

'The London Book Trade' Topographies of Print in the Metropolis from the Sixteenth Century. Edited by Robin Myers and others. Oak Knoll Press & British Library. 2003. £25.00

'Many binders houses crowded together'. Not a statement which, one suspects, could have been made in relation to the craft's practitioners for some years, but one that James Raven is able to make in his essay on the book traders of Paternoster Row, prior to 1800. The road ran, and still runs, east/west, immediately north of St Paul's Cathedral, a thoroughfare that Raven claims to be increasingly the most important to the book trade in Britain in the 18th century. Binders are recorded in the Row from 1312 (William de Southlete) onwards. What is striking is the ease of inter-change from one premise to another, and between trades. That said, Raven establishes an unbroken link in the use of shops in the Row over two centuries.

This book is a collection of the papers given at the 2002 Book History Society conference and is the latest title in the Publishing Pathways series. It is meticulously researched and highly authoritative. Although most papers focus on the life and work of printers and booksellers, they contain passing references to binders. However, the one does make mention of our craft is no less satisfying for that. It is an enlightening and highly readable paper given by Sheila O'connell (an expert in the field of prints and drawings at the British Museum) in which she examines the variety and role of the pictorial print, as opposed to the extracted book plate, in the mid-1700's Ω

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