

## PHONOGRAPHY AND ANASTATIC PRINTING IN SUFFOLK.

by EDWARD J LAW.

IN MAY 1845 the first issue of the *Ipswich Phono-Press* was published in Ipswich. This was a noteworthy event marking an innovation in two distinct areas. It was the first newspaper written in phonographic shorthand and the first newspaper to be printed by the anastatic process.

Phonography, which was well known to many subsequent generations as Pitman's phonetic shorthand, was a system of writing in which the sounds of language were expressed in signs, and was in its early years of development. The name phonography which Isaac Pitman used for his new 'method of writing all languages by means of signs that express sounds,' had been taken from two Greek words for sound or voice and writing.

The anastatic process of printing was also in a developmental stage. The basic concept was that text or drawings produced with an oil-based ink could be transferred to a zinc plate by a simple chemical process, without the need for costly and time-consuming engraving. The material was then printed off in the normal manner from the zinc plate. Thus it was ideal for phonographic shorthand, for which no printing fount existed.

No anastatically printed issues of the ground-breaking *Ipswich Phono-Press* newspaper have been located, so we are fortunate to have references to the enterprise in contemporary publications. John Jay Smith, an American visitor to Europe in 1845 wrote letters to his family and friends at home detailing matters which he felt might interest them and, soon after his return, published the letters in two small volumes. From that work, *A summer's jaunt across the water*, we learn that he visited some connections at Ipswich on 20 May 1845, calling on Thomas Clarkson at Playford Hall the following day. Clarkson, who was born in 1760, had been one of the principal movers, with William Wilberforce, in the movement for the abolition of negro slavery. At a later date Smith wrote 'The first application of the art [of anastatic printing] which we witnessed was at Ipswich, where some enthusiastic followers of the Phonographic method of writing issued a periodical in Phonographic characters from the Anastatic hand-press, thus combining two novelties.' From the date of his visit to Ipswich it is clear that the account refers to the first issue of the *Ipswich Phono-Press*. On his return to America later in the year Smith proceeded to promote anastatic printing and produced several books by the process in 1846.

Other, more detailed, accounts of the launch of the Ipswich shorthand newspaper are found in the *Phonotypic Journal*, a monthly magazine published by Isaac Pitman in Bath to promulgate phonetic writing and the form of shorthand writing which he had developed from 1837. From a review of *Ipswich Phono-Press* No. 1 which appeared in the *Phonotypic Journal* of July 1845 we learn that it was of large quarto format, edited by John King of Ipswich, and printed at the Anastatic Press. John King was the editor of a more traditional newspaper, the *Suffolk Chronicle*, which was published in Ipswich. He was interested in, and promoted the use of, phonography, and it was no doubt he who was responsible for producing the written copy from which the newspaper was anastatically transferred. King had intended to publish the new newspaper fortnightly, but he found from producing the first issue that it was more time consuming than anticipated, and future issues were scheduled to appear on the first of each month. It is known from an advertisement in the *Phonotypic Journal* that the *Ipswich Phono-Press* carried illustrations; the illustrator was Fred Russel, a local artist, who is also known for his use of the anastatic process in the 1850s.

We have no knowledge of how many numbers of the anastatic *Ipswich Phono-Press* appeared, but it had been superseded by August 1845. Thus there cannot have been more than three issues, and from circumstantial evidence it is almost certain there were only two, though neither has been located. In August 1845 the same title appeared in a smaller, demy octavo, format, edited by King and produced lithographically, copies of which are held at the British Library and elsewhere. King continued as editor to the end of the year after which it was passed to Isaac Pitman who continued it for a further year under the same title.

Pitman had commenced development of his shorthand in 1837 and promoted it tirelessly for the rest of his life. He commenced publishing a shorthand journal in January 1842, and a year later started the *Phonotypic Journal* which initially appeared in standard print. From this monthly magazine we are able to gain some idea of the development of phonography in Suffolk. A national Phonographic Corresponding Society had been established, with accomplished phonographers providing support to newcomers and novices. The first Suffolk reference was the admittance to membership of the Society, reported in April 1844, of Mr Charles Sully of Mr Tovell's Academy in Hadleigh. Sully, who was an enthusiastic follower of phonography, moved to Mr Harvey's Academy at Halesworth later that year. The first member noted at Ipswich was Margaret S May of Margaret's Green. Whilst these members were presumably the most accomplished exponents, they were only the tip of a larger following: at the time Margaret May joined the Society we know there were other supporters in Ipswich. An appendix to this article lists those who were followers of the movement in Suffolk.

There was a strong following in Ipswich by the beginning of 1844 when John King, of the *Suffolk Chronicle*, was giving public classes every weekday evening and two morning classes, to nearly 250 pupils. They were supported by a local bookseller, Mr Hunt, who opened a depot for publications of the Phonographic Institution.

Isaac Pitman, recognising that Ipswich was a 'phonetic town' arranged there, and at Woodbridge, a series of lectures by his brother Joseph and T A Reed in early 1845 which drew average attendances of 300. On 14 May a similar number attended the Ipswich Phonographic Soirée. Speaking to the assembly Joseph Pitman referred to the first phonotypic newspaper 'printed by the new and wonderful process of Anastatic printing.' At that date there were 500 pupils attending 18 classes at Ipswich, and a further 100 pupils at Woodbridge, where another soirée was held the following evening. In addition lectures were given throughout Suffolk in 1845 and 1846, at Holbrook, Clare, Cavendish, Haverhill, Lowestoft, Beccles, Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury, Hadleigh, Boxford, and Stowmarket.

The anastatically printed *Ipswich Phono-Press* was not the only novelty publishing output of the phonography movement. In 1840 the Pitman family conducted a manuscript magazine, written in shorthand, which they circulated among themselves. The idea spread in association with the Phonographic Correspondence Society, and quite a number of these manuscript Ever-Circulating Phonographic Magazines, as they were known, came into being in the 1840s. Those known for Suffolk were *The Ipswich Gleaner*, of Mr S G Francies, Ipswich, *L'original* (sans emprunt), par Charles Sulley, Chelmondiston, near Ipswich which, from the title, we may suppose was written in French, and *The Morning Star*, conducted by Sully & Clarke, phonographic lecturers, for the use of their pupils.

The presence at the Ipswich soirée of William Siemens suggests the reason for the use of anastatic printing in production of the *Ipswich Phono-Press*. The process had been invented early in the decade by C F C Baldamus in Germany, and advanced and improved with input from Wilhelm Siemens and his brother Ernst. Wilhelm came to England to promote it and other inventions, settled here and anglicised his name to William. Ransomes of Ipswich were engaged to develop a steam press for the anastatic process; no doubt the reason for Siemens presence in the town. It is interesting, in terms of their business success, that both Isaac Pitman and William Siemens, who would receive knighthoods,

had an unwavering belief in their interests and devoted energy and ingenuity in promoting them. Siemens probably saw the chance of having the newspaper printed anastatically as a great opportunity.

It is fitting that Ipswich has the distinction of being the location of the first anastatically printed newspaper. Following Pitman's designation of Ipswich as a 'phonetic town' it could also be described as an 'anastatic town'. We have already seen that Wilhelm Siemens visited Ipswich in connection with the development of anastatic printing presses. Thus it was that on 9 January 1845 Wilhelm gave what was possibly his first lecture on anastatic printing, in Ipswich, to members of the town's Philosophical Society. Through this developmental connection Ipswich had a head start over London, where the major unveiling of the process was in March 1845 with Michael Faraday's lecture on, and demonstration of, the process in his hugely popular series of lectures, at the Royal Institution.

Knowledge of the early anastatic presses at Ipswich is very imperfect. One which was operating in Tavern Street in April 1845 was probably established following demonstrations of the process which were given to the book printers and newspaper printers of the town at Messrs. Ransomes' foundry in March. The proprietor of that Press is not known, but it may be relevant that the bookseller Edward Hunt, who conducted the Phonographic Depot in the town, traded from Tavern Street. By May, when the *Ipswich Phono-Press* was printed on it, the press was located in Carr Street. In August 1847 Rudolph Appel was operating an anastatic press in the town, probably in Dial Lane where it was located in November 1847. Appel had been the printer employed by the patentees of the process in London and moved to Ipswich some time after the closure of their press in London at the beginning of 1847. It is very unlikely that Ipswich could support two anastatic presses and we may suppose that there was a progression of one press from Tavern Street to Carr Street to Dial Street rather than any of them operating at the same time. Subsequently the town was the home of Cowell's Anastatic Press, the leading, and for many years the only, anastatic press in the country. Samuel Harrison Cowell who had been printing in the town from the 1820s took out a licence for the anastatic process in 1848 and established the press which flourished for some 30 years.

## APPENDIX

### **Suffolk members of the Phonographic Corresponding Society 1843-46.**

(As extracted from the Phonotypic Journal.)

Miss MA Alexander, Goldrood, Ipswich.

Miss RB Alexander, Goldrood, Ipswich.

WJ Alison, *Bury & Norwich Post*, Bury St Edmunds, compositor.

Miss E Archer, Elm House, Ipswich, teacher.

Miss Bailey, Halesworth, Suffolk.

Christopher Banks, Real Suffolk Tea Establishment, Bury St Edmunds.

Charles Beard, St Peter's, Ipswich.

Miss Hannah Brown, Mr Morley's, Ipswich.

William Brown, James Wright's, printer, Sudbury.

WG Chappell, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

W Chub, Beccles.

James Clarke, Mr Morley's, Ipswich.

William Cook junr., 1 St Mary's Square, Bury St Edmunds.

William Cutting, Holbrook, Suffolk.

Miss B Day, Mr Cason's, draper, Eye, Suffolk.

John Denker, Sudbury, Secretary to Mechanics Institution.  
 Christopher Fielding, Brandon, Suffolk.  
 Rev. MW Flanders, Baptist Minister, Eye, Suffolk.  
 Miss E Foster, Elm House, Ipswich, teacher.  
 SG Francies, accountant, Mount Pleasant, Globe Lane, Ipswich.  
 Master John M Freeman, Eye, Suffolk.  
 Miss Anna Freeman, Eye, Suffolk.  
 Miss MC Freeman, Eye, Suffolk.  
 Thomas W Gissing, Mr Sawyer's, chemist, Fore Street, St Clements, Ipswich.  
 J Glide Jnr., 5 Matthews Street, Ipswich.  
 Thomas Glyde, Eagle Street, Ipswich.  
 George Goldsmith, Sepulchre Street, Sudbury.  
 Miss Harvey, Mr A Ransome's, Ipswich.  
 Miss Eliza Mary Hunt, Tavern Street, Ipswich.  
 Miss Isabella Maria Hunt, Tavern Street, Ipswich.  
 Mr John King, *Suffolk Chronicle Office*, Ipswich.  
 Mr Henry MacLagan, Hadleigh, Suffolk.  
 Margaret S May, Margaret's Green, Ipswich.  
 WJ Notley, Brandon, Suffolk.  
 FJ Palmer, Mr Harvey's Academy, Halesworth, Suffolk.  
 JF Paul, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds.  
 Benjamin Piggins, Mr Sewell's Academy, Eye, Suffolk.  
 FR Ridley, Berner Street, Ipswich.  
 Miss RM Ruddock, Ivy Cottage, Eye, Suffolk.  
 William Dillwyn Sims, Messrs Ransomes, Ipswich.  
 Edward Smith, Mr Tovell's Academy, Hadleigh, Suffolk.  
 Miss Mahal Smith, Rose Place, Norwich Road, Ipswich.  
 James Spilling, Bramford Road, Ipswich.  
 Charles Sully, Mr Tovell's Academy, Hadleigh, Suffolk, and subsequently Mr Harvey's Academy, Halesworth, Suffolk.

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