



WATFORD'S Printing Past NEWSLETTER

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*documenting the social, aesthetic
technical and educational aspects
of Watford's printing past*



A JOINT INITIATIVE BETWEEN

The Typographic Hub at
Birmingham City University

Watford Museum

West Herts College

University of the Third Age



For more information contact:

caroline.archer@bcu.ac.uk

luke.clark@watford.gov.uk

roberttaylor84@talktalk.net

WATFORD MUSEUM

194 Lower High Street, Watford

Hertfordshire, WD17 2DT

01923 232297

Many thanks for getting back to us!

The oral history project

We recently sent out a questionnaire aimed at individuals prepared to participate in an oral history project: the Group has been very pleased with the number of surveys returned and the information contained therein, which represents a wide range of eras, with the oldest respondent having started work in 1942 and the youngest who joined the industry in the 1980s! Many aspects of the trade are represented: compositors, printers, charge hands, designers, engineers, scientists and managers of all types. In addition, a number of alumni and staff from the Department of Printing responded to the survey, between them covering a fifty-year period from 1962 to 2012 and a full range of courses from printing, publishing, packaging.

The next step for the oral history project will be to apply for some funding to enable the project to move forward with both the speed and quality that we would like. We will keep you posted.

But in the meantime, we plan to undertake some 'test' interviews, which will be recorded both orally and visually, and then transcribed. This will take a few months, but once we are satisfied that we have established a good template for the interviews, we will return to all the respondents and organise a date and location for their interview.

So please bear with us; you have not been forgotten!

Website

News, views and more

The Project now has a web site containing information about the work that is being undertaken, and general information about Watford's printing past.
typographicclub.org/watfords-printing-past

'I have no idea what this is for!'

*Printing excavations at
Watford Museum*

'I have no idea what this for!' is a cry that is often heard in the store-room of Watford Museum, as members of the study group rummage among the artefacts donated by the public. However, there is usually someone to respond, 'Oh, that's a paper burst-tester' or whatever the article may be.

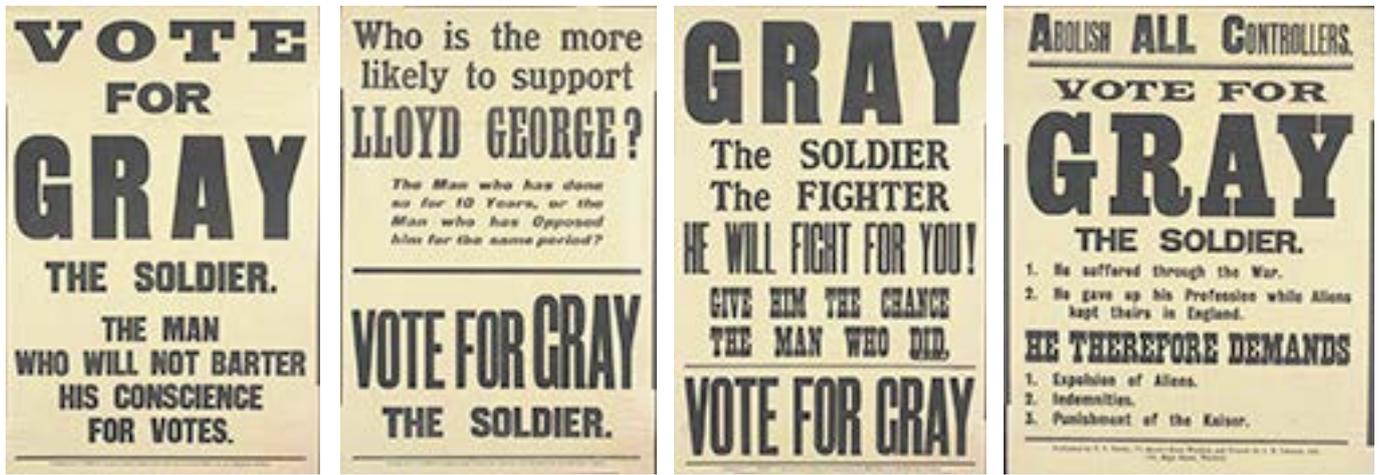
We have also found, and been totally baffled by, two identical and superb pieces of engineering, in well-made wooden boxes, secured with machine screws. We know that these were used in mechanised type-composition, because they have Monotype Corporation labels on them, but beyond that, we are, as I have said, baffled!

Other items have proved much easier to identify; two Montype keyboards, spools of Monotype paper tape, line and half-tone blocks in zinc and copper, composing and engraving tools, and sets of compositors rules and leads. Also found was a Ford Cup for determining the viscosity of liquids, particularly gravure ink. Other finds include items not directly associated with the mechanics of the printing industry, but rather with the industry's social history. Most notable of these is a miniature gravure cylinder, presented to Odhams (Watford) Ltd., by the European Rotogravure Association in 1973.

Virtually all our discoveries so far are from gravure and letterpress printers; there is little, if anything representing the lithographic process.

Much work remains to be done in the mucky store-room, among the even more mucky artefacts, but we are making progress and we are having fun!

If you would like to join the team, please contact Rodney Salter:
rodneysalter@btinternet.com



World War I

Campaign posters

Above are four of a series of nine World War I campaign posters published by T. V. Pretty, 77, Queen's Road, Watford, and printed by C. H. Peacock, Ltd., 101, High Street, Watford (proprietor and printer of the *Watford Observer*). The posters are now housed in the Imperial War Museum, London. Printed letterpress in 1918 and measuring 445 x 284 mm, they were produced for election-hopeful Frank Gray (1880-1935).

Gray was educated at Rugby School and admitted as a solicitor in 1903, retiring from the law in 1916, when he joined the army. Gray refused a commission and served as a private soldier in the Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Royal Berkshire Regiment) until the Armistice. Despite his privileged upbringing, Gray was a Liberal with a great concern for the plight of those less fortunate. After the war he worked as a farm labourer, lived with Warwickshire miners, and toured the workhouses of Oxfordshire as a tramp, publishing an account of his experiences in the book, *The Tramp: his meaning and being* (Dent, 1931). In the 1918 general election Gray contested Watford, although he failed to win the seat. He was elected MP for Oxford in the 1922 general election and was made a Liberal whip. However, he was accused of corrupt practices in the 1923 general election and was unseated in May 1924, but was later acquitted. However he retired from politics in 1926.

Books and articles

on Watford's printing past

One of the many jobs undertaken by the Group is the compilation of a bibliography of books and articles that contain information of relevance to Watford's printing past. Listed within the bibliography are a number of titles that deal exclusively with the history of printing in the town. Here are just a few that readers may find of interest:

BOOKS, DISSERTATIONS & PAMPHLETS

Peter Batsford: *A consideration of the relationship between the printing industry and technical education in the Watford area, 1870-1970*; Brunel University, 1983.

David Greenhill: *Printing and its development in Watford*; Watford, 1960.

Peter Greenhill & Brian Reynolds; *The way of the sun: story of Sun Engraving & Sun Printers*; True to Type Books, 2012.

Miriam Leech: *David Greenhill, master printer*; Watford, 1950.

Joan Raynard: *The location and economic growth of the Watford paper and printing industries*; University of Bristol, 1963.

ARTICLES

Caroline Archer: 'Printing in Hertfordshire' in *An historical atlas of Hertfordshire* (David Short, ed.) University of Hertfordshire, 2011.

T. J. Cowley: 'Printing education in Watford' in *Impressions*, 1960.

Derek Marshall: 'Engraved in history: the story of Watford's printing industry' in *Hertfordshire Countryside*, June 1989.

Timeline

Who, what, where and when

Watford's printing history is very often seen simply through the lens of the 'big boys' in the town: the Sun and Odhams. However, printing in Watford extended far beyond these names, and one of the tasks of the Group has been to compile a definitive list of all printers operating in Watford from the time Hugh Perry set up the first press in the town in 1816 to the close of the twentieth century (although the Project is now looking at making the database current to also include printers of the twenty-first century). Thanks to the unstinting work of U3A members Robert Taylor and Margaret Young, more than 500 entries have, so far, been included in the database, which records the names of the printing businesses, their addresses, date on which they started trading and the services they offered. Much of this information has been culled using trade directories located in Watford Library.

To supplement the database, the Group is now scouring the archives to try and locate images of people and places associated with the companies. These historical photographs are being supplemented by new photographs of the sites of printing works past and present. This is a difficult task, as Watford's urban development means many locations have disappeared and roads re-ascribed. But thanks to the diligence of U3A member Peter Branch many of the sites are gradually being identified and photographed.