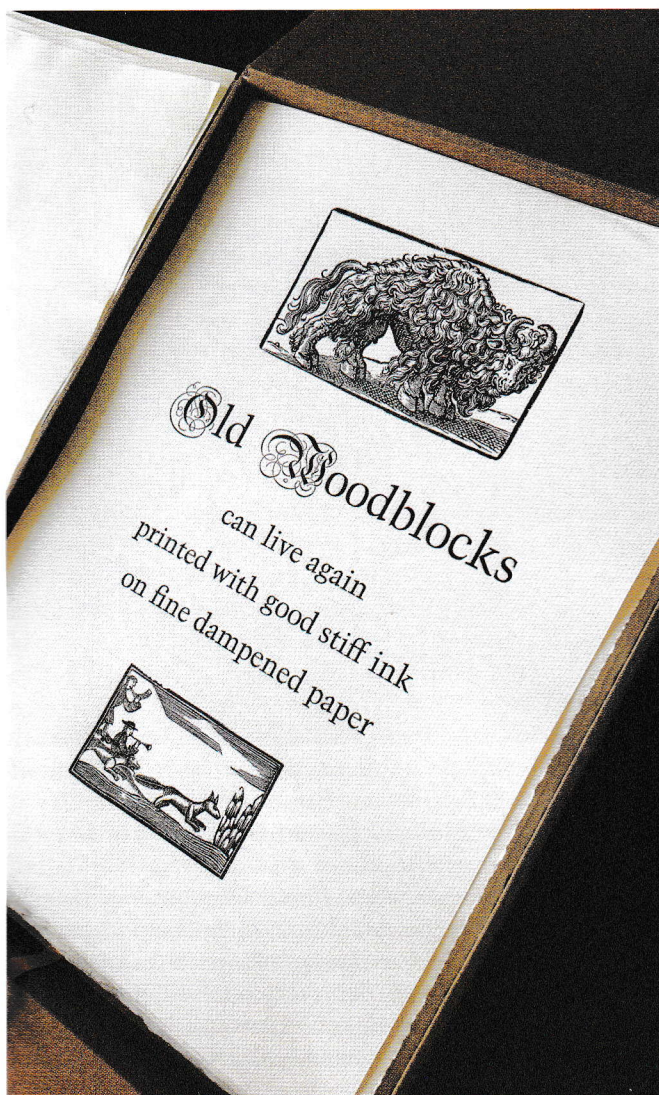


**Graham Williams**  
***A Collection of Printing from Woodblocks,***  
***on a Diversity of Papers***

Reviewed by Mark Askam



*A Collection of Printing from Woodblocks, on a Diversity of Papers* is, I believe, pretty unique in its content. What Graham Williams at the Florin Press has done is create a publication that realises his concept of allowing the viewer to see the differences that paper choice, fine ink and careful printing make when taking impressions from woodblocks. And with Williams being possibly the finest printer of wood engravings in the UK there is likely no better person to have undertaken such a task – and achieve such esteemed results. Forming the core of the project, nine different formes were designed, consisting mostly of Bewick woodblock illustrations paired with beautifully set texts that highlight Williams's considerable typographic flair. Each forme was then printed across a selection of different hand-, mould-, and machine-made A4 leaves. The reason for this repetition of the same prints on different papers is simple: it enables

the clearest comparison between them. Williams wants to show the difference that the choice of paper and ink can make to a print. When looked at individually, any of the prints here look spectacular, regardless of the paper used, and you would be forgiven for thinking that all show the woodblocks looking their very best. It is only when you undertake careful side-by-side comparison of how the same print looks on different papers that you see the subtle – and sometimes not so subtle – differences. It's fascinating, especially when in some cases the results are quite opposite to what you'd expect; one engraving in particular actually looks brighter on a darker paper than it does on a bright white one.

To sustain consistently the exceptional quality printing Williams has achieved, much time was taken with perfecting the make-ready before the papers were printed damp and with great care using bespoke inks. This resulted in the blocks being printed to a standard likely never seen before. Anyone who's seen a typical old Bewick print will instantly see an astounding difference, for despite all their intricate detail and technical mastery Bewick's engravings were often poorly printed, making them a pale shade of what they could be. By comparison, what we have in *Printing from Woodblocks* is simply stunning. I have to admit that I never used to be that fussed about Bewick's work until I saw his engraved blocks printed by Williams. The results are a revelation, with far more life than I'd seen in any Bewick before. I now have a far greater understanding and appreciation of the Bewick's work.

Aside from the immaculate printing, this portfolio of prints – housed in a handsome solander box – is unsurprisingly a paper-lover's dream. It features some absolutely gorgeous examples, including Barcham Green, Twinrocker, Lessebo, Saunders Waterford, Somerset, Zerkall, Modigliani and Basingwerk Parchment. As well as marvelling at the prints, I have spent much time enjoying and comparing the sheets as samples of the papers alone. The watermarks found throughout are a particular joy for me, especially on the last of the nine formes, which is very sparse in its printed content and pretty much just instructs you to look at the huge watermark on it.

In addition to the various prints, the solander box includes a beautifully printed A4 booklet featuring a further selection of smaller engravings, notes on the various papers, and details of the engravings and the typefaces used for each of the nine formes.

In summary, *A Collection of Printing from Woodblocks, on a Diversity of Papers* is a joy. It was clearly a prolonged labour of love for Williams and I can only marvel at the results and applaud his efforts. There are few practitioners of letterpress today that I truly feel deserve the description of master printer, but in this reviewer's humble opinion Graham Williams is one of them. I think this production clearly shows why.

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