

Between the Covers: Books and Booksellers

The trade in books grew from the system of barter between monasteries and the fledgling Universities, which in the Middle Ages were the two primary producers and consumers of books. In England, early booksellers were called Stationers, after their stalls (or stations) working from a fixed location, as opposed to being itinerant sellers.

When the Corporation of London approved the formation of the Guild of Stationers (now the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers) in 1403, many of the members were based around St Paul's Cathedral. Guilds protected the interests of and regulated specific trades. Members were tradesmen: they sold writing materials, or specialised in certain areas of book production, such as copying the text, illumination, or binding. From the 15th century, the adoption of paper and the printing press made book production considerably easier, and was the first major change that the relatively-young industry faced.

Literacy rates are notoriously difficult to calculate, but up until the introduction of compulsory education in 1870 it seems likely that about 30-40% of the population could read. Most probably didn't, except for newspapers and chapbooks, which were cheap pamphlets of folktales, ballads, or political and religious tracts. Books were a status symbol and beyond the financial means of a significant portion of the population.

This display includes examples of records relating to booksellers in the collections of Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham. A recent exhibition, *Collected Words: from the Literary Collections at the University of Nottingham*, celebrated Nottingham's recognition as a UNESCO City of Literature. An online version of *Collected Words* is available on our website.

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Leicester August 1825.

A specific agreement entered into between Mr. Edw^d. Allen
and J. Derry his warehouseman.

I do hereby declare to have engaged J. Derry in the
occupation as above stated, whose business it will be to make the regular
entries of goods when received and supply the orders which may be given
by my agents either in wholesale or retail; also settling the accounts for
cash and all, and attending to other business connected with the warehouse
as I shall from time to time direct.

The time of attendance shall be from seven
o'clock in the morning till eight in the evening, except when business
can be suspended or finished sooner, and all hours over and above shall
be paid for at the rate of the weekly allowance; but no account to be taken
of 10, 15, or 20 minutes, when leave is granted for one, two, or more hours
for private use, the same number shall be deducted from the over hours,
except one hour in the week which shall be given either on Monday or
Wednesday evenings or may be most convenient. Two hours and a half is
generally to be allowed for meals (viz.) three quarters of an hour for breakfast
one hour for dinner, and three quarters of an hour for tea. For which
services I will pay him in British currency, hereafter the sum of One
Pound one shilling per week, which shall also be capable of improvement,
when duly merited and the Trade will admit.

This engagement to be valid so long as both parties
shall be mutually agreed; but should any occasion transpire which
may render it necessary or desirable by either or both parties for the
engagement to be dissolved, a legal notice of one month shall be given
by either or both parties to each other unless both can be suited sooner.

I hereby declare to have engaged with Mr. E. Allen Bookseller
as above stated upon the terms and conditions therein laid down, and
further do positively agree to keep all the concerns relating to his Trade,
whether of custom, pieces of goods, matters in invoice and all other things
concerned therewith private; and will in no case expose or cause to be
expressed any part thereof to any person either during my stay with him
or afterwards, only so far as he shall direct and approve of.

Witness my hand

Witness

Draft of agreement between Mr Edward Allen, Bookseller, and J. Derry, his warehouseman; August 1825

John Derry (1792-1869) began a career in the army and saw action with the King's Dragoon Guards at Waterloo. After being discharged from the army, he became a warehouseman, agent and bookseller. This draft agreement shows the beginning of his career in the book trade, as a warehouseman in Leicester. Hours of work were 7am to 8pm, with 2 ½ hours for meal breaks, and duties included "making entries [sic] of goods when received and supply the orders...settling the accompts [accounts]...and attending to other business connected with the warehouse". His fourth son, Joseph Derry (1835-1910), founded the Nottingham-based printing and bookbinding firm of Derry's.

Bobbin and Carriage Makers.

Bates and Jardine, Edward st, Radford
 Bostock Joseph, Gregory street
 Carver and Mosley, Butcher street
 Disston W., Mansfield road
 Gamble John, Raleigh works
 Gaunt Joseph, Gregory street, Radford
 Hett & Bostock, George st, Ilkeston rd
 Jefford W., Denman street, Radford
 Oldbury George, Alfred street central
 Rea Alfred, North Sherwood street
 Roper Thomas, Woodland place
 Shipley E., Lincoln street
 Slater Philip, Packer's pl, Sherwood st
 Smith Edward, De Ligne street
 Truman Sylvester, Arkwright street
 Winrow Richard, Hollow stone

Bone Crushers.

Fothergill John, Wilford street
 Walker J. and T., Canal street

Bone Setter.

Smith John, Gregory street, Radford

Bonnet Front Manufacturers.

Clarke G. B., High Pavement
 Clarke J. B., Pepper street
 Cotton W., Church gate
 Eason and Co., Market street
 Eaton and Co., Market street
 Farmer John, North Sherwood street
 Hill E., Farmer's factory
 Lymn John, Woodborough terrace
 Wiley E. Drury Hill

Bookbinders.

Abbott G. & J., Woodland place
 Addicott J., Greyhound street
 Allen Richard, Caxton house, Long row
 Bull George, Hulse's yard, Parliament st
 Bull Robert, Newcastle street
 Burrows Robert, Barker gate
 Dance Isaac, Warser gate
 Field Henry, Upper Parliament street
 and Wollaton street
 Forman Thomas, Long row
 Moore A. H., Goose gate
 Vice James, St. Peter's gate

Booksellers and Stationers.

(See also News Agents.)

Allen Richard, Caxton house, Long row
 Battersby Samuel, Warser gate
 Bunny William, Bridlesmith gate
 Caulfield Robert, Hounds gate
 Christian Knowledge and National Society's Depôt, Albert st; J. Sissons, manager
 Dearden and Son, Carlton street
 Dunn J. N., South parade
 Flintoff John, Lister gate
 Forman Thomas Long row
 Frost John, Wollaton street
 Howitt John, Clumber street
 Hunt John, Long row
 Leighton John, Lincoln street
 Mercer Richard, Parliament street
 Preston R. W., Pelham street
 Renals E., South parade
 Shaw and Sons, Wheeler gate
 Simkins and Browne, Angel row
 Stevenson, Bailey, & Smith, Wheeler gt
 Sulley Joseph, Albert street
 Sutton A. K., Bridlesmith gate
 Sweet James, Stoney street
 Taylor Richard, Long row west
 Vice James, St. Peter's gate
 Wheatley Charles, St. Peter's gate
 Wiggins Frederick Coithurst, Chapel bar
 Wilkinson Richard, Ilkeston road
 Williams William, Sneinton Elements

Boot and Shoe Makers.

Addlessee James, Pelham street
 Attiwell Henry, Beck lane
 Archer J., Lewis st., Alfred st. central
 Bacon Thomas T., Our lane
 Bailey and Cheetham, Angel row
 Baker Wm., York street
 Ball Benjamin, Mitchell street, Alfreton road, Radford
 Barker John, Millstone lane
 Barlow Wm., Stanhope st., Water st
 Barton Thomas, Water street
 Bausor W., 75, Mansfield road
 Bedward Frederick, Coalpit lane
 Bellamy Charles, Charlotte street
 Bestow Luke, Manvers street
 Birch Sherwin, London road
 Bishop Henry, Milton street
 Bishop William, Coalpit lane
 Blackwell and Robinson, Long row east

Wright's Nottingham and suburban directory for 1862

Trade directories show which towns had a thriving book trade. In 1862, Nottingham had over two dozen booksellers. Trade directories were issued from the mid-18th century until the 1940s. Businesses, tradesmen, and (depending on the type of directory) the wealthier private residents could have their names and addresses printed, for a fee, and therefore be more easily found by the public and potential customers. Booksellers also operated as bookbinders, stationers and newsagents, printing a wide range of materials such as visiting cards and photograph albums.

Mr Sanderson

LB 233/1/45

London March. 17. 1701

I have sent you by Tuffin the Nottingham carrier
226 Orders for Alterations in Com: Prayers to be distributed within
your District of York Diocess; it is Mr Brathwaites (the Appanitor
General) desire to me to send for the future the same quantities
of all Books or Proclamations that shall be sent to the Diocess.
if at any time you have occasion to write to me, a Letter directed to
me Bookseller at Rose & Crown in St Pauls Church Yard will find

Your friend & Servant
Dan: Midwinter

Letter from Daniel Midwinter, bookseller of London, to Mr Sanderson; 17 March 1701/2

Daniel Midwinter was a prominent bookseller, one of several based at St Paul's Cathedral in London. Early religious booksellers published either Anglican or Dissenting books. This letter concerning 226 orders for alterations in common prayers to be distributed within York diocese. It was retained within the papers of the Archdeaconry Court, which had responsibility for ensuring all parishes had the correct ecclesiastical books available.

Ref: AN/LB 233/1/45

IMPORTANT DECISIONS.

NOTTINGHAM COUNTY COURT.—R. Wildman, Esq., Judge.

SUBSCRIBING FOR BOOKS IN NUMBERS.

AT the Nottingham County Court, held at the Shire Hall last week, judgment was given in a case, with the particulars of which the public should be acquainted. The plaintiffs in it were Messrs. BLACKIE & SON, of Glasgow, Publishers, who sought to recover the value of six numbers of the "IMPERIAL DICTIONARY," a work published in monthly parts, and which had, it was alleged, been supplied to defendant by his orders. It seemed that the defendant had ordered the book of one of the plaintiff's Agents in Nottingham, but after having received part, he declined to proceed with the remainder of the work. The plaintiff contended that he was bound to take the remainder, and consequently their Agent tendered him the five succeeding numbers. He however refused to receive them, and they therefore brought the matter before the County Court. The Judge (RICHARD WILDMAN, ESQ.), decided that the defendant was clearly bound to take the whole of the work, and therefore he made an order for the payment of the full amount, with costs.

Nottingham Journal, Friday, July 25th, 1851.

BIRMINGHAM COUNTY COURT.—L. Trafford, Esq., Judge.

TAKING IN BOOKS IN NUMBERS.—OLDERSHAW v. SHERLOCK.

WE are induced to notice this matter, from the fact, that persons taking in Number Books, frequently labour under misapprehension as to their position with reference thereto. In this case (and there have been others before his Honour), defendant, in the employ of Mr. WRIGHT, at the Saltley Railway Carriage Works, was sued for 2s., the price of a part or number of MATTHEW HENRY'S BIBLE, a work carried about for sale by plaintiff. There were two features in the matter:—defendant thought that when he signed a book presented to him by plaintiff, with reference to taking in this work, that he might discontinue so doing whenever he thought fit, and also, that he was to take only one part monthly; but finding that Oldershaw sometimes brought two parts, for which he insisted upon payment, he wished to decline the affair altogether, as he could not afford to spare so much money. But then the plaintiff showed, by his signature to his Subscribers' Book, that he had agreed to take in the Bible in the monthly parts—"monthly, or as often as published." The learned Judge said, persons should be careful what they put their signatures to, and that defendant must pay. Verdict for plaintiff.

Birmingham Journal, May 6th, 1854.

MS 162/12/11

Printed sheet, headed 'Important Decisions'; 1851-1854

Buyer beware! This printed sheet gives information about two cases in Nottingham and Birmingham where defendants were judged to be obliged to continue purchasing a series publications to which they had subscribed. At least one of the booksellers involved, Blackie & Sons, primarily sold serial publications to subscribers, rather than individual books, which is why they were motivated to take legal action. This clipping was found in the papers of the Derry family, who were Nottingham-based printers and bookbinders.

| | s. | d. |
|---|----|----|
| Napoleon Buonaparte, History of. Illustrated by G. Cruikshank | 6 | 0 |
| Normandy, Pictureque, by H. Blackburn | 16 | 0 |
| North Coast, by Robert Buchanan | 21 | 0 |
| Orval; or, the Fool of His Time, by Robert Lytton | 9 | 0 |
| Other People's Windows, by Hain Friiwell | 6 | 0 |
| Our Four Footed Friends, by Mary Howitt | 5 | 0 |
| Patranas, by the Author of "Traditions of Tyrol" | 5 | 0 |
| Peasant to Prince, by M. A. Pictzner | 2 | 6 |
| Picture Teachings, by Jane Bryne | 5 | 0 |
| Poems and Pictures | 21 | 0 |
| Rhyme and Reason, by H. W. Dulchen | | |
| Robinson Crusoe. <i>New Edition</i> | 5 | 0 |
| Robinson Fane, by C. and M. Lee | 3 | 6 |
| Roses, A Book about, by S. Reynolds Hole | 3 | 6 |
| Sovereigns, Memoirs of Celebrated Female, by Mrs. Jamefon .. | 5 | 0 |
| Tales upon Texts, by Rev. C. H. Adams | 5 | 0 |
| Telescope, The, by the Hon. Mrs. Ward | 3 | 6 |
| Tom Dunstone's Troubles, by Mrs. Eiloart | 3 | 6 |
| Toasting Fork, The Enchanted | 5 | 0 |
| Tennyson's New Poem—"The Holy Grail." A Sequel to the Idylls of the King. <i>Just Ready</i> | 7 | 0 |
| Universe, The, by F. A. Pouchet, M.D. | 31 | 6 |
| Village Idol, The, by Mrs. Henry Marcharnis | 3 | 6 |
| Water Babies, The, by C. Kingley. <i>New Edition</i> | 6 | 0 |
| Women, Characteristics of, by Mrs. Jamefon | 5 | 0 |
| Wonders, World of | 10 | 6 |
| Wordsworth's Poems | 21 | 0 |
| Young Painters and Young Musicians. A Book for Children. 1 Vol. | 5 | 0 |

December, 1869.

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AND TO
THE IMPERIAL COURTS
OF
AUSTRIA and RUSSIA.

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| " Extra Broad | " | 6 6 |
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BOOTH, 307, REGENT STREET. W.

Printed circular of Booth, bookseller, bookbinder, publisher and stationer; December 1869

Books were popular gifts for Christmas and New Year, and booksellers would ensure their subscribers received a catalogue of books available. The books listed alphabetically here are a mixture of factual, fiction, adults and children's. In contrast to today's book promotions, there are scarcely any details about what a book may be about or references to similar works that may assist the potential purchaser. There are several books relating to Nottingham: Kingston's boy's adventure book about John Dean, and a children's book by local author Mary Howitt.

Booth also printed a variety of stationery, and the different fonts on the front are designed to show the range offered.

Ref: Pw K 679