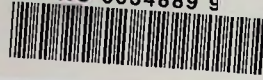


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**WOOD TYPE LETTERPRESS POSTERS
IN IRELAND 1820 - 1990**

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF
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Nostalgia is really a silly word - especially because those who will keep using it, think just by using the word everything has been said. The happiness about a circus, the surprise in discovering that black and white films are again being made, the amazement when the unrefined methods of burlesque return to a state theatre, the joy in watching an older dying art - this is sentimental and sensible at the same time since it creates an awareness of loss and makes people critical of the blessings of 'progress'.

from "Irish Country Posters" quoting
Benjamin Henrichs in DIE ZEIT, 36/1976 on the
Roncelli Circus

Introduction

In Ireland letterpress printing has remained a craft that has not been replaced by technology. In other countries this type of printing is no longer employed, and in Ireland it is now becoming a dying tradition.

In 1981 I started collecting posters from around Belfast, these were mostly to cover the bare walls of my flat. They were a mixture of screen print and woodtype letterpress. I realised that these were the only examples of woodtype I had seen, other than woodtypes in college. I was surprised that they were still being printed and became interested in how they had survived for so long.

In this thesis, I will explore the purposes and uses of woodtype in Ireland, from it being used originally in the 1820s for initials only, and then for headings, until it was used to dominate the whole poster. I hope to trace the history of commercial woodtypes in Ireland, from their beginning in 1828 to the present day.

In Ireland the amount of written material was very limited and there has not been anything written specifically on woodtype letterpress, other than the book - IRISH COUNTRY POSTERS by Gert Fleischmann. It seems that this area of printing has been neglected and that people are not aware of the uniqueness of this tradition of letterpress printing in this country.

I hope also to investigate how this type of printing survived for so long in Ireland, when it declined elsewhere. Although it is now threatened by the advances in technology and is vanishing quickly.

In the late nineteenth century, many printers changed over to

other forms of printing, in particular lithography. Lithography at first competed with letterpress printing but by the 1920's the woodtype era had come to an end. The technological advances made in the beginning of the twentieth century meant that the demand for woodtype and letterpress printing declined in other countries. Irish printers, however, could not afford to abandon woodtype printing as quickly - it had been too much of an investment for them.

In comparison to other countries like England and America, the advertising industry did not grow to the same extent and therefore, the smaller more traditional printer was able to survive.

In some other countries, in remote and provencial areas of Spain, France, Greece and Mexico, letterpress printing has also been able to survive for the same reasons. But today in Ireland it is declining rapidly. The few posters that are still printed using woodtype come from the old printers. The wooden typefaces they use are over one hundred years old and the printing presses on which they are printed are no longer manufactured. I hope to be able to discover the reasons why letterpress printing is declining and how it survived for so long. Also what changes have taken place to bring about its decline now? As there was not a lot of information readily available most of my research was through museums and libraries in both Belfast and Dublin. In the last ten years the Ulster Museum and Ulster Folk and Transport Museum have put together an extensive collection that includes theatre bills, public notices and political proclamations, all printed using woodtype. The National Library was also a good source of material pre-dating 1900.

However, the museums and libraries had few examples after 1950 and for these, I had to research individual posters which led me to the printers. I gained access to valuable material from a printer in Newry. I was also lucky to discover by accident Barrs printers in Letterkenny.

Letterpress is a form of relief printing. This means that the area to be printed is in relief to the non-printing area - in letterpress this a raised surface of type using wood or metal blocks. Fig. 1 - the printer has to assemble the type individually by hand. Each letter of every word has to be taken from the various type cases and arranged line by line on a metal tray. When completed, the tray is lifted onto the "bed" of the printing press and locked into place using pieces of metal, known as "furniture" or "keys" - Fig. 2.

The use of woodtype in printing and as a material for making type has been known for hundreds of years. But its function as display type did not originate until 1827. Before the nineteenth century only three different typefaces were available to the printer. The Industrial Revolution led to the development of advertising, which resulted in display woodtypes being manufactured.

Today woodtypes are the largest single body of unknown type faces remaining - they "represent a major element in the yet to be written history of display types". (11:p. 17)

It is strange to realise that no history has ever been documented of the posters printed using wood type. The many posters by printers and compositors are rarely mentioned. Instead the history of the poster is usually the history of the art or pictorial poster. If these posters are referred to, it is as "pure typographic posters".

Woodtypes main purpose was for advertising. It was designed to attract our attention, whether on a poster, political proclamation or newspaper heading. In order to be successful the poster had to be clear and effective.

For generations in Ireland, these posters have been produced by the printer and compositor without any help from a designer. The responsibility of the design and the supervision of the execution lie with the printer.

In this thesis, I hope to give an illustrated history of the development of these letterpress posters, within the following periods in 1825 - 1899, 1900 - 1949 and 1950 - 1990. For each group I will distinguish the qualities that the posters possess that enabled them to survive for so long.

Through my research I discovered certain characteristics that the Irish woodtype posters adhere to. They appeared obvious in the later posters printed in the 1950 - 1990 period, and seemed to be handed down from the printers before them. These "unwritten rules" include the preference for capitals, which makes the posters easier and quicker to read as the type appears more bolder and legible. The composition is usually centred and the text arranged - what, when, where. Also, the whole composition is usually exploited and filled with type. Certain devices were used such as using bolder typefaces so that the letters were enlarged and added emphasis. Later posters showed the mixing of a lot of different typefaces on the one poster. This was often used to distinguish between certain pieces of information and meant that no one piece of information would dominate the poster. There was also a preference for certain colours. These characteristics seem to govern the majority of the posters printed using letterpress, especially since 1900.

In order to talk about these posters, however, it is first necessary to discuss the developments of printing and the reasons why wooden types were manufactured and their characteristics and advantages. Also, how posters and advertising became of such importance in relation to woodtype will also be discussed.

** ***** **

1. Development of Printing

In discussing printing, one must be aware of the importance of movable type upon which printing is based. Movable type can be traced by four thousand years to Crete and printing to the seventh century in China. (Fig. 3) In the Western world, hand-setting with movable type was perfected in 1440 by a Goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg from Germany. By making a set of moulds from punches, he was able to produce large quantities of individual letters from each mould. Gutenberg revolutionised book production and his method remained unchanged for more than five centuries (Fig. 4).

From the time of the great Renaissance, books had been printed using fine roman typefaces. (Fig. 5) For other printing material the choice was limited, with only three different typefaces available (in only a few sizes) - a roman, italic and block letter (Fraktur). Even by the beginning of the nineteenth century few purposely designed typefaces existed. For poster work, printers had to use enlarged book typefaces which lacked visual impact (Fig. 6).

In the 1820s, however, all this changed due to the industrial revolution and typefounders began to develop their own first real display types from wood. Although carved letters from blocks of wood had appeared in Germany in the fifteenth century, Darius Wells, a New York printer was the first to produce woodtype commercially in 1827.

Wells used the end rather than the side grain of wood, in order to achieve greater detail and increase durability. The fine detail that could be cut into the end grain of hardwoods made a great proliferation of woodtype designs possible.

Wells' most important contribution though was to printing. He invented a compatible engraving machine that could mass produce woodtype in great quantity. This enabled him to be able to sell them to printers at a low cost.

The advantages of wood type over foundry metal were noted by Wells in 1828 :

These types are prepared with a machine, which gives them a perfectly even surface and renders their height exact and uniform while larger metal types are more or less concave on the faces, arising from the unequal cooling of the metal cast
....

Their plexity and loss arising from the breaking of metal types through the centre, as well as of the descending and kerned letters is completely obviated by my wood letter ... [2 : p.56]

After Wells' invention, the wooden poster types were manufactured on an industrial basis from 1818 onwards.

In 1834 the process was improved further by William Leavensworth, another New Yorker. He added a pantograph mechanism to the engraving machine which meant that from a standard pattern letter it was relatively simple to cut italic, outline, shaded, reversed, backslope, condensed, expanded and ornamental letters. This process of reproduction has remained the same until today. Leavensworth's advances in manufacturing woodtype formed a new era in job printing.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, publicity had become a necessity due to the Industrial Revolution. It had brought about the need for advertising which led to a rivalry between manufacturers, this in turn resulted in advertising becoming more specialised and the printing industry expanding and developing.

As the amount of printed advertising and promotional material grew the posters began to compete with each other for time and attention. It became essential that any printed material be

alluring and easier and faster to read, in order to make its message effective and understood.

The Industrial Revolution not only led to the expansion of advertising but to the development of typefaces (Fig. 7).

New typefaces needed to be developed as the earlier ones lacked visual impact and excitement. At first, the large wood letters were only used for initials and were not even used for whole words (let alone whole posters!) but the availability, lightness and good printing quality of wood made it the perfect choice for producing cheaply the large letters. Also, it was too impractical and expensive to ornament metal types for advertising; whereas with woodtypes, manufacturers had a freedom to make them as ornamented as required.

The development of wood typefaces in the early 1820's had an effect on the appearance of posters printed in Ireland. In order to be able to discuss this a short history in the development of typefaces is needed. Also, the characteristics of the different types make one aware of the reasons why certain typefaces were preferred.

DEVELOPMENT OF WOOD TYPE FACES

Fat faces, Romans, Antiques and Gothics developed from type faces designed in the early 1800s. The Fat Face was based on a Bodoni style typeface that had been designed by a London typefounder, Robert Thorne, in 1803. In 1815, Figgins designed the Egyptian typeface on which the Roman face was based and in 1816, Garnet developed a sans serif on which the Gothic was based.

The Fat Face was specifically designed for broadsheets and posters. It became the display typeface, as it appeared so effectively, especially in comparison to the smaller Roman type that it was usually printed alongside it.

The primary families of type were Roman, Antique, Gothic and Ornamentals.

A display Roman typeface (Fig. 8), needed to be able to withstand rough handling, be highly legible and heavy enough for display purposes. Fig. 9 shows an example of Roman, used for the title "MY NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE" and also, Roman Condensed for "MR LACY'S". Condensed Roman was popular throughout the 1840s but its popularity had declined by the 1860s due to its fragile appearance (Fig. 10).

The main derivatives of Roman were Aetna which fulfilled these demands better. The later Old Style, developed in the 1870s, improved this further. It was beautifully proportioned and became widely used for display purposes. Shaded, tooled and embellished, Romans were also very popular. The oblique was often added to give an illusion of dimension to some letters. This device was gradually exaggerated into a style that was adapted to a new Fat Face.

Antiques (which later became known as Egyptians) were slab serif letters (Fig. 11). They had block serifs instead of hairline serifs. In Fig. 9 the word "BENEFIT" was in Antique and in Fig. 14, Antique condensed was (Fig. 12) used for the title "GILDEROY" and Antique Extended (Fig. 13) for "CALEDONIAN". The principle faces derived from Antique were Clarendon. French Clarendon, Antique Tuscan and Grecian, Latin and French Antique.

One of the most important was Clarendon and extended version is seen in Fig. 15. This was a bold, masculine display face (similar to Antique Condensed). Fig. 16 shows Clarendon used for the words "SIR EDWARD". This demonstrates its main characteristic which was the bracketed serifs on the tails that can be seen especially in the letter "R". The word "CARSON" is in Clarendon Condensed.

French Clarendon (Fig. 17) differed from Clarendon in the treatment of the serif which was a heavy condensed, elongated

serif. In Fig. 18 the line "ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER" uses French Clarendon. Clarendons dominated a lot of printed material during the late nineteenth century period.

Antique Tuscan's design was a modification of the Antique - straight lines were substituted for curvy ones and the corners of serifs were extended into fine points. Antique and its derivatives made up a large portion of nineteenth century typographic styles. They also resulted in the innovation of the largest number of letter forms.

The sans serif typeface developed from the Egyptian design except it had no serifs. It was based on William Caslon IV's first sans serif, known as Gothic (Fig. 19).

Gothic in all styles was extremely popular with woodtype printers and constituted one of the major display types used in poster printing. It can be seen in Fig. 20 for the title "ROUSBY ROUSBY" and in Fig. 18 for the title "FARM OF LAND", also in Fig. 14 for the titles "WRECKER !!!" and "NACAIRE" and in Figure 9 for the title "WEATHERCOCK".

Gothics derivatives were Concave Tuscan, Teutonic and Bewel. The Concave Tuscan was designed in the 1850's. It had a very decorative appearance and also became widely used as a poster type. Later Gothics moved towards the Art Nouveau style of grotesque with curved lines being straightened and straight lines curved. An example of this type can be seen in Fig. 21, a theatre poster for the title "COLLEEN". Terminals (ends of letters) were extended above and below the lines or curly-curved. Crossbars were broken or moved diagonally instead of the conventional horizontal stresses. The important styles in Gothic were Gothic Full Face, condensed, italic and backslope.

Fig. 22 is a table showing the development of the various typefaces.

Ornamentals developed based on all the primary families and their derivatives. They were decorative and highly striking display faces. They were often experimental.

A separate body of typefaces, also made from wood, were used specifically for colour printing. These chromatic types enabled the printer to print two or more colours. They were printed from separate blocks and when being manufactured, one pantography setting had to be used to cut both blocks in order to achieve perfect registration. When they were printed respectively in both colours, they blended together to make whole letters - the word "COMEDY" in Fig. 23 is an example of chromated type. Sometimes they were designed to overlap, therefore creating a third colour.

Chromatic type made posters better advertisements, they were more colourful and enticing and therefore, more attractive to the customer. Posters using chromated type represent some of the finest work produced by woodtype.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOODTYPE

Woodtypes were able to hold the market during the nineteenth century due to certain characteristics that lead type did not possess. Unlike lead types the woodtype letterforms were bold and direct and they could be easily manipulated and distorted in a variety of ways. Various devices such as outline, shade, condensation and expansion as well as specific decorative motifs could be applied to new designs as seen in Fig. 24. Lead type was also too heavy and expensive to be used for advertising and was rarely cost large enough (over 8 lines).

The main purpose of woodtype was as display type for advertising. This was because it was bold, legible and attractive in appearance, as well as inventive. It increased legibility with its clearness and simplicity of form. The type styles were specifically designed to be legible - the shape of

the letters, their density, spacing and clarity gave an overall ease of comprehension.

Woodtype also made printing a lot cheaper. The advertisements using woodtypes were usually outdoor bills and posters for the circus, fair or theatre, also newspaper headings and political proclamations.

By the end of the nineteenth century, after three and a half centuries of plain and often dull roman letters, the printer now had a great variety of type material at his disposal.

The appearance of bills, posters, labels, letterheads and all kinds of ephemeral printing changed completely due to the availability of different types, their sizes weights and forms.

WOODTYPE POSTERS

As the scale of advertising grew, posters became widely used. Posters and periodicals were the response to society's need for quick information. The printer realised the importance of the need to communicate quickly and decisively. The poster became a major vehicle in informing and persuading the public.

Street literature had a powerful influence, ranging from the spread of literacy among the poor to the development of cheap news and widespread religious, social and political propaganda. Early posters (1820 - 1899) played a significant part in the cultural, social and political consciousness.

Woodtype posters were characteristic by their legibility, readability, order and emphasis. Their bold typography which had their trademark, made them appear simple and striking. The use of heavy sans serifs and elongated. Fat Faces distinguished early poster designs. The eye-catching statement was made in bold with the remainder of the message in smaller type. Words

of interest were emphasised with italic, bold or ornamented variations of a typeface in order to make them more attractive.

The vitality of the poster was also a major aspect, this was affected by the size, colour and shape of the poster and the position, letterspacing, wordspacing and character alignment of the type.

The advertisement, public notice or political proclamation needed its message to be expressed forcefully and persuasively to make the spectator a reader and the reader a buyer.

In the design, wood and lead type were often mixed freely. Decorative and plain swelled rules were used to provide both decorative and unifying qualities to these usually heavily weighted bills. Also, in the early posters, colour was used sparsely and ornamental dashes and heavy rules were added to give importance. Before the end of the century, colour began to creep into the posters.

Advertising moved job printing into the forefront as the largest category of printing.

2. (1825 - 1899)

In Ireland printing with woodtype began gradually, with printers mixing it on bills and broadsheets with lead types. Prior to 1828 woodtype was cut by hand and it functioned as headings on political proclamations. The amount of typefaces available to the Irish printer were very limited. However when woodtype began being manufactured commercially it was imported from the English companies Robert de Little of York and Stephenson Blake and Company of Sheffield. To my knowledge, there were never any typefounders manufacturing woodtype in Ireland.

The wooden types were first set and printed on the Columbian printing press. This was an iron hand-fed press, invented by George Clymers in Philadelphia in 1816. It took only one sheet of paper at a time and therefore, demanded a lot of manual effort by the printer. The Columbian Press is easily identifiable by the eagle on top (Fig. 25). Cope's Albion Press, invented in 1830, was also used during this period, as it was ideal for printing broadsheets, although it was slow (it could not print more than 100 sheets an hour). These were the principle presses on which woodtypes were printed before mechanical power.

The posters, bills and broadsheets printed during this period were mainly for the theatre, public notices or political proclamations. An example of these theatre posters is the series printed for the theatre, Belfast. "MR LACY'S BENEFIT" (Fig. 9) was printed in 1837. For each title that appeared, the typefaces or their weight and size were changed so that each act was emphasised. The titles were made to fill the lines; letterspacing was used if needed. The mixing of the different typefaces made these posters effective and legible. The variety of typefaces used within one poster achieved instead visual impact.

These posters were also a mixture of wood and lead type, the woodtype was further emphasised when placed with the lead type as it was small and light in weight. The wood letters were used primarily for the theatre name and the names of the different acts. All the titles appeared in capitals: "MR LACY" was in Roman Condensed which was a popular typeface at the time, with the word "BENEFIT" in Antique. The Roman typeface was also used for the title "MY NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE", although the word "WIFE" was on a separate line and in a larger type size. A sans serif typeface called Gothic was used for the title "WRECKERS" - although it was not as popular at the time, it soon became one of the major display typefaces, due to its boldness and legibility.

Ruled lines were also used throughout the format to separate individual pieces of information and add emphasis. The posters for the theatre, Belfast, are an example of a whole series of posters with the same heading, layout and design format. They all had the same shape and were printed on white paper using black ink. Their unusual shape which was long and narrow (used for a lot of theatre posters) added to their individuality.

In Fig. 26 a later poster (1850) with the main title "AFRICAN ROSCIUS" had a lot of small lead type which increased the effect of the main titles. The typeface Antique was used for AFRICAN and Roman for ROSCIUS. For words like ADRONICUSI, the type used was Antique Extra Condensed so that the whole word could fit on the line. In a later poster (Fig. 27) the title "OTHELLO" used Roman Condensed, with the sub-head at the top (for Five Nights Only) in Roman Italic. The title SAM COWELL used a condensed Antique.

An engraved image was also used in this poster to add more interest and increase the public's attention. It also served as a space filler.

A lot of posters at this time were nearly all lead type except for the headings. Fig. 28, printed for the "SMITHFIELD MARKET"

in 1848 is an example of this. It shows how too much text can make an ineffective poster. The composition is centred and completely filled with text. The sub-heading "BOROUGH OF BELFAST" is in woodtype and is unusual in that it uses lower-case type. It is printed in the Roman typeface. The word "SMITHFIELD" is in Roman Condensed of a larger point size with "MARKET" in a sans serif Gothic typeface, even though this is printed in a much smaller size because it is Gothic, its appearance is bolder and striking. Ruled line and engraved images give this public notice added emphasis and authority. But although the heading is impressive and the serif face elegant, the amount of smaller type makes this less interesting.

The other public notices for markets ere very similar in style using both wood and lead type, the compositions centred and bold typography (usually serif typefaces) were used for the main and sub-heading. Figs. 29 to 31 were printed between 1850 and 1852. They all had the same characteristics mentioned above as well as engraved images which gave them a more official appearance.

The "PORK MARKET" (Fig. 29) printed in 1850 uses all capitals and Antique Condensed for its heading. Short ruled lines above and below this provide an optical break between the lines of type and give emphasis to the heading.

The sub-heading "BOROUGH OF BELFAST" in a sans serif typeface is simple and effective. But again, there is too much lead type to make this an effective poster overall. In the whole composition, there are only six lines that use woodtype, these are the main eye-catching statements and their size and weight ensure that the message is communicated as quickly and decisively as possible.

The "CATTLE MARKET" (Fig. 30) printed in 1851 uses Roman Condensed for the sub-heading and word "CATTLE" at the bottom of the poster, Roman Extended for the word "MARKET" and Antique for "CATTLE" at the top. There are thick and thin rules above and below the title and under the sub-heading. The added

letterspacing in the word "CATTLE" means that the word fills the line.

The line at the bottom, "BULLS, OXEN, COWS, CALVES, SHEEP, SWINE" is in a Gothic typeface. The variety of typefaces in this poster give it a more lively appearance. The wooden types used alongside the smaller Roman lead type add emphasis to the important pieces of information.

The poster printed in 1852 (Fig. 31) differs from the other posters in that less lead type is used with a least seven different wooden typefaces and in different sizes. The line "BOROUGH OF BELFAST" is printed in Antique, with "GRASS & FLAX STRAW" in Roman Condensed, "MARKET" is in an unusual ornamented face. The line near the bottom "A PENALTY OF FORTY SHILLINGS" is in Roman Extra Condensed which add further decoration to this poster. The use of ruled lines break up the composition, are decorative and draw attention to certain pieces of information.

The scale of the posters and the size and weight of the wooden typefaces made the headings and sub-headings very effective. The poster printed in 1852 shows how the printer realised that with the increased amount of advertising each poster needed to be interesting and individual. The "PORK MARKET" (1850) appears quite plain and boring in comparison to the "GRASS & FLAX STRAW MARKET" (1852) as more decorative devices such as the treatment of rules and different typefaces used were added.

The playbills for the Theatre Royal in Belfast show the development of posters until the advent of colour printing. In these posters, the whole format is explained and filled with text. The earlier posters from 1867 to 1870 are printed in black on white paper and in order to make them more attractive and eye-catching the printer used a number of various devices.

In "COLLEEN BAWN" (Fig. 21) the title has a dropped initial and enlarged first letter to form a focal point in order to catch the reader's attention. In a later poster, the title "SCHOOL

FOR SCANDAL" (Fig. 32) uses two very unusual typefaces. The use of different typefaces within one poster made an optical break within the format and distinguished between acts. In other posters (Figs 33, 34 and 35) the different treatments of type for the titles "HUNCHBACK" and "2 GREAT CHARACTERS" and "LADY OF LYONS" added interest and vitality, as well as making them more individualistic. These decorative uses of type attracted the attention of the customer.

All of these theatre posters had the same heading, layout and design, the titles were always in capitals and ruled lines were used throughout to separate the different acts. The use of heavy sans serif typefaces and elongated fat faces in the bills were also a common feature and a trademark of these early posters.

By the 1870s colour began to creep into the poster. In Fig. 36 the colours used were red and green. Slightly later posters (Fig. 37 and 38) used chromatic type, which enabled one letter to be printed in two colours, as in the words "PLAY" and in the close up of the letters "OME" in "COMEDY".

Colour made these posters better advertisements as it added interest and vitality and therefore, attracted the attention of the public. The posters of the Theatre Royal are some of the best examples of the use of wooden types. They are decorative, evocative and although not intentionally beautiful, their colour and different treatments of type make them exquisite.

Fig. 39 printed in 1899, is another example of how the whole format is exploited and filled with text. It is also a mixture of wood and lead type. It is printed using green ink on white paper. The composition is centred and because there was not enough text, the title fills half the poster. Antique Condensed was used for the words "DEMONSTRATION" and "CLAREMORRIS" and Clarendon extended for the word "GREAT", each word was given a line to itself. The words CHEAP FARES were emphasised by the

use of rules. This poster I found in an antique shop, near the college, on sale for one hundred and fifty pounds!

Fig.s 40 and 41 printed on newspaper are flysheets advertising the Dublin paper "STANDARDS"'s evening news. It is dated May 1989. All the type is Gothic except for the date in Antique Extended and the decorative heading. Ruled lines separate the different news stories. The characteristics of these early posters become some of the trademarks of the later posters. The obvious quality was the emphasises of words of importance by using a large size or weight of type. Also how individual acts or pieces of information were separated by using different typefaces and the use of ruled lines which were also decorative devices. The whole format was also exploited and filled with text.

By 1890 the growth of the printing market which had resulted in competitive practices and cheaper methods of producing woodtype, meant that in Ireland woodtype was used in all print shops large and small.

3. (1900 - 1949)

Poster printed during this period had a lot of similarities with the earlier posters. They continued to be a mixture of wood and lead type and were used for the same purposes as political proclamations, public notices and for the theatre.

The whole composition was still exploited, with too much text usually in smaller lead type, and woodtype only being used for the heading. An example of this can be seen in Fig. 42 for the "BYELAWS OF IVEAGH MARKET", printed for the Dublin Corporation. It was printed in 1906 by Cahill Printers, Dublin. The sans serif type face Gothic was used for the top line - "CORPORATION OF DUBLIN" and was underlined to emphasize this. The heading "BYE-LAW" was in Antique, which was a bold, heavy serif, that added authority to the poster. It is very legible and attracts our attention. The sub-heading "IVEAGH MARKET" is in a fine, elegant serif face, possibly De Vinne, a derivative of the Roman typeface. It is an unusual choice for the time as it is a typeface that became popular much later. The headings of this public notice are simple and effective but there was too much smaller text, that I am sure few people read, which makes the poster's function inadequate.

Fig. 43 is an example of how even though there are only five words in the poster, the whole composition is exploited. This was printed for the Belfast newspaper daily advertising the evening news in 1913. The type is enlarged so that only one letter fits on each line. The heading "TELEGRAPH" is a sans serif condensed face, the letters are placed very close together, which gives them a more elongated appearance. This line has the most letters, in comparison to the line with the word "LATEST", which only has six letters and is in an extended Antique typeface so that the word will fill the line. The words "TITANIC" and "DISASTER" are in Antique, with the T of Titanic in Antique Extended which helps fill out the line. The ruled line under the heading separates the title from the information.

Due to the type size and weight the message is easy to read and is conveyed simply and effectively.

Later posters also had the same format and layout even though they were not printed by the same printer. The public notice (Fig. 44) printed in 1911 by R.J. Blair is for a "FARM OR LAND". In this poster there is a mixture of wood and lead type and the composition is centred. The title is in bold which emphasises it in comparison to the remaining type. It is in Antique Extra Condensed. The letters are placed very close together which makes them appear taller. It enabled the printer to cram a lot of letters onto the one line. The place "LISNACLOON" is in a Roman derivative typeface. Lines are used under the date and place to emphasis these points and also add a more decorative element to a rather uninteresting notice. The printer has mixed a lot of different type styles which also add interest, he has arranged the text when, what, where and exploits all available space. This poster is also printed on pink paper which is unusual as white paper is cheaper.

Another poster (Fig. 18) is also for a "FARM OF LAND", it was printed in 1918 by Joe Chambers. It is also printed on pink paper and has a mixture of wood and lead type. Most of the wood types used are sans serif faces. The printer has added interest to this poster by using decorative devices, on either side of the words "CREAGHOR, BREADY" and in the ornamental lines above and below the title. The words "FARM OF LAND" are in condensed Gothic and the line "ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER" is in French Clorendon, which was popular at the time. The use of different typefaces distinguishes between the different pieces of information.

A later Farm of Land poster, (Fig. 45) printed in 1936 by Emery Company is on blue paper. In this bill all the type is serified except for the auctionner's name at the bottom. The title "FARM OF LAND" is in a decorative Tuscan typeface, except for the F which is in Antique Extra Condensed. The word "FREEHOLD" is in Antique Extended and "FOR SALE" in Antique Light typeface. This

poster has less decorative elements than the previous two, as this period come to an end less decorative devices were used.

Other similarities with the earlier posters were how different typefaces were used to separate pieces of information. Examples of this are the posters printed for Limavady Union. These posters were all printed using black ink on white paper. They were all a mixture of wood and lead type with only the main headtips in woodtype. The layout of all three was practically the same although different typefaces were used. In Fig. 46 printed in 1915, the line "BUTTER PER WEEK" is the only line to use a sans serif typeface. This line of type which is in the middle of the poster adds interest and breaks up the composition. It also meant that the reader would probably read the whole poster as our eye is drawn down through the text. In Fig. 47, a later poster printed in 1919, the word "BREAD" is in a large Roman Condensed type so that it fills one line. It is emphasised by the size and weight of the type. In the line "LIMAVADY UNION" the type Latin Condensed has added letterspacing to justify it with the word "BREAD" and extend it to the width of the type. The sans serif typeface is used here for the word "CONTRACTS" and the line "BEST WHITE BREAD".

In Fig. 48 "POTATOES WANTED", the text reads like a Western "Wanted" poster. This has similar characteristics to the two previous Limavady Union posters.

Like the previous Farm of Land posters these posters by Limavady Union all had a similar format and layout to each other, except they were all printed by the same printer.

In comparison to these public notices for the Farm of Lands and Limavady Union and the other posters printed at the time, the political proclamations of the early 1900s possess an air of authority. The political proclamation had certain characteristics which they traditionally adhered to the use of the word PROCLAMATION or ORDER as the heading, enlarged type for the first initial or the first line of type, the royal seal and

the slogan GOD SAVE THE KING/QUEEN. An example of this is Fig. 49, Wimbourne's Proclamation printed in 1916. This has a lot of smaller text printed with lead type but it has the royal seal and slogan GOD SAVE THE KING. The enlarged initial of the first paragraph was a device used by the printer to act as a focal point for the reader, to draw him through the text. The heading "PROCLAMATION" is in an elongated Roman typeface, all capitals.

This was another typographic characteristic of these posters, as the printer often used elongated capitals for the heading and often with different letterspacing. Similar to Wimbourne's Proclamation was Fig. 50, "MAXWELLS ORDER" printed in the same year. It also had word type for its heading and the royal seal. The heading "ORDER" though was in an extended typeface, possibly a derivative of the typeface Latin. Although a forceful heading the effect is lost due to the large amount of smaller lead type.

The proclamation (Fig. 16) headed "SIR EDWARD CARSON" adheres more to the original format, with the elongated type used for the word "CARSON", which is in Clarendon Condensed. The reduced letterspacing emphasises the word, makes it appear bold. The words "SIR EDWARD" are in Clarendon. There was not a lot of text for this but the printer managed to exploit the whole format by using a larger lead type size which gives a boldness to the poster and an increased legibility. The slogan "GOD SAVE THE KING" is in a bold sans serif typeface and the sten language in the poster gives this an air of authority and visual impact.

A later proclamation in 1923 (Fig. 51) also uses a sans serif condensed typeface for the heading "PROCLAMATION". The line beneath "OFFER OF AMNESTY" is in Clarendon, popular due to its bold serifs. Like the previous poster, it also has less lead type although it does not have the royal seal.

One of the most politically significant posters of the time was the declaration of a Republic by the leaders of the 1916 rebellion (Fig. 52). The black border printed around the text gives it an official appearance. The smaller text is lead type

although it is quite a legible size. The words "IRISH REPUBLIC" are in a bold sans serif, the two lines "THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT" and "TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND" are in an Antique typeface.

In comparison, the public notices (Fig. 53) were used for less important general public information. The type did not appear as bold and the word "NOTICE" was not printed as striking or as authoritative as the word "PROCLAMATION". In the 1931 proclamation, the heading used a condensed sans serif similar to 1923 proclamation and it had a similar layout. It also had less text. The sub-heading "SAORSTAT EIREANN" placed across the top was another serif face extended to fill the line.

In later political proclamations the emphasis moved away from the text and instead, the printers devised short slogans which meant that the maximum meaning could be achieved from the minimum of words. It also made it quicker for the printer to set. In the Sinn Fein poster (Fig. 54) printed between 1920 - 1930 the whole composition is filled with type, there is very little lead type used but at least ten different woodtype faces. Due to the typographic treatment it possesses a powerful visual impact and as a political proclamation, appears very authoritative. The printer has used a lot of slogans each in various typefaces. The heading Sinn Fein is in Peerless condensed, on Antique derivative, with increased letterspacing. The word "DEFEAT" is an important word emphasised by the use of Antique extended. "THE ENGLISH GOVERNMENT" is in Gothic Special with increased word spacing. The mixing of the different type styles makes each piece of information separate yet together they function as a totally effective image.

One of the differences between the posters printed before 1900 and those printed afterwards, was that the use of ruled lines decreased. The poster "LORD MAYOR'S APPEAL" (Fig. 55) is an example of this. It is a public notice using both wood and lead type, decorative swelled rules are used as well as a decorative royal seal. The rules are short, although they still serve to

emphasise the title "LORD MAYOR'S APPEAL", which is in a bold sans serif face. The word "URGENT" is also underlined and in a bold sans serif, which joins these two statements together, even though they are separated by a line of serif type. The printer conveys the message quickly and directly, he achieves instant contact with the viewer by using bold typefaces. The legibility of the individual letters make this poster easier to read also. An earlier poster (Fig. 31) shows ruled lines used more for decorative purposes.

Another characteristic of these later posters was the increased use of the Gothic, sans serif typeface, evident in the last poster and also in Fig. 54 Sinn Fein poster. It became widely used during this period.

By 1940 entire posters like the Sinn Fein poster were composed using woodtype in comparison to posters printed before which only used woodtype for headings or initials.

Later theatre posters also differed from the earlier ones. Colour was more widely used although ruled lines were still used to divide the different acts. Fig. 56 printed in 1928 was for the Playhouse Theatre. Most of the woodtype is sans serif, evidence of the time. The use of red for the main headings and ruled lines adds decorative qualities to this poster.

A later poster (Fig. 57) printed in 1934 for the Ulster Theatre shows the same preference for the sans serif typeface and the colour used. The unusual shape, which is horizontal instead of vertical, the use of the rules and borders makes this a more decorative poster, one that would have stood out among others.

A later poster of this period (Fig. 58) printed in 1946 shows a very limited use of typefaces, mostly sans serifs. The words "TRAIN ALTERATIONS" are in the Latin typeface and the ruled lines add emphasis to it. A lot of information had to be conveyed in this poster, there is a lot of smaller lead type and space had to use economically. The layout is effective with the

message legible, the printer arranged the text, what, who and where. It is a purely functional image, for public information, neither decorative or exciting.

The posters printed between 1900 and 1950 saw the increased use of Gothic. Smaller lead type was used less and so were rule lines. Coloured paper began to be used more even though it was more expensive, it added interest to the poster. Printers however, still like to use a lot of typefaces especially for separating individual pieces of information.

Later posters, printed after 1950 were to retain some of these qualities but also find some of their own.

In 1900, lithography had been replaced by the more efficient and less costly method of printing known as linocut. Linocut was a particularly important development.

Linocut is a particularly simple type of set and prints (except where the ink is changed and arranged to make the poster). The design is first photographed and the image transferred to a linoleum printed plate. This is then treated as a printing stone by the linocut artist, but not in the same way. When printing, the ink is applied only to the top surface and the linoleum plate remains against a metal cylinder which transfers "ink" and the image onto the paper. This process was first introduced to the poster by James Beardsley in 1890. Linocut was developed as a means of producing posters in a more efficient way. The quality was also better. Linocut offered an immediate and significant advantage to the printer in that the design could be

also, even where linocut was used, the original colour could be printed a lot more cheaply than by lithography. The quality was also better. Linocut offered an immediate and significant advantage to the printer in that the design could be

4. Decline of Letterpress in other countries

By 1900 Letterpress printing with woodtype had started to decline in other countries. In the late nineteenth century mechanical inventions led to the substitution of power over human physical effort. Many printers changed over to these new printing machines, which resulted in the decline of Letterpress printing as a craft.

Power superseded human energy, precision mechanism took the place of skill and technicians and specialists took over from craft knowledge.

In 1904, lithography had been revived by Rubels invention of the off-set litho press. As the processed linked with this method of printing improved, lithography became a formidable competitor to letterpress.

Lithography is a photography process. Type is set and proofs (repros) taken of it, this is then cut and arranged to create the poster. The layout is then photographed and the image transferred to a cylindrical grained metal plate. This is then treated, so that water adheres to the background areas, but not to the image. When printing, the ink adheres only to the dry surfaces and the cylindrical plate revolves against another cylinder which transfers "offsets" and the image onto the paper. This process gave more freedom to the designer as letters could be manipulated easily, either curved, overlapped or placed wherever was required. Another major advantage was that in comparison to the letterpress method, it was much quicker, up to four times.

Also, when chromo-lithography was perfected colour could be printed a lot more cheaply than by letterpress. The quality was also better. Lithography offered an immediate and important advantage to the printer in that elaborate images could be

achieved. It was a more flexible process as it could reproduce the work of the engraver, typefounder, wood engraver and artist.

By 1914 the printing craft was on its way to becoming an industry. Printing had traditionally been an area of small firms but with the advances of the time, there was a tendency towards larger companies, which would be capable of producing greater amounts of printed material.

In America by the 1940s, commercial printers considered woodtype to be worthless, as there were no replacement sorts available if needed. The demand had fallen so quickly and dramatically that few woodtypes were manufactured.

WHY LETTERPRESS CONTINUED IN IRELAND :

The technical achievements of the nineteenth century meant that the demand for woodtype decreased. Printers scrapped their printing presses for the new Heidelberg Press but in Ireland, printing with woodtype was too much of an investment to be abandoned so quickly. Also in comparison to countries like England, the printing industry in Ireland remained an area of small firms due to the size of the country, plus the fact that it was poorer. Printing in Ireland was therefore, able to remain a craft and skill.

Only the larger and more progressive of Irish Printers could afford to invest in these new automatic printing presses and often they still used letterpress for smaller runs. The Heidelberg, at the time, was a real investment being able to achieve outputs of four thousand copies an hour, in comparison to the previous one hundred sheets labourously threaded out.

The smaller printers that did not change over could not afford to and also, for them, letterpress printing was effective. In comparison to lithography, letterpress had certain advantages; its types were re-usable and the initial cost of preparing a

print cost considerably less, as the preparation of plates in lithography took a great deal of time and were expensive. Also, corrections and alternations could be made at any time to the design when printing woodtype, were as if using lithography the mistake would cost money as the plate would be useless.

By 1930, the woodtype era had really reached its end. Today, it survives in Ireland and other provincial and isolated societies in Spain, Portugal and Greece and some rural parts of England.

The public notices that were printed later retained the same traditional layout of the vertical notices. Fig. 14 was printed in 1931 for the market's Department in Belfast. All came with typecases with some which were supplied at the time, except for the small heading "Belfast Chamberlain", which used the De Vinne Garamond, a relative of Baskerville. This had been a popular lead typeface originally, which was later cast in steel. It is a firm vertical type, which was in keeping with the usage of the time. The word "Belfast" is the center and emphasized by its vertical positioning and the large, bold capital. Although the impression is very similar to earlier public notices, it is a more interesting composition since it is unusual appearance. It also had very little lead type used in it and the printer had used as few words as possible in order to get the message conveyed directly and effectively. The main typographic since it is legibility and a simple and striking appearance. The use of short color lines above the sub-heading and level line of type height the composition.

The notices at this time were filled within a twenty five wide column of space the most was to take place. They were designed in columns of three and four, printed with horizontal and vertical lines, large and small. The printer had to design them so that they could be seen from a distance. As they were often displayed in that they were advertisements, sometimes they were left gathered from the top, top or bottom, they must be able to attract our attention immediately. This is one of the

5. (1950 - 1990)

The function of the woodtype poster changed during this period. Earlier posters had been printed for the theatre, as public notices or political proclamations, but after 1950, they were printed primarily for advertising entertainments. Because they were no longer designed for the same purposes, their appearance changed as well.

Any public notices that were printed later retained the basic traditional format of the earlier notices. Fig. 59 was printed in 1952 for the market's department in Belfast. All sans serif typefaces were used which were popular at the time, except for the small heading "BELFAST CORPORATION", which used the de Vinne typeface, a relative of Roman. This had been a popular lead typeface originally, which was later cast in wood. It is a fine serified type, which was in keeping with the image of the fine engraved royal seal that it was placed alongside. The word "CLOSED" in the poster was emphasised by its central positioning and the large, bold typesize. Although the composition is very similar to earlier public notices, it's more interesting composition gives it an unusual appearance. It also had very little lead type used in it and the printer had used as few words as possible in order to get the message conveyed directly and effectively. The bold typography gives it a legibility and a simple but striking appearance. The use of short ruled lines under the sub-heading and final line of type unifies the composition.

The posters at this time were billed within a twenty five mile radius of where the event was to take place. They were displayed in windows of shops and bars, pasted onto roadsigns and barns, telegraph poles, trees and walls. The printer had to design them so that they could be seen from a distance. As they were often displayed in less than ideal surroundings, sometimes they are just glimpsed from the car, bus or train, they must be able to attract our attention immediately. This is one of the

reasons why most of the later posters used only large, bold typefaces and sizes. Also, the printers aim is to achieve instant contact with the viewer - with a single word.

The use of short slogans is one of the characteristics of these later posters. The text was kept to a minimum and lead type was seldom used. An example of this is seen in fig. 60 "ANNUAL COLLECTION", printed by Jackie Donn in 1974. The amount of words has been kept at a minimum and no lead type has been used. The printers has used nine different typefaces for twenty one words! This was another distinctive typographic element of later posters which was not seen to the same extent on earlier posters.

Fig. 61 which is another poster printed in 1973 by Jackie Donn for the Newtownforbes Dancing Festival, has nineteen different typefaces used in twelve different sizes (more will be discussed on these two posters later in the chapter).

Another characteristic of these later posters was the increased use of colour. In earlier posters, colour had been used sparsely and instead, ornamental dashes and heavy rules had added decoration and emphasis. Later posters used more colour and therefore, less decorative devices. Fig. 62 for a Variety Show and concert, printed by Jackie Donn in 1973, two colours of ink, graduated into each other, gives an interesting and individual appearance to this poster. Another example - Fig. 63 printed by the County Donegal Printing Company Limited throughout the 1970s for Kilmacrenan Hall, has three colours of ink, green, red and black, graduating into each other.

Most of these later woodtype posters were printed on a Wharfedale Printing Press (Fig. 64) that was invented in 1858. Printers in Ireland began using them around the 1880s/90s. This printing press was a two-revolution stop-cylinder, hand-fed, flat-bed press with an ink table. It had no grinder which enabled several colours to be printed in one run and therefore, meant that the colours became graduated into each other. The

colour was spread onto the moving ink slab in strips with a spatula. The Wharfedale press became the machine for the jobbing printer, due to its strong, simple construction and mechanism.

Traditional colours for these posters were red and black on yellow paper. Today, they can be still found on some posters like fig. 65 printed for the Limelight Nightclub in Belfast by McVickers in Newry, 1989. The posters however, have been updated with the yellow background silkscreened in Belfast and then sent to McVickers for the woodtype to be printed on in black ink.

PROFESSOR GERT FLEISCHMANN - IRISH COUNTRY POSTERS

In 1973 Professor Gert Fleischmann became captivated by the posters he saw around rural Ireland, while on holiday. He was more astonished when he realised that they were printed using woodtype and for the next eight years he collected more of these posters, with the aid of an academic team from the Bielefeld College in Germany. He concluded his search with an exhibition held in the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Trinity College, Dublin, which was the result of co-operation between the Bielefeld College and the German Culture Institute in Dublin with the National College of Art and Design. It was later moved and put on display in Germany.

Gert Fleischmann was fascinated by the woodtype posters as they were something that had long disappeared from Germany, he says :

We were strangers in Ireland and perhaps, that is why we were particularly sensitive to the values, which we had lost a long time ago in our country.

[4:33]

Over the eight years, Gert fleischmann collected a large number of the posters, visiting printers and their customers. In the

posters he saw a beauty, he recognised not only their traditional originality but their unique graphic qualities.

In September 1989, I was able to visit Gert fleischmann at his home in Bielefeld. There in his attic he had stored the whole exhibition, which included many of the original posters printed in Ireland and which he allowed me to photograph. He also had a large collection of woodtypes that he had been given by various printers in Ireland who no longer used them. If he had not taken them, they were going to be burned. Gert Fleischmann shipped them back to Germany under the guise of fire wood!

In 1982 he published his book "IRISH COUNTRY POSTERS". In the foreword by Dr. Hildegard Hamm-Brucher he describes his first reactions to these posters, printed using woodtype :

Accostumed as I am to large poster advertising with lapidory texts, the typography in this case struck me as still being in its rightful place. Even my first glance at the posters revealed their qualities - freshness, directness and simplicity.

[4:11]

He feels that the craftsman's skill is inherent in the compositions which are "clearcut, open and beautiful pictures in type", that possesses an "aesthetic pleasure". He acknowledges that the :

unknown printers who quickly produce inexpensive bills and posters from their woodtypes have been forgotten under the impact of the artists posters celebrated in literature and art history.

[4:p.11]

In his book, Gert Fleishmann introduces the rural typographic posters of recent years and three printers from the Irish provinces - Jackie Dann, Thomas Morahan (who died in 1976) and the County Donegal Printing Co. Ltd. In presenting these three printers, he hoped to show the different types of posters and the different methods used in designing them.

Gert Fleischmann was captivated by the posters printed by Jackie Dann and their "strange, fascinating rhythm". Jackie Dann is the sole employee of Dann's printing works, Longford. Gert Fleischmann describes him as having "flair for form and rhythm which is dependent of rigidity and the doubtful ideal of accuracy". [4:39] Dann was left the printers by his grandfather. Like a lot of printers, he does not plan his posters beforehand but rather goes straight to work on them, making up words and lines from the letters and relying on his instinct for form and rhythm. In his print shop, he has an original Heidelberg and a Wharfedale printing press.

Fig. 60 printed in 1974, was printed on a Wharfedale, which allowed the red and black in it to mix together - this can be seen in the bottom of the word "COLLECTION" printed in red with a tinge of black at the bottom, also the line "FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED" and the line "SUNDAY MAY 27" printed in black and tinged with red. The composition has been centred and contains nine different typefaces - a combination of bold and plain types, condensed and elongated. The most important words are in bolder type sizes - "COLLECTION" is a sans serif (De Little's No. 53), "ST CHRISTOPHER'S" is an elongated latin type and "SUNDAY MAY 27" also in an elongated latin type. The S and C, and S and M of these lines are in an enlarged sans serif typeface. This makes the line of type fill the line, and also emphasises the word within the line of type.

Other typefaces such as Clarendon for the word "SCHOOL" and an elongated Clarendon for the word "ANNUAL" were used. An unusual sans serif was used for the bottom lines "AT ALL CHURCH GATES / PLEASE HELP", it looks like a late Gothic type, similar to Teutonic.

Gert Fleischmann describes this poster as "one of the most beautiful we have of Jackie Dann's". Gert Fleischmann like the unintentional blending of the colours and the different mixing of typefaces, which were unlike anything he had seen before.

An earlier poster by Jackie Dann printed in 1973 (Fig. 61), for the Newtownforbes Dancing Festival was the poster that started Gert Fleischmann's project. Like the previous poster, he was attracted by the variety of types, sizes and forms which gives the impression that the printer had simply changed the types and filled the poster's every space. But he discovered that Jackie Dann had a well-planned design which was determined by the limited possibilities of only a few cases of wooden types and this attracted him even more.

In this poster there was a lot of information that had to be conveyed clearly. Dann ordered his poster, firstly "where" and "when" for the heading, using an elongated, condensed latin type for "NEWTOWNFORBES", with the N in a heavy Gothic. This device strengthened and emphasised the word, for if he had used the latin type for the whole word, it would have had a weak appearance overall and if he had used gothic, it would have been too bold and illegible, also it would not have fitted onto the line. The second order was "what" - the individual acts and their dates of appearance. The usual rule of giving each individual group a different typeface was very difficult for the printer as there were so many groups and he did not have enough typefaces. For the groups "MIGHTY AVONS" and "COUNTRY BLUE BOYS" the same sans serif typeface was used but by making the word "COUNTRY" condensed and elongated and by changing the B to a clarendon type, he was able to hide this and gave them a different appearance. Also for "HILL-BILLIES" and "EVERGLADES" he used the same typeface but by adding extra spacing to the dates above them he was able to create a different image.

Fig. 62 was also previously mentioned, for its use of colour, also has a lot of similarities in its use of type. The letters M and H of memorial Hall are used for the same purposes as the N in Newtownforbes, and the further mixing of serif and sans serifs typefaces in the line "MAY REYNOLDS TERESA BRESLIN", also the different typesizes in the line "BALLINAMUCK VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS".

In these posters, Jackie Dann's flair for the rhythm can be seen, which is independent of any rigid rules. Gert Fleischmann described him as :

a master of creating amazing variations, considering the few types he had available. His work is characterised by the big differences in the boldness of types, their size and his choice of colours.

[4:66]

While in Letterkenny, I visited a printer who had not met Jackie Dann but knew of his reputation and work, he said he was the man in poster design.

However, Jackie Dann does not make his main income out of printing these posters, but by jobs like the Memory Bill for Eamonn De Valera which he had to print ten thousand copies for.

Thomas Morahan did not do an apprenticeship but learnt his trade and skill from his father in his printing shop - the Stokestown Democrat Printing Works. When his father died, him and his brother and sister took over the printing shop. They printed mostly posters, tickets, handbills and cards. In 1918, the father had purchased a second-hand Wharfedale, after using a hand-press Albion from 1888 to print a newspaper, by 1948 when the publication of their newspaper The Stokestown Democrat ceases, they are still using the Whorfedale.

Fig. 66 is a poster for Rooskey's Carnival, 1974. It is printed with red and a blue ink tinged with black on pink paper, he also made variations using yellow paper. The bold sans serif for the word "CARNIVAL" is made unusual by its vertical appearance. Like Jackie Dann, he mixes a variety of different type styles. The border of this poster is made up of individual dots and astericks which Thomas Morahan arranged himself, differently, one by one. Two hundred copies of this poster were made and at the time, the customer paid seventeen pounds.

Of his work, Gert Fleischmann said :

his posters can be instantly recognised by the harmonic way in which he used types, sizes and colour. Nobody could do the border as he could!

[4:66]

In 1976 Thomas Morahan died, his workshop was preserved by the Bunratty Folk Park. Up until his death, he has kept using the old Wharfedale printing press.

In 1975, the County Donegal Printing Company was flourishing although their posters that they printed with woodtype were beginning to diminish, the demand for them had gone down and they were now only a minor section of the company's business. The reason for this was that costs were high, and it would have been more profitable for them to discontinue printing them and only use their litho and automatic presses but at the time, they told Gert Fleischmann that they hoped "the posters will remain for some years yet".

Some auctioneers, dance hall and concert organisers still considered the posters to be an essential factor in their advertising. They served as a reminder and as a reinforcement of the announcements in the local newspapers. But because of the rising prices they did not want to have to pay for them, even though the costs are really incredibly low.

Throughout the 1970s, the County Donegal Printing Co. printed a series of posters for the kilmacrenan Hall - Figs. 67, 68, 69 and 70. These were printed every week and are a good example of their style. The graduated colours on the posters show that they were printed on a Wharfedale. For each week, the heading and structure were kept the same with only the groups names changing. The majority of the types were sans serifs printed as large as possible. The text was kept to a minimum and the format totally exploited. The separate pieces of information

were divided by ornate rules. Often the colours printed depended on the colours that happened to be on the rollers at the time.

Similarly, the same treatment was given to the posters printed for the Termon Hall (figs. 71 and 72). The County Donegal Printing Company stopped printing in 1979. It was not productive for them to continue although they had hoped they would be able to last a bit longer, they were part of the trade that they had not wanted to lose.

Like Gert Fleischmann, I too, found that the distinctive typographic element of these posters in the mixing of various typefaces, in the one poster, and sometimes even in the same word. How boring they would appear with only one or two typefaces!

THE GROUP THEATRE

In Belfast, the Linen Hall Library has started in recent years taking an interest in collecting theatre posters. Their collection which spans the last one hundred years of theatre posters in the North of Ireland is also regularly updated. For my thesis, I was more interested in the later posters. Figs. 73, 74 and 75 are for the Group Theatre, they have silkscreened backgrounds but the type is printed in woodtype over this. This makes the poster cost a lot less as in the beginning they get their image silkscreened in one colour, in this case red, and get a lot of copies printed so that for future plays they just need to add the type and they can use as many as they like.

For the Group Theatre most of the types used are sans serif especially for the main acts, which are suitable because of their boldness and legibility. Serif types are used for the dates, time or the author's name.

The printer has certain restrictions in this design as the text

has to be confined to a certain area. Usually the headings are centred with the dates and times to the right, so that they do not overlap the silkscreened image.

These examples were printed in 1981.

BARRS PRINTERS, LETTERKENNY

Stopping in Letterkenny in November 1989, I saw what looked like a letterpress printed notice in an auctioneer's window. Interested, I went in to find out where it had been printed. They directed me to Barr's from the main street. There, I met Tom, who at the time was very busy, there was only him and a very young helper working the printers. I had only stopped in Letterkenny for one hour as I was on a bus on its way to Dublin. Tom took a few minutes to talk to me about his business and work and before I left he gave me a poster.

Fig. 76 is the last poster that he printed using woodtype. He set it by hand himself and said that he would never do it again. This poster titled "RADIO LIFE" is a good example of a later woodtype poster in that although there are obvious traditional elements it is also more innovative. A lot of time has gone into the layout and design, as there was a lot of information to convey.

In the poster there is the mixing of different typefaces and sizes which is a characteristic of later posters. The line "ALL STAR BAND CONCERT" has the first letter of each word in a bolder type weight. If all the word had been in the lighter sans serif condensed style the word would have appeared too fine and weak but this device means that the words are emphasised. This was also used by Jackie Donn in Fig. 61. Also, because this is the only line of text in black, it makes it appear even bolder. In the bottom line he has also mixed the typeweights for different words - "ALL PROCEEDS TO ETHIOPIA", the word "ETHIOPIA" is in a

much bolder type weight within the line which means that it is emphasised a lot.

Tom has also printed this poster in three colours and because it was not printed on a Wharfedale, it meant a lot of work for him. The three colours red, blue and black would have had to be put on the press separately which means that each poster went through the press three times. The colours unify the poster, red is used for the heading and the lines at the bottom, the black is used for the text in the centre with blue type above and below. Through the use of colour the information is divided and each piece has its own importance, yet it all functions as a whole.

Barrs stopped printing with wooden type in 1985 because it was not profitable anymore. This was because the posters were only small editions and did not make money as they had to be set by hand.

MC VICKERS PRINTERS, NEWRY

Mc Vickers is a printers on the outskirts of Newry town. It is a small building but all available space inside is filled with the five printing presses including a Wharfedale, an original Heidelberg and off-set litho presses. They also have a linotype machine for making lead type. In an additional room books are bound by stapling or sewing.

In January 1990, I visited the printers and met Dan, who is the only printer left at Mc Vickers who still uses the woodtype and old Wharfedale printing press. Over the years their woodtypes have been diminishing until now, they have only a very small limited range of typesizes although they have each face in a lot of varied sizes. Altogether they have about forty cases of woodtype. A lot of their type has been given to the Ulster Museum in Belfast. Dan explained that one of the reasons for giving some of the typefaces away was that they were too

"old-fashioned". However, he thinks that there is still a demand for printed posters using woodtype although it is steadily decreasing, he says there are less posters about these days.

I discovered Mc Vickers after a long search. In 1988 I had been given a poster at the Belfast Limelight Club after a concert. When I became interested in woodtypes in 1989, I remembered the poster and contacted the club to trace the printer. I was given an address in Belfast which did print part of the poster, (the background is silkscreened) but not the woodtype. After contacting the club again, I was given Mc Vickers' address which is where the posters are sent for the type to be printed on them.

The background is silkscreened in different colours, red and yellow or pale blue and green, the type is always printed in black. In fig. 65 printed in September, 1988, the format is simple and straightforward. The main act "EDEN" is in a heavy Gothic, in a large type size and underlined for further emphasis. It is much larger in size in comparison to the other acts. The second act "ESCAPE TO WISCONSIN" is in a serif face which I could not identify, although definitely derived from antique, it falls somewhere between Ionic and clorendon condensed. The final act is in a much smaller condensed sans serif type. In between the words "AND" and "WITH" are printed using lowercase sans serif woodtype which is rarely seen.

In fig. 77 the main act is more impressive, because only two acts were playing Dan had more space to fill and the tact "THE CARRELLINES" is used to fill two lines. THE is in bold gothic extended and "CARRELLINES" in a sans serif condensed type, like Jackie Dann and Tom, he has used a heavier and larger C to attract attention. It also appears decorative. The second act "THE STILLs" and "CHIMERA" are in the same serif face used for "ESCAPE TO WISCONSIN". Dan obviously used a sans serif face for the main act, for the second a serif and if there was a third, a smaller sans serif. For each poster the dates were in

the same typeface, a serif with the number in a bold sans serif.

The posters appear more contemporary due to the text not being centred, also the silkscreened background gives them a more colourful and attractive appearance.

In November the Limelight finished the "Little Weed" gigs but the same promoters started up similar gigs in "THE PLAYPEN" - Fig. 78 shows the remains of an old Playpen poster on a wall in Belfast City Centre. It has been torn off by wind and rain. It is very similar in style to the Limelight posters. Fig. 79 shows the type for another Playpen poster printed in December. At the bottom you can see the keys that kept the wood blocks in place, so that they would not move while printing. There are five different woodtypes here as well as lead types.

Fig. 80 show other type that had been set and yet to be printed, to go across the bottom of litho paper. Most of Mc Vicker's posters are printed for events in the local surrounding area. A lot of them are for entertainment. Some artists have posters printed off themselves using full-colour litho and then the type is added by Mc Vickers, this means the place and date can be changed. An example of this is Fig. 81 for Susan Mc Cann. Although they are printed using off-set a white space is left at the bottom to add the type in black. The off-sets are also printed at Mc Vickers.

All the text for "FOUR SEASONS HOTEL / NEW YEAR'S EVE BALL" is in the unusual serif face previously used in the Limelight posters. Dan has used some devices characteristic of these later posters by enlarging the first letter of the bottom line of type. The enlarged initial makes the line more eye-catching.

Donn explained how the woodtype is only really used if there is a short run of posters. An example of this is Fig. 82, there was only twenty copies of this printed. This is an advertisement for shops and garages around Newry to display outside. It was printed on two separate sheets, the type is the

largest, size seventy-two print. The type size ensures that passing motorists will see it clearly.

Posters such as the Limelight ones would have between eight to one hundred copies. They are not worth using offset litho for because the plates would be too expensive and when only using one colour, it is quicker and a lot cheaper to use the woodtypes.

Other posters like Fig. 83 titled "DANCE NITE" have not been printed by letterpress, although it looks like it. This is because originally the type was printed from woodtypes but then it was cut up and laid down and printed using offset. This is how the top line "CAMLOUGH BRASS & REED BAND" is curved.

Fig. 84 for the "ANNUAL BAND PARADE" is a letterpress poster using allwoodtypes including lowercase. It adheres to the format characteristic of earlier posters. The composition is centred, and the top line "BESSBROOK TRUE BLUES" is a mixture of different type faces with the initials of each word in a serif face and the remainder in a condensed gothic sans serif. A similar device has been used in the line below except the typefaces are all the same and the initials have been changed by using a larger type size.

Mc Vickers had one decorative face left which Dan used for the "WIZARD OF OZ" poster (fig. 85). This was printed in four colours offset. The type is a mixture of wood and lead, the decorative face is similar to Egyptian ornamented.

Although the woodtype printing takes up only about 5% of the total of Mc Vickers work, Dan feels that it will last a bit longer, or he hopes it will. He is eighty three years old and I have a feeling that when he goes that will be the end of the woodtypes printed.

Summary and Conclusion

CHARACTERISTICS OF IRISH WOOD-TYPE POSTERS

Throughout the 1950 - 1990 period, there are certain characteristics that the woodtype posters adhere to. There seems to be unwritten rules by which the posters are composed and printed, that are simple and traditional and that must be handed down to the printers today from the printers before them. These "rules" can be defined in the following eight points :

1. The composition is usually centred, and there is no asymmetry, although the effect can be achieved by mixing different type faces.
2. There is a definite preference for capitals. They appear bolder, easier to read, the letterforms are more straightforward and they can be seen easily from a distance. A lot of the woodtype fonts did not have lowercases, or the printers did not buy them.
3. The text is arranged in an order of - what? when? why? and where?
4. The whole format is exploited and filled with text. Every line has to be filled with text, if the words are too short then they are made bolder and if needed, the first letter of each word is made a heavier weight. This adds emphasis to the word(s). By changing a letter(s) the printer is able to emphasize a whole line of type easily and impressively. Another device is to use condensed typeface which enables the printer to cram a lot of letters into a small space. This also makes the type appear more elongated. If the line cannot be filled the solution is to centre it.

5. The paper printed on is usually white, as it is the cheapest, but if the printer is only printing in one colour he will sometimes use a coloured paper in order to make the poster more attractive.
6. If several groups or acts are mentioned, the same typeface is never used for more than one of them, each group should have a different typeface. This means that no group is more dominate.

If the printer does not have enough typefaces and he needs to distinguish between groups, he uses the same type but alters it in such a way to disguise this.

7. If individual pieces of information or events need to be separated rules lines are normally used.

They are also used to emphasis certain words of importance.

8. Most posters are printed using black, red, blue, violet or green ink, or in combinations of blue and red, red and green, green and violet, red and black.

One of the more obvious differences in these later posters was that the majority of them were composed entirely of woodtype, in comparison to the earlier posters that used a lot of lead type.

Of the later posters Gert Fleischmann said -

In contrast to the flood of subtle and sophisticated posters for consumer advertising, these letterpress posters stand out, clear, open and gay.

DEVELOPMENT OF WOODTYPE FACES IN IRISH POSTERS (1920 - 1990)

In Ireland the Roman typeface was most popular before 1900. After this it steadily declined, although it was used up until 1930. Between 1900 - 1930 the proliferation of all type styles increased. Letterforms tended to be lighter and usually condensed or elongated, in some cases there was even an extra condensed style. Fig. printed in 1911 uses antique extra condensed. The de-emphasises on bolder styles resulted in an increased number of typefaces. Roman condensed was also a popular typeface.

Roman's loss of popularity after this period was due to its fragility inherent in its design. Its appearance was too fine especially in comparison to the other typefaces with their bolder serifs (it was not really a suitable poster type).

A later derivative of the roman typeface, de Vinne, had a revived popularity in the 1950 - 1990 period (Fig. 86).

The antique typeface followed a similar path to roman, achieving its popularity height before 1920. However, as a typestyle it resulted in yielding a major portion of the twentieth century typestyles.

Antique's main derivative clorendon became very popular and was widely used during the 1900 - 1950 period. As a display face, its boldness made it unique.

Another popular derivative was the lain typeface from 1920 - the late 1970s (Fig. 87).

The typeface gothic steadily increased in popularity from 1910 onwards. In 1920 gothic light face was the most popular condensed face. By the later period the gothics were the most widely used for posters. They were also one of the few faces

with lowercases printed and used in posters. The gothic typeface became the principle founder for new typographic designs in all areas of printing.

The Decline of Woodtype Letterpress Printing in Ireland

In Ireland woodtype letterpress managed to remain a craft, although in the last thirty years it has become a dying tradition. In other countries, the craft of printing has long become a technical process. It is no longer determined by the compositor and printer, but by designers and typographers. Through the years the introduction of more sophisticated equipment and processes resulted in greater specialisations in every section of the trade. Today the operator who sets type no longer prints it. The production of print calls for the co-ordinated efforts of a surprisingly large number of skilled operatives, for design, typesetting, platemaking, binding etc.

In Ireland however, a small percentage of posters are still printed by the printer, without any help from the designer or typographer, with their skill handed down from the printer before them.

When lithography was invented in 1904, printers in Ireland kept using letterpress as the changeover was so expensive. Irish printers could not afford to abandon their woodtypes and printing presses as quickly. It had been too much of an investment for them. In letterpress their types were re-usable and the initial cost of preparing a print considerably less than in lithography smaller, more traditional printers were able to survive for so long because Ireland's size and population meant that the advertising industry did not get as big as in countries like England and America.

The smaller print shops kept their old machines. A lot of them have not invested money in new equipment for over fifty years

like the County Donegal Printing Company or Jackie Donn's print shop. In printers like Barrs and Mc Vickers, the wooden typefaces used were old, some more than one hundred years. The printing presses that these printers use are no longer manufactured!

Another reason why they survived for so long is that for the Irish printer, they were so effective.

It is difficult even in a relatively small country like Ireland to totally assess the size and scale of printing companies today. The majority of them have between 1-10 employees, with only 5% employing over 50. Today in Ireland, in excess of 90% of all print is produced by the lithographic process.

Woodtype letterpress began to decline due to a lot of reasons. Firstly a lot of people began to want smaller posters printed on cardboard for displaying indoors. Using the old woodtypes became increasingly time-consuming, so that it cost more money which the customer was not prepared to pay. The cost of paper and printing ink, as well as wages had also increased so much that small editions rarely brought in the costs. Many printers could not afford to keep printing as they were losing money, so they either closed or made the change to off-set litho. If they had highered their prices the customers would not pay.

Also, customers are now asking for the better quality that litho can achieve, they want elaborate images or photographs on their posters. Often entertainment bands want pictorial rather than purely typographical posters. To some people the letterpress posters also appeared too old-fashioned.

Smaller businesses needing advertising could not afford to pay the more expensive prices for woodtype and began creating their own posters using felt tip pens. Big businesses did not want to use them, as they wanted more colourful or photographic

advertisements, in order to give the impression that they were keeping up with the times.

Finally, the campaign "Keep Ireland Tidy" started in the late 1970s, meant that bills and posters could no longer be randomly posted along the roads, on walls, telegraph poles or trees etc.

Since 1985 Ireland's print industry has undergone revolutionary changes. In offset the plates are now made of light weight alluminium and the process can now be controlled by computer. Desk Top Publishing has also resulted from the uses of the computer which makes it more accessible for small businesses to print brochures, information sheets and promotional material. The computer has reduced the costs dramatically.

Also, marketing has developed so much in the last few years resulting in even small businesses recognising the need to have their products promoted and advertised as attractively as possible. At the lower end of the market, this led to the establishment of lots of fast printing shops. These can provide for all the small business needs in several colours.

As these areas of the print industry expand more people begin to use them and so more equipment can be bought and as this demand increases, the prices for these new technical advances will fall.

The printers who continue to use letterpress are mostly old men who had their skill handed down from their father or grandfather, they did not learn any other way. Young people have not learnt the skill as they did not see money in it and so, when the last of these old printers go the skill will die with them.

Today, in comparison to the other commercial advertisements, which have been printed by essentially mechanical processes, increasingly automated and mass-produced, the woodtype

letterpress posters stand-out with their freshness. The style is straightforward, simple and unadorned. Often their appearance give the impression that they have been composed crudely and boldly but they are full of character. They communicate a specific and unsophisticated functional. A lot of the woodtypes are elegant and give the posters pleasing aesthetic qualities. They have a remarkably strong visual impact.

In his book, "IRISH COUNTRY POSTERS", Gert Fleischmann says that "no-one who has anything to do with these posters in Ireland regards them as aesthetic products."

The printers do not keep them. I think times have changed, maybe it was Gert Fleischmann who influenced this change in attitude but a lot of people involved in, or connected to the printing industry are taking an interest. In Barr's printers in Letterkenny, the printer Tom has kept a few copies of each poster he has printed as part of his own private collection and in Mc Vickers printers in Newry, Dan also keeps his and was able to give me a few copies of recent posters printed there. Museums and libraries are also becoming involved. The Ulster Museum in Belfast and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Cutta have recently started to collect these posters, although at the minute they only date until 1950.

I feel that a lot of Irish people, including those in the printing industry, Museums and libraries are still unaware of the uniqueness of these Irish posters, especially the later ones. Also, in the 1990s they are definitely threatened by extinction more than ever under the impact of progress. However, I feel that :

Despite all this progress and the mechanical aids brought about to aid the print and printing industry, the craft still remains a curiously human business and one of the remaining where skill counts.

This was written in 1936 and still true today.

These wooden type posters were never intended to be precious or unique, in Ireland they are not regarded as having these qualities yet, but in America they have become highly valued for their scarcity and historical importance.

I hope in this thesis I have given an insight into this area of printing that is rarely written about and yet has survived for so long. I know that I have left a lot of work undiscussed but I feel that I have included enough examples to show the progression and characteristics of these posters. Also I am sure that along the West coast of Ireland there are other letterpress printers still working. I would like to think so anyway. Hopefully in the near future a full history of these wooden type posters will be written before they vanish completely.

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