

# Cheap Print and Street Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century

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David Atkinson and Steve Roud (eds), *Cheap Print and Street Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023,  
<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0347>

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ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80511-039-2

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80511-040-8

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80511-041-5

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80511-042-2

ISBN XML: 978-1-80511-044-6

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80511-045-3

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0347

Cover image: 'Jack on a cruise', pewter print. British Museum 2011.7084.20,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jack\\_on\\_a\\_cruise\\_\(BM\\_2011,7084.20\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jack_on_a_cruise_(BM_2011,7084.20).jpg)  
Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

# 4. Popular Print in a Regional Capital: Street Literature and Public Controversy in Norwich, 1701–1800

*David Stoker*

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At the turn of the seventeenth century Norwich was the largest English provincial city, with a population of around 30,000, and would retain this pre-eminence for the next three decades. It was the trading and distribution hub for the prosperous East Anglian region and a production centre for textiles.<sup>1</sup> Weaving was the principal occupation of its inhabitants, supported by a host of related trades, such as dyers, spinners, hot-pressers, and so on. However, it was as a commercial centre with its associated professional services that Norwich gained most of its wealth. Its marketplace was described as the largest in England. The city was a significant inland port at the centre of the large and densely populated county of Norfolk, which had two important sea ports — Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn — and a host of prosperous market towns. It was also the seat of a diocese.

By 1752 the population had grown to 36,000, rising to 40,000 in 1786, but had been overtaken by Bristol. According to a mid-nineteenth-century historian, Norwich underwent its 'most prosperous time' between 1750

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1 Penelope J. Corfield, 'From Second City to Regional Capital', in *Norwich since 1550*, ed. Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson, with Christine Clark (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 139–66.

and 1780, a boom period ended by the economic disruption brought about by the French Wars of the 1790s.<sup>2</sup> The 1801 census recorded a population of 37,000, but the city now ranked seventh in England, behind the ports of Bristol, Liverpool, and Plymouth, and the emerging manufacturing centres of Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds. The city had lost its supremacy in textile production to west Yorkshire. Thus, eighteenth-century Norwich saw rapid growth for eighty-five years, followed by the beginnings of a decline.

This period also corresponds with the reintroduction of printing to the city and the establishment of the first local newspapers in 1701.<sup>3</sup> This trade catered not only for the gentry and educated classes, but for tradesmen and other literate citizens. It also provided an outlet for — and record of — public controversies of all kinds. Norwich offers an opportunity to trace the impact of the coming of print on the everyday lives of the provincial population, through the development of the printing trade and the successes and failures of competing firms.

## The formal and informal book trade

By 1700 Norwich had a thriving book trade, with three established bookselling businesses near its marketplace — each of which was several decades old — as well as two newcomers who had recently set up shop.<sup>4</sup> These had a working relationship with printers and wholesale booksellers in London and Cambridge, who supplied their wares. There was a fair degree of ‘publishing’ in the city, where Norwich booksellers either commissioned or shared in the production costs of works of local interest, designated as ‘printed for’ in the imprint. Alternatively, they

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- 2 A. D. Bayne, *Comprehensive History of Norwich* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1869), p. 572. Population figures are given in Thomas Peck, *The Norwich Directory* (Norwich: J. Payne, [1802]), p. 69.
  - 3 Printing had briefly been practised in Norwich between 1568 and 1573 among the large community of Dutch Protestant refugees, but not thereafter until 1701. See David Stoker, ‘Anthony de Solempne: Attributions to his Press’, *The Library*, 6th ser., 3 (1981), 17–32.
  - 4 David Stoker, ‘The Norwich Book Trades before 1800: A Biographical Directory’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 8 (1981), 79–125, entries for Oliver, Giles, Rose, Goddard, and Selfe.

might act as named distributors, designated as 'sold by' in the imprint.<sup>5</sup> The Norwich book trade would grow at a steady rate throughout the eighteenth century due to the growth of the economy, the introduction of local printing in 1701, and the development of papermaking in Norfolk during the 1690s.

The nature and extent of a less formal trade in street literature in Norwich is difficult to chart because of the transience of the tradesmen and the failure of their products to survive. Nevertheless, throughout the seventeenth century there is evidence in the city records of an informal trade in printed matter, especially broadside ballads. Most of this comes from the permissions granted to ballad singers to advertise and sell their wares. Thus, in March 1681, 'John Taylor of Aye in Suffolk and his wife produced a licence from ye Master of ye Revells to signe [i.e. sing] and sell Ballads, and hath leave to doe so untill further order.'<sup>6</sup> Usually such licences were time-limited. Thus permission was given to Robert Woollans and Henry Martyn 'to sing reade and sell ballads for the space of a week behaving themselves civilly'.<sup>7</sup>

It was not only ballads that were sold in the streets and marketplaces of seventeenth-century Norwich. In 1679 Laurence White was authorized to 'read and sell pamphlets on horse-backe until Wednesday next'.<sup>8</sup> 'Pamphlets' sometimes included controversy or even sedition at times of political tension. In January 1689 an investigation was instituted to find the distributors of *Reflections on Monsieur Fagel's Letter*, with those concerned threatened with 'all the severity of the law'.<sup>9</sup> The investigation involved questioning two established booksellers and searching their stock. Later, in December 1693, Humphrey Prideaux, archdeacon of Suffolk, described the appearance of a 'scurrilous pamphlet against

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5 David Stoker, 'Norwich "Publishing" in the Seventeenth Century', in *Printing Places: Locations of Book Production & Distribution since 1500*, ed. John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press; London: British Library, 2005), pp. 31–46.

6 Norwich, Norfolk Record Office, Norwich Mayor's Court Book 25, fol. 85, 3 March 1681.

7 Norwich Mayor's Court Book 25, fol. 264, 24 May 1690.

8 Norwich Mayor's Court Book 25, fol. 37, 29 November 1679.

9 Calendar of State Papers (Domestic), 1688/9, 153, 166; *Reflections on Monsieur Fagel's Letter* ([12 January 1688]) [ESTC R182598].

my Lord Nottingham'.<sup>10</sup> However, it was not until the reintroduction of printing and the publication of the first newspapers after 1701 that there was significant evidence of this informal trade.

## The reintroduction of printing to Norwich

In September 1701 Francis Burges, a London journeyman printer, set up a press 'near the Red Well' in Norwich.<sup>11</sup> Prior to establishing his press, Burges had visited the city and secured support from local booksellers and several of the senior clergy. Some of the earliest small items to emerge from the new press were commissions from the cathedral. *Directions to Church-Wardens* was written and financed by Prideaux, 'for the use of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk', but printed and sold by Burges.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, a combination paper listing forthcoming preachers at the cathedral was printed at the behest of Thomas Tanner, chancellor of the diocese.<sup>13</sup> Other early titles were financed by members of the local book trade. *The Religion of the Bible*, by John Jeffery, archdeacon of Norwich, was 'printed for' Thomas Goddard, a young bookseller in the city.<sup>14</sup>

Most works to emerge from his press over the next few years were uncontroversial and aimed at an educated audience, including sermons, religious texts, and poems, often printed at the expense of their authors. Small items were commissioned by local booksellers for a less educated audience, such as *A Choice Collection of Divine and Pious Sentences*, printed

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10 Edward Maunde Thompson (ed.), *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux, sometime Dean of Norwich, 1674–1722* (London: Camden Society, 1875), p. 159.

11 David Stoker, 'The Establishment of Printing in Norwich: Causes and Effects, 1660–1760', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 7 (1977), 94–111; David Stoker, 'Printing at the Red-Well: An Early Norwich Press through the Eyes of Contemporaries', in *The Mighty Engine: The Printing Press and its Impact*, ed. Peter Isaac and Barry McKay (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), pp. 29–38.

12 Humphrey Prideaux, *Directions to Church-Wardens for the Faithful Discharge of their Office* (Norwich: printed and sold by Fra. Burges, near the Red Well, 1701) [ESTC T31885].

13 *Norfolk Preachers [...] from 2 November 1701 to Trinity Sunday Following* (Norwich: printed by F. Burges for Samuel Oliver, 1701) [London, British Library, Harleian MS 5910, II, fol. 152].

14 John Jeffery, *The Religion of the Bible: or, A Summary View of the Holy Scriptures as the Records of True Religion* (Norwich: printed by F. Burges; for T. Goddard, bookseller, in the Market Place, in Norwich; and for A. Baldwin, in Warwick Lane, London, 1701) [ESTC T122813].

for Thomas Goddard, who also commissioned *The Church Catechism, Analysed, Explained, and Improved*, 'For the use of Norwich school'.<sup>15</sup> Following a gruesome murder in Great Yarmouth in 1704, when a former sailor slit the throat of his landlady during an argument, one Norwich and one Yarmouth bookseller jointly commissioned *An Account of the Tryal and Condemnation of Mr. William Boone*, and when there were later accusations of inaccuracies in the account, all those concerned profited further by producing *An Account of Mr. Boon's Confession, together with the Last Passages of his Life*, which included 'a Letter to a Friend, Inlightning the Whole Matter'.<sup>16</sup>

Francis Burges realized that occasional commissions would not keep his press in business and that he would also have to undertake printing at his own risk and serve other potential markets. One way he did this, in November 1701, was to print the first issue of a weekly newspaper, the *Norwich Post*, the first to be printed in the provinces.<sup>17</sup> The other way was to recognize that there was a continuing demand for chapbooks, ballads, and other small titles by members of the peripatetic book trade. His earliest publication carried an announcement of another title, *The Parents Best Token to their Children*. Only a third edition survives, which shows it to be a chapbook containing moral precepts, a catechism, prayers, graces, fifty weighty questions and answers, and examples of God's heavy judgements.<sup>18</sup> Also:

The ABC; commonly call'd *The Kiss-Cross Row*, set down in all the different Characters that are to be met with in Books, with the *Vowels*,

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- 15 C. V. M., *A Choice Collection of Divine and Pious Sentences* (Norwich: printed for Tho. Goddard, bookseller, in the Market Place, in Norwich, 1702) [ESTC T186847]; *The Church Catechism, Analysed, Explained, and Improved* [...] for the Use of Norwich School (Norwich: printed for Tho. Goddard, 1703) [ESTC T85813].
  - 16 *An Account of the Tryal and Condemnation of Mr. William Boone* (Norwich: printed by Fr. Burges; for Thomas Goddard, in Norwich; and Owen Peartree, in Yarmouth; and are to be sold by Mrs Ann Baldwin, in London, 1704) [ESTC T208704]; *An Account of Mr. Boon's Confession, together with the Last Passages of his Life* (Norwich: printed by Fr. Burges; for Thomas Goddard, in Norwich; and Owen Peartree, in Yarmouth; and are to be sold by Mrs Ann Baldwin, in London, 1704) [ESTC T193190].
  - 17 Geoffrey Alan Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); R. M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices: Early Provincial Newspapers in England* ([Columbus]: Ohio State University Press, 1965); Trevor Fawcett, 'Early Norwich Newspapers', *Notes and Queries*, 19.10 (1972), 363–65.
  - 18 *The Parents Best Token to their Children*, 3rd edn (Norwich: printed and sold by Fra. Burges), price 1d. [ESTC T55694].

*Consonants, Diphthongs, double and treble Letters, with easy Syllables for them that cannot read, in a very plain way. With Directions, how to write true English; where to place, & how to keep Stops, & where to use Great Letters: how to make a Receipt in full or in part; And the Contractions us'd in Writing are explain'd, &c.*

All this was encompassed within sixteen pages and sold for 1*d*. Another chapbook surviving from the press, *A Token for God-Children*, written by John Jeffery, does not have Burges's name, merely the imprint 'Norwich, 1704', presumably because there was no longer any commercial need to advertise to the distributors.<sup>19</sup>

In a pamphlet prospectus issued from the press in September 1701, Burges had raised and answered potential objections to his trade: 'The Press may do more mischief than good, by putting people at variance in publishing of libels. — As to libels, I'll take care not to meddle with such.'<sup>20</sup> He was not always able to keep this promise, however, and sometimes preferred not to associate his name with a particular work. He printed three editions of *A Bomb Thrown amongst the Quakers in Norwich* by Francis Bugg, each one identifying the place of printing but not the name of the printer.<sup>21</sup> He also printed the anonymous rebuttal: *F--- B---'s Bomb, Obstructed in its Motion, and Hammer'd about his Own Pate*.<sup>22</sup>

Francis Burges's moderate success ended in November 1706 when the thirty-year-old died, leaving his widow Elizabeth and a journeyman to run a thriving business.<sup>23</sup> There are no surviving copies of the *Norwich Post* from Burges's lifetime, but soon after his death his widow was

19 John Jeffery, *A Token for God-Children* (Norwich, 1704) [not in ESTC].

20 David Stoker, 'Francis Burges' "Observations on Printing", 1701: A Reconstruction of the Text', *The Library*, 7th ser., 6 (2005), 161–77.

21 Francis Bugg, *A Bomb Thrown Amongst the Quakers in Norwich* (Norwich: printed for the author; and sold by the booksellers in Norwich, 1702) [ESTC T64361]; Francis Bugg, *A Bomb Thrown Amongst the Quakers in Norwich*, 2nd edn corrected and enlarged (Norwich: printed at Norwich; and sold by Norwich booksellers; and by J. Taylor, at the Ship, and R. Wilkins, at the King's Head, in St Paul's Churchyard, London, 1702) [ESTC N62641]; Francis Bugg, *A Bomb Thrown Amongst the Quakers in Norwich*, 2nd edn corrected and enlarged (Norwich: printed at Norwich; and sold by Norwich booksellers; and by J. Taylor, at the Ship, and R. Wilkins, at the King's Head, in St Paul's Churchyard, London, 1703) [ESTC T22955].

22 J. P., *F--- B---'s Bomb, Obstructed in its Motion, and Hammer'd about his Own Pate* (printed for the author; and sold by the booksellers in Norwich, 1702). [ESTC T60886].

23 John Chambers, *A General History of the County of Norfolk*, 2 vols (Norwich: J. Stacy, 1829), II, 1178.



indicating that the press was doing a healthy trade with the itinerant booksellers:

These are to give Notice to all Country Chapmen & others that at the Printing-house near the Red-Well, Norwich they may be furnish'd with all sort of history-Books, Song-Books, Broad-sides &c. There may also be had, Devotions for the Holy Communion. Price one penny. Likewise may be had a Book entitul'd A path-way to heaven: or, a sure way to happiness, viz. of Death, Heaven, Hell, Judgement, and very weighty Considerations of eternity. Price one penny. The true description of Norwich, both in its antient & modern state. Price one Penny.<sup>24</sup>

### The adolescent era of the Norwich press, 1707–20

Burges's success had not gone unnoticed, however. His death provided two businessmen the opportunity of stepping into the dead man's shoes. Within a few weeks two more presses appeared, with two journeymen printers recruited from London, each producing a range of small publications and a weekly newspaper. Neither of these entrepreneurs — Samuel Hasbart, a distiller, and Thomas Goddard, the bookseller — had foreseen the existence of the other or realized that Elizabeth Burges would continue her husband's business.

By the beginning of 1707 the situation in Norwich had changed, as there were now three competitors fighting for the work that had kept one comfortably in business. The whole tenor and content of matter printed in Norwich changed markedly, and there followed twelve eventful years as the three (later four) presses and newspapers fought with one another for survival. Eventually, by 1719 or 1720, the two strongest businesses emerged as stable concerns, and their rivals disappeared. Elizabeth Burges refused to give up her press and continued to publish the *Norwich Post*, but she survived her husband by less than two years. The Red Well press operated for a further decade, initially under the imprint of 'the Administrator of E. Burges'. From 1710 it operated under the name of Freeman Collins, a wealthy and influential London printer (previously the master of Francis Burges, and possibly also the father of Elizabeth). Collins entrusted the operation of his Norwich press to

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24 *Norwich Post*, 3 May 1707.

various assistants, including the young Edward Cave, who later became the founder of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>25</sup>

Samuel Hasbart opened his printing office next door to his distillery in Magdalen Street in December 1706, a month after the death of Francis Burges.<sup>26</sup> He had engaged the services of a 23-year-old London printer who had not completed his full term but was nevertheless a competent journeyman. This was Henry Cross-grove, or Crossgrove, a colourful and educated man, the son of an Irish Jacobite, who was left to manage the press and newspaper, and who would feature in the history of Norwich printing for nearly four decades.<sup>27</sup> The first issue of Hasbart's weekly newspaper, the *Norwich Gazette*, emerged from his office on 7 December 1706, price ½d. It was followed by a variety of small books, sermons, licences, receipts, political speeches, and broadsheet accounts of executions, murders, suicides, and disasters. Within three weeks the printer was advertising:

To all Booksellers, Country Chapmen, Hawkers, and others, this is to give notice that they may at the Printing Office in Magdalen Street, in a short time be furnisht with all manner of little Novels, Histories, Poems, Romances, Story-books, Riddle-Books, Song-Books, Jest books, Broad-sides, and Ballads, they shall all be printed on good Paper and a very fair Character, and sold very Reasonably, especially to those who shall buy to sell again.<sup>28</sup>

A month after the first issue of the *Gazette*, the paper was complaining that: 'On Saturday last an Anonymous Ill-designing Person clandestinely Printed a Counterfeit ignorant News-Paper, intituld the Norwich Postman being a compleat composition of ignorance and error, as those that bought it plainly perceiv'd.'<sup>29</sup>

Thomas Goddard — the bookseller who had commissioned work from Burges's press — employed Sherard Sheffield, a London journeyman, and

25 Stoker, 'Establishment of Printing in Norwich'; Stoker, 'Printing at the Red-Well'; David Stoker, 'Freeman and Susanna Collins and the Spread of English Provincial Printing', in *Light on the Book Trade: Essays in Honour of Peter Isaac*, ed. Barry McKay, John Hinks, and Maureen Bell (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press; London: British Library, 2004), pp. 27–36.

26 *Norwich Gazette*, 7 December 1706.

27 J. B. Williams, 'Henry Cross-grove, Jacobite, Journalist and Printer,' *The Library*, 3rd ser., 5 (1914), 206–19.

28 *Norwich Gazette*, 21 December 1706, 4 January 1706/7.

29 *Norwich Gazette*, 4 January 1706/7.

a young apprentice, William Chase, as his assistant. Sheffield remained in post for just over a year and from the spring of 1708 Goddard's press became the responsibility of the sixteen-year-old Chase.

There was a note of surprise in Thomas Tanner's comment to a friend in 1709, that 'what with Newspapers, Sermons and Ballads, our three Printing Houses still keep up.'<sup>30</sup> Somehow, the three Norwich presses managed to remain in business. Yet their printers continued to bicker with one another, accusing each other of producing seditious or sacrilegious material:

Whereas there has been lately published in this city an abominably base & unchristian pamphlet, containing an impudent pack of lies, pretending that a woman in this city had sold herself to the devil, and that he was to fetch her on May-day, with many other hateful circumstances: And whereas I am generally censur'd, and blam'd by many as the printer of the same; I do here clear myself of that imputed Villany, and do sincerely assure the Publick, that I am wholly innocent and that I may fully convince all who so unjustly censure me, this is farther to inform the publick, that I understand that Paper was published by a bookseller in this city, who somewhere keeps a private press, and has for some time clandestinely printed and publickly pester'd the town with a pretended news-paper, under the assum'd title of the Norwich Postman.<sup>31</sup>

One interesting dispute involving the three presses was conducted through items in their newspapers and various small pamphlets.<sup>32</sup> Robert Baldwin had preached a controversial sermon at the archdeacon's visitation at Burnham-Westgate in November 1706, questioning the morals of unnamed local gentry, clergy, and magistrates.<sup>33</sup> This was published by Goddard, and brought forth adverse comments in the local papers, as well as an anonymous *Letter to Mr. Baldwin, Occasioned by his Sermon* from the press of Elizabeth Burges.<sup>34</sup> *An Answer to the*

30 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ballard 4, fol. 95.

31 *Norwich Gazette*, 8 May 1708.

32 David Stoker, 'Mr Baldwin's Sermon and the Norwich Printers', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 13 (2004), 33–43.

33 Robert Baldwin, *A Sermon Preached at the Arch-Deacon's Visitation at Burnham-Westgate, in the County of Norfolk, October 9, 1706* (Norwich: printed for T. Goddard, 1706) [ESTC T197982, N67368].

34 *A Letter to Mr. Baldwin, Occasioned by his Sermon Preach'd at the Arch-Deacons Visitation, at Burnham Westgate, in the County of Norfolk, Octob. 9. 1706* (Norwich, printed in the year 1707) [ESTC N63741]; advertised in the *Norwich Post*, 3 May 1707.

*Letter to Mr Baldwin Occasioned by his Sermon* was advertised in the *Norwich Post* on 3 May, which despite its title comprised another attack upon Baldwin.<sup>35</sup> Cross-grove later joined the battle with *Some Impartial Reflections on Mr Baldwin's Sermon and the Letters Concerning It*, which he wrote and published anonymously, poking fun at all concerned, including Goddard.<sup>36</sup> He also published a sermon from the 1690s, dealing with criticisms of the clergy, in an attempt to fuel the controversy further.<sup>37</sup> Baldwin refused to get involved further, so Thomas Goddard commissioned *A Real Vindication of the Much Injur'd Mr. Baldwin*, which put an end to the controversy.<sup>38</sup>

This was by no means the only visitation sermon to stir up a local controversy. Three years later the Rev. Charles Buchanan complained that his visitation sermon on *Unity and Unanimity* had been 'attack'd and basely wrested in a private Cabal, by some Persons from whom I might have expected fairer quarter [...] and the Doctrines delivered in this Sermon were not only Ridicul'd, but Lewdly perverted'.<sup>39</sup> It was for this reason alone that he had been persuaded by a friend to print it.

Most controversial works published in the city at this time concerned issues of national and local politics. Throughout the eighteenth century, Norwich was divided into competing political factions of Whigs and Tories. Henry Cross-grove, the Tory editor, who would later become the proprietor of the *Norwich Gazette*, summed up the situation in a letter in 1714: 'The City of Norwich is at present distracted with party rage, Whig and Tory, High Church and Low Church, or to give it to you in the local dialect, Croakers and Tackers make the two contending parties.'<sup>40</sup> Goddard and Chase were both supporters of the Whig and Low Church factions.

35 *Norwich Post*, 3 May 1707.

36 *Norwich Gazette*, 7 June 1707.

37 William Jegon, *The Following Sermon Was Preach'd Some Time Since at an Episcopal Visitation in Norfolk* (Norwich: printed by H. Cross-grove, in Magdalen Street, 1707) [ESTC N31847].

38 *A Real Vindication of the Much Injur'd Mr. Baldwin, with a Brief Essay in Defence of his Sermon* (printed in the year 1707) [ESTC N65077].

39 Charles Buchanan, *Unity and Unanimity: A Sermon Preach'd at Loddon, April 26. 1710* (Norwich: printed by Fr. Collins, for Fr. Oliver, in the Cockey Lane, near the Market Place, 1710), price 3d. [ESTC T176126], preface.

40 London, British Library, Add. MS 5853, Henry Cross-grove to John Strype, 2 December 1714.

Francis Burges's promise 'not to meddle with libels' did not apply to his successors, whose newspapers came out in support of one or other of the factions. Details of these squabbles have failed to survive, but several notices in the *Norwich Gazette* between 1706 and 1718 suggest that competition between the rival printers forced them to undertake any work that might enjoy a ready sale, even if it could be considered libellous or seditious. Thus, Henry Cross-grove complained in February 1710: 'Whereas some Gentlemen do clamour and Threaten me for printing a pamphlet entituled The Archbishop of York's Speech to the House of Lords. This is to inform the City, That the same was done at the Printing-Office of Deputy Collins, and not by me.'<sup>41</sup> The 'Deputy Collins' referred to here was the prosperous London printer Freeman Collins, who had inherited the Red Well press following the death of Elizabeth Burges, and may have been her father.<sup>42</sup>

By the time that the early Norwich printers began to cross the municipal authorities the political situation was equally divided between the parties. The trade had become sufficiently established and had proved itself sufficiently useful to protect it from direct suppression. Thus, printers were able to take more liberties with the political content of their productions than before. The process was gradual and occasionally checked by a printer being called before a magistrate and warned, or his premises searched. On one occasion Henry Cross-grove complained as follows:

Whereas some malicious people have falsely reported, that the printer of this paper was both the author and Printer of a scurrilous Note that was clandestinely printed and privately dispersed about this City, This is therefore rightly to inform all those Gentlemen who are possest with that Notion, that the same is utterly false, and that the printer hereof was neither directly or indirectly concern'd in Writing or Printing the said Paper. 'Tis true, I am fully satisfy'd and firmly believe, (nay, I dare attest) that 'twas printed in Norwich, tho' I am not very well satisfy'd by whom; but sure I am, that 'tis no impossibility to discover the person by whom it was printed, if not the factious author; and if his Worship the Mayor had

<sup>41</sup> *Norwich Gazette*, 11 February 1710.

<sup>42</sup> See Stoker, 'Freeman and Susanna Collins and the Spread of English Provincial Printing'; Ian Maxted, *The Story of the Book in Exeter and Devon*, Exeter Working Papers in Book History, 12 ([Exeter]: Exeter Working Papers in Book History, 2021), pp. 44–50 <https://bookhistory.blogspot.com/2007/01/devon-book-36.html>.

but ordered the three Printing-offices in this city to have been searcht the same Day that he was pleased to send for me, I make no doubt but the cunning — MAN who caus'd it to be printed (not printed) [*sic*] would have been found out. This by way of vindication. Hen. Cross-grove.<sup>43</sup>

Goddard's printing business 'at the printing press' in the Market Place was operated by William Chase until 1714, when the former apprentice acquired his own premises in Dove Lane. Goddard remained as proprietor of the *Norwich Postman*, which was re-launched in 1713 or 1714 as the *Transactions of the Universe*, still printed for him by Chase. Sometime between 1714 and 1722 the proprietorship of the newspaper passed to Chase, and it was re-launched again as the *Weekly Mercury*.<sup>44</sup>

After the death of Freeman Collins in 1713, the Red Well press operated under the name of his widow, Susannah, and then his children, Freeman II, John, and Hannah. The *Norwich Post* was re-launched as the *Norwich Courant* in 1714. No copies now survive, but a description from the early nineteenth century describes it as 'wretchedly printed and scarcely readable'.<sup>45</sup> The same could be said of a poem printed by Hannah Collins at the press in 1715 satirizing members of the Tory faction, including their principal mouthpiece, Henry Cross-grove:

C---sgr---ve, not least, tho last o' th' Tribe,  
The Muse now purpose to describe;  
To him we give the Preference,  
For Ribaldry, Impertinence,  
And that great Gift call'd Impudence:  
By which alone he makes his Claim,  
And hopes to get his Share of Fame.<sup>46</sup>

Several stanzas later, it ends:

He is (tho' some Account him shallow)  
A lamentable merry Fellow;  
He'll tell a smutty Tale abstrusely,  
You'd cry to hear him do't so sprucely;

43 *Norwich Gazette*, 26 April 1707.

44 David Stoker, 'Prosperity and Success in the English Provincial Book Trade during the Eighteenth Century', *Publishing History*, 30 (1991), 1–58.

45 Chambers, *General History of the County of Norfolk*, II, 1291.

46 *The Impartial Satyrst, a Poem* (Norwich: printed by H. Collins, near the Red Well, 1715), price 4d. [ESTC T125683].

And when you read his Dying-Speeches,  
He's fit to make you piss your Breeches.

He has besides these Qualities  
[*part of line missing*] Lies  
In which he's got to such Perfection,  
He scorns to stop at a Detection;  
And if reprov'd by Men of Sense,  
Outbraves them all, by's Impudence.

Cross-grove was arrested for high treason early the next year and his premises ransacked, but the charge was so preposterous that it was soon dismissed.<sup>47</sup>

The squabbling continued into 1718, with printers accusing one another of libel and sedition:

There has been this week an Half-sheet paper clandestinely printed, & seditiously hawked, intitled an account of the difference between the King & His Royal highness the Prince of Wales; and being informed that I am suspected to be the printer of it, I do hereby declare that I am no ways concerned in it. But I cannot but observe that as the said paper is printed without being stamp'd and without the known name of the printer (in direct breach of a late Act of Parliament) 'tis plain that some people have no more regard to their pretended loyalty than they have to the laws.<sup>48</sup>

The following August, Cross-grove reported, 'Just now I hear that a great many printed copies of a seditious & treasonable paper intitled a petition from the City of Norwich to His Majesty King George has this night been privately scatter'd about in the streets,' denying any responsibility himself.<sup>49</sup> He was again in trouble with the Attorney General towards the end of the year for copying seditious reports from a London paper. This time, he appeared to be genuinely concerned about the outcome and the possibility of having to give up, with 'the hope the publick will not on account of my present troubles reject their old newspaper'.<sup>50</sup> The printer apologized profusely in a letter to Charles Delafaye, Under-Secretary of State: 'I hope your Honour will excuse what Offences I may have given, by inadvertently Copying from such Papers as I now perceive are

47 Williams, 'Henry Cross-grove', pp. 213–15.

48 *Norwich Gazette*, 25 January 1718.

49 *Norwich Gazette*, 23 August 1718.

50 *Norwich Gazette*, 13 December 1718.

obnoxious to the government, and I faithfully assure you I will for the future so strictly regulate and reform my Conduct in that Affair, that your Honour may see I do not immerit and Have a Grateful Sense of any such Clemency from the Government.<sup>51</sup> Thereafter, Cross-grove and the *Norwich Gazette* kept away from national politics for twenty years, although by 1739 he was unable to resist again using his newspaper to comment.<sup>52</sup>

The Red Well press was taken over by one of Freeman Collins's former apprentices, Benjamin Lyon, in 1717. He, too, was arrested and brought before the Norwich Quarter Sessions on a charge of printing a libel. Unfortunately, there is no surviving record of the details of the crime or the outcome of the case.<sup>53</sup>

Samuel Hasbart had left the operational control and editorial content of the *Gazette* to his printer, although it was printed on his premises. Cross-grove purchased his freedom of Norwich, as a printer, on 18 June 1710 and developed his own independent printing and publishing business. By 1718 he had built up a loyal readership for the newspaper, supplemented by other small publications, many of them written by himself. Unlike his competitors, he had steered the newspaper through the difficult years following the introduction of stamp duty to emerge largely unscathed. Hasbart then decided he wanted a larger stake in the profits of the enterprise he had founded, offering Cross-grove a thirty-year lease at an inflated annual rent of £30. Cross-grove refused to accept and moved into cheaper premises near to St Giles's church.

Hasbart, left without any stake in a Norwich printing business, resolved to start again with another weekly newspaper in the Tory interest, in competition with the *Norwich Gazette*. He approached the London printer Thomas Gent with the offer of a partnership, but he had just accepted a similar offer in York. Gent recommended Robert Raikes, who came to Norwich in the spring of 1718.<sup>54</sup> The chronic competition

51 G. A. Cranfield, 'The Early Careers of Robert Raikes, I and II', *Notes & Queries*, 196 (1951), 119; G. A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 142.

52 Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 336–38.

53 Norwich, Norfolk Record Office, Norwich Quarter Sessions Minutes, 11 November 1717.

54 *The Life of Mr Thomas Gent, Printer of York* (London: Thorpe, 1832), pp. 77–78.



between the three Norwich printers was therefore worsened by the appearance of a fourth. Hasbart's plan was a disaster. There was not enough potential custom for a new newspaper in a market already saturated. Both Cross-grove and Benjamin Lyon poured scorn on the venture. Within three months the new title had failed, and Raikes had moved to St Ives to try his luck there. Nothing is known to have survived from this short-lived press, and even the name of its newspaper is now lost.<sup>55</sup> The added competition from a fourth newspaper, coupled with Lyon's prosecution for libel, were instrumental in also forcing the *Norwich Courant* out of business; Benjamin Lyon is next known as the first printer in Bath, c.1729.<sup>56</sup>

### Norwich printers, 1720–60

By 1720 there were two significant printing offices remaining in Norwich, each with a newspaper. Cross-grove had made enemies before 1720, but after his brushes with the law he settled down and prospered over the next decade, even serving as a Common Councillor after 1728. In 1737 he moved to larger premises in St Giles, where he remained until 1744. In 1730 he was accused of 'publishing' (i.e. reading aloud) a seditious pamphlet, but made submission and apologized.<sup>57</sup> He died on 12 September 1744, having edited and printed the *Norwich Gazette* for thirty-eight years, and continued to use his newspaper as a vehicle to rail against his rival printer and newspaper proprietor until the very end.<sup>58</sup>

The business was continued by his son-in-law Robert Davy, who continued to print the *Gazette* but lacked Cross-grove's entrepreneurial skills. The Jacobite rising may also have impacted adversely upon public support for a well-known Tory newspaper.<sup>59</sup> By 1749 the *Norwich Gazette* was losing popularity and relied on giving away copies of plays and songs with each issue in order to boost its circulation.<sup>60</sup> Davy re-launched

55 *Norwich Gazette*, 19 April–14 June 1718; *The Life of Mr Thomas Gent, Printer of York*, p. 77.

56 Trevor Fawcett, *Georgian Imprints: Printing and Publishing at Bath, 1729–1835* (Bath: Ruton, 2008), p. 11.

57 *Norwich Gazette*, 15 March 1718, 26 February 1737.

58 *Norwich Gazette*, 15 September 1744.

59 *Norwich Gazette*, 24 November 1744.

60 *Norwich Gazette*, 23 September 1749.

it as the *Norwich Journal* around 1751, but this made little impact and only a single copy is known.<sup>61</sup> He printed several tracts for Methodists until 1758 (see below), and continued to be listed on Norwich polls, as a printer, until 1768.

William Chase re-launched the *Weekly Mercury* as the *Norwich Mercury* around 1726 and moved to larger premises in Cockey Lane. He printed and published many publications, also becoming a successful bookseller and auctioneer, sometimes in partnership with Goddard.<sup>62</sup> He served as Common Councillor from 1718 to 1727 and from 1730 until his death in 1744. His one brush with authority was when he criticized the scrutiny at an election in 1729, but he was later discharged.<sup>63</sup> The business was continued by his wife Margaret and her sixteen-year-old son, William, until 1750, when William took over responsibility.<sup>64</sup>

There were two minor presses during this period, although their impact on the trade was probably minimal. Thomas Goddard was one of the most active booksellers and 'publishers' — as well as being an auctioneer — between 1700 and 1750. However, he never lost his interest in printing or gave up his materials, and a few small items survive identifying him as printer into the 1730s.<sup>65</sup> Robert Newman, a former schoolteacher, also attempted to operate another printing business near the Red Well in 1753. He advertised in the *Norwich Mercury* and his name is found on the imprints of a few small works until 1763.<sup>66</sup>

## Norwich printing, 1720–60

The weekly newspapers constitute the bulk of Norwich printing during these decades. Until the demise of the *Norwich Journal* around 1751 there were always two, but for a decade the *Norwich Mercury* had a monopoly, until the founding of a revived *Norwich Gazette* in 1761. However, there

61 Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p. 471.

62 *Norwich Gazette*, 9 June 1744.

63 *Norwich Mercury*, 2 August 1729.

64 *Norwich Mercury*, 2 June 1744, 24 March 1750.

65 Notably a parliamentary poll book, *An Alphabetical Draught of the Polls* [...] (Norwich: printed and sold by T. Goddard; by whom such gentlemen as please may have them bound at 6d. each, and all other binding work done very reasonably, 1735) [ESTC T161984, T208781].

66 *Norwich Mercury*, 3 August 1754. In 1763 he opened an 'office for miscellaneous intelligence at his printing shop' (*Norwich Mercury*, 19 November 1763).

were many other materials published in Norwich, including religious works, especially printed sermons (which have the highest survival rate). Religious publications — other than those adhering to the doctrines of the Church of England — could be problematic, however. Thus, ‘On Thursday last one Edward Thurston, a vagrant, was committed to the Castle by Sir Randal Ward, Bart. & Thomas Vere Esq, for dispersing and delivering to divers of his majesty’s subjects in this county, several copies of 3 pamphlets filled with Popish Blasphemy tending to pervert the Protestants of the Kingdom.’<sup>67</sup>

One of the most prolonged and interesting pamphlet wars in Norwich concerned the coming of Methodism to the city in the 1750s, and the subsequent discrediting of the first charismatic preacher, James Wheatley.<sup>68</sup> He had been well thought of by the Wesley brothers as an influential author and preacher, but was expelled in 1751 when his immoral conduct with several women at Bradford-on-Avon became known. He came to Norwich as an independent preacher in August 1751 and began preaching to thousands in the open air. He met with both success and opposition, particularly from clergy, which fomented riots from November to the following March.<sup>69</sup> The story is told in letters to the newspapers and in various local publications, such as *A True and Particular Narrative of the Disturbances and Outrages that Have Been Committed in the City of Norwich*.<sup>70</sup>

Wheatley and his supporters also published a series of tracts, such as *A Word of Advice to the Inhabitants of Norwich*, and *An Earnest Appeal to the Inhabitants of Norwich*.<sup>71</sup> In 1753 he published *The Chronicle of the Preacher*, giving an account of events in mock-Biblical language: ‘When therefore this Preacher came, they were smitten with great Wrath; and they took Council together, and were determined to put him down: For, lo, said the

67 *Norwich Mercury*, 20 July 1754.

68 D. O’Sullivan, ‘The Case of James Wheatley, Methodist’, *Norfolk Archaeology*, 36 (1975), 167–75; Elizabeth J. Bellamy, *James Wheatley and Norwich Methodism in the 1750s* (Peterborough: World Methodist Historical Society, 1994).

69 *Norwich Mercury*, 14 December 1751; Bellamy, *James Wheatley*, chapter 3.

70 *A True and Particular Narrative of the Disturbances and Outrages that Have Been Committed in the City of Norwich* (London: printed in the year 1752) [ESTC T103542].

71 James Wheatley, *A Word of Advice to the Inhabitants of Norwich* (Norwich, 1751) [not in ESTC]; James Wheatley, *An Earnest Appeal to the Inhabitants of Norwich* (Norwich: printed in the year 1752) [ESTC T208951].

Priests, much People do seek after him, and our Profits haply will be abated!’<sup>72</sup> This was answered in *The Anti-Chronicle*, which described Wheatley as ‘an ignorant strouling miscreant, surnamed Slavercant’.<sup>73</sup>

In 1754 Wheatley’s past caught up with him and charges against his morals were levelled by his enemies. Thomas Keymer, formerly a supporter, accused him of fornication in *The Wolf in Sheeps Cloathing*.<sup>74</sup> Wheatley replied in a tract, now lost, but this brought forth further accusations from Keymer in *The Fawning Sycophant Display’d*.<sup>75</sup> A series of similar pamphlets followed, attacking Wheatley and his congregation, such as the poem *The Methodist’s Method Explain’d*.<sup>76</sup> Eventually, Wheatley was brought before the Norwich Consistory Court and convicted of being ‘a lewd debauched, incontinent and adulterous person’.<sup>77</sup> Two appeals, to the Court of Arches and the Court of Delegates, failed to overturn this verdict. Thereafter, Wesleyan Methodist society in Norwich was damaged for some years by being associated with Wheatley in the public mind. The pamphlets attacking Wheatley were printed without any name in the imprint, although their types and ornaments suggest that they came from the press of William Chase II. Those defending Wheatley were printed openly, by Robert Davy, a recent convert to Methodism.

At least forty-six sermons printed in Norwich during these decades are known, in part reflecting the greater importance played by this form of publication, but also a disproportionately high survival rate due to piety and superstition. As with Robert Baldwin in 1707, sermons could give rise to public controversy and a flurry of publications. Robert Potter published a sermon *On the Pretended Inspiration of the Methodists* in

72 James Wheatley, *The Chronicle of the Preacher* (Norwich: printed for the author; and sold by R. Davy and J. Goodwin, 1753), p. 3 [ESTC T208954].

73 *The Anti-Chronicle* (printed for the author; and sold by R. Newman, in Norwich, 1753) [ESTC T208956].

74 Thomas Keymer, *The Wolf in Sheeps Cloathing* (printed in the year 1754) ESTC T208972].

75 Thomas Keymer, *The Fawning Sycophant Display’d, being an Answer to Mr. Wheatley’s Reply* (printed in the year 1754; and sold by T. Keymer, and by Tho. Kitson, Norwich) [ESTC T208835].

76 John Hawes, *The Methodist’s Method Explain’d* (printed in the year 1754) [ESTC T208969]; *Norwich Mercury*, 17 August 1754, and subsequent issues.

77 Bellamy, *James Wheatley and Norwich Methodism*, pp. 192–203.

January 1758.<sup>78</sup> This resulted in *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Potter, in Answer to his Sermon*, by Cornelius Cayley.<sup>79</sup> Potter then republished his sermon with *An Appendix [...] Occasioned by Mr. Cayley's Letter*.<sup>80</sup> That in turn was briefly answered in an advertisement at the end of Cayley's *The Riches of God's Free Grace Displayed*:

Now the Author confesses that if artful Evasions, low Puns, abusive Language, and a few scraps of Latin, be a sufficient answer; 'tis completely done. But as such Things, will be regarded by none but weak and shallow Minds; and by those who are disposed to turn all things sacred into ridicule; the Author, thinks that nothing more is necessary, than to pray his Readers seriously to reperuse his printed Letter to Mr. Potter.<sup>81</sup>

Potter's sermon was also read by John Wesley during a visit to Norwich and occasioned a response in *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Potter*.<sup>82</sup>

There were other categories of local publication that have often now been lost — notably the different forms of street literature. Public executions were a regular, but not particularly common, feature of city life at this time, with ten taking place in Norwich during the decades 1741–1760, and a few others elsewhere in Norfolk.<sup>83</sup> The opportunity was used by local printers to produce chapbooks or broadsides to be sold to onlookers, as well as hawked in the city streets and neighbouring country districts. These might include an account of the crime, the criminal's confession, and sometimes repentant verses attributed to the

78 Robert Potter, *On the Pretended Inspiration of the Methodists* (Norwich, printed and sold by W. Chase; sold also by R. Griffiths, and M. Cooper, in Paternoster Row, London; Mr Merrill, at Cambridge; Mr Green, at Bury; Mr Hollingworth, at Lynn; and Messrs Powell and Carr, at Yarmouth, 1758), price 6d. [ESTC T14571].

79 Cornelius Cayley, junior, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Potter, in Answer to his Sermon* (printed and sold by R. Davy, and at Mr Gleed's, bookseller, Norwich; at Mr Keith's, in Gracechurch Street, and at Mr Lewis's, in Paternoster Row, booksellers, London; also at Mr Green's, Bury; Mr Hollingworth, at Lynn; and Messrs Powel and Car, at Yarmouth, 1758), price 6d. [ESTC T77748].

80 Robert Potter, *An Appendix to the Sermon on the Pretended Inspiration of the Methodists, Occasioned by Mr. Cayley's Letter* (Norich [sic]: printed and sold by W. Chase; sold also by R. Griffiths and M. Cooper, London; Mr Merrill, at Cambridge; Mr Green, at Bury; Mr Hollingworth, at Lynn; and Messrs Powell and Carr at Yarmouth, 1758), price 6d. [ESTC T14572].

81 Cornelius Cayley, junior, *The Riches of God's Free Grace, Display'd in the Conversion of Cornelius Cayley* (Norwich, printed in the year 1757) [ESTC T77749].

82 John Wesley, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Potter, by the Rev. Mr. Wesley* (London: printed and sold at the Foundery, Upper Moorfields, 1758) [ESTC T169856].

83 Figures from <http://www.capitalpunishmentuk.org/norfolk.html>.

felon. There were accounts of suicides and unsolved murders which enjoyed equal popularity. Such publications were notorious for their inaccuracy and downright untruthfulness, even among the undiscerning majority of the eighteenth-century reading public, but were nevertheless extremely popular.

There was also a demand for accounts of famous executions, printed well after the event and sold to those unable to witness the spectacle. Henry Cross-grove printed for Norwich readers *The Dying Speech of Captain Thomas Smith*, who was hanged, drawn, and quartered for treason at Tyburn in 1708.<sup>84</sup> He also reprinted accounts of famous executions from the past, such as *A Full and True Relation of Anne Green, Who Was Hanged at Oxford, 14th December 1650*.<sup>85</sup> Robert Davy advertised *The Narrative of Confession of Mr Robert Watts, Who Was Executed in this City in the Year of 1701*, in the *Norwich Gazette* of 2 December 1749.

On occasion, Cross-grove tried to dissociate himself from the disreputable aspect of this branch of the trade. In August 1727 he announced:

This day William Winter, Robert Clark and William Mallows, are to be Hang'd in the Castel Ditches for the City and John Hitching upon the Castel-Hill for the County, unless an Unexpected Reprieve should come down for any of them. They are all poor ignorant wretches, and incapable of making any handsome speech in confession. There is indeed a paper patch'd up for Winter which was offer'd to me to print, but I thought it too mean and trifling for the press and not worth publication.<sup>86</sup>

Chase, on the other hand, was always content to sacrifice respectability in favour of a profit, resulting in some instructive newspaper exchanges. In August 1734, Chase's *Norwich Mercury* advertised the confession of William Morris, price 1½d., 'The original paper of which confession are in my hands and shall be shown to any person that desire it.'<sup>87</sup> Cross-grove in the *Norwich Gazette*, however, had a different interpretation of events:

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84 *The Dying Speech and Confession of Captain Thomas Smith* (Norwich: printed by Cross-grove, 1708) [ESTC T208905].

85 *A Full and True Relation of Anne Green, Who Was Hanged at Oxford, 14th December 1650* (Norwich: printed by Henry Cross-grove, 1741) [ESTC T208945].

86 *Norwich Gazette*, 19 August 1727.

87 *Norwich Mercury*, 31 August 1734.

On Wednesday last William Morris was executed here for the Robbery committed above a year ago just without Magdalen Gates. He behaved very modestly and was seemingly penitent; and just before he was turned off, he declared to The numerous spectators, That he had left no confession or dying speech behind him: and that if any Paper should be published as such after his death, he assured them on the words of a dying man that it would be Intirely false & Lies. Notwithstanding which a false and scandalous paper was immediately after published as such on a single sheet of paper without either stamp or printers name, in direct Violation of an act of Parliament.<sup>88</sup>

Chase responded the following week:

I receiv'd several papers written with William Morris's own Hand, from his Father & Brother wherein are contained a further account of his life & actions and also his letters of advice to his brother: which writings I added to the former account and published them last Wednesday at 1d each. Cross-grove last week speaking of Morris's execution amongst other acquaints his readers 'That just before he was turned off [...]' In these remarks every Line contains a falsehood. First: It was not a Single Sheet, but a Sheet & a Half where by it become a Pamphlet, and consequently want no stamp, it was no Violation of an act of parliament to be without it. Second-lye My name was to it as Printer, on the title-page. Third-lye The account published was not false, for it was taken by the Magistrates of this City upon Oath & since confirm'd by his own father & brother. Now by this plain narration of a matter of fact which no one can dispute, we are able to judge Mr Cross-grove's veracity.<sup>89</sup>

A year later Cross-grove was reporting the forthcoming execution of John Mann and Timothy Ward and commented: 'and if any Papers should be published to Catch the Penny, under the titles of their dying speeches and confessions, (as was done last year by Richard Morris [...]) I do assure the publick they will not be of my printing, and that I will never be any ways concerned in such Grub-street Undertakings.'<sup>90</sup> The same day William Chase was advertising 'The true confessions of John Mann and Timothy Ward taken on Friday 15th August from their own mouths and signed by themselves'.<sup>91</sup> Cross-grove attacked his rival in the *Gazette* of the following week: 'and immediately after they were

<sup>88</sup> *Norwich Gazette*, 31 August 1734.

<sup>89</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 6 September 1734.

<sup>90</sup> *Norwich Gazette*, 16 August 1735.

<sup>91</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 16 August 1735.

turned off a Paper called their Dying-speeches and confessions were cry'd about; in which were several Robberies mentioned that never were committed'.<sup>92</sup> It is ironic that the only copies of such 'disreputable' Norwich publications to have survived from this period come from the press of Henry Cross-grove.

In the late 1730s another category of publication gained great popularity and continued to be issued well into the nineteenth century. These were the lists of the prisoners about to be tried at the assize courts, together with a short account of their alleged crimes. They were ostensibly printed for the purposes of the court, 'by order of the Gaoler'. However, Chase regularly advertised them in his newspaper and sold large numbers at 1d. or 1½d. to potential spectators at the trials. When both the city and the county assizes were held in Norwich he would produce a separate list for each, and by 1743 he was printing lists of the prisoners to be tried at the county assizes when they were held at Thetford.<sup>93</sup>

No broadside ballads or slip songs printed in Norwich have survived, although Luke Hansard later refers to having printed them at Stephen White's shop in the 1760s, so there is likely to have been some production in previous decades.<sup>94</sup> Twenty-five examples of printed poetry survive with Norwich imprints dated between 1701 and 1760, half of which were broadsheets and the remainder small pamphlets. Several were in Latin, and others were works of genuine literature such as John Pomfret's *The Choice*, or John Gay's mock epic, *The Fan*. Several of these poems originated from Henry Cross-grove's pen, such as *The Auctioneer* (mocking Thomas Goddard), or else were directed against him, such as *The Impartial Satyrst* (above). After 1740 most surviving poetry printed

92 *Norwich Gazette*, 23 June 1735.

93 For example: *Norfolk, to Wit: A Calendar, or List, of the Several Prisoners to Be Tried at the Assizes to Be Held for the Said County of Norfolk at the Guildhall in the City of Norwich on Monday the 7th of August, 1749, the Time of their Commitment, their Several Crimes, and by Whom Committed* (Norwich: printed by W. Chase, by order of the Goaler) [ESTC N472309]; and regular advertisements in the *Norwich Mercury* from 27 March 1739 onwards.

94 *The Auto-biography of Luke Hansard, Printer to the House, 1752–1828*, ed. Robin Myers (London: Printing Historical Society, 1991), p. 9. Hansard refers to 'all the Aldermay Churchyard Literature', and he also says, 'Mistress managed the shop, and when this or that Ballad drew near out, or such a ½ Sheet 8vo or 12mo was in its "last quire", — then Luke went to work for a remanufacture' (p. 11).



in the city was in book form, often financed by the author, and intended for an educated and discerning audience.

Hardly any of the chapbooks advertised by the Burges family and others during the first four decades of the century have survived, and even the titles are unknown. Cross-grove advertised his own compilation, *A Collection of Curiosities*, at a special discount to hawkers, who would take a quantity of them in order to resell them in the countryside.<sup>95</sup> A copy survives with an account of the annual migration of birds to the moon, and the tale of a man who was supposed to have been taken there by the birds and dwelt there for six months. It also includes a story of a youth brought up by wolves, and a description of the eclipse of the moon. This work was typical in that pre-existing woodcuts were used, having been altered in an amateurish way to fit the story. Other survivals include booklets that contain light-hearted stories, proverbs, remedies, and jokes aimed at the simple and semi-literate population. Local examples include Thomas Eldridge's *Incomparable Varieties*, Robert Goodman's *A Choice Collection of Curious Relations*, and his *An Agreeable Companion*.<sup>96</sup> Other classes of locally produced popular literature have suffered an equally low survival rate, although advertisements and one or two survivors show that there was still a demand for local news pamphlets, which were never completely superseded by the Norwich newspapers. One example is an account of the fire at Burwell in 1727, which cost 119 lives.<sup>97</sup>

Almanacs were an important category of reading matter sold in the city and surrounding country areas each November, but these were printed in London and subject to the monopoly held by the Stationers'

95 *A Collection of Curiosities* (Norwich: printed by Hen. Cross-grove, 1726); *Norwich Gazette*, 11 June 1726.

96 *Incomparable Varieties; or, A Cabinet of Secrets Unlock'd by the Key of Experience* (printed for Tho. Eldridge, in St Gregory's Churchyard, Norwich; where may be had neat French brandy, Jamaica rum, and all sorts of fine English brandies, rich cordial waters, the famous threepenny bottles of Daffy's elixir, excellent remedies at sixpence a packet, fine snuffs, and tobaccos of all sorts, by wholesale and retale) [ESTC T110598]; *A Choice Collection of Curious Relations* (London: printed for and sold by Robert Goodman, on the Upper Walk, in the Market Place, Norwich, 1739) [ESTC T110593]; *An Agreeable Companion, being a Choice Collection of Curious Remarks* (London: printed for and sold by Robert Goodman, Norwich, 1742) [ESTC T76188].

97 George Large, *A True Copy of a Letter, containing an Account of a Very Terrible Fire that Happen'd on Friday Night Last the 8th Instant at Burwell* (Norwich: printed by Cross-grove) [ESTC T208941].

Company. Thomas Goddard advertised in November 1726 that he had 'got for the Year 1727 Almanacks of all Sorts, both Bound, Stitch'd or in Quires [...] which he will sell by Wholesale or Retale very reasonably'.<sup>98</sup> The Stationers' Company monopoly began to be eroded in 1748, with the appearance of Robert Dodsley's *New Memorandum Book*, the forerunner of the modern diary. It was not until the mid-1760s that the Norwich printers began to publish their own versions.<sup>99</sup>

A surprisingly large number of popular publications related to the history and geography of Norfolk and Norwich. Although Kett's rebellion and the associated battle of Dussindale had taken place in 1549, they remained an important part of the historical identity of Norwich. Alexander Neville's account, *De furoribus Norfolciensium*, appeared in 1575, and was translated into English by Richard Woods as *Norfolke Furies* and published locally in 1615 and again in 1623. A shortened version was printed by Francis Burges within a year of his opening his press, and reprinted in 1718, 1728, 1751, and probably in other editions now lost.<sup>100</sup>

In 1706 Elizabeth Burges printed two penny tracts, *A True Description of the City of Norwich* and *A Short History of the City of Norwich*.<sup>101</sup> These gave little information beyond lists of sheriffs, mayors, and bishops, and a sketchy description and a brief chronology of remarkable events. *A True Description* was printed on appallingly inferior paper, with no regard to typography, but was nevertheless popular enough to have been reprinted the following year and again in an enlarged form by Benjamin Lyon in 1718.<sup>102</sup>

William Chase published a 6d. history in 1728, the fullest published in the city up to that time, but it was little more than an amalgam of previous publications together with a plan of the city. It was issued both with Chase's usual Norwich imprint and with the imprint of John

98 *Norwich Gazette*, 26 November 1726.

99 *The Norwich Memorandum-Book, for Gentlemen and Tradesmen, for the Year [...] 1766* (Norwich: printed by W. Chase, 1766) [ESTC T208809].

100 A 1702 edition is noted by Chambers, *General History of the County of Norfolk*, II, 1288, but has not survived.

101 Cited in Richard Gough, *British Topography*, 2 vols (London: printed for T. Payne and Son, and J. Nichols, 1780), II, 8.

102 *The History of the City of Norwich [...] to which is added, Norfolk's Furies; or, a View of Kett's Camp* (Norwich: printed by Benj. Lyon, near the Red Well, for Robert Allen and Nich. Lemon, 1718) [ESTC T110592].

and James Knapton in London.<sup>103</sup> This work enjoyed some success, and within three months Chase had gathered an additional collection of miscellaneous information about the city, including a shortened English version of the *Norfolk Furies*, all of which he published as an appendix costing 4d.<sup>104</sup> The account of Kett's rebellion, with the new title of *A View of Kett's Camp*, could also be purchased separately.

The success enjoyed by Chase's history tempted his rival Henry Cross-grove to publish an *Essay on the Antiquity of the Castel of Norwich* by Thornhagh Gurdon, also in 1728.<sup>105</sup> Although the author's ideas were derived from the writings of William Camden and have since been proved to be completely wrong, the publication of the essay did represent a marked improvement in the quality of local history published in the city up until that time. In 1736 Robert Goodman published the first part of his impressively named *The Records of Norwich*, which was followed by a second volume in 1738. These were priced at 1½d. each and contained the usual collection of miscellaneous information. They were followed in 1738 by the even slighter *An Authentick History of the Antient City of Norwich*, by Thomas Eldridge, which was nothing but a shortened version of Chase's history of ten years earlier.<sup>106</sup> All of these were short works intended for a popular audience, but there was also a public controversy between two antiquarians, Benjamin Mackerell and Francis Blomefield, following the latter's proposals to publish a massive *History of Norfolk* in 1733. This resulted in the publication of Mackerell's largely plagiarized history of King's Lynn in 1735.<sup>107</sup>

There would also have been innumerable examples of jobbing printing — advertisements, handbills, printed forms, and notices of all kinds — almost all of which have failed to survive from this period.<sup>108</sup>

103 *A Compleat History of the Famous City of Norwich* (Norwich: printed and sold by William Chase, in the Cockey Lane, 1728) [ESTC T110709]; *A Compleat History of the Famous City of Norwich* (printed for John and James Knapton, booksellers, in St Paul's Churchyard) [ESTC T193678].

104 *Norwich Mercury*, 4 May 1728 (and ESTC T110709 above).

105 Thornhagh Gurdon, *An Essay on the Antiquity of the Castel of Norwich* (Norwich: printed and sold by Henry Cross-grove, 1728), price 3d. [ESTC T110600].

106 Thomas Eldridge, *An Authentick History of the Antient City of Norwich* (Norwich: printed for the author) [ESTC T110597].

107 David Stoker, 'Benjamin Mackerell, Antiquary, Librarian, and Plagiarist', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 42 (1993/4), 1–12.

108 For the growth of jobbing printing in provincial centres and its impact on the development of trade and commerce, see James Raven, *Publishing Business in*

The earliest musical concerts took place in the city during the 1730s, and the first permanent theatre was established there in 1757, both of which would have generated work for local printers. No individual slip songs or playbills survive, but William Chase did produce *The Ladies and Gentlemens Musical Memorandum; or, Norfolk Songster*, containing songs sung at the local concert hall, with an introduction setting out the etiquette for singers and audiences.<sup>109</sup> Likewise, in 1739 horse-racing began on nearby Mousehold Heath, attracting crowds of more than a hundred thousand and generating more work for local printers.

### Norwich printing, 1761–1800

Printing and publishing in Norwich during the last four decades of the century was dominated by two powerful businesses, each producing a weekly newspaper while undertaking a range of other work. However, the first *Norwich Directory*, in 1783, shows that there were other businesses in the city.<sup>110</sup> The complicated story of the Chase family and the ownership of the *Norwich Mercury* after 1760 has been told by Rex Stedman — it passed through the hands of William Chase II until his death in 1781, then to William Chase & Co. (a partnership of William Chase III, Thomas Holl, and Catherine Matchett) until 1785; a partnership of William Chase III, Richard Bacon, and his son-in-law William Yarrington until 1786; Yarrington and Bacon until 1794; and Richard Bacon alone thereafter.<sup>111</sup> By the end of the century, a printer and newspaper proprietor such as Richard Bacon was an established member of the local gentry, playing an important part in civic affairs.

The second major printing, bookselling, and newspaper business was that begun by John Crouse, a former apprentice of Chase, in 1760. He purchased the stock of the bookseller Robert Goodman and acquired a press which he set up in Cockey Lane. In 1761 he began to print a weekly newspaper, the *Norwich Gazette*, in opposition to the Chase's *Norwich*

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*Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 73–79.

109 *The Ladies and Gentlemens Musical Memorandum; or, Norfolk Songster* (Norwich: printed by W. Chase, in the Cockey Lane), price 1s. 6d. [ESTC T178431].

110 *The Norwich Directory; or, Gentlemen and Tradesmen's Assistant* (Norwich: printed and sold by W. Chase and Co., March 22, 1783) [ESTC T43183].

111 Rex Stedman, 'Vox populi: The Norfolk Newspaper Press, 1760–1900' (unpublished thesis, Library Association, 1971), pp. 62–91.

*Mercury*. In 1766 he opened a printing office in the Upper Market Place.<sup>112</sup> In April 1769 he re-launched his newspaper as the *Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*. Crouse took on a partner, William Stevenson, in 1785, and in 1796 they took on Jonathan Matchett, a grandson of William Chase II. Crouse died shortly afterwards and the business was continued by his partners.<sup>113</sup>

Two other printers are listed in the 1783 *Norwich Directory*: Richard Beatniffe and Stephen White. Beatniffe was a prosperous bookseller who, in June 1766, opened a printing office in St Peter Permouthergate parish, 'having engaged proper assistance from London and purchased a large quantity of Mr Caslon's excellent type'.<sup>114</sup> Over the next thirty years he was responsible for printing and/or publishing many books, until 1795 when he took on John Payne as his partner, and retired in 1798. Thereafter Payne continued alone until 1807, issuing Thomas Peck's directory of the city in 1802.<sup>115</sup>

Stephen White operated from 1763 until 1794, when he was succeeded by his widow Ann. His business would have been unmemorable were it not for his first apprentice, Luke Hansard, who later wrote an autobiography giving a vivid account of his time in Norwich between 1765 and 1771. His parents had responded in 1765 to a newspaper advertisement seeking an apprentice, and the young man was placed on trial with White, an 'eccentrick genius, but truly honest man', whose business was as a 'printer, bookseller & stationer, engraver and copperplate printer, medicine vendor, painter, boat builder, and general artist'.<sup>116</sup> Hansard described his apprenticeship:

The Printing office was in the Garret, and consisted of one Letter Press and one Copperplate Press, and of Types, but small quantities of few varieties; but with these Types and these Presses, I had to learn my Business, and with them, my Business I did learn accordingly. — My Master was but very rarely in the office; he was either engraving, or

112 *Norwich Mercury*, 28 June 1766.

113 Stedman, 'Vox populi', pp. 114–48; *Norfolk Chronicle*, 19 November 1796.

114 *Norwich Mercury*, 21 June 1766.

115 Peck, *Norwich Directory*. Payne became a freeman printer on 21 September 1799 and opened a shop at 53, Market Place (*Norwich Mercury*, 28 September 1799).

116 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, pp. 9, 7.

painting, or wood-cutting, or fishing, or pigeon and rabbit shooting, or boatbuilding and rowing and sailing; anything but the office.<sup>117</sup>

They moved to larger premises in 1767: 'before, press-room & composing frames, bedroom & stowage, were all in one: — But now I thought I was in clover; the Letterpress & copperplate Press stood aside each other, — my bed in one nook and a pigeon inclosure in the other'.<sup>118</sup> Stephen White was a multi-talented printer: 'If a Wood cut was wanting for a popular Ballad, master would soon engrave it [...] if I wanted a side stick, or Quoins, or a large letter for a hand bill, they were manufactured in a crack or two.'<sup>119</sup> However, he was also indolent and quickly became bored with his trade, and gave his apprentice little by way of instruction:

Occasionally only and very sparingly did I receive personal instruction from my Master. Though very far from ill-tempered he was impatient, and I believe disliked the practical part of his Business [...] But in a short space of time I became expert; I was proud in being compositor & pressman, corrector and manager, copperplate printer and shopman, book keeper and accountant to this chequered business.<sup>120</sup>

About fifteen small books from this press survive, but this was only a small part of its output. The press undertook all kinds of jobbing work for local tradesmen and the city corporation.

Three more quotations from Hansard's autobiography illustrate how he spent his working days:

Jobs o[f] every description were constantly on hand; they were innumerable; and scarce the vigil of a Market day arrived, but some quitrent receipt, some sale of country stock, some notice of meetings, some *Bayardo* to cover, some card-assembly plate, some rare-show at the next fair, some wild beasts 'just arrived', — some quires of Ballads for the next Statute; — some Godfrey's cordial, Daffy's elixir, English's or Anderson's Scots Pills, or Ladies Sticking Plaister, were wanting for the return errand carts next day; So that frequently on the Tuesday & Friday nights, poor Luke has been tugging late all alone till Master came home from his evening merry meeting.<sup>121</sup>

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117 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 9.

118 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 11.

119 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 9.

120 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 9.

121 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 11.

Hence all kinds of bills, and 'Bills of the Play,' whether by men or Monkeys, quadrupeds or bipeds, winged fowls or creeping beasts; Lectures upon heads, or dissertations upon hearts; circulation of the blood or prodigies of nature; — were all printed by Master: and nothing, nothing could be more according to his volatile genius; and nothing more delightful to me. Here i was in my element; all bustle; the man's head in the lion's mouth, the monkey dancing on the tight rope or slackwire; — no sooner printed, than home I carried them.<sup>122</sup>

No beggar is permitted for a moment about the streets; no ballad singer without a license, or without being free of the city, and that circumstance vitiates his election privilege; no show, no detachment from Sadler's Wells, or Saunders's troop of horsemanship; no *topplers* (tumbler); no jugglers, no conjurers (slight-of-hand men); no wild beast from the menagerie of the Emperor of Morocco or Tower of London; no birds from the averie of the Prince of the Feathered Islands; no Painting, no needlework, no exhibition whatever, that would draw money from the people, is suffered, without Mr Mayor's express license, — and in this license, *the Printer* to be employed is mentioned. *Stephen White* was the Corporation printer for these things.<sup>123</sup>

Very little of this kind of work has survived, other than a few printed advertisements.<sup>124</sup> White printed the annual broadsheet verses given away by members of the Society of Lamplighters in return for a Christmas tip from the 1760s until 1793, with those after 1794 printed by Ann White.<sup>125</sup> The existence of Stephen White's rolling press for copper-plate prints also indicates that there must have been a market for cheap graphic images at this time, although no examples printed in Norwich appear to have survived.

122 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 23.

123 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 23.

124 Richard Burman, *Cork-Cutter, near the North-Gates, Yarmouth* (printed by S. White, in Norwich) [ESTC T136867]; *Just Arrived from the University at Florence, and to Be Seen at Mr. Robert Barrett's, in the Market-Place, Yarmouth [...]* *that Most Curious Art of Glass Transparent* (Norwich: printed by S. White) [ESTC T29316]; *For the Inspection of Those, Who Are Endow'd with Noble Spirit of Curiosity* (Norwich: printed by S. White, Magdalen Street, 1767) [an advertisement for a collection of exotic animals]; *For Six Days and No Longer, to Be Seen Floating [...]* *an Aerostatic Globe* (S. White, printer, Norwich [1784]).

125 *A Copy of Verses, Humbly Presented to All our Worthy Masters in the City of Norwich, by the Careful Society of Lamp-lighters, for the Year 1765* (Norwich: printed by S. White) [ESTC T6001].

Two printers came to Norwich after the 1783 *Directory*, James Bowen and John March. Bowen arrived from London in 1789 and printed the 1790 Norwich poll.<sup>126</sup> He died later in the same year, leaving his widow Anne destitute.<sup>127</sup> John March was a printer and bookseller from Great Yarmouth, in partnership with John Downes, from 1784 until 1793. He was in Norwich in August 1793, where he printed and sold several substantial works including the unsuccessful periodical publication *The Cabinet*. He was listed on a sheriff's poll of 1797, but emigrated to George Town, USA, where he died in 1804 at the age of fifty.<sup>128</sup>

### Norwich publications, 1761–1800

ESTC lists 240 items that were either printed in Norwich or else had the name of a Norwich bookseller in the imprint for the years 1721–60. The equivalent figure for 1761–1800 is 863, representing a 360 per cent increase in the number of titles produced. This only measures items that have survived. There was also a marked increase in size of publications, whether newspapers or books. A typical Norwich publication from the 1740s was less than fifty pages, whereas G. C. Morgan's *Lectures on Electricity* of 1794 ran to more than seven hundred pages.<sup>129</sup> Yet these were years when the population was relatively stable and there were few major public controversies in the city.

All the publications described above were reflected during these years, only more so. There were sermons (both provoking and conciliatory), other works of religious controversy, books of poetry, history, popular science, calendars of prisoners, and a host of other printed matter. The numbers of executions in the city rose markedly during the last two decades of the century, with fifty-eight taking place between 1781 and 1800 (partly due to the loss of the American colonies for the transportation of offenders). These decades saw a plethora of last dying speeches and confessions printed in the city, for such crimes

126 Bowen advertised in the *Bury and Norwich Post*, 25 March 1789.

127 *Norwich Mercury*, 20 November 1790, 28 May 1791.

128 C. H. Timperley, *Encyclopaedia of Literary and Typographical Anecdote* (London: Bohn, 1842), p. 818; Frank J. Farrell, *Yarmouth Printing and Printers* (Great Yarmouth: Jarrold & Sons, 1912), p. 10.

129 G. C. Morgan, *Lectures on Electricity*, 2 vols (Norwich: printed by J. March; and sold by J. Johnson, St Paul's Churchyard, London, 1794), price 10s. 6d. [ESTC T99578].



as burglary, highway robbery, horse-stealing, and wilful murder. Seven examples have survived, although none with any indication of the printer. Not all such publications were genuine. *The Last Dying Speech of Miss Mary Laws* (c.1790) is almost certainly fictitious and was probably printed in London.<sup>130</sup>

Accounts of murder trials continued to be popular. *The Trial of Henry Sell, for the Wilful Murder of Mrs. Elizabeth Clark, Wife of Mr. Wm. Clark, Farrier, at Walsoken*, for example, went through two editions in 1788 and 1789.<sup>131</sup> These were printed by Peter Gedge, proprietor of the *Bury and Norwich Post* newspaper, which, although printed in Bury St Edmunds, enjoyed a large circulation in Norfolk. Gedge also retained a shop in Norwich and employed a distributor in London as well as an extensive circulation network in East Anglia. He appears to have specialized in publishing local murder trials during the late 1780s and early 1790s, with at least five examples surviving.

One category of publication not surviving prior to 1760 is election literature, as described in the subtitle of the *Election Magazine* of 1784: 'An Impartial Collection of the Essays, Songs, Epigrams, Cards, Reasons, Strictures, Prophecies, Letters, Questions, Answers, Squibs, Queries, Addresses, Replies, Rejoinders, &c. that Were Distributed during the Canvas and Election of Representatives for the City of Norwich, and County of Norfolk.'<sup>132</sup> This was a joint venture by printers supporting opposing sides to collect and republish the printed ephemera published during the election period. It was intended to be published weekly, although only two issues appeared. Norwich had a relatively large electorate, with freemen and freeholders entitled to vote annually for members of Common Council and the sheriff, and periodically for

130 *The Last Dying Speech of Miss Mary Laws, near Dereham in Norfolk, being a Full and Particular Account of her Most Cruelly and Barbarously Poisoning her Father* [ESTC T155012].

131 *The Trial of Henry Sell, for the Wilful Murder of Mrs. Elizabeth Clark, Wife of Mr. Wm. Clark, Farrier, at Walsoken, in Norfolk, at the Lent Assizes 1788, Holden at Thetford, before Sir W. H. Ashhurst, Knt., One of his Majesty Justices of the Court of King's-Bench, Taken in Short-hand* (printed and sold by P. Gedge, Bury, and at No. 10, Cockey Lane, Norwich; sold also by Kirkman and Oney, No. 79, Fleet Street, London; and by the booksellers of Norwich, Cambridge, Lynn, Wisbech, Yarmouth, Downham, Ipswich, and the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk in general, [1789?]) [ESTC N498516].

132 *The Election Magazine; or, Repository of Wit and Politics* (Norwich: printed by J. Crouse, and Messrs. Chase and Co., and sold by them; and all other booksellers in Norfolk, &c.), price 1s. 6d. [ESTC T32479] (advertised in the *Norfolk Chronicle*, 24 April 1784).

representatives for the city in Parliament. There had been hotly fought elections throughout the century, but the earliest surviving evidence of this kind of printing is in the memoirs of Luke Hansard relating to the general election of 1768: 'Printers are made great instruments at all contested Elections; They are among the principal Actors and terrible engines to carry on the contest; and thus our little office became the centre point and rallying place of poets and party squib writers.'<sup>133</sup> Although his office was 'open to all parties' Stephen White and his apprentice were supporters of the Tory faction, still in a minority in the city:

I was great among the little combatants of electioneering disputants. This wetted my zeal in the Printing office; and as often as a Whiggish Song, or Squib, was to be printed, if none of my party Poets or Authors were at hand, i ventured at something myself, to place by its side, and to counteract, as i thought, its intended joke or satire; for it was no unfrequent thing, during the 3 months canvas to have a Whig and a Tory ballad side by side in the same impression.<sup>134</sup>

Few of the originals of these have survived from the eighteenth century, but following the election of 1768 White collected them together and published them in book form.<sup>135</sup> This idea was clearly a success, as many similar collections of election ephemera appeared thereafter.

More than thirty poll books printed in Norwich between 1710 and 1800 now survive, listing the names of those entitled to vote and how they cast their vote. The idea was to curb disputed election results and reduce fraud, but even such publications could give rise to controversy. There were two rival editions of the poll for 1786. In an advertisement for the one published by J. & C. Berry the compilers claimed: 'In the spurious copy of the poll, lately published by Mr. Richard Bacon, Auctioneer, there are upwards of 200 errors of various kinds. Some votes are entirely left out; and in order to counterbalance such omissions, the names of as many others, who did not vote at all, are inserted — to make

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133 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, pp. 13, 15.

134 *Auto-biography of Luke Hansard*, p. 15.

135 *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse, Relative to the Contested Election for Members of Parliament for the City and County of Norwich, Anno Domini, 1768* (Norwich: printed by S. White, Magdalen Street; and the booksellers in town and country) [ESTC T119900].

up the number!’<sup>136</sup> Richard Bacon responded at great length and with venom:

Mr. Berry has had the effrontery to assert that the above Poll is an inaccurate catchpenny publication, whereby he impudently means to deceive the public into an expectation that his own would be exempt from such imputations; but if either of the publications in question ought to be branded with the term *catchpenny*, the public will doubtless fix it upon that which, after so much indecent vaunting in its favour, comes forth upon an inferior paper, at a higher price & abounding in errors. Indeed there is one kind of superiority which Chase & Co. cannot but allow to Mr. Berry’s poll over their’s, and that is a superiority both in the *number* and *nature* of the errors.<sup>137</sup>

The 1790s was a decade of agitation for political reform by the working classes, influenced by the ideas promulgated by the French Revolution and in publications such as Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (1791–92). This led to the formation of political discussion groups in major towns and cities throughout the land. Norwich alone had ‘between 30 and 40 separate societies [...] besides many in the country villages’.<sup>138</sup> Many of these societies produced their own printed addresses to the public, which circulated in the streets.<sup>139</sup> As the Secretary of the Norwich Patriotic Society explained to the President of the London Corresponding Society in September 1795:

We have the satisfaction of informing you of the very rapid increase of our Society in Norwich and Norfolk: we have at present nineteen Divisions, and more are daily forming; we circulate small pamphlets and hand bills; — we wish much to encourage cheap editions of works or select parts. The Political Progress of Great Britain is a book, in our opinion, well calculated to serve the general interest of Liberty.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 October 1786.

<sup>137</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 26 October 1786. The story of the dispute is told in David Stoker, ‘The Berry Family of Norwich: The Rise and Fall of a Book Trade Dynasty’, *Publishing History*, 74 (2014), 67–95.

<sup>138</sup> *Copy of a Letter from the United Societies in Norwich to the Society for Constitutional Information*; reproduced in Michael T. Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society, 1792–1799*, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), VI, 77.

<sup>139</sup> For example: *At a Meeting of the Revolution Society, Held at the Bell Inn, Norwich, December 17th, 1792* ([Norwich, 1792]) ESTC N5202; *An Address from the Patriotic Society of Norwich to the Inhabitants of that City* ([Norwich?], 1797) [ESTC N29304].

<sup>140</sup> *Copy of a Letter from Norwich to the President of the London Corresponding Society*; reproduced in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, VI, 169.

These publications alarmed the gentry. As Hannah More noted in a letter to a friend: 'Vulgar and indecent penny books were always common, but speculative infidelity, brought down to the pockets and capacities of the poor, forms a new era in our history.'<sup>141</sup> It was to counteract the so-called 'poison' of such publications that she introduced her Cheap Repository Tracts in March 1795, using the same broadside ballad and chapbook formats, distributed both by booksellers in town and by hawkers and pedlars in the countryside. Her scheme began in the West Country, but quickly spread throughout Britain and Ireland.<sup>142</sup> The tumultuous events taking place on the Continent were recorded in Norwich by the 'Tory' Stephen White, with a broadside titled *A Full and True Account of the Surprising Trial and Condemnation of his Most Christian Majesty Louis XVI*.<sup>143</sup> Likewise, the events then taking place that would lead to an uprising in Ireland may have seemed remote from East Anglia, but the trial of Arthur O'Connor and other United Irishmen in May 1798 warranted a locally published account by Peter Gedge in Bury, with an imprint including the names of ten Norfolk and Suffolk booksellers, while also offering a 'Good allowance to hawkers'.<sup>144</sup>

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The range of locally produced publications expanded rapidly during the last quarter of the century. William Chase's *Norwich Memorandum Book* of 1766 proved to be successful and became an annual feature thereafter. It was joined by the rival *Crouse and Stevenson's Norwich and Norfolk Complete Memorandum-Book* in the 1780s, and in the 1790s by *The Norfolk Ladies Memorandum Book; or, Fashionable Repository*, the latter 'embellished with two ladies in the most fashionable full dresses

141 William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1835), II, 461.

142 David Stoker, 'John Marshall, John Evans and the Cheap Repository Tracts', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 107 (2013), 81–115.

143 *A Full and True Account of the Surprising Trial and Condemnation of his Most Christian Majesty Louis XVI., Late King of France, together with his Last Will and Testament, Written by Himself* (Norwich: S. White, [1793]) [ESTC N508866].

144 *The Trial of Arthur O'Connor, Esq., James O'Quigley, James John Fivey, John Binns, John Allen, and Jeremiah Leary, for High Treason* (printed and sold by P. Gedge, Bury; Forster, Ipswich; Stow, Stowmarket; Burkitt, Sudbury; Loder, Woodbridge; Downes, Yarmouth; Mrs Bowen, and Stevenson and Matchett, Norwich; Barker, Dereham; Marshall, Lynn; &c. &c., [1798?]) [ESTC T505967].

of the year'.<sup>145</sup> The second *Norwich Directory*, compiled by Thomas Peck during 1801 and published the following year, shows a still relatively prosperous city which was just beginning to suffer what would become a prolonged period of decline. If the weaving trade was now lost, throwing many artisans into poverty, new commercial enterprises such as banking and insurance had been established over the last few decades. There were now seven booksellers and one print seller listed. Two prosperous printing businesses — Richard Bacon, and Stevenson and Matchett — continued to produce weekly newspapers and undertook a range of other emerging commercial functions such as appraising, auctioneering, and estate agency. Two others — John Payne and Ann White (widow of Stephen) — appear to have survived by producing a range of small publications and an increased volume of jobbing work of all kinds.

Printing was now an essential part of the local economy. In 1700, most ordinary citizens of Norwich would have had relatively little contact with printed matter, whereas their great-great-grandchildren living a century later would come across a wide range of popular publications, official notices, advertisements, and forms. The introduction of printing to the city had had a profound impact on the lives of all but the poorest members of society and laid the foundations of a modern community.

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145 Crouse and Stevenson's *Norwich and Norfolk Complete Memorandum-Book* (Norwich: Crouse and Stevenson, [1789]); *The Norfolk Ladies Memorandum Book; or, Fashionable Repository, for the year 1794, Embellished with Two Ladies in the Most Fashionable Full Dresses of the Year* (Bury St Edmund's: J. Rackham).

