

A new census of wooden presses in Great Britain

Alan May

INTRODUCTION

Phillip Gaskell's 'A census of wooden presses' appeared in the Printing Historical Society's *Journal* in 1970,¹ although most of the survey work was carried out much earlier, between 1951 and 1953. Its aims were ambitious. Gaskell attempted to describe briefly, and whenever possible depict, all of the then-known surviving wooden presses of traditional 'common press' pattern throughout the world. More recent replica presses and nineteenth-century presses of new design, such as the presses made in America by John Ramage ('Ramage jobbers'), were excluded.

In 2008 while on a visit to Brecon Museum and Art Gallery, I was surprised to find there a common press which was not recorded in Gaskell's census. Finding it suggested that it was time, after more than fifty years, for someone to look again at the situation, particularly as the availability of e-mail would simplify the task of communicating with press-curators in other countries and could result in something more comprehensive than was possible in the 1950s. However, a new world-wide survey of common presses was a bigger job than I felt able to tackle. I decided therefore to concentrate on the presses in Great Britain alone.² The idea was submitted to the Printing Historical Society, to whom I am very grateful as they both gave their approval and made available a grant to help with travel costs.

Gaskell listed fifteen presses in Great Britain, to which he assigned the numbers GB1 to GB15. Three of his presses – GB10, GB11 and GB15 – have been excluded from the present survey, GB11 because it had already disappeared by the time the survey was published in 1970 and GB15 because it is a one-sixth scale model. GB10, which was at the Hunterian Library, University of Glasgow, until the 1960s, I have so far been unable to trace. It was on loan from Outram and Company of Glasgow, but that company is no longer in existence. Two new presses have come to light, one at Newark (found in the National Printing Heritage Trust's *Directory*)³ and the one at Brecon which has now been moved to the Collections Centre, Nantgarw near Cardiff. These

1. Phillip Gaskell, 'A census of wooden presses', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 6 (1970), [1]–32.

2. I mentioned that I was surveying only British common presses to Karel van der Waarde, who subsequently took on the task of surveying the rest of the world. It is hoped to publish a report on his findings in a future number of the PHS *Journal*. A description of a previously unrecorded common press discovered in Belgium is due to appear in number 25 (Autumn 2016).

3. Desmond Field, *A directory of historic printing items held by museums in the United Kingdom and Ireland*. Chester: National Printing Heritage Trust, 2000.

4. The balance of display-*versus*-storage has altered somewhat since Gaskell made his survey in the 1950s, although it is not always possible to tell from his account published in 1970 whether each press was then available for the public to see. However, it seems that, at that time, of the fifteen British presses Gaskell described, ten were probably on display, four (GB6, GB12, GB13 and GB14) were in storage and one (GB11) was missing, presumed destroyed. Two of those which were dismantled and in storage at that time (GB6 and GB13) have now been reconstructed and put on display; four others (GB2, GB3, GB4 and GB9) are currently on display, or at least accessible to the public in some degree.

5. These are the locations of the replica presses I have come across, with date of manufacture and maker's name (it is probable that there are others): the Bodleian Library, Oxford (1951, A. H. Smith and A. Brown, built to replace a similar replica press destroyed by war-time bombing; detailed plans of the press are preserved at the Bodleian); Cambridge University Library (1969, Philip Gaskell); Manchester Museum of Science and Industry (1977, L. J. Hewitt); the British Library, London (1991, Howard Nelson); the Globe Theatre, London (2000, Windsor Workshop Ltd); Amberley Working Museum (2004, John Land); University of Reading, Department of Typography & Graphic Communication (two presses, 2007 and 2011, both Alan May); the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock (2008, Burns First Edition Project Team); The Tom Paine Printing Press, Lewes (2008, Alan May); Genepy Press, St Albans (2009, Paddy Murfitt); St Bride Library, London ('the Dürer reconstruction', 2014, Alan May; see *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* new series 22 (spring 2015), 62–79).

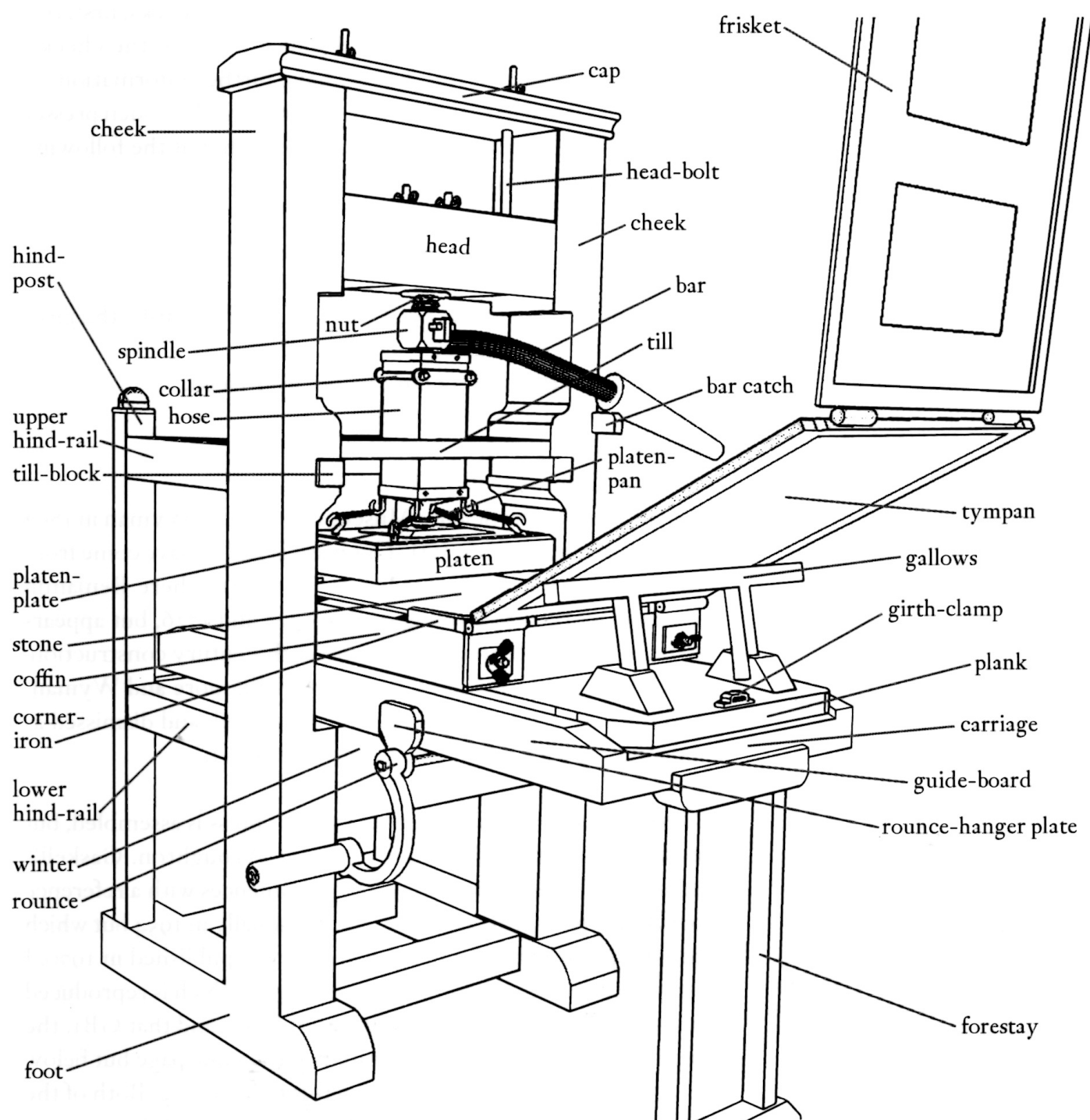
have been allotted the numbers GB16 and GB17, making a total of fourteen presses in the new survey (excluding GB10, GB11 and GB15, and adding GB16 and GB17).

The first job has been to find the present location of each of these fourteen presses. Most are in or near where they were in Gaskell's time, though frequently the museum's name has changed. A real difficulty has been that eight of the fourteen presses are now in storage (six having been dismantled), usually several miles away from the museum to which they belong.⁴ These museum stores are frequently dark and always packed full of other unrelated items making photography difficult. I am sure that museum curators struggle constantly with the problem of what to do with items not wanted for display, but the practice of dismantling and moving these presses into storage, and not rebuilding them once there, leaves them open to the twin dangers that parts will be mislaid and that the knowledge of how to reassemble them will be lost. Several of the presses seen now have parts missing, parts which were present in Gaskell's census, and several have not been on display for decades making it unlikely that anyone at the museum will know how to reassemble them. The ethos of museums has changed profoundly since the 1950s. Their emphasis today is very often on the need to tell a story in a family-friendly way rather than to concentrate on particular objects or classes of object. This is perhaps laudable, but printing presses are disadvantaged by this change. They do not fit easily into such schemes and the competition for scarce display-space results as often as not in them being banished to the store-room.

All fourteen of the common presses listed have been examined and all but one photographed. Those dismantled and in storage offer only very limited opportunities for photography. The pictures obtained in these circumstances contain useful detail but are not of the quality needed for reproduction in print. In view of this, I have decided that my best course is to follow Gaskell's practice and show in most cases just a portrait shot of each press together with my report. I hope to publish the detailed images later, once an appropriate means of doing this has been decided upon. I have prefaced each of my press reports with information based on that Gaskell provided, so that readers can judge what changes have occurred between the 1950s and the 2010s without having to refer back to the *PHS Journal* of 1970.

Since 1950 a number of replica common presses, based on a range of existing designs, illustrations and exemplars, have been constructed, including one commissioned by Gaskell himself.⁵

For those readers unfamiliar with the terminology of wooden presses, I include below an annotated diagram of a typical press (Fig. 1). The other figures reproduced below have been assigned the numbers of the presses they depict, with fractional numbers added when more than one image is included.



1. Sketch of a typical common press with the major features marked (the girth has been omitted, to show the position and form of the girth-clamp more clearly)

THE SURVEY

In the listing which follows, the first section is derived from the data supplied by Gaskell.⁶ Dimensions are given in inches (with the metric equivalent in parentheses, to the nearest half centimetre). The dimensions of platens and tympan (when present) are given with the longer side, parallel with the cheeks, first; this information is followed by the distance between the cheeks. Should any reader of this *Journal* have further information on the presses listed here, or know of other original wooden presses in the British Isles, they can contact the author at the following e-mail address: alanmay@talktalk.net.

GBI Science Museum, London

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, no guide-boards; the girth is attached to an adjustable cleat.

Platen: 19 × 13½ (48 × 34 cm); wood, iron-faced.

Tympan: 28¾ × 21¾ (73 × 55 cm).

Cheeks: 26½ (67 cm).

Lacunae: Gallows (ball-racks present).

Notes: Given to the Science Museum by Charles Wyman in 1863 (accession number 1863/14). This press is said to have come from the printing-office of John Watts (d. 1763), where Benjamin Franklin worked as a young man in 1725 and 1726, but appears to be of late rather than early eighteenth-century construction. Brief details of its pedigree are given by Bigmore and Wyman⁷ and the connection with Franklin is discussed, and dismissed as a confusion with USA4 (see below), by Smart.⁸

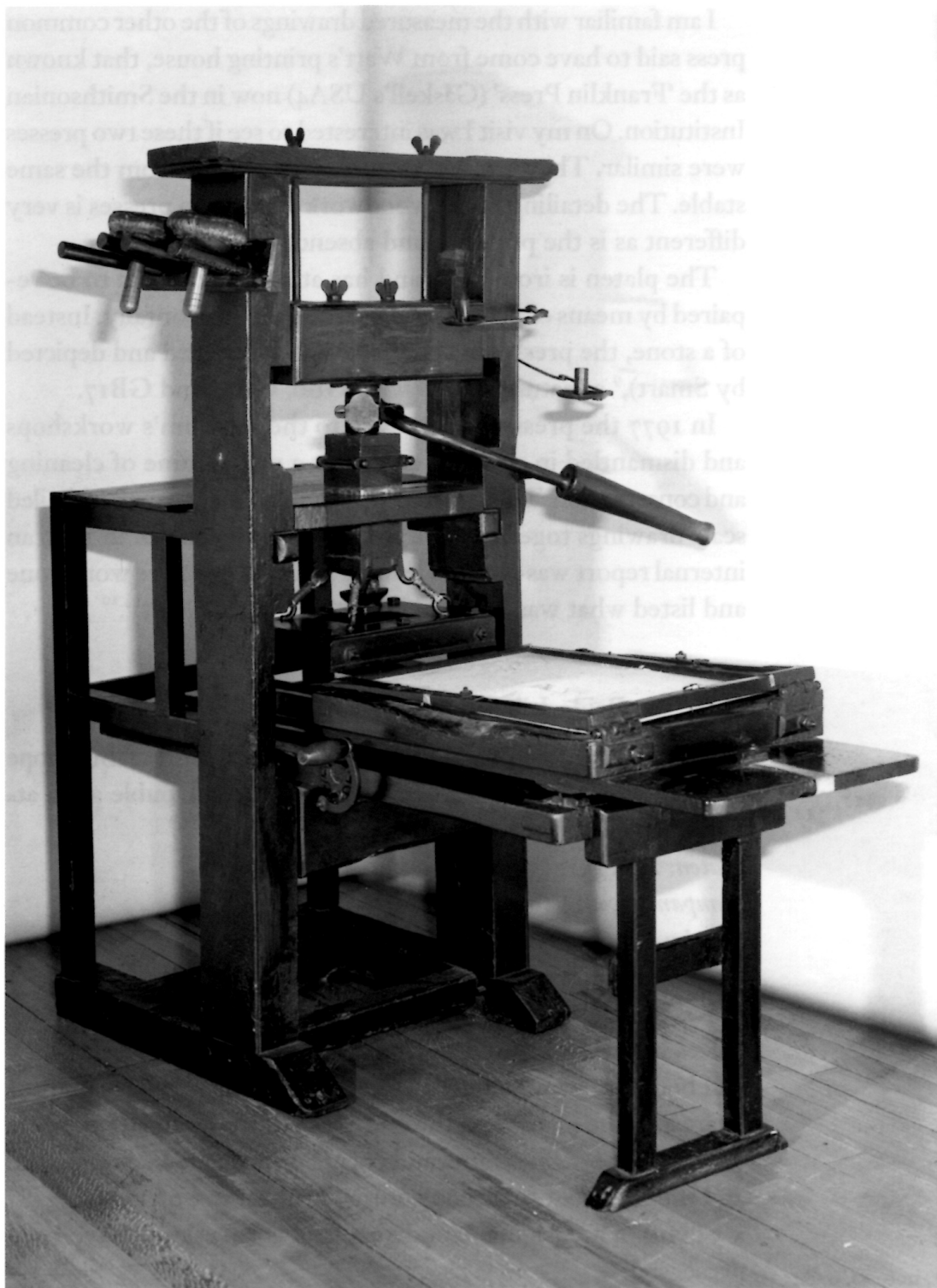
Notes from a visit made in June 2013: This press is assembled, but now in store at the Museum's store at Wroughton. Gaskell's account of British common presses commences with a reference to GBII, a press which he examined personally in 1954 but which had disappeared by the time his census was published in 1970. I originally assumed that the image of a press which is reproduced immediately below this account was of GBII and that GBI, the next press described, was illustrated on the same page but below it. My visit to Wroughton showed this to be wrong. Both of the illustrations on page 11 of Gaskell's survey show GBI.

Gaskell's images of GBI show that the ball-racks, the candle-holders, the till-blocks, the foot-stop and the rounce were all

6. Gaskell (1970, note 1).

7. E. C. Bigmore and C. W. H. Wyman, *A bibliography of printing*. 3 volumes. London: Bernard Quaritch, 1880–1886, I, pp. 233–234, and III, p. 99.

8. John E. Smart, 'The wooden common press at the Science Museum, London', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 15 (1980/1981), 81–88, p. 82.



present at the time of his survey. On my visit none of these were to be seen, and the missing galleys had been replaced with a modern, inauthentic construction. I have since corresponded with the press-curator concerning the missing items and have been assured that except for the foot-stop all still exist. They were removed to facilitate the press's move to Wroughton and will be replaced in due course.

GBI. Before dis-assembly for storage at Wroughton.

I am familiar with the measured drawings of the other common press said to have come from Watt's printing house, that known as the 'Franklin Press' (Gaskell's USA4) now in the Smithsonian Institution. On my visit I was interested to see if these two presses were similar. They are, but do not I think come from the same stable. The detailing in the woodwork of the two presses is very different as is the presence and absence of guide-boards.

The platen is iron-faced and has at some time had to be repaired by means of bolts passing through it horizontally. Instead of a stone, the press has a cast iron slab (described and depicted by Smart),⁹ a feature shared with GB6, GB12 and GB17.

In 1977 the press was removed to the museum's workshops and dismantled in order to carry out a programme of cleaning and conservation. This provided the opportunity to make detailed scale drawings together with a photographic record. In 1979 an internal report was prepared which both outlined the work done and listed what was known about this press's history.¹⁰

GB2 St Bride Library, London

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, no guide-boards. A Stanhope lever-movement between the bar and spindle. Double girth attached to cleats with thumbscrews.

Platen: 20 × 15½ (51 × 39.5 cm); wood.

Tympan: 34 × 20 (86.5 × 51 cm).

Cheeks: 27 (68.5 cm).

Lacunae: Gallows (see below).

Notes: Bought in 1894.¹¹ In 1969 the coffin was restored; the side-pieces were decayed and worm-eaten, and it was found that they had been cut away to take a larger stone. The two corner-irons nearest to the platen and the end-piece of the coffin-frame were missing. The coffin-frame and corner-irons have been renewed and the stone cut to its conjectured original size of 32 × 20½ (81 × 52 cm). The original woodwork and corner-irons have been preserved.

Notes from a visit made in 2011: My first impression was of how large and heavily-built this press is. It is also the only one that I have seen made from mahogany which, even at the time of construction, must have been an expensive choice. W. Turner Berry in his account of this press surmises that it was built around 1750 and only later fitted with the Stanhope lever (see Fig. GB2). He offers as evidence some cutting away of wood from the press's

9. Smart (1980/1981, note 8), p. 84.

10. For an account of this work, and some of the photographs of the press made at the time, see Smart (1980/1981, note 8), who refers to a total of sixty-five photographs 'and a set of drawings occupying twelve sheets' (p. 88).

11. W. Turner Berry, 'Autobiography of a wooden press', *Typographica* 8 (1954), 20–26.



GB2. At St Bride.

left cheek in order to make room for the levers' knuckle-joint but I am still left wondering whether, in view of its large size, its builder planned from the start to gear up the pull with a compound lever.

Caleb Stower in *The printer's grammar* of 1808 reports that the application of Stanhope's lever to the common press had been attempted 'by nearly all the press-makers of the metropolis' but that the experience had shown 'how impossible it is to construct a machine of this sort, comprised principally of wood, capable of resisting the great increased power intended to be produced by the new arrangement of the bar and spindle'.¹² This press and

12. Caleb Stower, *The printer's grammar; or, introduction to the art of printing*. London: Published by the editor ... for B. Crosby and Co., 1808, p. 506.

GB6 are the only known examples of presses now extant fitted with compound levers.

This press is complete except for two missing cramp-irons, but is in too fragile a state to be usable. The gallows which Gaskell listed as missing seem to have appeared again. The tympan still have their original skin coverings but these have dried out and contracted so much that the tympan frames have become distorted.

GB3 Bodleian Library, Oxford

Type: Modified Blaeu hose, head-bolts, ratchet girth-winch, guide-boards.

Platen: $19 \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ (48 × 32 cm); wood.

Tympan: $27 \times 21\frac{3}{4}$ (68.5 × 55 cm).

Cheeks: $25\frac{1}{2}$ (65 cm).

Lacunae: Winter, frisket (see below).

Notes: Formerly at the Oxford University Press; bought by John Johnson from a small printer and stationer in Woolwich in 1932.

Notes from a visit made in April 2012: The press was then housed at the Story Museum, Rochester House, Pembroke Street, Oxford, but was moved in August 2015 to the Visiting Scholars' Centre in the Weston Library. This press is now complete. It was kept at the University Press until some time after Johnson's death in 1956, and was donated to the Library before 1970 (though the photograph reproduced by Gaskell shows it in its former home at the University Press). It has been used regularly to demonstrate early-modern printing, and is the only original common press in the country currently functional. The woodwork is very simple with little use of mouldings or decoration apart from the rather elegantly turned hind-posts. The tenons on the upper end of the cheeks are unusual in the way they project well above the cap, perhaps to provide anchor points for ceiling braces. Wood-screws have been used copiously in the press's construction. They have parallel threads and are without points. This probably implies a late-eighteenth-century date as the manufacturing process for such screws was not patented until 1760. Before this, screws were hand filed. There are just four cramp irons but these run right across the underside of the plank, a feature shared with GB12. The normal arrangement is of five smaller irons on each side. The winter which was absent in the previous census has now been replaced as has the upper back rail. The head is badly



cracked (and has been repaired with an iron brace) and the guide boards are frail, but this press is still remarkably complete even down to the original point screws and foot-stop. When Gaskell examined the press, the frisket was absent. It was presumably missing at that time but has since been found, as the press has a frisket-frame which appears to date from the same period as the tympan, and both are shown (albeit not clearly) in Gaskell's photograph.

GB3. At the Story Museum, Oxford.

GB4 Chetham's Library, Long Millgate, Manchester

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, without guide-boards.

Platen: 18 × 22 (45.5 × 56 cm); wood.

Tympan: 28 × 22 (71 × 56 cm).

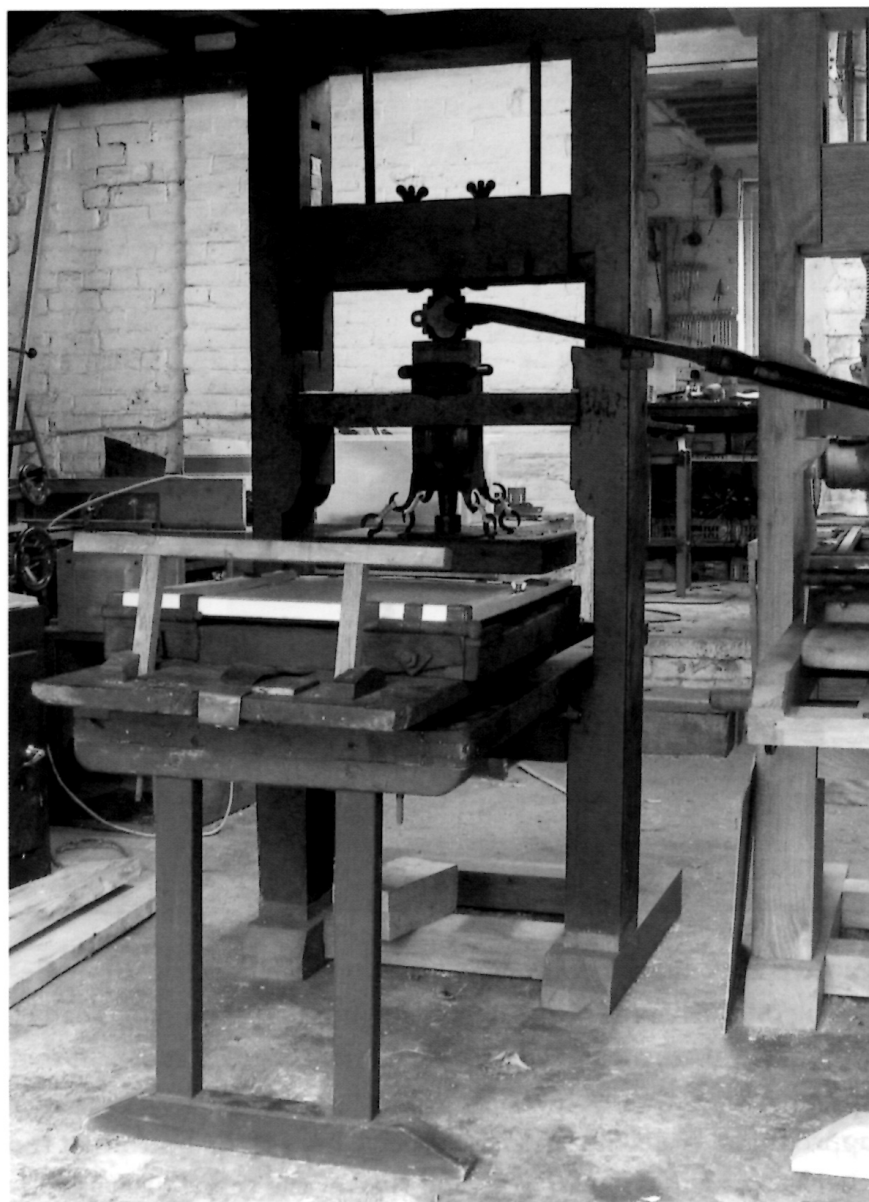
Cheeks: 26 (66 cm).

Lacunae: Feet, hind-posts and rails, gallows.

Notes: Presented in the early twentieth century by George Falkner and Sons, Deansgate Press, Manchester, together with other equipment. The press was not illustrated in Gaskell's survey.

Notes from a visit made in 2010: This press was reputedly in working condition when it arrived in the library. We know this because the donor tells us as much in a pamphlet *Description of the press* which he produced at the time of presentation in 1902.¹³ The booklet was sold by the library for one penny. When examined early in 2010, however, this press was in very poor condition with evidence of both woodworm and rot. One corner of the carriage and the outer tympan were both worm-eaten and unusable. At some time between 1902 and the date of Gaskell's survey, the feet and cross members of the press have been lost. Subsequently, an attempt has been made to use it without feet. Whoever did this must first have tried to make the press more stable by screwing the cheeks to the winter then bolting the carriage down through the winter tenons. They had also to shorten the forestay and provide another stay at the other end of the carriage because the press was then 140 cm lower than intended. It is known that this press spent some time on loan to the John Rylands Library, apparently for the purpose of demonstrating printing, but whether the feet were still present then is uncertain. In any case this makeshift construction was highly unsatisfactory. When seen, the press was still very unstable and much too low to be used effectively. It also has a number of unusual features in its carpentry. It is constructed almost entirely of softwood and is completely without mouldings or other decoration. It appears never to have had hind-posts or hind-rails as there are no mortises for these in the cheeks. The method of joining the head and feet to the cheeks is unusual and is borrowed from roof-construction (see below). It works structurally, but makes the job of assembling the press very awkward. On the other hand the metalwork of the press looks entirely appropriate. This misfit between the quality of the woodwork and the ironwork leads me to suspect that perhaps this is a late attempt to reuse parts from an earlier press. As

13. Robert Falkner, *Description of the antique printing press & other hand appliances: formerly the property of Messrs. Geo. Falkner & Sons of the Deansgate Press Manchester, and presented by them to the Chetham's Hospital & Library ...* [Manchester: Chetham's Hospital, 1902]. A second edition was printed a few years later.



GB4.1. During restoration in Alan May's workshop.

a result of my visit to Chetham's Library, I was asked to undertake some restoration work on the press

The following restoration was carried out in late 2010. New oak feet and cross members were fitted and in order to be consistent with the original construction, these had to be bolted on. The original bolts were missing but the captive nuts which these would have engaged with were still in place, fitted into small mortises cut into the inside face of the cheeks and retained there by wooden plugs (see Fig. GB4.3). The same arrangement was used to fix the cap to the cheeks. This method is found in early-nineteenth-century roof-construction. It has disadvantages when used on a press as it is not possible to insert and tighten the bolts with the press upright. New nuts and bolts had to be used as the



GB4.2 (above). Early machine-made screws.

GB4.3 (right). A partly with-drawn wooden plug used to retain a captive nut.



captive nuts did not conform to any modern bolt thread. In deciding on the length of the new bolts those retaining the head to the cheeks were measured. In doing this it became apparent that the cheeks had at some time in the past been shortened by approximately 40 cm, since the captive nuts at the bottom of the cheeks were much nearer the end than at the top. This was confirmed by checking the press's total height and the height of the carriage. Packing-pieces were fitted under the cheeks to correct this (see Fig. GB4.1). The carriage corner-joint was repaired and the fore-stay rebuilt to its original height. A new outer tympan was made utilising the hinges from the original. The rounce-barrel was repaired and new leather girths fitted. New oak galls were supplied and the mounting-brackets mended. Minor patching was also done to the wooden oil retaining fillets surrounding the ribs on the carriage and the platen. The plank was badly split, which had caused some of the cramp-irons to become loose. These were found to be held in place by factory made iron screws without points. The plank was made good and the loose cramp-irons secured. The press has no carriage guide-boards. Instead the plank is guided in its travel through the press by four of the ten cramp-irons attached to its under surface having

downward extensions which bear against the ribs and so hold it on course. Repair work was kept to the minimum. The aim was to do just enough to return the press to a condition where it was stable and able to be used for demonstration purposes.

Regarding the date of this press, Falkner speculates in his booklet that it dates from the mid-seventeenth-century. It is possible that some of the metalwork is from this period but the evidence provided by the woodwork argues for a much later date. Factory-made woodscrews are used profusely in the press's construction (see Fig. GB4.2). Such screws first appear about 1760. Until around 1850 they were made without points and so had to be screwed into a pre-drilled hole. By 1800 factory-made screws without points were available in a variety of sizes and were relatively inexpensive. The use of bolts with captive nuts was first employed to replace the traditional mortise-and-tenon joint in roof-construction around 1820.

GB5 Scarborough Public Library Museum and Art Gallery

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, guide-boards.

Platen: 18 × 12 (45.5 × 30.5 cm); wood, iron faced.

Tympan: 28 × 23¾ (71 × 60.5 cm).

Cheeks: 26 (66 cm).

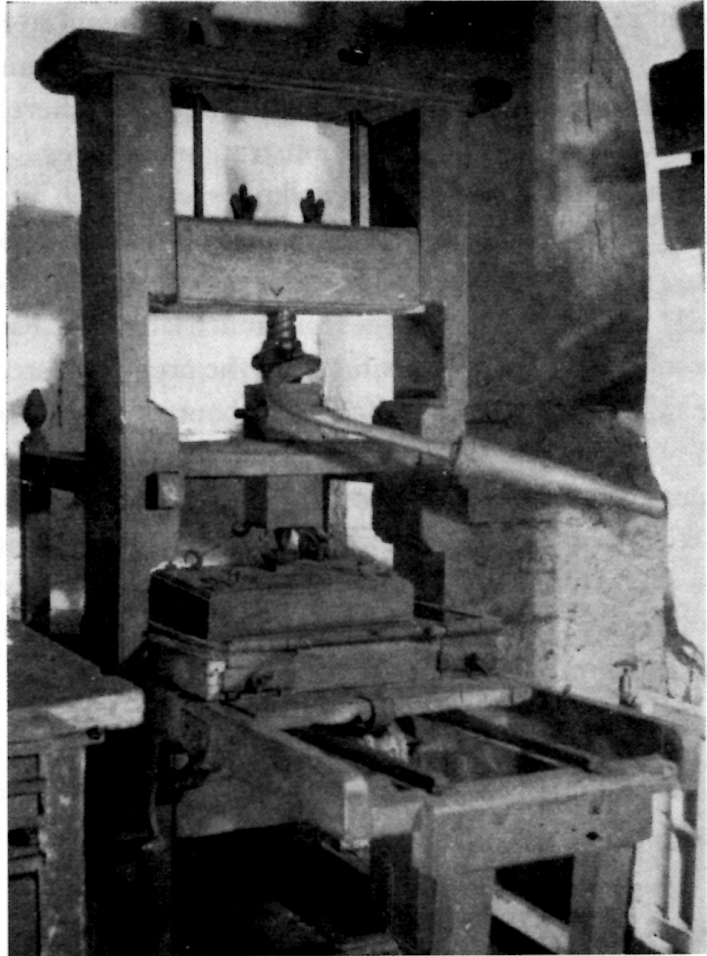
Lacunae: Gallows.

Notes: This press is said to have belonged to the York printer Thomas Gent (1693–1778).

Notes from a visit made in April 2011: From Gaskell's photograph this press appears to have been in good condition at the time of his survey, except that the plank looks to have been shortened and the gallows-supports removed. Sadly, when I visited the site in 2011 the press had suffered a catastrophe. What remains of it is now in store at Woodend Creative Workspace, the Cresnet, Scarborough YO11 2PW.

The press was given to the Museum in 1899 by a member of the Todd family which had taken over the printing-office and lending library on Bland's Cliff in Scarborough in the early nineteenth century. This was the first printing-office in Scarborough and was established by Thomas Gent in 1734. The press was on display in the 1970s at the St Thomas's Museum, Sandside, Scarborough. When this closed, the press was dismantled and transferred to an outstore prone to damp. In 2003 someone realised that it was deteriorating and had it moved into a boiler-room to

GB5. Gaskell's photograph as published in the PHS *Journal* in 1970.



dry out. The separate parts were then treated for wet rot then wrapped in polythene and placed on shelves in the store where they now reside. The polythene wrappings made it difficult to check for missing items or obtain photographs. The few items that could be unwrapped indicated that much of the woodwork had already deteriorated beyond repair. The museum intends to retain the press but has no plans to restore it.

GB6 Huntly House Museum, Edinburgh (now Writers' Museum, Edinburgh)

Type: Modified Blaeu hose; Stanhope lever-movement; head-bolts, girth-ratchet; iron bed.

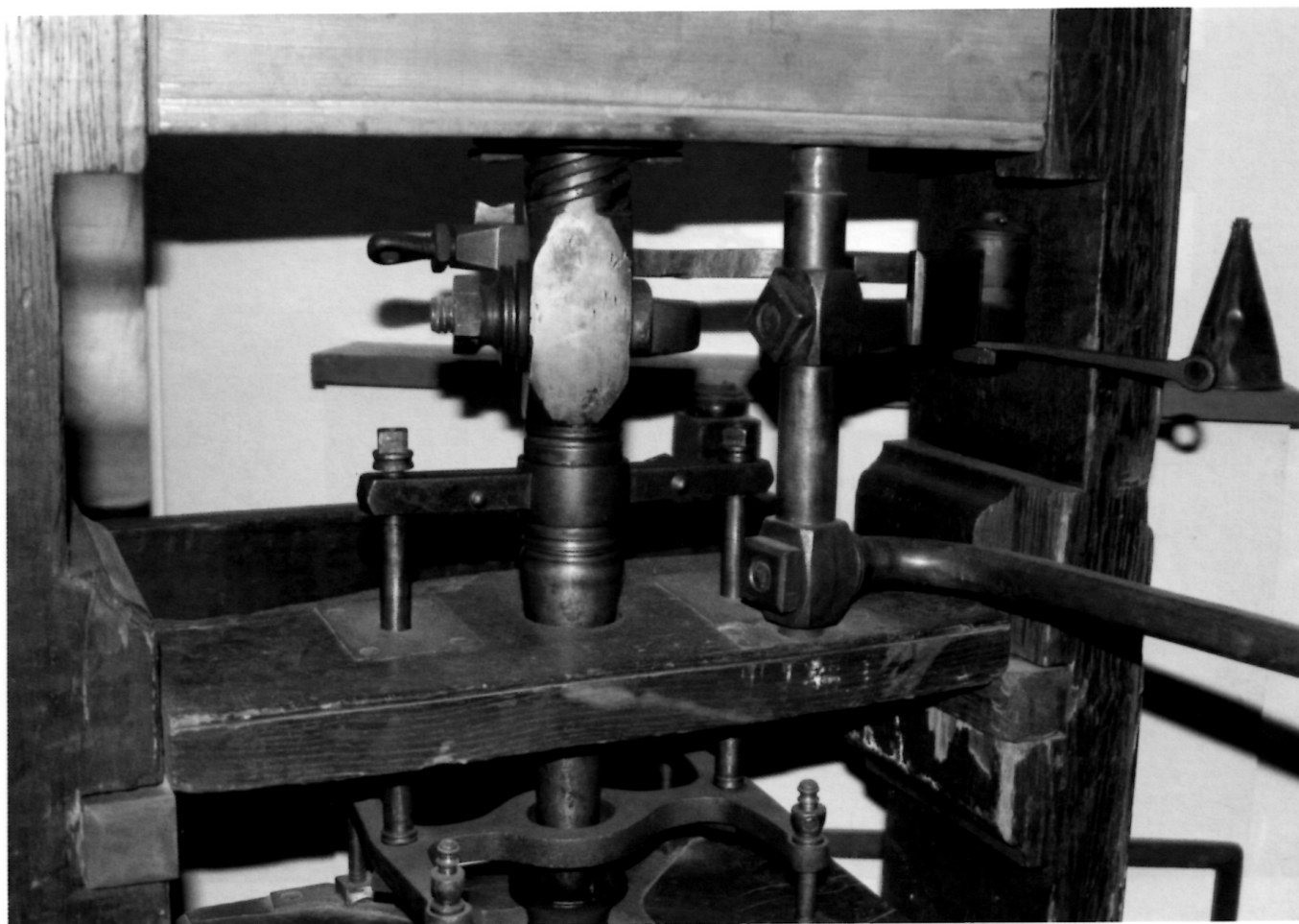
Platen: $19\frac{1}{2} \times 12$ (49.5 \times 30.5 cm); wood, iron faced.

Tympan: $28\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$ (72 \times 54.5 cm).

Cheeks: $25\frac{1}{2}$ (65 cm).

Lacunae: Possibly winter.

Notes: Dismantled. Dated 1796. Presented by Spottiswode Ballantyne to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (accession number W.35/1940). Now located in the Writers Museum, Lady

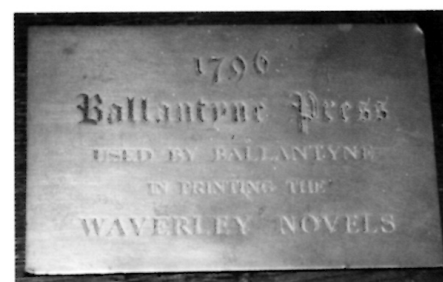


Stairs House, Lady Stairs Close, Edinburgh (accession number HH1730/5). This press was not illustrated by Gaskell.

GB6.1 (above). Detail of the hose and 'Stanhope' mechanism.

Notes from a visit made in April 2013: This press and GB2 at the St Bride Library are the only known examples of common presses fitted with Stanhope levers. The two are however very different. GB2 is a box-hose press while GB6 has a modified Blaeu hose, with guide-boards, and is also much smaller. The Stanhope levers are different too, both in their engineering and in the way they are mounted. The press is complete but the winter, cap and head are modern replacements.

GB6.2 (below). The plaque attached to press GB6.



A double girth-winch is fitted to the plank and a single one to the front of the coffin. A ball-rack is attached to the left cheek. Unfortunately, the room in which the press is displayed is so small that it was not possible to get a complete picture of it. A plaque attached to the press states '1796 Ballantyne Press used by Ballantyne in printing the Waverley Novels' (see Fig. GB6.2). The first edition of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (the first of the 'Waverley novels') was printed by James Ballantyne (1772–1833) in 1814, so this is a plausible claim.



GB7. Detail of the press, showing the cheeks, platen, coffin etc.

GB7 Leeds Museums and Galleries

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, without guide-boards, screw-cleat for girth.

Platen: 19 × 12¾ (48 × 32.5 cm); wood, iron-faced.

Tympan: 29 × 23 (73.5 × 58.5 cm).

Cheeks: 26 (66 cm).

Lacunae: Hind-posts and rails, frisket, gallows, rounce; the plank appears to have been shortened.

Notes: At the time of Gaskell's survey the press was on loan to Leeds University from the City Museum, to which it had been presented by Mr G. Pallister. It is now located at Armley Mills Industrial Museum, Leeds (accession number LEEDM.5.1981.0039.1).

Notes from a visit made in June 2012: This press appears to have been in a dilapidated state, with numerous parts missing, even at the time of Gaskell's survey. It was also incorrectly set-up, with the bar inverted, the feet fitted the wrong way round and the carriage not correctly positioned. It is now dismantled and in store together with a number of iron hand-presses. It now

has new hind-posts and upper and lower back- and side-rails, all replaced in softwood. Items still missing are the stone, gallows, inner tympan, rounce-handle and platen-pan. The plank has been shortened leaving only sufficient room for a girth-clamp but not the gallows. The coffin-sides have been cut down, perhaps to make use of it as a proofing press in spite of the absence of a stone. The platen which is not lashed to the hose is iron faced and has a platen-plate and a moulding around its top which suggest a mid-eighteenth-century date. The proximity of other stored items prevented the obtaining of a satisfactory photograph.

GB8 Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums

Type: Modified Blaeu hose; head-bolts, guide-boards, ratchet girth-winch.

Platen: $18\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{3}{4}$ (47.5 × 32.5 cm).

Tympan: $27\frac{3}{4} \times 21$ (70.5 × 53 cm).

Cheeks: $24\frac{1}{4}$ (61.5 cm).

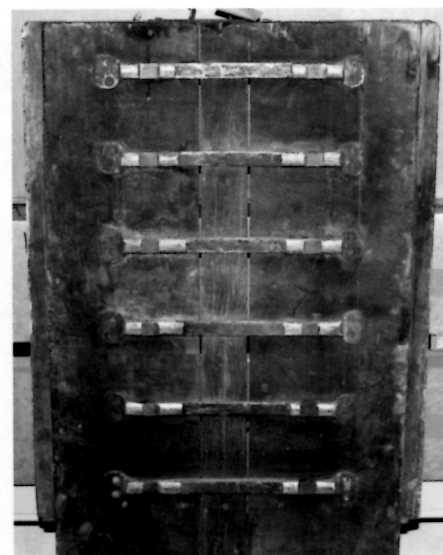
Lacunae: Gallows.

Notes: Museum accession number ABDMS75264.

Notes from a visit made in April 2013: Dismantled and in store. This press was apparently complete except for the gallows and some damage to its feet at the time of Gaskell's census and, until my visit, the museum was under the impression that this was still the case. Sadly the till-blocks, winter, inner tympan and stone have all now disappeared. I understand that a search for the missing items is planned. The six cramp-irons run right across the plank and so help to keep it flat (see Fig. GB8.2). This would seem an improvement over the norm of ten small separate irons. The press has little in the way of decoration, apart from the turned work on the hind-rails. The museum's 1898 catalogue contains an entry which reads 'Old Printing Press and Table, "old Durno's" – Presented by Alexander Walker, Esq. LL.D'. This is no doubt a reference to the Aberdeen printer Alexander Durno (1815–1889?), who specialised in broadsheets. The donor was a local merchant and antiquary, Alexander Walker (1825–1903).



GB8.1. The press in store at Aberdeen.



GB8.2. The underside of the plank, showing the six cramp-irons.

GB9.





GB9.2 (left). Detail of the platen showing the mouldings.

GB9 Museum of Science and Engineering, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (now renamed The Discovery Museum)

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, without guide-boards; screw-cleat for girth.

Platen: 18 × 12¾ (45.5 × 32.5 cm); mahogany.

Tympan: 30 × 24¼ (76 × 62 cm).

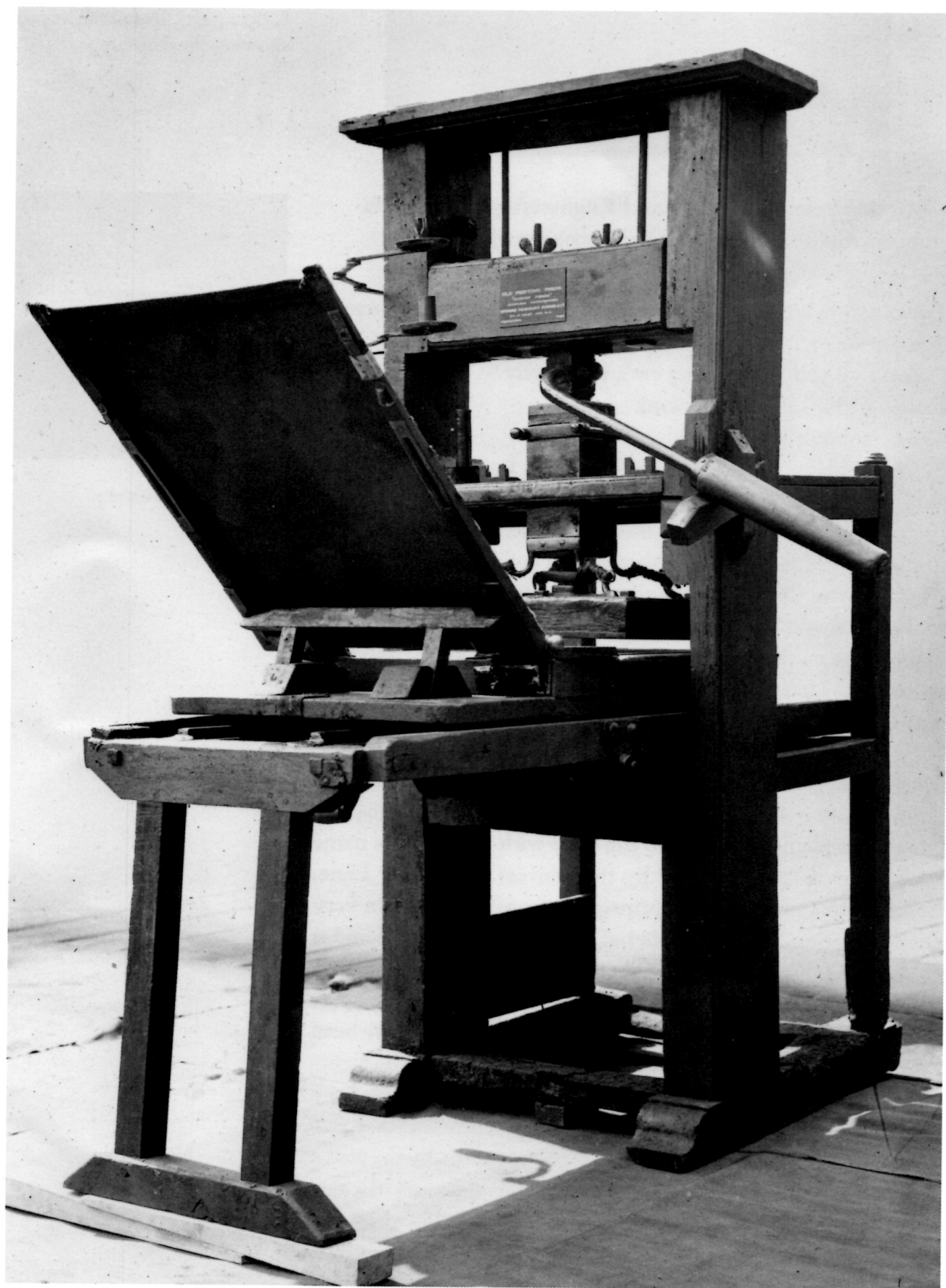
Cheeks: 26 (66 cm).

Notes: Gaskell says 'Said to have been built by [Thomas] Apenshaw of Leather Lane, London (Pendred's 'Ashpinshaw') in about 1750 (although it looks later than this); then to have belonged to the Newcastle printer D. Akenhead [David Akenhead (1735–1813)] during the later eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century it was in the possession of a family of Newcastle printers named Emery [Robert Emery (1794–1871) and his heirs]; presented to the museum by R. F. Emery in 1948' (accession number TWCMS:2002.049).

Notes from a visit made in May 2012: Gaskell supplied no measurements (those noted above were taken by me in 2012). The press has a brass plaque attached to the head with the maker's name spelt 'Ashpinshaw' followed by the address 61 Leather Lane, London. The press is made principally from oak and is in very good condition. It is complete but has been immobilised and is on display as if within a tiny eighteenth century printing-office. There are very few woodscrews used in its construction, apart from those holding down the girth clamp (which may have been fitted later) so that the projected date of the middle of the eighteenth century is probably correct (though it may not have been made by Thomas Ashpinshaw, who is only recorded as active between 1785 and 1805). This dating is borne out too by the platen which is of mahogany and has a nicely-cut ogee and astragal moulding framing its upper surface (Fig. GB9.2). The press has never had till-blocks. The till, which unusually is in one piece, is fixed to the cheeks by four specially-made cheese-headed bolts, so made that they can be driven in flush with the cheek surface by means of a forked screwdriver.



GB9.3. Girth-clamp.



GB12. Photographed in the 1930s.

GB10 and GB11 omitted (see p. ?? above).

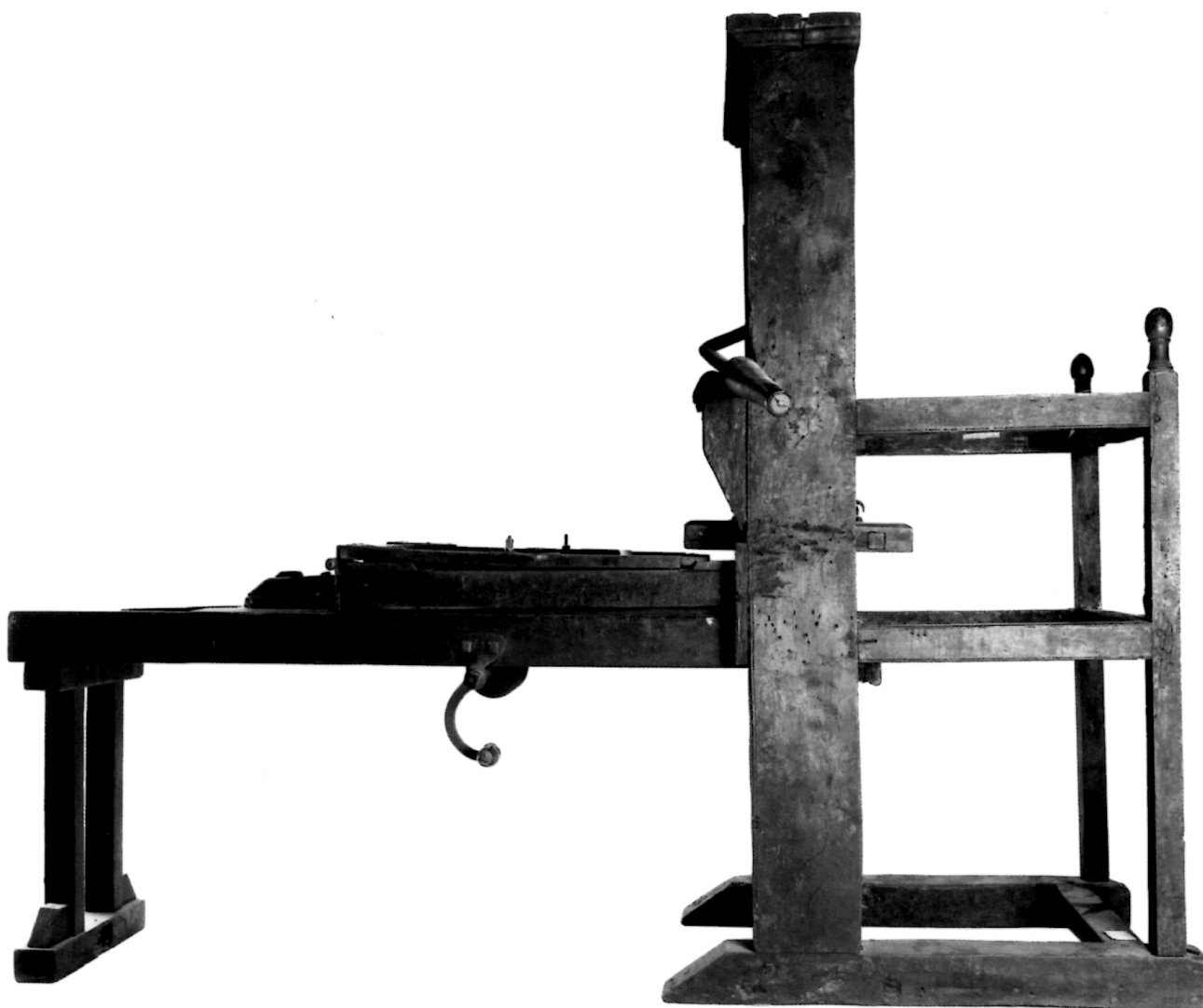
GB12 Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh (now National Museums, Scotland)

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, no guide-boards.

Lacunae: Platen, gallows.

Notes: Presented by the Science Museum (now the National Museum of Science and Industry), London, in 1932 (see below), where it had been assigned the number 1883/158. Before this, the press had been in the possession of Marchant Singer and Company. The press was on show at the time of Gaskell's census, but with the carriage assembly dismantled. Gaskell's photograph is confusing, showing another press (a Ruthven?) and a detached platen in the foreground. Royal Scottish Museum acquisition number 1946.X.11; National Museums, Scotland, acquisition number T.1962.82.

Notes from a visit made in April 2013: This press is now dismantled and in store and it has not been possible to measure the tympan or distance between the cheeks. The carriage is without guide-boards. According to the museum's records this press came to Edinburgh in 1932, not 1946 as Gaskell suggests (probably based on the acquisition number). The Museum has a number of early photographs of the press, one of which appears above (Fig. GB12). These photographs are not dated but were probably taken at the time of the press's departure from the Science Museum. They show the original iron-faced platen in place. This platen had disappeared by the time of Gaskell's census. In 1963 the press was displayed at Earl's Court in the 'Printing and the mind of man' exhibition, by which time it had acquired a new replacement platen and gallows. It still has an original ink block but has lost the two candle-holders which can be seen in the early photographs. The press is in a stable condition apart from the front foot cross-member which is cracked and decayed. It has lost two corner irons and the turned decorations atop the hind-posts. There are mouldings around the cap, head and till and on the front edges of the cheeks suggesting an early-to-mid eighteenth-century date. It was last on display at the National Library of Scotland around 2007.



GB13. Side-view (photograph courtesy of the Museum of London)

GB13 Museum of London.

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, guide-boards.

Cheeks: 26 (66 cm).

Notes: Dismantled at Lancaster House (museum accession number A 21786).

Notes from a visit made in April 2012: The press was on public display at the time of my visit but was placed on a steeply-sloping ramp and was overlaid with mounted work from an unrelated exhibition. This made photography all but impossible. I have therefore used an image supplied by the museum (Fig. GB13). The press is almost complete although in a shaky condition. The gallows are no longer present, although they are shown in Gaskell's picture. The press is incorrectly set up. The carriage needs to be pushed farther in so that its right hand end butts up against the hind-rails. The rounce-handle is also either fitted to

the wrong side of the carriage or, more likely, the carriage has been fitted back to front. There are no girths and no press-stone. The front cross-member is a replacement. The appearance suggests a mid-eighteenth-century date.

GB14 St Bride Library, London

Type: English; box-hose.

Cheeks: 15½ (39.5 cm).

Lacunae: Cap, platen, frisket, bar.

Notes: Not illustrated by Gaskell. Formerly owned by Hove Public Library.

Notes from a visit made in May 2011: The press is dismantled and in a basement store. Several parts not listed as missing by Gaskell could not be seen at the time of my visit, but happily these had been put elsewhere for safe keeping and have since come to light; they include the spindle-garter and hose. All appear to be in good condition. The press came from Hove Public Library in about 1960. Little is known of its earlier provenance but its appearance suggests an eighteenth-century date. The press framework is in good condition although the fact that none of the wood joints is dovetailed allows more movement than is desirable. The press is unusually small. The width between the cheeks implies a platen size of about 10 × 8 (25.5 × 20.5 cm).

GB15 omitted (see p. ?? above).

GB16 Newark Museum, Newark-on-Trent

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, without guide-boards.

Cheeks: 25½ (65 cm).

Lacunae: Spindle, hose, nut-retaining bolts, garter, till, till-blocks, platen, stone, inner and outer tympan, frisket, rounce, rounce-spit, rounce-hangers.

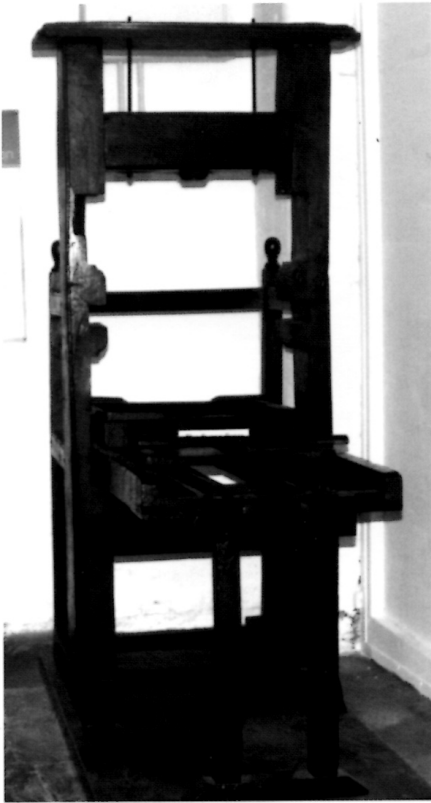
Notes: Not included in Gaskell's survey. Museum accession number 756.1.

Notes from a visit made in October 2011: When viewed this press was on display at Newark Museum, 48 Millgate, Newark-on-Trent. However, this museum is now closed and a new museum, the Newark and Sherwood Museum Service Resource Centre, Brunel Drive, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 2EG, opened in

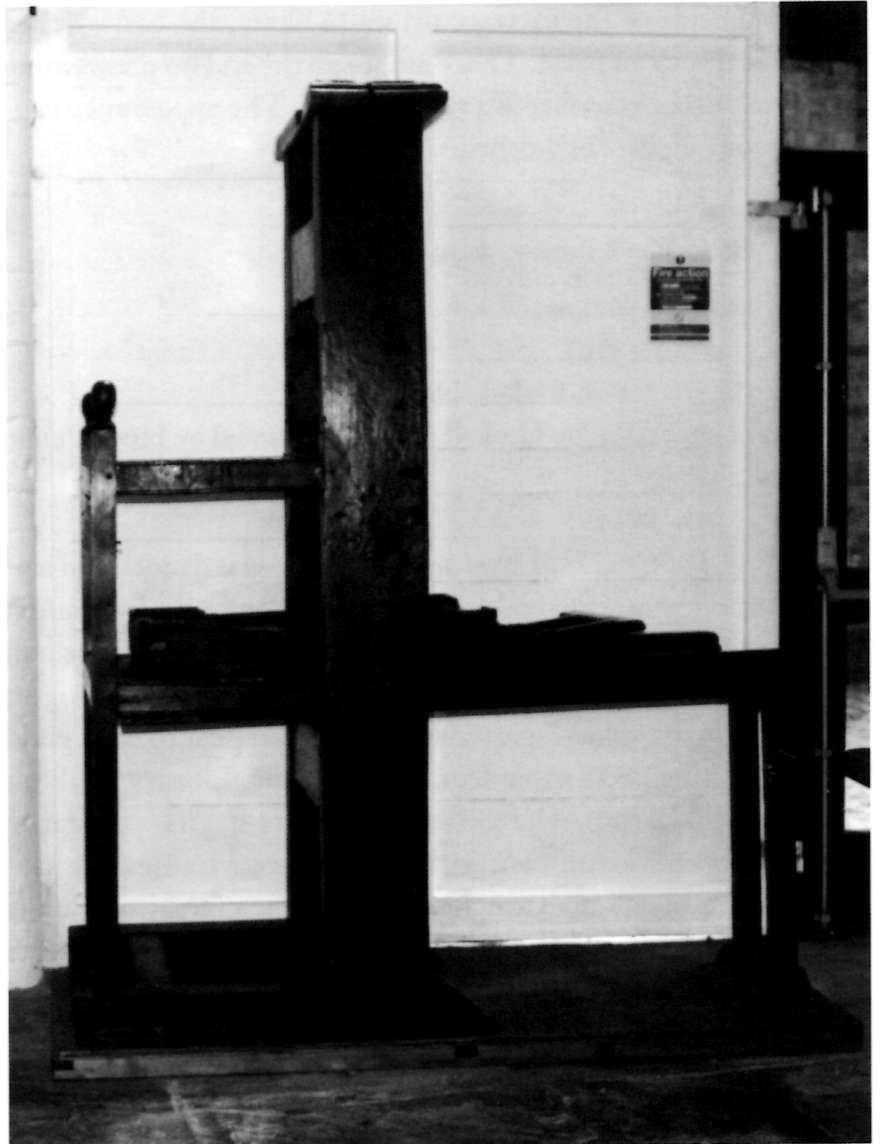


GB14. The press in store at St Bride.

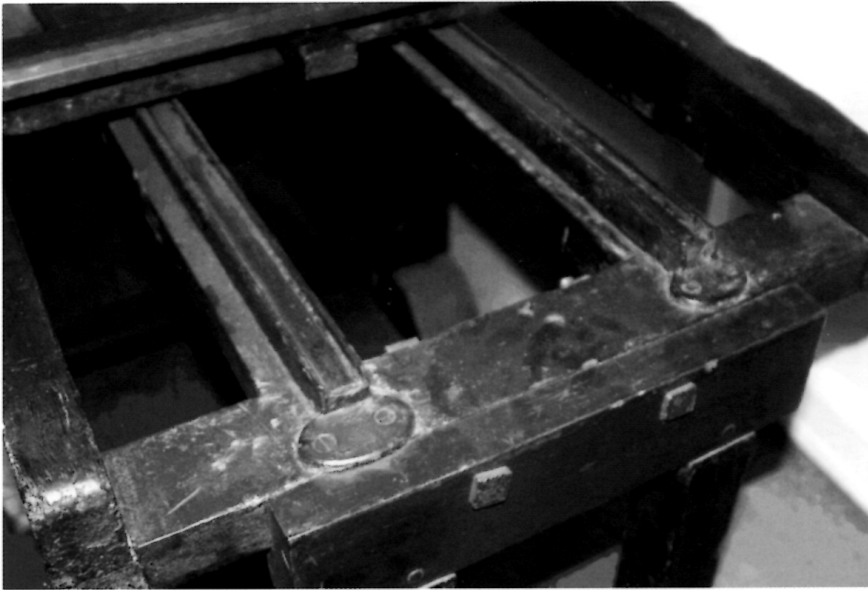
GB16.1 (right). Side view (all images of this press courtesy of Newark and Sherwood Museum).



GB16.2 (above). End view.



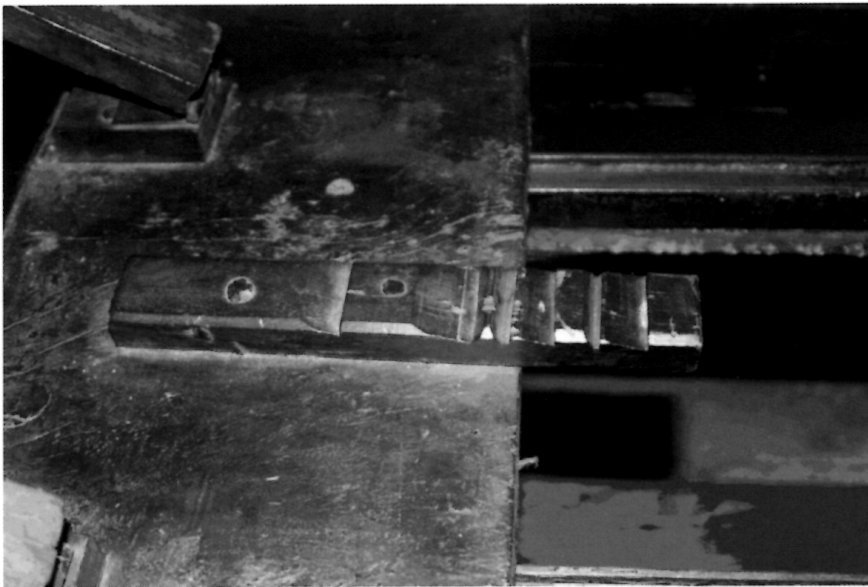
late 2014, where this press is believed to be in store. The press was originally the property of Samuel and John Ridge who presented it to Newark Town Museum in 1911. It is rumoured that some of Lord Byron's early work was printed on it. The press is far from complete and from some photographs in the possession of the museum it appears that this was the case before they took possession of it. Most of the wooden parts are still present and in reasonable condition. Some restoration work has been done and the head-bolts are replacements. The method of ensuring that the carriage runs true is unusual. On a press without guide-boards the front and rear cramp-irons normally have downward projections which register against the sides of the steel ribs. On this press the ribs have been made with a wide groove running down the centre of each (Fig. GB16.3). In this groove run



GB16.3 (above). Ribs with centre groove.



GB16.5 (above). Butterfly-shaped cramp-iron.



GB16.4 (above). Notched wooden strip for adjusting the angle of the gallows.

pecially-made butterfly-shaped cramp-irons which have round projections which fit into the grooves (Fig. GB16.5). This arrangement must have been more trouble to make but would have helped to keep the ribs lubricated. I have not seen such an arrangement in any other press. The gallows are attached to the plank with hinges. The gallows angle was adjustable by means of a strut (now lost) held in position by a notched wooden strip attached to the plank (Fig. GB16.4).



GB17.1. The press photographed around 1953.

GB17 National Museum of Wales, St Fagan's

Type: English; box-hose, head-bolts, without guide-boards, screw-cleats for girths.

Platen: 18 × 11¾ (45.5 × 30 cm); webbed cast iron.

Cheeks: 25⅝ (65 cm).

Lacunae: Gallows, tympan, frisket.

Notes: Not included in Gaskell's survey. Museum acquisition number NMW 53.425.

Notes from a visit made in March 2011: When viewed in 2011 this press was on display at Brecon Museum and Art Gallery but has since been returned to storage at the Collections Centre, Nantgarw, near Cardiff. The press was found in Crickhowell town hall when Breconshire County Council purchased the property from the Duke of Beaufort's Estate in 1953. One of the photographs reproduced here (Fig. GB17.1) was taken at about the time of its discovery. The press is believed to have been used by William Williams (1775–1844) of Brecon between 1802 and 1844, and later at Crickhowell.

The till is in one piece and is attached to the cheeks using bolts and captive nuts. There are no till-blocks. Only the base of the gallows is present, and is hinged to the plank. This unusual arrangement allowed the angle of the gallows to be adjusted by means of a strut (as with GB16). The evidence for this is a metal plate still attached to the plank which has a series of holes drilled in it to hold the strut (Fig. GB17.3). Instead of a stone there is a webbed iron casting. The use of iron casings for stone and platen, and the frequent use of wood screws employed in its construction, suggest a late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century date. Since its return to the Collections Centre at Nantgarw the museum has taken the opportunity to make a collection of photographs of all of its separate parts.



GB17.2. The press on display at St Fagan's in 2011.



GB17.3 (left). The gallows adjustment-plate