



De Worde



Sample booklet designed by Alistair Hall at [We Made This](#)



One of the devices de Worde used at Fleet Street

De Worde

Our latest typeface has been designed to mark the 60th birthday of [The Wynkyn de Worde Society](#).¹ In 1957 a group of publishers, typographers and designers decided that their new society should be named after de Worde, a pioneer of printing and publishing in late medieval England. De Worde was William Caxton's first assistant and at his death the inheritor of his business. In 1500 De Worde moved the press from Westminster to new premises on Fleet Street, consisting of a shop with printing house and a dwelling house, and were known by the sign of the Sun.

Origins

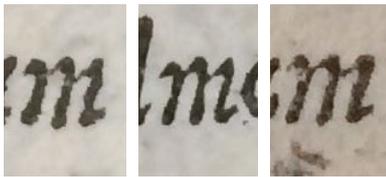
At the start of the sixteenth century printing in England was at a point of change. With this change came new ideas and a new style in the shape of roman type. De Worde first used a roman type in a book in 1520, but he was not the first printer in England to do so. However, he was the first to introduce an italic type to English printing in 1528.

Over time italic has become subordinate to the roman. We now see it as a tool to highlight part of a text – a word or a title perhaps. The origins of italic, however, are far more highbrow. The letter style was created by Francesco Griffo for the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius in 1500 and used for the setting of classical texts in convenient small format. Printers across Europe were quick to copy this new style and add it to their collection of types. It's thought that de Worde obtained his italic from France.

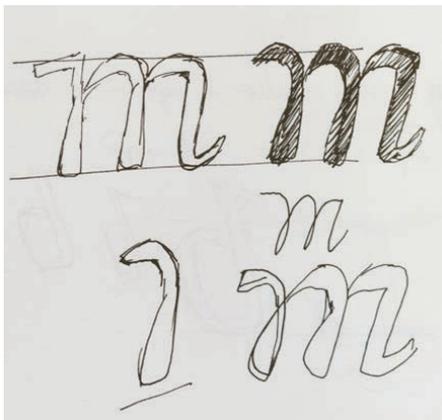
¹ Visit wynkyndeworde.co.uk to find out more about The Wynkyn de Worde Society

Research

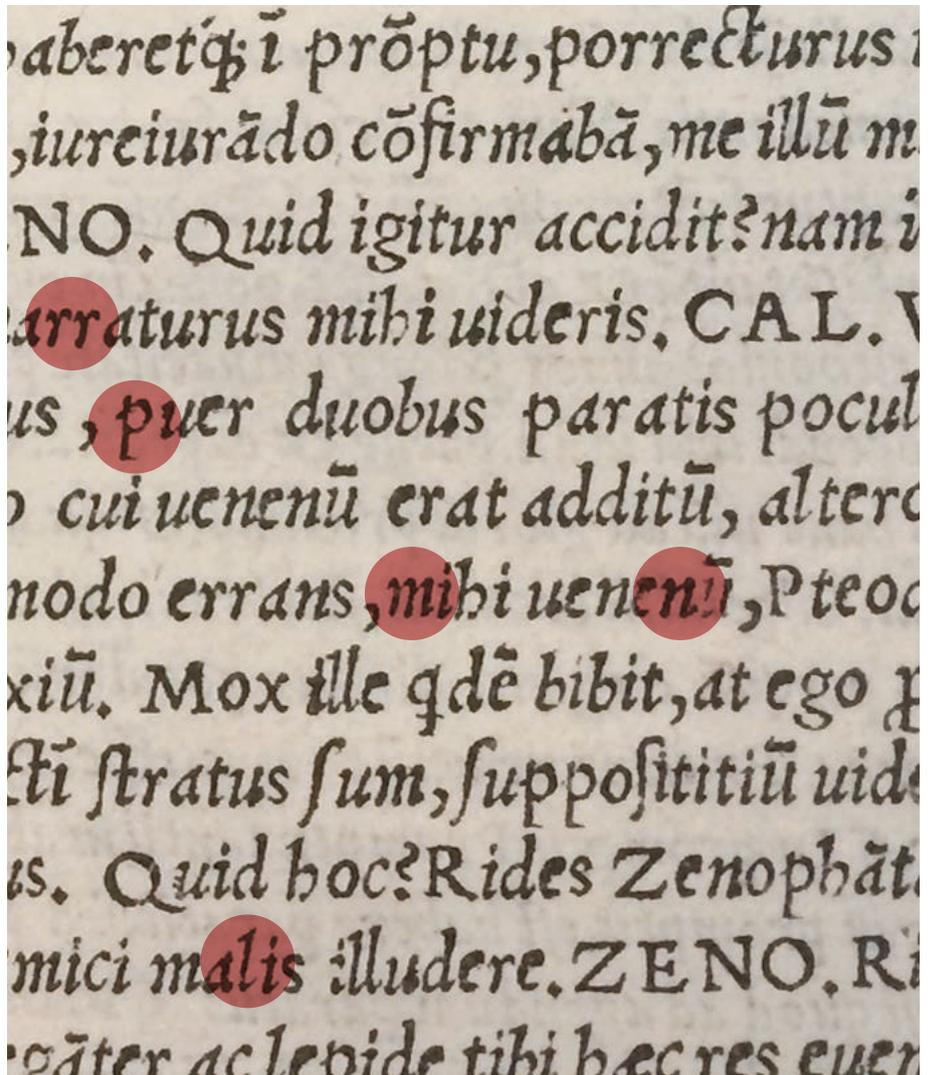
When looking for inspiration for the De Worde typeface, it seemed logical to start with the italic he used and introduced to English printing. Examination shows a type full of chaotic rhythm – it bounces along the line quite freely and is not as regimented as we would expect today. This, combined with several interesting details seen in the lettershapes, formed the basis of what would become the De Worde typeface.



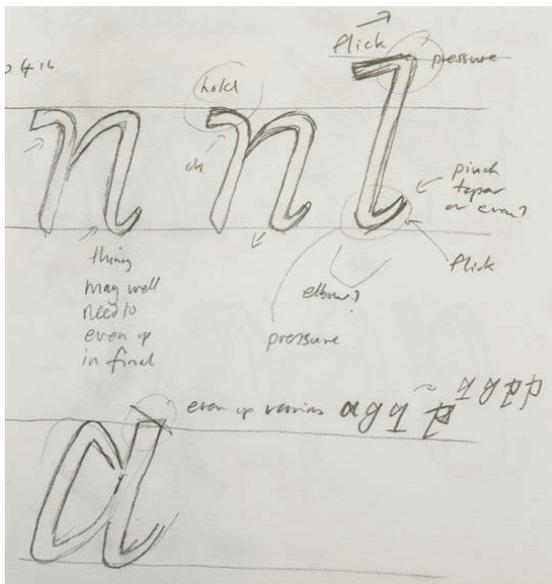
Various impressions reveal interesting structures



Sketches



The italic de Worde used in 1528

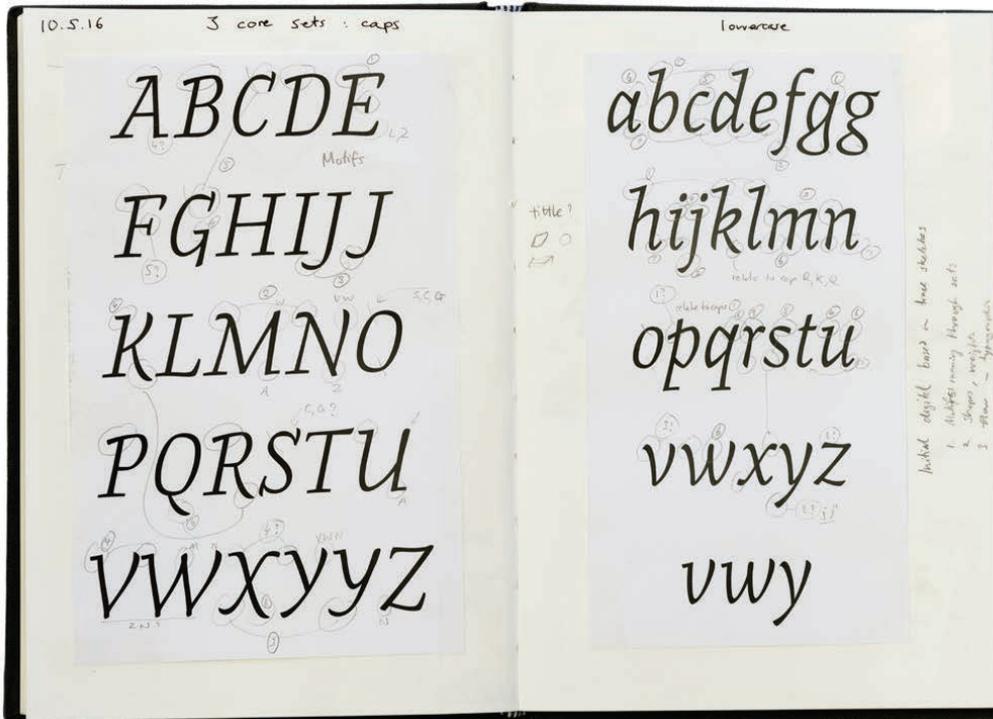


Developing features

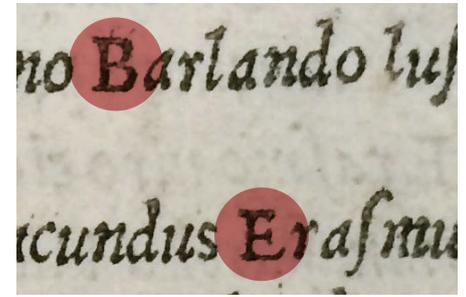


The highlighted letters above show some of the interesting details – the *r* bends and twists, the final leg of the *m* is different to the others, the flick of the *n*, the top stroke to the *l*, and the *p* is packed with features; a right only foot serif, a tall stem and a long entry stroke to its bowl.

A more assertive shape for the *a* was developed which lead to a cursive *g* in preference to the roman style found in the original italic.



Capitals and lowercase showing stylistic motifs across the alphabet

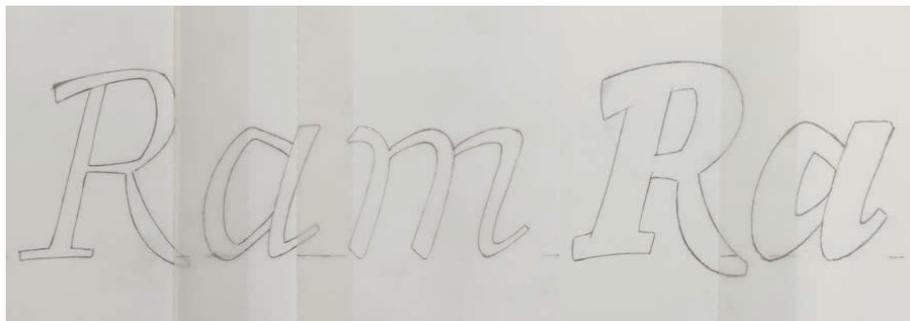


Building a coherent set

The first italics only comprised of lowercase letters, there were no italic capitals, so roman caps were used alongside the italic. This would look strange and archaic to our eyes today and would vastly reduce the type's usefulness. So italic capitals for De Worde were designed from details found in the lowercase.

A modern typeface needs to service a wide spectrum of possible uses. Following the initial development of a Regular weight, a wider range of weights were conceived. From a skeletal ExtraLight to a jaunty Heavy, the De Worde family consists of seven weights in total with an extended character set including small capitals, superiors, number sets and fractions.

More information together with licensing options can be found online at typography.net



Early drawings made on tracing paper



Spread from the sample booklet

A special showing

This beautiful type sample has been designed by Alistair Hall at [We Made This](http://WeMadeThis). Produced to mark 60 years of The Wynkyn de Worde Society, the sample cleverly shows many of De Worde's features. A [PDF version](#) is available online or the printed version, in all its glory, is available to [buy](#).

ExtraLight
Light
Regular
Medium
Bold
ExtraBold
Heavy