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THE REGULATION OF THE BOOKTRADE IN NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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UNTIL WELL after the middle of the nineteenth century specialization in the provincial booktrade was uncommon. Most printers engaged in retail activities as well. Bookbinders were always, to a limited degree, booksellers. Persons engaged in the booktrade, then as now, tended to diversify as a means of self-defence in an unbookishminded community. In villages around Newcastle in the early part of the century such lugubrious combinations as Printer and Publican, Bookseller and Blacksmith were not uncommon. Even in the cities many traded in goods totally outside the booktrade. In Sunderland, in the 1830s, a certain William George Jackson traded as "Engraver, Lithographer, Beer Trader and Patent Manure Agent". In Durham at the same time William Ainsley, a Printer, Stationer, Bookseller, and Bookbinder was a successful mustard manufacturer, his product advertised regularly under the slogan "Observe the Bookseller's shop!" Even in Newcastle strictly keeping to a single trade was most unusual. There was no neat line between the production of books or their wholesale and retail distribution. The main subject of this paper is how people in the booktrade in Newcastle attempted to regulate competition in their own self-interest. The diversity of the trade made it difficult for any group to achieve a monopoly position, and organizations tended to be either ineffective or short-lived. The early nineteenth century is peculiarly rich in records that demonstrate this.

In Newcastle in 1801 there were some 26 firms which could roughly be categorized as being within the booktrade; by 1821 this number had risen to about 37. The "booktrade" is a convenient term to summarize three groups of trades. The first group was engaged in the actual production of printing material—letterpress printers and engravers—both in wood and metal (as was Bewick). The second group was employed in the retail activities of booksellers, stationers, publishers, map-, print- and music-sellers, newsagents, and the provision, in a pre-Public-Library age, of circulating libraries. Lastly, there were bookbinders.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the booktrade in Newcastle was at its peak. All statutes prohibiting printing in the provinces had long been repealed or disregarded. Population, industry and literacy were increasing at a great rate. There was a demand for print—for advertising, for commerce, for politics, for mass reading, and for reading and collecting by the small, but relatively rich, educated minority.

London was too far away from the North-East to satisfy this demand for print except with regard to the unimportant, economically speaking, production of books proper. It was not until the coming of the railways that London dominated the Newcastle booktrade, not only because of better and faster distribution of London produce, but also and more importantly because of the flow of its capital. In the first twenty years of the century, however, not a single booktrade firm in Newcastle was controlled from London and, while local firms found it profitable to pirate London-owned copyrights, no London publisher was yet forced by cost pressures in the capital to employ Newcastle printers. Later on in the century the Newcastle trade was almost to lose its identity because of these economic pressures.

SOURCES

It is due to two of the booksellers in business in Newcastle in the first two decades of this century that this paper can be written. But for their collecting activities a great deal of what is known about the history of the North-East around 1800 would now be forgotten, including the history of the booktrade. John and Thomas Bell were the sons of an Alston land-surveyor who was apprenticed in Newcastle about 1780. John Bell senior became a bookseller in addition to his land-surveying activities in January 1794. His two sons were also land-surveyors and booksellers at different times in their careers. Surveying, of course, involved a great deal of travelling and the two made use of their dual careers to collect printed and manuscript material relating to Northumberland and Durham.

Thomas Bell was by far the more successful of the two brothers, economically; he ended his career as Land-agent to the Duke of Northumberland. His collections were chiefly in the field of genealogy, topography and the history of particular estates. John Bell was more interested in his contemporary world. In 1836 he was visited by the well-known biographer, Thomas DIBDIN (1838), who described his visit as follows:

And here be it allowed me to make honourable mention of another Gateshead Genius, of a somewhat different complexion;—of one, who, pursuing an honourable profession (that of a surveyor) with activity and distinction, yet contrives to find time for the collection of some of the most singular and amusing tracts—in the character of ballads, broadsides, fly-tails, stitched, and bound, treatises—especially in illustration of Gateshead and Newcastle. Whatever happens of notoriety sufficient to furnish a printed record, is sure to have a place in the second-story of Mr. John Bell's house, at Gateshead! Concerts, plays, ridottos, masquerades, jack-o'-th'-greens; Maid Marians, wrestling, bull-fighting; hanging, drowning, stabbing, shooting;—every feature attending the congregation and legislation of human beings—is sure to be reflected upon the book-shelves of Mr. Bell. His "last dying speeches and confessions" would have made the late Tom Warton, or John Brand, half crazed. He showed me one of these, which I may not easily forget. It was a short life of the murderer, and one leaf consisted of a piece of flesh after execution. Here was illustration with a vengeance! Seeing me turn deadly pale, Mr. Bell was so kind

as to call my attention to more diverting objects; and almost loaded me with a few "right merrie conceits", in verse and in prose, which I carried away, in more than ordinary triumph, for home-importation. Unimportant as such acquisitions may at first sight appear, yet many of them are essential to the laborious topographer; and Mr. Bell is yet the historian of the "Lower Empire" of the North.

John Bell's collection ranged from the coal trade (50 folio volumes, the most important early nineteenth-century source) to ballooning, from railways to race-meeting programmes. He made an effort to obtain, and then filed appropriately, broadsheets being produced around the town over a period of 40 years. The two brothers must have had arrangements with printers to send them material of interest. Both formed collections on the history of the booktrade—John Bell's, in two folio volumes, is now in Newcastle Public Library. Thomas Bell's, in five octavo volumes, was previously at Capheaton Hall, but is now, owing to the generosity of Messrs. Hindson Print Group Ltd., in the University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne. They comprise press cuttings, broadsheets and manuscript notes concentrating on the period to 1840. The two collections are unparalleled anywhere else in Britain. It is from them that most of the information on which this paper is based was derived.

THE NEWCASTLE STATIONERS' COMPANY

At the time with which this paper is concerned, and for many years before, Newcastle had had a Stationers' Company. The last of the fraternities to be incorporated in Newcastle was the Scriveners' Company (13 September 1675). The penultimate incorporation was the Stationers—or, to give the Company its full title, Upholsterers, Tinplate-Workers and Stationers—on the 22 July 1675. The Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriff incorporated six upholsterers, three tinplate-workers and two stationers. These two were Thomas Clarke (or Clerke) and Michael Durram (or Durham). It is most unlikely that any of the incorporated companies of Newcastle were effectively regulating their trades by the third quarter of the seventeenth century. We shall adduce evidence to support this view.

On 1 November 1816 the Company authorized Edward HUMBLE (1817), one of its stationer members to publish its charter and rules. At the end of his publication he included a list of all the Company's members from 1675 to 1816. In 1816 there were five stationers in membership, and over these years only twenty-four stationers had been admitted out of a total of ninety-five. Freedom of the Company was gained by presentation, principally in its early days, by servitude (i.e. apprenticeship) or by patrimony.

Perhaps, while the majority of admissions was by servitude, the Company may have exercised some slight control over the trade. Under section 31 of Elizabeth's statute relating to artificers, labourers, servants of husbandry, and apprentices it was

not lawful for anyone to set up in business in any craft, to which he had not been apprenticed for at least seven years. Throughout the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century there are records of prosecutions for offences against this section. The section, against the wishes of the journeymen concerned, who felt that they were being deprived of what they had earned, was repealed in 1814. Nevertheless, as we shall show, a majority of the master stationers were not members of the Company. (Incidentally we must remind ourselves that the term stationer altered in meaning over these two-and-a-half centuries, but we have no other means of separating the trade.)

Table 1 shows the admissions to the Company up to 1816. As may be expected, since the 1814 repeal occurred only right at the end of the period covered, this table shows that a substantial proportion of those being admitted to the company had been apprenticed to one of its trades. At the same time the number of those being admitted by patrimony becomes important after about 1770, and by then the company must have taken on many of the characteristics of the freemen's companies as they now exist. On the other hand, three of four stationers admitted by patrimony after 1784—William and Emerson Charnley, and Thomas Brown jr.—will be found in HUNT's (1975) list as practising stationers, booksellers and printers.

TABLE 1

ADMISSIONS TO THE COMPANY OF UPHOLSTERERS
TINPLATE-WORKERS AND STATIONERS

Decade				Stationers only		
	Present.	Total Serv.	Patrim.	Present.	Serv.	Patrim.
1675-84	13	2		4		
1685-94		8			1	
1695-1704		5	2			
1705-14		8			1	
1715-24	1	6				
1725-34	1	5		1		
1735-44	1*	4	1		1	
1745-54		3	2		2	
1755-64		3			1	
1765-74		4	1		3	
1775-84		3	3			
1785-94		1	1		1	1
1795-1804		5	2			2
1805-16	4	4	2	3	2	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	20	61	14	8	12	4

* The Mayor

The same sort of exercise can be carried out on the geographical index to Christopher Hunt's dictionary. Here the three classes of entry are (1) those who, with whatever other trades they practise, are described as stationers (with its changing meaning), (2) printers, and (3) the totality of printers, engravers, booksellers, stationers, publishers, mapsellers, printsellers, musicsellers, bookbinders, newsagents, and owners of circulating libraries. The index gives the range of dates known for each person, and these are listed in *Table 2* by their earliest date. The same conclusion must be drawn from this table as from *Table 1*, namely that after 1770 those describing themselves as stationers were predominantly not members of the Stationer's Company.

TABLE 2

ENTRIES IN HUNT'S DICTIONARY, 1626-1816

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Printers*</i>	<i>Stationers*</i>	<i>Stationers not in Humble's list</i>
before 1675	6	3	2	(2)
1675-84	5		4	
1685-94	1		1	
1695-1704	2			
1705-14	2	1	1	
1715-24	5	2	2	1
1725-34	2		1	1
1735-44	12	8	4	3
1745-54	6	1	4	1
1755-64	6	3		‡
1765-74	12	2	8†	6§
1775-84	22	11	8	7
1785-94	15	5	9	9
1795-1804	19	9	5	5
1805-16	36	10	16	15¶
	151	55	65	48

* These categories may overlap, since a person may be both a stationer and a printer.

† Two are evidenced only from Humble's list. Presumably they were journeymen (admitted by servitude) and not masters, with whom exclusively Hunt's dictionary is concerned.

‡ Humble's list includes one person (T. Saint) described as a printer and bookseller.

§ Humble's list includes one person (T. Brown) described as a bookbinder.

|| Humble's list includes one person (J. Rayson) who does not appear in Hunt's dictionary.

¶ Humble's list includes one person (G. Willis) who does not appear in Hunt's list, another (F. Humble) who was a printer and publisher in Durham, and a third (W. Garret) who did not start in business on his own until 1839.

Conclusion

In the early days of the Company there were very few stationers, but they seem all to have been members of the Company. It does seem clear, however, that from the second quarter of the eighteenth century the Company quite rapidly lost whatever control it may have had over the trade, although its stationer members were clearly still taking apprentices to the trade. It is clear that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the period covered by this paper begins, the Stationers' Company must have had no noticeable effect on the book trade.

The Stationers' Company failed chiefly, perhaps, because of the *ad-hoc* nature of its constitution, without provision for membership of printers of whom there happened to be none in Newcastle at the time of its foundation. The medieval concept of guild monopolies of trade was breaking down everywhere in England by the end of the seventeenth century. Legally regulated monopolies were good for the tradesmen who were in them but, at a time of rapid economic and population growth, there were too many outsiders who wished to be in for the system to function. The very growth of the booktrade and its increasing complexity, however, made some trade association desirable by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The advantages of price-fixing, or, more elegantly phrased, retail-price maintenance, to the booktrade were as obvious and yet as debatable at that time as today. In London there was open warfare between the more conservative booksellers organized within the Stationers' Company and an independent band of "Associated Booksellers" who attempted to undersell their longer-established competitors. James Lackington was the most famous of these rebels, and in 1803 he claimed to be selling more than 100 000 volumes per year at cut-price rates. The established booksellers combined against those offering cut prices by attempting to cut off supplies from publishers and wholesalers, and by the 1820s they had largely succeeded in crushing their discount rivals (PLANT, 1939).

DISCOUNTING IN NEWCASTLE

In Newcastle, too, the increasing number of booksellers was leading to discounting and price reductions. The leading *enfant terrible* of Newcastle was John Mitchell, who was born in Ayr and served his apprenticeship with Wilson, the Kilmarnock printer of Robert Burns. He commenced his own business as a printer and bookseller in Carlisle in 1795 but in 1799 he moved to Newcastle. He had contacts with the discounting booksellers and stationers of London, and apparently got much of his stock from them. A typical advertisement of his read that he sold books "for ready money only. It is his determination to sell every article from 10 to 20% below regular prices". He was a determined radical and founded the radical newspaper

The Tyne Mercury. He was also a pamphleteer who delighted in written warfare with his political enemies. In 1818 a nicely-worded pamphlet attack on him was entitled *Grim typo, the Tyne demon. Dedicated (without permission) to the Editor of the Tyne Mercury*.

It was in response to the activities of Mitchell that, in 1701, a group of Newcastle booksellers and printers grouped themselves together as a "Booksellers Association"—they also called themselves "a club" and "a society" at various times in their twenty years of existence as an organization.

Apart from Mitchell and other discounting booksellers the Newcastle booktrade had problems not shared so acutely by centres nearer London, Oxford and Cambridge. A monopoly that was still in existence was the right of the King's printer and of the University Presses to print Bibles and Testaments, the constant best-sellers of the booktrade. They were marketed in a vast range of formats to suit particular needs—from formal use from the pulpit in Church to private devotion. This monopoly of printing was confined to England, and in the eighteenth century it was common practice for Scottish-printed Bibles to be sold in England. In 1802 Lord Chancellor Eldon granted to the Universities a prohibition forbidding a bookseller to sell Scottish Bibles in England. Newcastle, so much closer to Edinburgh and Glasgow than to Oxford and Cambridge, felt particularly aggrieved by this decision.

THE BOOKSELLERS' ASSOCIATION

In his notes John Bell described the foundation of the Booksellers' Association—"Eight stationers . . . formed themselves into a club or society, for the purposes of regulating the prices of stationery, particularly of paper, which had at that time greatly risen in price, and for keeping up a friendly intercourse with each other. Mrs. Charnley (the elder) was founder of the Society and fixed the rules, which were, that the members should meet at the house of Mr. Henry Sunderland, the Crown and Thistle Inn, in the Groat Market on the first Tuesday in every month, when they should sup on toasted cheese and have each a glass of spirit or negus, economy being the order of the day; that there should be fines for non-attendance, increasing with the length of time the member absented himself; the fines to be spent on the anniversary of their establishment when the members were to dine together under an increased fine; that the members should mutually bind themselves not to sell under the prices agreed upon at any meeting; a secretary to be appointed to summon members on special, monthly or anniversary meetings; . . . Special meetings were called on any particular occasion at the request of two or three members, and double fines were enforced for absence at such meetings. They afterwards removed their meetings to the Golden Lion Inn in the Bigg Market kept by Mrs. Jane Elliott, where

they continued for several years but generally partaking of an elegant supper, and the evening expenses usually amount to 5 or 6 shillings."

Mrs. Charnley was the wife of the old and declining William Charnley, who had been apprenticed as long before as 1742, owning his own business since 1755. He died in 1803, but his wife had long been the mainspring of the business. After his death she took into partnership their son Emerson Charnley, whom Dibdin in the eighteen thirties called "the veteran Emperor of Northumbrian booksellers".

Another formidable lady member was Mrs. Sarah Hodgson, the daughter of Thomas Slack, one of the most important Newcastle printers and booksellers of the mid-eighteenth century, and the widow of Solomon Hodgson. Sarah was a very capable businesswoman and with the *Newcastle Chronicle* as a foundation, the firm was the most important and productive Newcastle printer of the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The two ladies were normally represented by sons at the somewhat vinous meetings.

Another member was David Akenhead, representing a family that had been printers and booksellers in Newcastle since before 1760. Edward Humble, John Bell, Edward Miller, Robert Sands were the other, less important but still significant, founders of the association. Together they represented the overwhelming number of retail outlets, in terms of items sold, of books and stationery in Newcastle. The grouping was bound to have considerable influence on London suppliers, who would be unwilling to anger such a powerful cartel by supplying booksellers in opposition to it.

Booksellers

Their overwhelming concern was with the most profitable lines of trade—stationery, Bibles, almanacks and school textbooks. In the minute book of the association covering its twenty years of existence there is not a single reference to a book outside these categories. John Marshall, the most important Gateshead bookseller who became a member of the association in 1810 after he opened a branch in Newcastle itself, wrote a letter which has survived and which indicates nicely the preoccupations of the members—

There is nothing perhaps of more importance for your consideration than the uniformity of prices of what is properly called stationery, amongst which school books bear an important rank. I have found that for some time past we have been selling Hutton's Arithmetic at two prices, viz. 2/6 and 3s. In different shops in the town they are sold at different prices. I have for some time wished this article to be settled, and have been prevented only from not being able to attend the meeting.

Yours Respectfully, John Marshall.

The commodity which caused most concern was paper itself, the price of which was going up rapidly in the early 1800s. About once a year a comprehensive

schedule of different types of paper was drawn up, split up by size and quality, with the appropriate wholesale and recommended retail price. In the minute book would follow a list of the best-selling school and children's books. These included: William Rusher's *Reading Made Most Easy: consisting, of a variety of useful lessons, proceeding from the alphabet, to words of two letters only; and from thence to words of three, four, five letters etc., etc.; so disposed, as to draw on learners with the greatest ease and pleasure; both to themselves and teachers*. This work ran through 405 authorized editions between 1783 and 1840, together with innumerable piracies. A similar standard text was William Markham's *Introduction to Spelling and Reading English*. Battledores retailed at a penny each throughout the period, while chapbook editions of Tom Thumb—*The Famous History of Tom Thumb—Wherein is declared, his marvellous acts of manhood. Full of wonder and merriment*—cost either 2d or 3d.

The adult counterparts of these childish bestsellers were the almanacks, general, astrological, legal, clerical etc. These ranged from single sheets to pin on the wall to elegantly bound memorandum books. The appropriate almanacks were purchased by members of every social class.

Other goods whose prices were controlled were slates—graded by size—and ink. There were also standard surcharges on London "Magazines and Reviews" to cover the cost of "Coach carriage". A 6d London periodical part was sold for 7d in Newcastle, while any part costing more than 2/- was surcharged by 3d.

The lists as they appear in the minute book normally have the annotation that the secretary was instructed to circulate copies so that each member may "be in possession of a completed list . . . so that he could set his prices accordingly". It must have been a fairly effective way of price-fixing for the best-selling items. When this failed members were quite prepared to keep a watching brief on each other. At its meeting on 2 February 1807 "Mr. Humble produced half a sheet of paper taken out of a copy book which was purchased of Messrs. Akenhead for 5d and which contained half a sheet more than was agreed by the trade to sell at 6d"!

The Lord Chancellor's ruling, referred to earlier, confirming the monopoly of Bible printing in England to the University Presses and the King's Printer, caused Newcastle traders much concern. In March 1802 all the members signed a letter to the agent of the Edinburgh printer with the monopoly of Bible printing in Scotland requesting "to know how far you will guarantee us in the sale from any action that may be brought against us by either of the English Universities or their Agent. We trust, therefore, you will take this affair into consideration and return us an answer as soon as convenient, as we dare not venture to give you any order till we hear from you." In a subsequent letter sent in April 1802 they spelled out the guarantee they wanted—

that in case any action should be brought against any of us for selling in England the books they print, that they will engage to defend us at their expense in such action, and be responsible to us for any mulct or fine that may be incurred by continuing to dispose of them; which we think they may safely do, as we have all been accustomed to sell the books printed by His Majesty's Printers for Scotland ever since we began business, without ever being called in question for doing it.

The agent apparently refused to guarantee indemnity but did promise to take back any books that Newcastle booksellers had in stock should the English Universities successfully stop the sale of Scots Bibles in Newcastle.

The matter was referred to occasionally over the next ten years, but apparently no action was taken until 1816 when a special meeting was called in November to hear that "a process had been instituted against Mr. Akenhead for selling Edinburgh Bibles and Testaments". A letter was written to Edinburgh asking for advice. The unhelpful reply was that—

it is not in my power to give any advice which may be satisfactory on the subject you write about. It is quite true I agreed to take back any of our books you might have on hand when you should find it not convenient to dispose of them, provided they were returned in quires as you received them, but it never was my intention to take them back when bound, as we have no way of disposing of them in that state.

The result of this was apparently that Edinburgh-printed Bibles were no longer brought across the border for sale in Newcastle, as they never again featured in the lists of prices to be controlled.

Another matter of common concern to the booksellers was the operation of the Stamp Act as it affected the sale of almanacks. A statute of 1711 had required sheet almanacks to bear a revenue stamp for 1d. In 1781 the duty was 4d; in 1811 it was a full shilling. This was often considerably greater than the cost of production, and caused the selling price of almanacks to be much higher than it otherwise needed to be. There was thus a considerable market in illegal, unstamped almanacks, often imported from Ireland to which the Stamp Acts did not apply. The established booksellers who were members of the Association could not offer illegal almanacks for sale as prosecution would have followed easily and, for them, disastrously.

Smaller booksellers and travelling chapmen had no such inhibitions. The Association here, contrary to its attitude to Edinburgh Bibles, was full of enthusiasm for enforcing the law in Newcastle. In November 1804 the Secretary sent a letter to the Stationers' Company in London regretting "the loss the revenue sustains by the greatly increased sale of Belfast and other unstamped Almanacks in this town and neighbourhood. Resolved unanimously—that they would most readily step forward to second the efforts of the Revenue Department in suppressing all such illegal publications, and which most probably will be further increased by the late advance of duty". The Company of Stationers, whose members were suffering similarly in London, replied in sympathetic terms, but offered no concrete suggestions. In 1808 the Newcastle Association again regretted the sale of illegal almanacks "finding that it not only injures the revenue, but also the sale of legal almanacks". They subsequently sent a delegation to the Mayor of Newcastle requesting prosecution of the sellers of unstamped almanacks. The Mayor, however, refused to accept the suggestion that the signature of all local Magistrates should appear on a "bill to be printed and posted in the town and neighbourhood, at the expense of the trade, with a view to putting a stop to the sale of unstamped almanacks ... and to

authorise the Magistrate to offer a reward of £5 ... to be paid to any person who shall be the means of convicting any two offenders". The Mayor was apparently unwilling to encourage informers on this scale in what at that time was merely a commercial rather than a political problem. By the 1820s the application of the Stamp Act to periodicals had become a rallying cry for radical reformers seeking to end this "tax on knowledge".

In attempting to secure the effective operation of the Stamp Acts the booksellers' association was trying to defend its own local trading position. When it came into conflict with another local monopoly, the bookbinders' association, the booksellers were themselves anxious to break this by introducing the work of London binders. We shall return to this shortly.

A great deal of the Association's minute book is taken up, not with discussing matters of moment, but with recording elaborate procedural points, details of fines for non-attendance, details of wages, the menus of suppers served and complaints about their cost. Light is thrown on the standard procedure at meetings by this extract recording a meeting in November 1813—"Mr. Bell Jnr., having requested this special meeting to be called for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of meeting monthly and not having attended, it was unanimously resolved 'that Mr. Bell's conduct is highly reprehensible for neither attending or sending an apology and putting the members present to the expense of 5 shillings each'". To this Thomas Bell, into whose hands the minute book passed after the dissolution of the Association, has annotated "this must have been resolved when the members present had fully satisfied themselves with punch!! Thomas Bell was present at the meeting and did not leave it until after 10 o'clock. At that hour no such resolution had been passed". At a meeting held in September 1816 only three members turned up, and the Secretary noted "at this meeting a sumptuous supper was partaken of by the above three gentlemen and the resolution entered into that the supper bill should be paid by the absentees". The meetings were obviously pleasant social occasions.

The End of the Booksellers' Association

In April 1817 there is the first mention of the issue which was subsequently going to bring about the demise of the Association. The committee of the Literary and Philosophical Society had written to all Newcastle booksellers asking for more favourable discounts for books supplied to the Society's library. The Association in considering this letter resolved "that no greater reduction than 5% on the amount of the general order of the Society would be allowed". Thomas Bell described what happened next—

In 1817 some difference arose amongst the members in consequence of the conduct of Emerson Charnley as to the proposition made from the Literary Society; and its being notorious that two members of the trade, who were members of the Society and generally advocates for high prices being charged, paid little or no attention themselves, to what

they wished others to be bound to and adhere to. The meetings from this time were thinly attended. And the monthly meetings after the anniversary held on the 23rd March, 1818, were wholly given up. It was now agreed that special meetings should be held (only) on any material change in the price of stationery, and one was consequently held on the 19 October, 1819, and another on the 15th May, 1821, when the meetings were wholly discontinued. Annual Meetings were held in 1819, 1820, 1821 and 1822, but the excess that was generally indulged in, and its being notorious that they did not increase the "friendly"! feeling that now existed amongst the trade, these were also given up, and in a few short months each was striving to undersell the other.

As a postscript it may be noted that in 1829 when the Mechanics Institute applied for tenders to supply new books and periodicals they received five tenders. George Arnett and James Finlay each offered a 10% discount. Eneas MacKenzie offered 12½%, and Fenwick Loraine and Emerson Charnley each offered 15%. Other booksellers refused to tender. Emerson Charnley was given the contract.

BOOKBINDERS

Bookbinders were somewhat apart from both printers and booksellers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century publishers' casing, a machine-based process which could be closely linked to the printing operation, had not yet developed. Every book had to be "bound" in the traditional sense. Binding could range from "full morocco" to "common sheep", from gold tooling applied by hand, with an appropriate crest for a nobleman's library, to no lettering whatsoever to save money. Binding could be commissioned by the customer or carried out by the bookseller prior to sale. Whatever style or cost was involved the work had to be done by a bookbinder, that is to say a man with skill and training in this specialist, skilled craft.

At the end of the eighteenth century there were three classes of tradesmen around Newcastle who called themselves bookbinders. Firstly, there were those who genuinely bound books themselves, having served apprenticeships to the trade. These were comparatively rare. The second category of "bookbinder" was more common. A shop advertised bookbinding, but in fact sent all the binding work to a specialist around the corner. The third category was more usual outside Newcastle. A general printer and bookseller in, say, Morpeth would employ a bookbinding journeyman for a few weeks or months during each year. Every shop that sold books had to have some contact with a bookbinder. Most country shops received many of their more popular theological and educational books not as sheets, but already bound in the cheapest of sheep bindings; but they all depended heavily on the sale of "periodicals", i.e. part publications. Customers eventually wanted these bound up. The peripatetic bookbinding journeymen was a usual feature of the early nineteenth-century booktrade. Among the papers of the Society of London Bookbinders is an

1832 map of England marked to show normal routes for bookbinders to follow when travelling from one provincial bookseller to another.

Newcastle was a large enough city and sufficiently important as a book-producing centre to have its own resident bookbinders. In 1813 there were nine firms which carried out binding. Four of these firms did nothing but bind books; the other five were large booksellers with bookbinding departments. As with bookselling, the advantages of some price-fixing arrangements among the different firms were obvious. Comparable trades, for example builders and carpenters, controlled prices within particular centres by meeting regularly and publishing lists of prices which members were to follow. In London, at least since the beginning of the century, the bookbinders had published annually a "price book"—the 1813 edition was fully entitled *The Bookbinders' Price Book, calculated for the different-modes of binding, as agreed upon at a general meeting of the trade in December 1812, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand. To commence January 1st, 1813.* This was a substantial pamphlet of over 50 pages. The Newcastle bookbinders, following the London example, issued a less ambitious price list in a single large broadsheet. Their co-operation was apparently sporadic, since there is no evidence that more than two were ever issued, in 1806 and in 1813. No example of the 1806 production has survived, but it was debated extensively by the members of the Booksellers' Association. A single copy of the 1813 list has survived in the Thomas Bell collection.

It is headed *List of prices agreed on by the bookbinders of Newcastle, August 1813.* It is divided into two large sections, the top half relating to printed books, the bottom half to account books, obviously a very profitable aspect of the bookbinding trade. The list is divided into a number of columns. In the first column appears a list of "sizes of books"; in the second column, "names of books as precedents for charges"; the remaining sixteen columns are lists of the different binding styles and leathers available. As an example—a crown folio book is Horsley's *Britannia Romana*. To have this large book bound in "morocco, elegant (gilt) edges" would cost £1.18sh. With less tooling the cost would go down to £1.12sh.6d. Fully tooled calf would be £1. Calf just lettered—9/6d. Sheep skin was a mere 7/6d, while the cheapest of all "common boards" was just 2/10d. It cost 11/6d to bind three years of the *Newcastle Courant* in half-bound calf. The *Methodist Magazine* in half calf was 1/9d. The spelling books we saw earlier cost 4d to bind in "common sheep".

We have no record of the actual meetings of the booksellers. What does survive is the reaction of the booksellers to the two pricelists. In July 1806 a special meeting was held "to take into consideration the great advance of prices charged by the binders". The meeting resolved "that in several instances their charges are unreasonable". Messrs. Charnley and Akenhead were asked to "examine the said prices and that they do procure the latest list of the London binders' prices, and after comparing them to report the same to the trade". A letter to be sent to each bookbinder who had signed the list—

Sir,

Mr. Charnley having laid before a meeting of the trade, the advanced prices of binding,

it was generally considered that the charges are in many instances unreasonable and that it is necessary that a reduction be made to place the trade in at least as good a situation as London, Edinbro' and York. Resolved, therefore, that the prices be taken into consideration by the trade, and that they trust the binders will so far accede in their sentiments, as to do away the apparent necessity of ordering their books in future *bound* from the respective publishers—signed on behalf of the meeting James Finlay, Secretary.

At a subsequent meeting in August 1806 the bookbinders submitted revised prices which the booksellers agreed to.

The 1813 pricelist was considered by the booksellers at a meeting in May 1814 and again "the binders' prices . . . many of them thought very extravagant". A letter was again sent to the bookbinders who, however, declined to alter their prices, and in July 1814 "Mr. Charnley mentioned at this meeting that he had looked over the prices of the finer work in the bookbinding business, and said that as no redress was to be had in the great advance of that branch of work he would advance the sale of London binding".

Fortunately, the 1813 London price book has survived, so that a direct comparison with the Newcastle prices is possible. This comparison shows that there was very little justification for the grumbles of the booksellers. The Newcastle prices were obviously based on the London ones, most being precisely the same. The newspaper and periodical binding offered in Newcastle was decidedly cheaper than in London, while the sheepskin binding offered for school books was again markedly cheaper than in London.

The nice irony of this protest was that four of the nine signatories to the bookbinders' price list were also members of the Booksellers' Association—Sarah Hodgson, George Angus, Richard Miller and James Finlay (who had moved into bookbinding since 1806 when he had been Secretary of the Bookseller's Association and had signed the letter of protest to the bookbinders concerning their prices at that time). Of the other five, only one, Kenneth Anderson, was not a specialist bookbinder. He, in fact, was one of the new class of discounting booksellers which the Association had been founded to counter. But the Association's members were prepared to associate with him in his bookbinding capacity when it was in their interest to do so!

Of the four specialist bookbinders three of them, Thomas Brown, John Oviston and Cuthbert Handyside, were apparently very small businessmen. The other, William Lubbock, was more interesting, because he was obviously a fairly large operator. When he commenced business in 1808 he wrote letters to prospective patrons saying that he had "engaged an excellent forwarder, also a boy who had been two years at the trade as such". He had also "upwards of £50 in brass tools only, already ordered". In about 1820 he had as many as eleven employees, and at his sale after bankruptcy two years later his equipment included four standing presses, seven lying presses, six sewing benches and several hundred tools. Some of these tools are still in use today in the Bindery of the University Library in Newcastle upon Tyne. He claimed in his frequent press advertisements to have "invented an entire new style of binding, which for beauty and uniformity surpasses every mode of ornamental

finishing hitherto introduced". He must have overreached himself, since he became increasingly in debt and went bankrupt in 1822. John Bell noted on the cover of his folder containing references to Lubbock that "Mr. Thomas Bewick who knew men and things as well as any one used to say—Lubbock the bookbinder was made of tenter hooks, hogs lard and backie chews".

There is no evidence of any subsequent issue of bookbinders' price lists within Newcastle. The numbers of bookbinders increased considerably during the 1820s and 30s and presumably the rules of naked competition applied as with the book-sellers.

CONCLUSION

On 29 September 1476 Caxton was granted a lease of property within the precincts of Westminster Abbey to set up his press, and so introduced printing to England. A century later the London Stationers' Company was chartered by Mary, at least one object being the censorship of printed matter. A further century later Newcastle's stationers were incorporated "in restraint of trade".

It is worth remembering that, although he was, of course, printing for the privileged few, Caxton printed in the vernacular, and so prepared the way for a much wider market for books. This paper celebrates five centuries of printing in England, and it is, perhaps, happy, therefore, that this essay on the control of the booktrade in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, together with a glance at three centuries of the Newcastle Stationers' Company, demonstrates how difficult it proved to "regulate" the booktrade. Even a cursory perusal of Christopher Hunt's dictionary will show how vigorous was the booktrade in Newcastle from the beginning of the eighteenth century until the end of his period, and this despite the activities of those who would have controlled it.

SOURCES

Manuscript

Minute book of the Booksellers' Association of Newcastle upon Tyne (Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, deposited in the Northumberland County Record Office).

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Library, which also has an alphabetical interfiled collection of xerox copies from both collections.)

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