

## Jarrolds Printing Museum visit

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 11 members of the U3A visited the Jarrolds Printing Museum, and were treated to an intensive 3 hour tour of the extraordinary room which houses a vast, historic range of printing artefacts, stretching across at least 250 years.

Split into 2 smaller groups, we traversed the museum in 5 stations, each attended with a former Jarrolds employee, now volunteer, who described in detail and with great precision, each stage in the development of printing. From single letter hand type-setting, through to the advent of mechanical typesetters, halftone plates for letterpress and off-set lithography and finally, book binding, these volunteers revealed not only their extensive knowledge, but their passion for the skills involved.

This remains a working museum, and the staff remain competent in their specialised field, demonstrating the skills that were once essential in providing the nation with literature, as well as keeping alive the heritage of the past to better understand the impact of future technical developments.



Hand type setting is demonstrated here:

On the right Duncan is setting lines for printing, with each letter, space and punctuation set individually (back to front).

On the left, an example is shown of a type face set at

18pts. The smallest, the diamond font is only 3pts large, and was used for miniature documents or manuscripts.





A monotype mechanical typesetter was introduced in 1887, which sped up the whole process, here demonstrated by Duncan, with great whirring and clanking of gears and levers.

In the early printing presses, lines of type were prepared in 2 or 4 pages, fastened into a metal case and placed in a 'forme'. Ink was dabbed over the plate, which was a skilled business to spread the ink (made of linseed oil and soot) evenly, and not filling in the 'a's and 'e's. These were placed under the press and one copy at a time was produced.



The serendipitous invention of lithography replaced the need for individual letter types, using oil and ink on a smooth limestone surface, which could be used over and over again.

Later the method of off-setting eased the process, and speed became the essence.



Folding (in multiples of 4), sewing, cutting with a guillotine, case-making and lacing were all demonstrated with both skill and humour.

Hard-backed books were elaborately made and time-consuming in their construction, which was reflected in their value.

It was generally agreed that we had experienced a most enjoyable and instructive afternoon.