

Banging Out

"There used to be a tradition in Fleet Street newspapers called 'banging out'. It involved an employee, on the day he retired after a life-time's stalwart service to his chosen rag, being walked by his colleagues through the presses in the print room. As he wandered towards his rendezvous with a carriage clock, the printers serenaded him by whacking the metal benches with their hammers, beating out a ceremonial slow-march to mark his departure."

Jim White

Banging out also occurred when apprentices passed out and when Fleet Street presses were shut down and moved to Wapping and Westferry in the 1980s.



History of Printing in Fleet Street

In 1476 William Caxton brought the first printing press to England from Europe. Up until this time books had been produced by monks laboriously copying out texts by hand. The invention of the printing press was to transform society in ways similar to the internet as it revolutionised access to ideas and information by making books more affordable. Initially set up in Westminster, Caxton's apprentice Wynkyn de Worde took the printing press to Fleet Street to serve the needs of the legal profession and sowed the seeds for the development of the newspaper industry in the area.

The first daily newspaper was printed in 1702 and the industry grew up until the mid 1980s with as many as 100 thousand people working in what were essentially factories for producing newspapers.

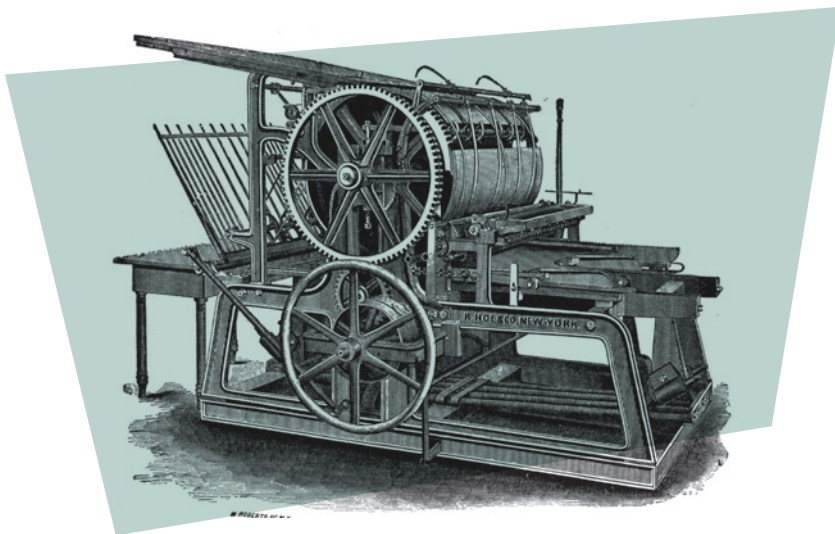
The industry became a major employer in London with many deciding between a job on the docks or "on the print". A range of skills were needed and a system of apprenticeships provided those skills and a job for life. With those skills a language and culture specific to the industry developed and also a camaraderie and unity that expressed itself in increasingly strong unions which fought for better pay and conditions in what was often dirty, loud and dangerous work.

Fleet Street became synonymous with news printing. The 24-hour nature of the business meant it was an area bustling with printers, journalists, delivery vans, huge factories and very busy pubs! It



remained so until the mid 1980s when a combination of technical innovation and political conflict led to the beginnings of the end of the industry in the area. Rupert Murdoch took on the Unions with the Thatcher government providing tacit support. Murdoch moved his printing plant to Wapping sacking almost 6000 workers in the process while secretly employing a new workforce.

A year of bitter conflict ended with other publishers following suit, albeit in a less combative manner. With this move from Fleet Street and into new technology ended almost 300 years of industry in the centre of London. The culture, work and struggle lives on in the memories of those who worked in the industry.





The Printing Machine

I was born in a big room, surrounded by machines in all different sizes
clicking

and buzzing for attention,

Grew up with a man,

William Caxton,

A young friendly craftsmanship

Who built and took care of me,

He was extremely smart and kind,

But always made me do work,

Tired and breathless I couldn't even speak,

Caxton days went quickly,

He left me cold inside,

I miss his French, Latin and Dutch,

I miss his laugh and smile,

I also miss his unusual looking clothes,

I am a print machine, I hope you understand who I am.



Printing

Printing is a clever thing,
find each letter,
place it on the bar.

Tighten it up,
You don't want them coming off,
Shillings you will lose.

Put the sticks together,
Place them on the printer,
Paint ink on the letters.

Close the top board,
Slide it in,
There you go you are almost there.

Turn the handle to press the page,
Slide the board back over.

Lift up the top board,
Pick up your page,
And there are your words.

It's a masterpiece!



Losing my job

Working and working,
all day long,
can't wait to finish,
when will it end?

I hear a speech,
I've lost my job,
what will I do?

I complain,
As I'm sad, in pain,
I need a home,
I don't want to be alone.



Black Old Dusty Printing Press

Black old dusty,
Leaking ink everywhere,
Adored printing-smells fill the air.
Cold type along the shelves,
Keys, small, with potential to unlock big dreams!

Old machines resting in one position,
Locking the door,
Dreams fade away!

Dawn the time, when the room lights up,
Unions, march along the streets,
Seeking compensation
Teaching other people,
Yesterday's skills



Michael Delaney

Michael Delaney

he really did no harm,

killed by the little white mice,

on his friend's birthday.

Devastating loss,

a happy innocent boy

he really did no harm,

Michael Delaney.





Innovation

I wake up in the morning, grabbing my iPhone to check the news. I remember how it was before, when there was no technology, there were only our hands, to be used. This reminds me of the printing press, many years ago.

Memories spring in my mind; reminding me of when I used to make large newspapers, organising the type from left to right. We had to take night shifts to make sure the newspapers were fresh and ready for the next day. 'Hot off the press' they used to call it. A messy and sometimes painstaking job to do, but we did it!

Now, I see them being made on only a small laptop and a printer, the size of a shoe box. We can read the news using digital media or pick up a newspaper for free. It wasn't like that before!

Innovation changed it.

Innovation changed the world.

Innovation changed MY life!





Just a few of the activities undertaken by the children



Undertaking research at St Bride Library



Rehearsing their role plays



Learning to set a white balance



Their letterpress pegged up to dry

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