

PENRITH

Print's history back to life

Renovated museum reopens with more to see



Penelope Bradley

PENRITH is home to a true relic of a bygone era, with the Museum of Printing's 1886 Wharfedale letterpress.

Brought to Australia on a ship from England more than 120 years ago, the old newspaper printing press was responsible for the production of the *Nepean Times* from about 1860 until its closure in 1986.

The antique machine was once operated via a system of complex belt-pulleys and powered by a coal-fed steam engine, according to museum committee member Graham Elphick, 76.

Museum of Printing



- » Has reopened with new displays
- » Located on the corner of Ransley St and Mulgoa Rd
- » Open from 10am until 2pm every Saturday.
- » Details: printingmuseum.org.au

Mr Elphick, a retired compositor who has been a volunteer at the museum since its opening in 2001, said the museum was established by Alan Connell, a former linotype operator, who was employed at the defunct newspaper for 40 years.

The museum, at Penrith Showground's Paceway Complex, recently underwent extensive renovations, with a new foyer and more space to display vintage machinery and printing memorabilia.

"Equipment that has been in storage which we were previously unable to display is now on display

see," Mr Elphick said.

Home to a comprehensive library of operational printing manuals for the obsolete machines, the museum hosts regular meet-ups with speakers including James Cryer, a former operator of the mammoth machines and artist Juliana O'Vean, an artist, who has produced a limited-edition book detailing the museum's treasured relics.

Mr Elphick, of North St Marys, is the nephew of a letterpress operator and the grandson of a bookbinder.

He said he was sad to see the end of an era.

"When the letterpress is finally gone, it will be very sad but it is important to preserve its history," he said.

"When you're a compositor working on a print job you have to be maths and engineering expert as well as a bit of an artist.

"It takes years to learn properly how the machines work.

"When you get your final result there's a sense of satisfaction — you feel proud of

