



# Our Printing History



An entry in the Limerick Corporation Book for the year 1680 reads as follows. Samuel Terry certified by Mr. Reid to have been his apprentice for seven years, and had well and truly served his time, admitted to the freedom of this city. This is the earliest documented record of a printer having served his apprenticeship in the city. The entry also shows that Mr. Reid, the master printer, must have been in business in Limerick from at least 1673. Samuel Terry went on to become a fully fledged printer in his own right, and printed a number of books at his premises on Baal's Bridge.

During the Williamite campaign in Ireland a perambulating press was in operation and many proclamations and bulletins were issued. This press was used in Limerick, during the siege of 1690, for the printing of the translation of a Latin poem by an Irish Capuchin priest.

The eighteenth century saw the flowering of many famous printers in Limerick, including Andrew Welsh, John Ferrar, John Cherry, Andrew Watson and William Goggin. Many hundreds of books, bearing the Limerick imprint, were published in the city in this period.

Perhaps the best known of these eighteenth century printers was John Ferrar. In addition to being our first major historian, he was also a bookseller and editor of the Limerick Chronicle, which he also printed, from 1768 to 1781, when the paper was taken over by Andrew Watson.

It should also be mentioned that Limerick had two paper mills, at Annacotty and Ballyclough in the eighteenth century. Joseph Sexton opened his first mill in 1749, and, in the same year, Bigg's Military History of Europe was printed in Limerick on paper "made by Joseph Sexton".

Many more Limerick printers emerged in the nineteenth century. The firm of McKern, founded in 1807, is the oldest surviving company. In 1811, McKern's published the book An Account of the Siege of Limerick, from the landing of King William.

Some of the books printed in Limerick in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have vanished without trace, but many more can be seen to this day at the City Library and City Museum.

In the present century, one of the biggest publishing ventures ever undertaken was carried out on the Shannon Industrial Estate in the late 1960s, when the Irish University Press reprinted the British Parliamentary Papers (or Blue Books).

Thus we have a long history in printing. Our writers, printers, publishers, paper-makers and booksellers have made their own distinctive contribution to books and book-making - and not all of them were financially rewarded for their labours.