

## Some Cambridgeshire Industries and Trades—Part 4

# BOOKBINDING AND PRINTING

by ENID PORTER

In early days the Cambridge bookbinders were synonymous with the stationers. They are first mentioned in 1271 when, following a dispute between the university and the Archdeacon of Ely regarding the extent of their respective spheres of jurisdiction, the Bishop of Ely decreed that stationers, writers and illuminators who served the scholars only should be under the jurisdiction of the university, while their wives, with other lay persons, should be under that of the Archdeacon.

This privilege, shared by scholars' personal servants, was re-confirmed in 1354.

The stationers were sellers of literature required by the university, but their main function was the binding and repair of manuscripts and, later, of printed books. They could also, after the art of printing had been discovered, set up printing presses, although it was not until 1521 that John Siberch set up his press on part of what is now Tree Court in Gonville and Caius College.

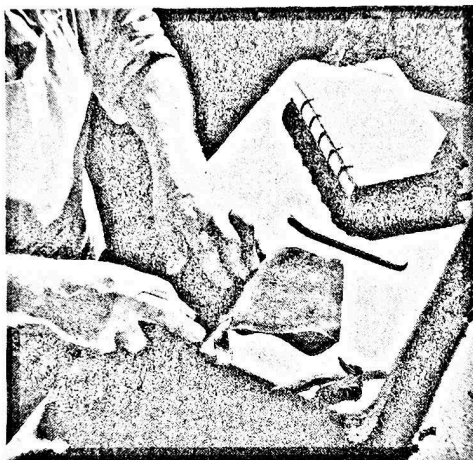
The payments received for book-binding were not over-high, although the fine leathers used, many imported from Lisbon, must have been expensive. Walter Hatley, at the end of the 15th century, received only two shillings from the university for each folio-sized book that he bound. Hatley may have been the man who stamped his work, of which several examples are still in Cambridge, with a small impression of a unicorn.

Another 15th century binder was Gerard Wake, nicknamed by later scholars as the "Demon Binder" because his stamp bore the design of a devil, though he used others as well. Some of Wake's work also survives in Cambridge, two examples being bindings on registers in Pembroke College.

At the end of the 15th century, the Franciscans, who had arrived in Cambridge in 1225 and were, by then, on the site of Sidney Sussex College, produced some binders among their members. In 1527, a member of Christ's College, known only as Leonard, was paid 20

shillings for rebinding volumes for Holy Trinity Church.

After 1583, the three stationers then regularly licensed by the university to bind, sell and print books, came to be appointed as university printers and the business of bookselling and of binding ceased, gradually, to be connected officially with the university and became open to public competition.



*A binder skiving or cutting the leather for the cover of the book beside him.*

A well-known binder of the 18th century may be regarded as the last of the old-time stationers, in that he also sold books, prints and stationery. He was John Bowtell whose name is perpetuated in that of a ward at the old Addenbrooke's hospital to which he left a large sum of money.

He lived in Trinity Street, opposite the modern Turk's Head restaurant, and was also employed as a binder at the university library. He was succeeded in his business by his nephew, also named John Bowtell, whose bindery was in Green Street.

Bowtell, senior, was noted in his day for his discovery of the first satisfactory substitute for leather in binding, a fact which he brought to the attention of the public in an advertisement which he inserted in the "Cambridge Chronicle" in 1798.

This stated that, because of the

continuing scarcity of calf-skins and other leathers, (due, no doubt, to the war with France), "the substitute provided some time ago for such a material is still to be had of J. Bowtell, by whom the discovery of paper-making in imitation of leather was made several years ago."

By this time, a small number of other binders were working commercially in Cambridge. By 1830 there were eleven such craftsmen in the town, and by 1847 their numbers had grown to 18 who served the needs of the colleges, of members of the university and of the inhabitants of Cambridge and the county.

They worked with tools which had changed little over the centuries and are, indeed, little changed today. They used calfskin, pigskin, coloured leathers or cloth according to the wishes—and the pockets—of their customers, and they brought to their work the same care and skill which one can see when visiting the four or five hand-binders at work in Cambridge today.

The elegant facade of No. 10 Green Street, for example, still bears the name of John P. Gray & Sons, although it is no longer a family concern. But the same fine work is produced there still as in the days when the first John Gray established himself in Green Street in c. 1850.

In Bridge Street, in the old bakehouse of St. John's College, is Mr. Vere Stoakley's bindery in which he joined his father, F. E. Stoakley, in 1925. His grandfather had his bindery at No. 30 Green Street.

Until 1932, Miss Rosemary Philpotts, in her Marygold Bindery, carried on a small business working in fine leathers of all kinds, mainly for presentation volumes. She first set up in Cambridge in 1903 then, after a move to London after the first world war, returned here and finally settled in Castle Street, on part of the site of the present Kettle's Yard gallery.

So much has been written of the history of the university printing houses and of the Pitt Press, that reference, here, will be made only to some of the commercial printers of Cambridge and their work.

The first newspaper should, of course, be mentioned. This was the "Cambridge Journal and Flying Post", which appeared in 1744, published and printed by Francis Hodson on the site of the Waterhouse building of Caius College, near the Senate House. In 1767, the paper merged with the "Cambridge

Chronicle", founded in 1762, and was printed, in the early 19th century, by Francis Hodson's son, James.

Francis Hodson's name appears, as printer, at the foot of a number of broadsheets now in the Folk Museum. These were issued during the Napoleonic Wars and they contain lengthy, and stirring, appeals to every true Briton to take up arms against the French.

The Radical newspaper, "The Cambridge Independent Press", began in 1839, printed first in the yard of the Black Bear (on the site of Market Passage), and then on Market Hill, close to the printing offices of its Conservative rival, the "Chronicle". Both newspaper presses produced other work as well—public notices, election addresses, pamphlets and booklets.

The "Cambridge Express" was first printed in 1868 by Metcalfe & Palmer at their printing house at the Trinity Street end of Green Street. In this house the "Chronicle" had been produced prior to the opening of the new offices on Market Hill. Metcalfe & Palmer, after 1876, when Green Street was widened and their printing house demolished, set up separate businesses, Metcalfe at the corner of Rose Crescent and Trinity Street, Jonathan Palmer in Alexandra Street, near another 19th century printer, John Webb. Both separately and together, Palmer and Metcalfe were also prolific general printers.

By the end of the 1880s there were 13 commercial printers at work in Cambridge, among them: Hall & Son of Trinity Street, who published and printed books and guide books and were also stationers and booksellers; F. W. Talbot of Sussex Street who was continuing the business founded in the 1830s by his father; Foister & Jagg in Petty Cury Falcon Yard where the business had been started in the 1830s by Hugh Foister; Wilson & Son in Jordan's Yard; W. P. Spalding in King Street; Jones & Piggott in Trinity Street.

Many of these, and other, names are still well-remembered by many, while the firm of F. P. Piggott continues today in Round Church Street, under the grandson of the Francis Piggott originally in partnership with Jones. Francis Piggott's printing house, trading under the name of the Caxton Press—the name still used by the firm—was in the appropriately-named Caxton Court,

# TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

## Britons Strike Home!

AT a time when our *Freedom*, our *Wealth*, and our *Lives* are threatened by *Frenchmen*, it becomes every *True Briton* to stand forward in defence of his *Country*. In former Wars we fought for *Glory*, in this War we must fight for *Life*.—Let all who have health and strength **TAKE ARMS**.

Do not think our *Fleets* can always protect us. In *One Night* the French Army may land.—Last War they landed twice at *Killala* and once at *Bantry* in *Ireland*; and once at *Fisgard* in *Wales*. **BONAPARTE** swears he will lose *One Hundred Thousand Men*, but he will conquer England.—His Generals and Soldiers are eager to Rob and Plunder. **MASSENA** declares, if he cannot conquer England, or hold it, he will make it *unfit even for Englishmen to live in*. The French have Maps of all your Roads, and Lists of all the Shops they can pillage. They will burn your Corn and your Houses—They will kill your Old Men—They will force your Young Men to fight against the *Savage Blacks* (in *St. Domingo*)—They will ravish your Wives and Daughters—They will toss your Young Children on their Pikes and Bayonets.

*Part of one of a number of broadsheets printed by Francis Hodson in Cambridge to encourage Englishmen to fight against Napoleon.*

near the present entrance to Boots the Chemists in Sidney Street.

In c. 1918 it moved to Alexandra Street, opposite Jonathan Palmer's press, where it continued until the move, in recent years, to Round Church Street.

The kind of work produced by the printers of the last century was similar, of course, to that now done today—public notices, posters, guide books, pamphlets and so forth, menu cards for the colleges, for Masonic banquets and other grand occasions, and for private dinner parties were very much a speciality of the printing works of W. P. Spalding and of the firm of Redin & Co. which was established in Trinity Street by 1891 and closed only in the 1950s.

The type, layout and design of the earlier years of the last century is, today, of interest to many, as is evidenced by the numbers of students and others who consult the collections of menu cards, public notices etc. which are in the Folk Museum.

The contents of the notices are of interest, too, for they cover such events as the introduction of the

Penny Post, the opening of the Cambridge to Bedford Railway and of the Free Library; prohibitions such as the ban on the use of catapults in Cambridge streets, the firing of explosives and the riding of horses on Parker's Piece; arrangements for royal visits, local celebrations of royal marriages, local memorial services following the deaths of sovereigns or great statesmen.

Some posters contain appeals to Cambridge people for money or clothing after great disasters—the bursting of the Brafeld Dam near Sheffield or—a topical one today—famine in India.

Most of these notices have the names of their printers on them, but it is noticeable that this is not so in the case of many of the printed election addresses. Some of these, however, contain such uninhibited verbal attacks on the rival of the candidate who produced them that perhaps not even a 19th century printer, used though he was to the rough and tumble—and the bribery—of Victorian municipal and Parliamentary elections, cared to advertise his name on them.