

Tradition lives on

By TROY DODDS

IN today's world of desktop publishing, a few clicks of the mouse can solve even the most complex of problems, but in Alan Connell's day, things in the newspaper game were much different.

Eight years ago, Alan realised his dream of keeping the past alive by opening the Penrith Museum of Printing, a concept that has grown so big there's no more room for new memorabilia.

"I wanted to preserve the fading art of typesetting," Mr Connell said of the idea behind the museum.

"The printing trade was and still should be an art."

Mr Connell said it was a suggestion by his daughter that led to the museum growing from a simple idea to a reality.

"I worked at the *Nepean Times* as a typesetter and when it closed the stuff was scheduled to be sent away for recycling," he explained. "My daughter said that was a shame as there was 106 years of history there, and she suggested that I open a museum — which I did."

That museum has grown to become a local tourist attraction, with many coach tours stopping by to re-live the history of how newspapers used to be put together. Incredibly, many of the museum's machines are in working order, with Mr Connell and his team of volunteers contributing to ensure everything still operates.

"People are really surprised when they see what we have and they are especially shocked when everything is still in working order," Mr

Connell said. "We're now in a position where there's no room left here. The Penrith Paceway have been very good to me in allowing us to have the space here."

Having spent some five decades in the newspaper trade, Mr Connell is determined to continue to keep the spirit of the old typesetting days alive.

"There's a lot of people who don't know how tough it used to be," Mr Connell said. "The requirements these days are not as exacting."

A large proportion of the machinery and equipment on display at the Museum started its working life at the *Nepean Times* and while the newspaper no longer exists, Mr Connell said it's important to keep its history alive given it serviced the local area so well, operating in Penrith as early as 1882.

The Penrith Museum of Printing is located within the grounds of the Penrith Showground / Paceway complex. For information on group tours, call 4731 2714.



Penrith Museum of Printing founder Alan Connell inspects some of the machinery on display at the local tourist attraction. Photo: PETER VEITH.