

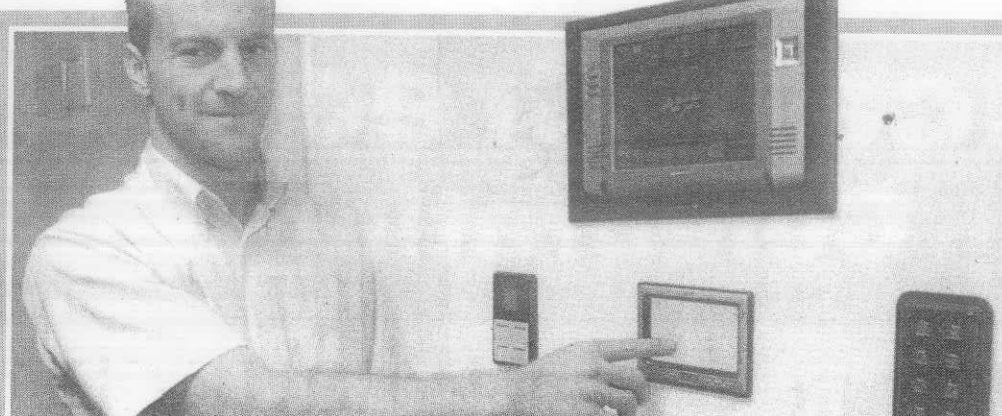
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A family name that has never been out of print

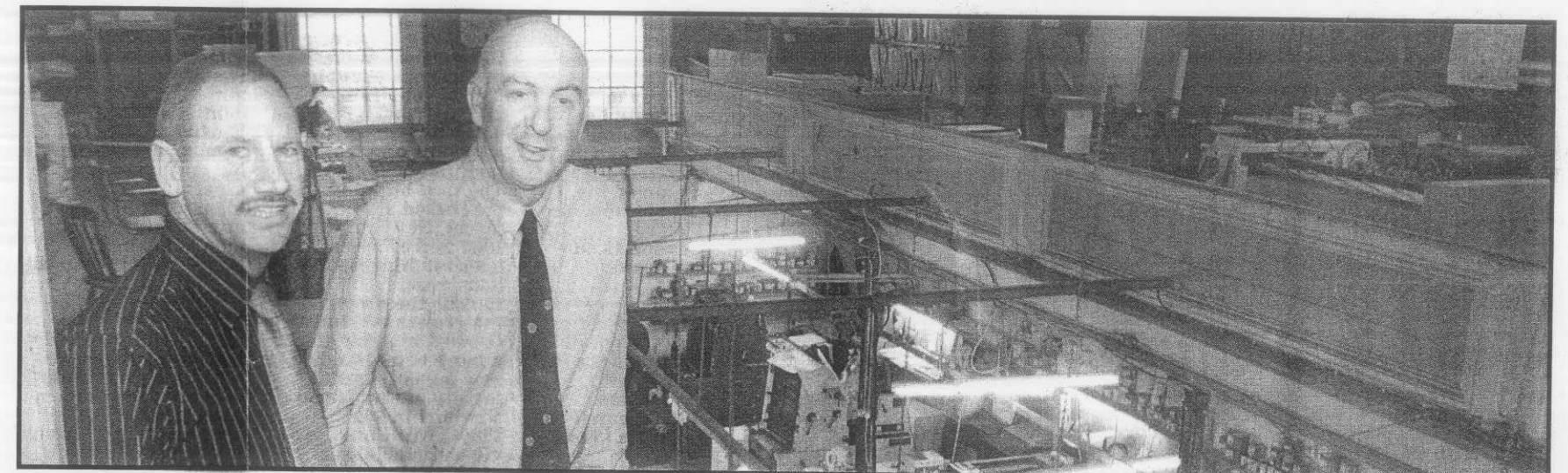
By ANNE SHERIDAN

AFTER passing the double centenary this year, the real test for McKerns Printing in Limerick's Glentworth Street is the next 10 years. "The changes in the industry are colossal. I'd go so far to say that the actual word printing could die away within

the next 10 years. Image technology is going to be the new thing. It's going to be tested like it's never been tested before," said Brien Morris. Throughout the ages, the business was owned by the McKerns family from 1806 to 1902, when it was acquired by the Eakins family and from 1948 to the present, the Morris family have remained at

the helm. Even with the changes of ownership, the name has always remained the same. "It's been a staggering feat of good fortune to last this long. There were very little changes between 1806 and the middle of the 20th century but from the 1960s onwards all the changes occurred," said Mr Morris.

•Fit to print: Christy Flynn and Brien Morris looking over the printing works in McKerns on Glentworth Street



ris. To reflect the changing industry and the massive bombardment of all mass media, Mr Morris offered a timely example. "In the old days, if you'd arrived in the world. Nowadays, people are typing their names in every email they send," he said. Although he was not particularly drawn to the industry in his younger years, it has since captivated him. "You're creating something from literally nothing almost. It's different every day and if you did the same thing twice it would be months apart," said Brien. But fellow director Chris

Flynn believes that, in the long term, the digital revolution will not replace the use of offset. "We got a good balance now between both," he said. Since Chris arrived there have been notable "investment changes" and a graphic designer has been hired. "That's very important in moving the business forward. You have to change with your customer needs. Whatever the customer requires we have to be in a position to produce it," he said. In 2005, Ivan Morris departed and Chris Flynn was appointed general manager and director; Brien's wife, Anne is also a director and manages

the accounts. Chris has been with the company for nearly 10 years. "Back then everything was done by hand, and now the work is automated. Digital is the buzzword now," he said. Now the company has the backing of Chris's youthful energy and 27 years of experience in the industry. He began his apprenticeship with the Limerick Leader and later studied printing at the College of Technology in Bolton Street, Dublin. His parents, Albert and Rita, met while working at McKerns and love blossomed. Just as the ownership has moved with the

times, the location has also changed. The first premises was on the corner of Rutland Street and Francis Street, before it was demolished for the construction of the present day Sarsfield House. Thereafter many moves occurred: from the premises beside the old Town Hall and Watch House Lane, to 23, George Street (now O'Connell Street) Gradually the business inched its way up to its present location on Glentworth Street in the 1950s. The founding father was George McKern. At the age of 23, he secured a position as a type compositor with the Limerick General Advertiser newspaper.

At the time Limerick was on the cusp of an industrial boom and George quickly saw an opening for a modern commercial printing house. With the help of his father, the print works at Rutland Street was established. Years later, his great grandson, Leo McKern, played the role of the eccentric barrister in the popular television series Rumpole of the Bailey. But its history goes deeper: as early as 1811 and up to 1817, McKerns printed such books as Account of Sieges from landing of King William, Limerick and its Sieges, A History of Limerick and Holiday Haunts on the West Coast of Clare.

The company even owned and ran the Limerick Weekly Echo newspaper, when G Ivan Morris purchased the company which was later sold in 1971. "Our slogan used to be: from a label to a newsletter," said Brien. Consequently, the building which was formerly a Presbyterian Church, became known as The Echo. "Time goes so fast when you look back," said Brien. But the company is more than proud of its longevity. They have moved with the times, their staff have remained loyal, and, most importantly, they have served their customers well.

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