



NewSPRAT

Newsletter of the Scottish Printing Archival Trust
Issue No 1

Welcome to this, the first SPRAT Newsletter What are we? Who are we? What are we about?

The SPRAT acronym stands for the Scottish Printing Archival Trust which was registered in 1988 with the main purpose of "conserving knowledge and examples of Scotland's book (and other) printing heritage for the benefit of the public and print/media education."

The Trust's objectives are: to record information, institute research and acquire material relating to the technological, social, educational and historical development of Scottish printing; to make this material available to the public – through exhibitions, publications and otherwise; to acquire funds and premises for the above objectives and manage their control and to do all things as will properly attain the above purposes.

Our secretary became aware that an era in Scottish printing had ended with the demise of Clark-Constable Ltd in 1986 signifying, as it did, the death of the major players in the Edinburgh book printing league. Clark-Constable was itself an amalgam of notable firms (R. and R. Clark; Morrison and Gibb; T. and A. Constable; Oliver and Boyd; Thomas Nelson; Darien Press).

Approaches to interested individuals and organisations who shared his view that this printing past should be "conserved" resulted in the formation, initially, of a Steering Group and then the Trust itself whose members are: *Chairman* Robert Thomson; *Secretary* James Keppie; *Treasurer* R. Michael Jeffrey; Ian M. Campbell; Helen Clark.

In a nutshell

We are already established as and will continue to be the repository of material and memorabilia for the Scottish Printing Industry.

We will proceed with our work of identifying and recording existing archive material in Scotland and arranging for publications and exhibitions where suitable (our directional role).

We will continue to seek a suitable permanent archive for long-term storage and display while – in the short- to mid-term – looking for storage facilities for the increasing amount of material received as a result of our success so far in encouraging firms and individuals to deposit items with us.



The SPRAT trustees (left to right) Chairman R. Thomson; Treasurer R. M. Jeffrey; I. M. Campbell; Secretary J. C. Keppie (not shown: H. Clark)

What have we done so far?

The Trust was formed in 1988 and we joined the Scottish Industrial Heritage Society in 1991. We have held our first exhibition *A Reputation for Excellence*. Funded by a grant from the Edinburgh District Council, the exhibition took place in the Edinburgh Central Library in 1990. It was opened by Magnus Linklater, editor of *The Scotsman*.

The Edinburgh District Council has kindly made a further grant for the Trust's administration costs for 1992-93. The Trust has also approached the Scottish Development Agency (as was), LEEL, Edinburgh Marketing and Edinburgh Vision in regard to development and funding.

We have established contacts in Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen and Perth with a view to identifying local archival material and the possibility of producing appropriate publications and holding further exhibitions.

Contacts have been made and/or maintained with the Scottish Print Employers Federation, Napier University, the National Trust for Scotland, Edinburgh District Council (Dept. of Recreation), the National Printing Heritage Trust, the Museum of Communication, the Scottish Record Office, the Royal Bank of Scotland, the University of Edinburgh, the Bank of Scotland and others.



Caseroom at T. and A. Constable Limited, Hopetoun Street, Edinburgh, 1930

The printing trades in the People's Story Museum

The People's Story is a new museum situated in the Canongate Tolbooth near the foot of Edinburgh's Royal Mile. The museum tells the story of the life, work and leisure of Edinburgh's people over the past 200 years. Edinburgh is justly proud of her printing past, and aspects of this story are told in the museum's display.

In 1985, when we started to collect material relating to the printing, bookbinding and allied trades, we realised with great regret how many of the major firms had closed – Thomas Nelson, Oliver and Boyd, Neill and Company, Morrison and Gibb, to name but a few. Although many of the artifacts had been lost, a photographic record existed for most of these firms. Over the next few years we collected material as firms closed – Clark Constable, Smith and Ritchie and Waverley Cameron. We also embarked on a programme of active recording of firms surviving at that time – Holmes MacDougall, George Waterston, Waddie and Co., Blackwood, Pillans and Wilson, Hunter and Foulis, and Hislop and Day. After public appeals we received offers of photographs, handtools, and personal memories of the trades which we recorded on tape for our oral history archive.

The People's Story is just what its name implies. By using direct quotes from the oral history tapes, the story is told mainly by using the words of the people who once worked in the printing and allied trades. There is a panel

on each subject – printing, bookbinding and stationery manufacture. These consist of photographs, text and quotes. A large display case contains an array of material including items relating to: hand composing, monotype and linotype casting, colour printing, die stamping, the production of marbled paper, sealing wax manufacture, works outings and trade union activity.

In a reconstructed "set", David Nicol, journeyman bookbinder, is "finishing" a book with gold leaf. Like all our sets this one is based on the life of a real person. David Nicol served his apprenticeship at Andrew Whyte's and worked there for 25 years before going to McNiven and Cameron. The contents of the set came from Waverley Cameron, Hunter and Foulis and individual donors.

Down the years the museum has built up a fine collection of sashes and banners belonging to the different unions. The earliest of these is a banner which was carried by the Edinburgh Bookbinders in the Jubilee Reform Procession of 1832. It bears the words

"of making many books there is no end"

How optimistic the workers were 160 years ago!

Helen Clark
Keeper of Social History
Edinburgh District Council

Current developments

- Possibility of Research Assistant for investigation and recording of local archive material throughout Scotland prior to publication(s).
- Consideration of Membership/Sponsorship position and prospects.
- Possibility of major print exhibition in City Arts Centre in 1994 with Edinburgh District Council support.

Aberdeen's first printer

Aberdeen's first printer was Edward Rabin. He is said to have been an Englishman, native of Gloucester, and to have served as a soldier in the Low Countries. Evidence of his time in the Low Countries is demonstrated by the similarities between Rabin's type, devices and ornaments, and those of the Pilgrim Press in Leyden.

Details of his career in Scotland, beginning in Edinburgh and moving to Aberdeen via St Andrews, appear in *The Hero as Printer*, published in 1976 by Aberdeen University Library to commemorate the Caxton Quincentenary.

He was appointed by the Town Council as their printer in November 1622. Rabin must have been an extraordinarily industrious worker. It is claimed that he produced 150 publications, apparently with the help of one worker. The productions ranged from religious to philosophic subjects, but there was also a horn book. Horn books were the class books used by children in school.

Vulgate Bible

One of the most important books ever to come up for auction in Britain in recent years was a Vulgate Bible which dates from the dawn of printing. The 36-line Bible was printed with type cast directly from the matrices which were struck in the workshop of Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz. It is believed to date from the 1450s. The name "Vulgate" derives from the number of lines in which each double column of Latin text is arranged on the page.



Four of the BA Publishing students who were involved in the editorial/production work of A Reputation for Excellence

Did you know...

that the first printing press to arrive in Edinburgh was imported from France in 1507. Walter Chepman, a man of property, supplied the necessary capital and his partner, Andrew Myllar, supplied the technical know-how, having travelled to France to learn the trade at Rouen.

that it was in 1528 when Thomas Davidson was the first printer to use Roman type. This was when he set up the type for *Strena*, a poem to celebrate the accession of King James V.

that although it is not possible to pinpoint the date printing was introduced to Dundee, there is evidence to suggest that this was around 1547.

that in 1567 Robert Lekprevik printed the first book in Gaelic, a translation of John Knox's *Book of Common Order*.

that the Union of the Crowns in 1603, with the departure of the court to London, saw the first trade recession to be experienced by Scottish printers.

that Robert Foulis was apprenticed in 1720 as a barber and in 1727 established himself in that trade in Glasgow. In 1739 he set up business as a bookseller and two years later turned his attention to publishing.

that the first type-foundry in Scotland was built in St Andrews in 1741/42 by Alexander Wilson and John Baine. The former has been dubbed "The Father of Scottish Letter Founders" while Baine later emigrated to Philadelphia and founded the firm which cast the first \$ sign in the USA.

that the year 1755 saw the birth of Dundee's first newspaper entitled *The Dundee Weekly Intelligencer*.

that Patrick Neill, a founder of the firm Neill & Co, Edinburgh, which ceased trading in 1973, was a renowned botanist and played a leading role in the establishment of West Princes Street Gardens.

that William Ged, the inventor of stereotyping, was said to have been a native of Dunfermline.



The five BA Publishing students who have been involved in the production of this premier issue of NEWSPRAT

Requests for assistance

Are you, or were you, involved in the printing industry? If not, perhaps someone you know is, or was, and could help us in our search for suitable artifacts, memorabilia of all kinds – particularly photographic, company histories and other material – and stories of interesting times and individuals. We are also hoping that it will be possible to arrange for taped reminiscence sessions (audio and video).

We are anxious to ensure that we stem the flow of items of printing interest to the dustbins of Scotland (sadly, much has already gone) and to encourage firms and individuals to contact us before disposing of anything. While it may be possible to house certain basic items of machinery and equipment (as and when we acquire premises) the size of early printing equipment does make the acquisition of any large items unlikely. We would, however, be very interested in photographs and/or videos.

Ancillary trades

When we say "printing" we don't just mean the putting of ink on paper. We would also like to include the ancillary trades, many of which no longer exist. Therefore, if you have connections with the following trades the "Requests for assistance" above also refers to you.

These trades are blockmaking (process engraving), typesetting, stereotyping/electrotyping, bookbinding, inkmaking, papermaking, stationery manufacturing and associated trades – e.g. paper ruling, screenprinting, gravure, lithographic, type and metal foundries, and the suppliers of the vast range of materials and equipment needed by these firms.

Donations made so far

Holmes McDougall (courtesy Mr R. MacMillan): books and artifacts
 Mr and Mrs J. Tulloch (estate of George S. Kay): books and artifacts
 Edinburgh Central Library (Edinburgh Room): copies of *Edinburgh Typographia*
 Eric Cumming (formerly of McLagan & Cumming): Charles Cumming notebooks
 Unilith (courtesy of Mr M. Scott): books and booklets
 Scotforms (courtesy of Mr P. Laidlaw): poster production *Rules and Directions for Printers*
 Broughton McDonald Church: engraved pewter music plates (at Napier University)
 Mr R. Paterson: bookbinding equipment (at Phillips, bookbinders)
 SPEF: miscellaneous items.

Correspondence

If you feel that you can contribute to our development in any way please contact the secretary. We welcome correspondence for a possible regular column in the Newsletter which would also include items of interest and photographs (Trade Unions' recollections are particularly sought).

For sale

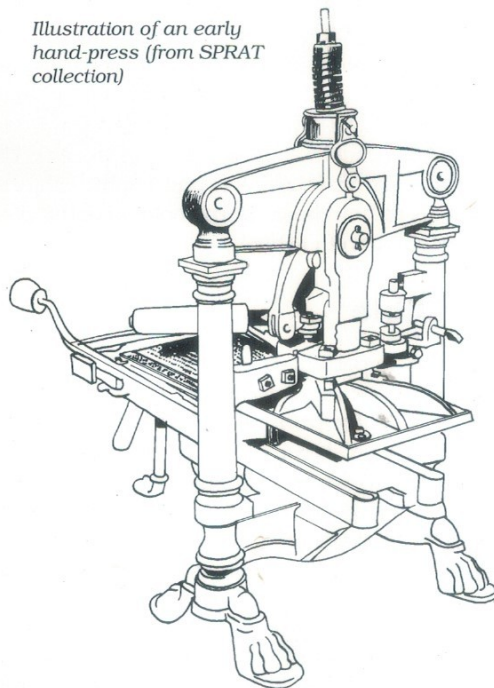
1. Illustrated booklet *A Reputation for Excellence* published in conjunction with SPRAT's exhibition on Edinburgh Book Printing History (1990). Price £ 3.50 incl. p. and p.
2. Poster: *Rules and Directions for Printers* (1721). Price £ 3.50 incl. p. and p.

Both items are available from the secretary at the address below.

Production of NewSPRAT

This first issue of the SPRAT newsletter is typeset in Bookman which was originally cut as a bold face for Miller & Richard, Edinburgh. The typesetting, scanning and sizing of line illustrations were done on an Apple Macintosh system. The photographs were reproduced in the Scottish Colour Centre. The newsletter was printed on a Heidelberg GTO 2-colour machine.

Illustration of an early hand-press (from SPRAT collection)



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Contact address:

Secretary, SPRAT
 5 Abercorn Avenue, Edinburgh EH8 7HP
 Telephone: 031- 661 3791