

# The WAVERLEY TYPEWRITER.

BY MARTIN HOWARD

LAST SUMMER, I TRAVELED TO SCOTLAND to acquire a rare Waverley typewriter. John, the owner, had received his grandfather's typewriter from his dad. The grandfather had bought the Waverley in the 1930s for keeping the accounts on the family farm. Shortly after, his wife got an Olivetti and the Waverley was sent to the barn for decades. It must have been a good barn, as the typewriter stayed in exceptional condition over the years.

## A Fine Piece of Engineering

THE WAVERLEY IS WELL KNOWN FOR BEING one of the four typewriters with the distinctive design of having typebars that stand up behind the carriage and swing forwards to strike the top of the platen. The other three are the Brooks, North's, and Fitch, all 19th-century typewriters and rare finds today. The impressive design of these typewriters gave visible typing; however, the disadvantage of obstructing the backwards escape route of the paper was considerable, as the carriage became larger and more complicated to keep the paper fully contained within the carriage. However, unlike other typewriters (including the Williams) with restricted paper paths, where one cylindrical cavity is used to load the paper before typing and one for the typed page to roll into, the Waverley design allows for the paper to simply rest on three forwardly projecting prongs as it feeds into the typewriter.

The Waverley is an imposing and beautiful machine with its elegant typebar shield and handsome gold-painted name plate leading to a forwardly placed keyboard. It is also impressively engineered with some special features. Here is an informative review of the Waverley from *The Phonetic Journal* (May 4, 1895):

*As the Waverley Typewriter is now on the market, the following particulars will be of interest. Like the Maskeyne, it is a "differential spacing"*





machine. Its writing is in full sight of the operator, the type-bars playing forwards and downwards. The space-key is ingeniously devised so that it can be struck simultaneously with a character-key, a great deal of time, it is claimed, being thus saved in operation. A ribbon is used as the inking device. The paper is carried in a cage as in the North and the Williams. The shift-key is, however, the most characteristic feature of the machine. The Waverley has two complete sets of type, like the Yost, the Caligraph, and the Bar-Lock, yet has only a single keyboard as in the Remington. The action of the shift-key is, therefore, so far as we know, unique. [The single-keyboard International of 1891 is the only other typewriter with this feature.] It does not oscillate the cylinder backwards and forwards, but gives a lateral play to the mechanism connecting the keys with the type-bars, thus bringing the upper-case type-bars into action, and throwing the lower-case out.

To clarify, when one pushes the upper-case key, the sub-levers for the lowercase typebars disengage and the sub-levers

for the uppercase typebars are brought into play. You will see in the photos that there are two rows of typebars; the lower row is for lowercase and the higher row is for uppercase. Each typebar has only one character on it, not the two characters normally seen on a typebar for a typewriter with a shift key. The advantage is stated in *The Phonetic Journal* (1 Aug. 1896): "This ingenious arrangement is novel, and thus is entirely effective, and gives the machine the undoubted merit that it cannot possibly print the capitals out of line. As all the characters tend to exactly the same printing point when the type-bars descend, not to two printing points as in the case of most shift-key machines."

The Waverley, like some other early typewriters, has proportional spacing. Its proportional spacing, though, despite the advertising claim "Perfect Spacing as in Letterpress," is only for M and W (as mentioned in an 1897 ad), with the carriage moving 1½ spaces to accommodate their widths. It seems remarkable that such an effort was made for just these two letters, especially as the intent for full proportional spacing with three character widths is stated clearly in the patent papers.

**THE "WAVERLEY" STANDARD TYPEWRITER.**  
**PERFECTION IN WRITING.**  
 PERFECT SPACING AS IN ORDINARY LETTERPRESS.  
 PERFECT VISIBILITY.  
 TERMINAL SPACING.  
 UNIVERSAL KEYBOARD.



Full Particulars from  
**THE WAVERLEY TYPEWRITER, LTD.**  
 OFFICES AND WORKS—  
 61 & 63, Handforth Road, Clapham Road, London, S.W.

First known Waverley advertisement, Board of Trade Journal, 1894

**The WAVERLEY STANDARD TYPEWRITER.**  
 An English made Typewriter for Englishmen.

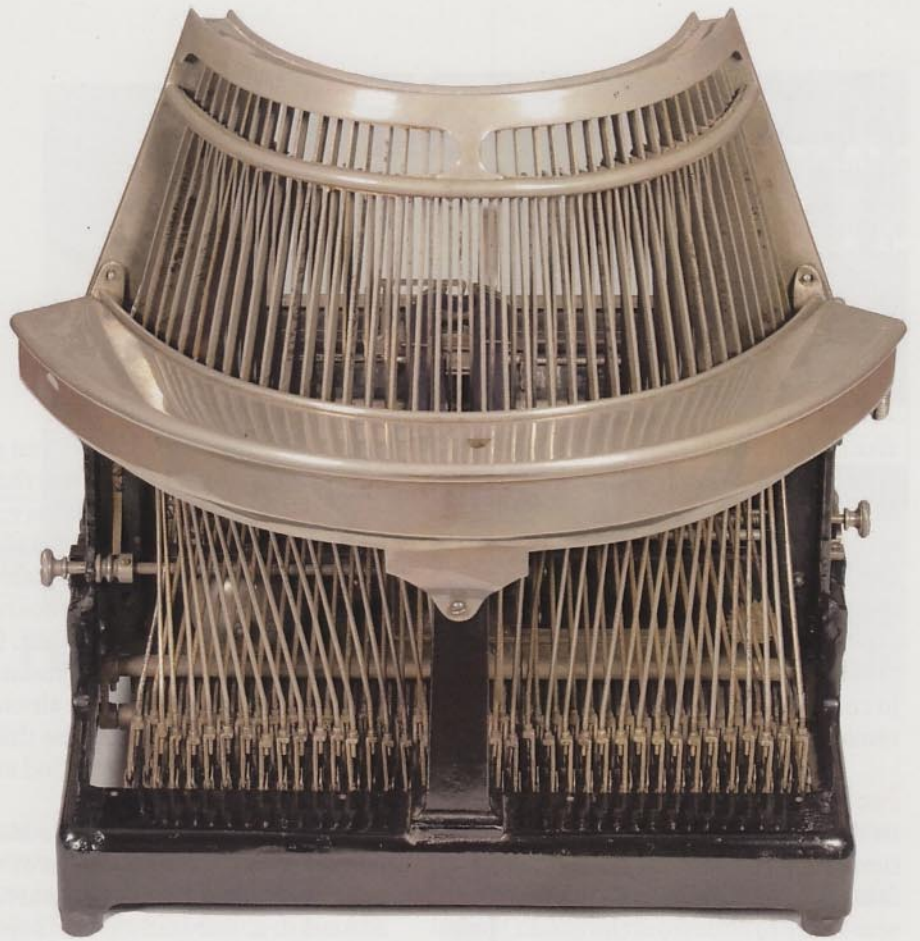


Visible Writing.  
 Universal Keyboard.

Differential Spacing.  
 Separate type arm for each letter.

**THE** old-fashioned machines made light of **VISIBLE WRITING**, saying it is of no importance. Do not be misled, watch any of their operators and note the time occupied in lifting the paper carriage to inspect the work. Would you not think it strange if you were asked to write your letters under the writing table and raise the table to inspect the work? Compare our differentially spaced writing with the cramped "m's" and "w's" in the older machines. Operators save one-fifth in time by using the terminal spacing.

Pittman's Year Book, 1897



Another interesting feature is the presence of a "SPACE" key that moves the carriage the width of a standard character, with the spacebar moving the carriage 1½ spaces. Once again, the typist could push the spacebar simultaneously with the last letter of a word to immediately be ready for the next word. This was called terminal spacing.

### History of Manufacturing

THE WAVERLEY'S US PATENT WAS APPLIED for in 1889 (one month earlier in England) and granted in 1891 (448,037—with additional patents for the ribbon spool and typebar assemblies, 472,999 and 502,190). The Waverley Typewriter Company was registered in early 1894, with the first advertisement appearing that year. It was manufactured in London and apparently appeared on the market in 1895, as stated in *The Phonetic Journal*; however, there is some uncertainty as to whether the Waverley was actually available for purchase in 1895. What is certain, though, is that despite the great efforts of its inventors, Edward Higgins and Charles Jenkins, it was manufactured for only a very short period of time, with the company being bankrupt by mid 1897. Typewriter historian G. C. Mares reports in 1909 on an in-

teresting contradiction: "At the proceedings in connection with the winding up, it was stated that so far as the machine itself was concerned, it had proved a commercial success, but the further exploitation thereof was rendered impossible for want of sufficient capital."

The following abridged auction notice from 1898 will cause the hair on any collector's neck to stand up: "they will offer for sale at the Waverley Typewriter Works, Clapham, London, a costly collection of modern machine tools, including screw-cutting, and other lathes, milling machines, a complete electro-plating plant, polishing lathes, as well as the office furniture, stock and stores, consisting of about 250 Waverley Typewriters."

In all likelihood, it is sad to say, these 250 Waverleys likely went straight to the junkyard.

In 1914, a British newspaper had the following ad: "EXCHANGE. Waverley TYPEWRITER in black leather carrying case, for Acetylene Headlight for car."

In the end, only eight Waverley typewriters are known, with an interesting story on a ninth whose existence was brought to my attention by collector Jos Legrand, who knew that one had been in the collections of the Scottish National

Museum. With some detective work, I was able to learn that the SNM had a Waverley from 1934 to 2010, when it was deaccessioned and given to a charity program called "Old Tools, New Tools" which repairs old tools for reuse in Africa. I spoke with a curator who assured me that it must have been in very poor condition and that with known Waverley typewriters in the Bernard Williams collection and the London Science Museum, there was no need to keep theirs. It does seem odd, though, that if this Waverley was in good enough condition to be fixed for reuse, it was not worthy of staying in the museum's collection. ■

### Known Waverley Typewriters

Howard	H 3
Breker	E 11
Barbian	F 11
Frei	G 20
Rapetti	J 42
Mantelli	F 46
New Walk Museum	I 49
London Science Museum	unknown

Note: I have placed the serial numbers in numerical order but it is possible that the letters dictate the order of manufacture.