busy industrial centre on the river Forth, which widens out into an estuary as it flows past the shipping centres of Grangemouth and Bo'ness ; further south are the iron foundries of Carron and Falkirk and the Stirlingshire coalfield. In the west the beautiful contours of Demyat terminate the Ochil range. Close beside it is the Abbey Craig, surmounted by the monument erected to Sir William Wallace, the hero of Scottish independence. A little to the south of this lies the historic town of Stirling, once the residence of Scottish kings, its ancient houses and towers climbing up the steep hill towards the Castle on its summit, the scene of many brave deeds and secret crimes in bygone days. At the foot of the Castle rock flows the Forth, and it was here that Wallace gained his great victory at Stirling Bridge in 1297. Just beyond Stirling is the still more famous field of Bannockburn where, in 1314, Robert Bruce, afterwards King Robert the First of Scotland, gained the crowning victory in the long campaign against southern aggression. Looking still further westwards, Ben Lomond and the Argyllshire mountains rear their rocky heads upon the skyline.

THOUSANDS of visitors make their way every summer to Alva Glen, one of the most famous beauty spots of the Ochils, which contains some fine waterfalls and wild rocky gorges. Besides this, the hills provide many other excursions. There is no finer walk in Scotland than that to Ben Cleuch (2,363 feet), the highest point of the Ochils, and it has been truthfully said that "the view from the summit, both for extent and grandeur, has not its equal in the British Isles."

On a clear day the prospect is a magnificent one. In the north and west there is an uninterrupted view of the Grampians, among which may be distinguished Ben Nevis, sixty-three miles away. In the south-west the peaks of Arran are visible with glimpses of the Clyde, and to the south the Scottish Midlands, from Edinburgh to Glasgow are spread out. Eastwards are the Forth and Tay estuaries; Edinburgh Castle, Arthur's Seat, the Bass Rock and the Isle of May are all visible. In all, portions of twenty-five counties may be seen.

A very cordial welcome will be given to any of our friends who can visit Alva, and we shall be glad to show them something, not only of the internal equipment and resources of Longbank Works, but also of the natural beauties and historic surroundings among which our work is carried on.