

## Feeding the printing presses

John Garrood of Fakenham was well known for making bicycles although his business started by making agricultural implements. He was also an inventor and at one point he was making pedals that would open doors, not to make life easier for servants but to make it easier for them to carry more at once with both hands!

Garrood was a friend of Thomas Miller Jr. the printer who asked him to invent an automatic feeder for his 'flatbed' printing presses so that he did not have to pay girls to hand feed them. Garrood worked on his ideas for some while, then he discovered that someone, possibly in Italy, had already built such a feeder!

Miller would not invest in one - he was too preoccupied with a share issue to raise finance for an extension to his works. Unfortunately this issue was under-subscribed.

A new company took over the project and installed larger, more modern presses. In the 1920s these were fitted with automatic feeders, these worked by friction and some skill was required by the operator to set them up for operation. They would not handle all kinds of paper and bibles and hymn-books still had to be hand-fed. They also had limited capacity and so a man had to be paid to keep them 'topped up'. It is interesting to note that these feeders were still in operation in some places for 40 years!

The advent of vacuum pumps revolutionised automatic press feeders, Rubber suction cups separated the paper and delivered it, resulting in deep-pile feeders which did not need constant attention. Indeed, if the paper specification was constant, more than one title could be printed in a shift!

Printing on large sheet flatbed printing presses is now history but current small sheet presses still use suction operated feeders.