

This booklet is printed by Aske Printworks in Stavanger, and deals with the canning and printing industries in the city from 1900 onwards.

The subject is not chosen by accident. Stavanger is, and always has been, the city in Norway – after Oslo – where the printing industry was of the greatest extent. This flourishing activity began at exactly the same time as the canning industry, which was the most important industry in the city in the years 1900 – 1950.

Aske Printworks had no particular tradition as a printer of labels, and so it may well be asked, why choose such a subject. The answer is easy enough. No-one has hitherto described the significance of these two industries for each other in one volume, and so, despite there being much of the story that is missing, we have, perhaps rashly, undertaken the task.

There is no-one better qualified for this than the former Curator of the Norwegian Canning Museum, local historian, John Gunnar Johnsen, who has brought the project to completion.

The collecting of sardine can labels – so-called “iddisar” in the local dialect – from this period, perhaps represents some of the finest achievement which the country has preserved.

It is thought that no less than 40,000 different designs of labels were printed.

As an example, the 37 small labels in the pages which follow are merely a small and random choice from the Canning Museum’s rich photographic archive, chosen from the letters A and B!

The richness of designs and the quality of the pictures rapidly made the labels attractive for children as objects to collect, along the same lines as glossy prints, postcards and stamps.

The number of labels, and the relatively easy access to them, meant that one could be fairly free with them.

It was easy enough to obtain new labels with a little effort and contacts at the factories. So labels were used to make paper darts, and to decorate kites or even an entire child’s room.

The ready availability was also given expression in the event known as “drøsing” or “sjeining”, when new labels were launched into the breeze from a high point on the factory, and for a short time we could experience the dream of being millionaires and being able to dispense “paper money” to hopeful and expectant children.

The function as “money” or at any rate a medium of exchange is seen in the way that they were kept, in piles of 9, with one special one folded over the top. Earlier still the game of “mablis” was developed, in which one paid with labels when hit by an opponents marble.

The number of canning factories and printworks in Stavanger gave the subculture of label collecting an extensive coverage in the city, and this is the reason for the great interest which is still today linked with these documents of cultural history. As well as the old photographs – also from the Canning Museum – our photographer Dag Myrestrand has also put his soul into representation of a choice of labels set against

different maritime backgrounds.

So, alongside the recording of history on paper, what could be more natural for a printworks, which loves to show its skills, than to demonstrate them with old-fashioned masterpieces of the printer’s art?

In this special edition, we have not succumbed to the temptation of using effects such as for example one extra colour to emphasise the gold on the King Oscar labels. But we have made a special effort to reproduce the pictures as closely as possible to the originals, by the choice of paper and bromides.

The paper is Galleri Art Silk, which has been treated with a touch of gloss overlay on the pictures to emphasise further their brilliance, details and depth. In order to make the book as easy as possible on the eye, the text has been treated with a matt coating so as to counteract reflections, and a little yellow dye has been added, so as to reduce the contrast between the letters and the background. The illustrations are not reproduced by conventional bromides, but by crystal bromides, which wherever possible make the reproduction even sharper, and gives an emphasis which in our opinion makes the subject “come alive” to a greater extent.

The whole book has been bound by enthusiasts at one of Aske’s most supportive clients through the years, the advertising agency BBDO in Oslo.

## The breakthrough years of the Canning Industry, Stavanger 1900 - 1920

*The first facilities were relatively insignificant, and it was only after 1890 that the management of factories began on an industrial footing, and the factories themselves were large stone buildings. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were thirteen canning factories in operation, with a combined workforce of about 1,250 people, both men and women. In the busy summer season, the time for canning brisling, the number of those employed was much greater.*

*The great advantage of the canning industry is its universal market. Therefore it cannot be harmed to any perceptible extent by the changing customs regulations of individual countries.*

This is how the canning industry in Stavanger was presented at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in a publication printed by the Stavanger Exchange Committee.

The tone is very optimistic and satisfied, at the opening of the new century. The city's industrial life was pulling out of the dramatic bankruptcies and collapse of the 1880s; new industries were beginning to be established, export was on the rise, as was the population.

In 1900, Stavanger was a city with 30,000 inhabitants and a variety of industries.

The city was still not over the turnaround caused by the crisis of the 1880s, but new industries and production methods were being brought into use. This was particularly significant at the city's largest workplace,

Stavanger Støberi & Dok in Spilderhausvigen.

This shipyard had almost 400 people in its employ and was fully occupied with the building of "modern steamships". Other branches of industry had also found their place in the city, such as nail factories, footwear factories, can producers, soap factories, a brewery and a potato flour factory.

At the same time trade continued with fresh and salted fish, lobster and seaweed ashes.

Something new was in the air, but the city was still characterised by architecture and a communications infrastructure from the 1850s.

Certainly, the railway station had been built in 1878, and the first quay for steamships had been built right out at

Skansen, but most of the warehouses around the main harbour still had direct access to the sea. However there were several canning factories on Strandside ready to force their way in between the old warehouses.

Those involved in the economic life of the city were satisfied with the situation in 1900. They certainly hoped for continuing growth, but probably none of them could have predicted the extent of that growth over the next twenty years.

In 1918 the number of canning factories had increased to 60, and well over 4,000 people were employed there. Yet more were employed during the high season for the production of brisling and kippers.

STAVANGER PRESERVING CO. WAS THE PIONEER OF THE CITY'S CANNING FACTORIES. IT STARTED ON A SMALL SCALE IN (THE STREET) ØVRE STRANDGATE IN 1873. BY 1900 PRODUCTION HAD INCREASED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT A WHOLE NEW FACTORY BUILDING HAD TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN NEDRE STRANDGATE. THREE OLD WAREHOUSES WERE TORN DOWN AND REPLACED BY A 3-STORY BRICK BUILDING. THE COMPANY'S MAIN TRADEMARK, TWO CROSSED FISH, WAS DESIGNED BY THEIR AGENT IN LONDON AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 1880S. FOR MORE THAN 100 YEARS THE TRADEMARK HAS ADORNED MILLIONS OF CANS ALL OVER THE WORLD. IT IS STILL IN USE FOR SOME MARKET

The ripple effect of the canning industry was also significant. Many companies acted as suppliers of goods and services to the canning factories. A rough estimate indicates that half of the city's working population was either directly or indirectly involved in this main earner.

*"..THE FAT BRISLING POURS AN UNSTOPPABLE STREAM OF SILVER OVER THE CITY. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT IT IS THE CANNING INDUSTRY WHICH HAS CREATED MODERN STAVANGER"*

The export of canned fish from Stavanger was 756,000 kg. in 1895; in 1900, it was 1,900,000 kg., and in 1915, it reached 36,700,000 kg.

In terms of cans, export in 1900 was 15 million cans, and 350 million cans in 1915. Figures such as

these are impressive even apart from their economic significance, and even more impressive when one considers all the operations which need to take place from the time the fish come into the factory in the morning, until all have been canned, sometimes late into the evenings. One of the best known of the producers of canned goods, Endre Grønnestad, has passed down the following colourful description of the production process:

*From small boxes, the fish are put into large barrels, where the water gushes in like a spring, while the fish dance around and are separated from*

*Inside, on the lower floor of the factory were about a hundred small tables covered in shiny gleaming brisling.*

*Industrious fingers threaded every brisling onto rods, which were in turn set in frames. When the frame was full, it was put on a trolley, which when fully loaded, was despatched to the smokery.*

*Here the work is intense: Keeping the fires going, putting in the frames, turning them round and moving them down, it all goes on continually. It is so important to smoke the brisling properly. It must be cooked during the smoking process, but not fried brown. It must have the silver colour, if it is good. Finally it has passed the test, and goes out on the frames on the trolley, and after a time in to the lift. Now it is taken up to the second floor, where the frames are removed, and the "scissor girls" immediately go into action with their part of the operation, cutting off the heads of the brisling. Light streams in from all sides, sparkling and shining at some distance from the marble tables where the energetic "layers" sort and pack the sardines in cans. There in a corner is the oil-filling pump, which, powered by machinery, automatically puts the necessary (olive) oil into each can, twenty at a time.*

*From the "layers", the sardine cans go to the "seamers". Each of these ingenious seaming machines closes up to 6,000 cans per day.*

*After seaming, the cans fall down into a cart, which, when full, is taken to the autoclave room, to be steam-treated. (sterilised).*

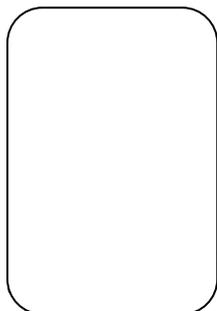
*The brisling has to go through all these operations before it is ready as a sardine. But there is still a long way to go, before it is ready for the market.*

FROM 1902 "KING OSCAR BRAND" WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT TRADEMARK FOR CHRISTIAN BJELLAND & CO. ON THE EXPORT MARKETS. THE COMPANY WAS GRANTED PERMISSION BY THE KING TO USE HIS PORTRAIT AND NAME, AND CARRIED OUT A LARGE SCALE MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR THAT BRAND NAME. IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN THE MARKETING WERE THE REGULAR NEW EDITIONS OF ADVERTISEMENTS. UP UNTIL 1920 THERE WAS ALSO A "YOUTHIFYING CURE" FOR THE KING'S PORTRAIT. BY MEANS OF THIS "CURE" THE AGEING AND BALDING KING HAD HIS HAIR RESTORED, AND HIS CHEEKS FILLED OUT. THE TRADEMARK KING OSCAR IS TODAY STILL ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR NORWAY FOODS LTD.

The majority of the anonymous workforce were women. Their working day was dependent on the arrival of the fish. When the fish were plentiful, the day was long, but if they were in short supply, the day was short, or there might be no work at all. Most of the work was piece work, and for those with nimble hands, this could provide a good daily wage. However, it was rarely that they had more than 150 working days a year.



For the first ten years most of the factories lay in the area of Stavanger around Vågen. But with the rapid growth from 1900 onwards, factories were established gradually further away from the centre. This moved the centre of gravity of the canning industry to the east side of the city, and in



particular the area between Strømsteinen and Lervig. In this limited area there were 40 factories in business in 1920. Many of them were built right up next to each other, and from all of them rose one or more chimneys. For many years these chimneys were one of the architectural characteristics of Stavanger.

In order to maintain such a high level of production, the canning industry needed many suppliers. If we use 1915 as a theoretical example, the following quantities of items would be required.

4 -5,000 million brisling  
350 million rubber rings

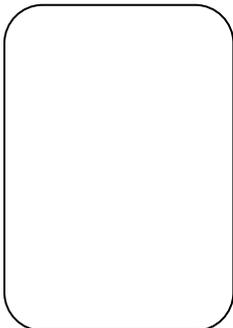
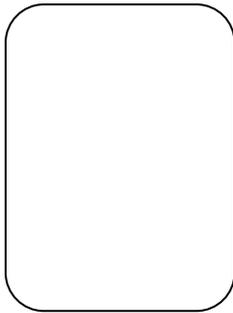
MANY LABELS ARE DECORATED WITH FISH-RELATED MOTIFS.  
SOME OF THEM OVERSTEP THE BOUNDARIES OF REALISM AND USE HUMOUR TO ATTRACT ATTENTION. THIS ONE WAS  
PRINTED BY DREYER DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND WAS AIMED AT THE BRITISH MARKET.

350 lids and cans  
350 million can keys  
350 million labels  
3,500,000 wooden boxes  
10 million litres of olive oil.

Apart from all these, one still needs to include all the machines, rods, frames for smoking, threading tables, different types of printed materials, and transport services, to name but a few. The numbers are a low estimate, but serve as examples to show the effect that the canning industry and its support industries had. But the starting point of all these numbers is to understand why the characteristic of Stavanger is that it is the “Canning City”.

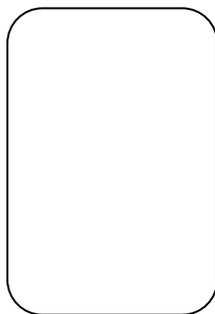
HOW COULD SUCH A  
GROWTH IN EXPORTS  
BE POSSIBLE?

The Norwegian canning industry has always stressed the quality of Norwegian brisling as an important reason why “Sardines from Norway” became an international success. That is indeed an important contributing factor, particularly with reference to the summer catch of brisling. These taste good, are boneless, and look delicious. In addition “Norwegian sardines” are smoked, and this is what distinguishes them from sardines from elsewhere. But the explanation for the growth in exports is rather more complex than simply “we had the best fish”



The explanations can be divided roughly into two groups. First, significant technical improvements which led to a more efficient running of the factories. Second, skilful marketing of the industry's products.

In the years up to 1910 machines and equipment



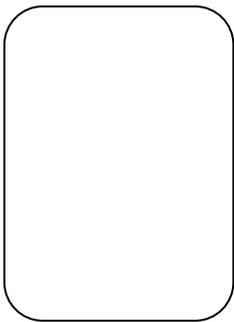
were developed which made it possible to produce canned products in a completely different way and at a speed which would have been completely unthinkable in earlier years. By 1900 presses were available which could press out a lid and a can in one operation.

The laborious work of the tinsmiths in soldering tins together was thereby rendered superfluous. Also by 1900, a patent had been taken out on a machine which was to revolutionise the whole industry: the seaming machine which made it possible to fasten the lid to the tin without soldering. Before the advent of the machine, solderers could only manage to solder between 600-700 lids per 10-hour working day. But with Reinert's, or Opsal's seaming machines, the seamers could now manage up to 7,000 lids in the same time.

Also by 1910, the threading table had been invented, and the decapitating machine which replaced the laborious work of cutting off the heads of the fish with scissors.

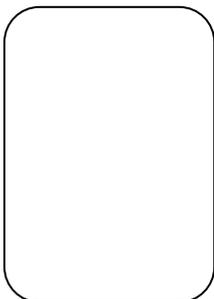
It was these inventions which changed can production from largely hand-labour to an industry. The use of machines and other equipment made it necessary for the factories to be housed in more solid and suitable buildings than the old warehouses. That is why it is in this same period that we find the building of most of the characteristic canning factories in brick.

The increase in the efficiency of production led to a significant reduction in prices. In 1900 a can of summer-caught brisling sold for 40 øre, whereas in 1912 the recommended price was 17 øre. This went along with improving the competitive situation on the international market, particularly in relation to the French and Portuguese competition. In these years the French sardine industry had considerable difficulties, partly because of the significant reduction in the supply of fish. There were also constant conflicts in the business. The Norwegian competitive edge was further strengthened under these conditions.



The technical improvements were important both for lowering the price, and also so as to be able to produce the large quantities which were increasingly demanded. However there remains the question as to whether the efforts put

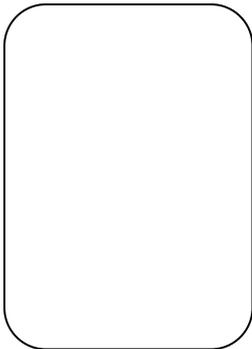
into sales and marketing were not really the most important reason for the incredible rise in exports. A sales and distribution network, undergirded by massive marketing campaigns, was built up over the whole world. The impact in that area is that much more impressive when we know that it happened as the pioneer activity in



the development of the Norwegian advertising business. The canning business thus became an important factor in the work done in developing Norwegian competence in international marketing.

UNTIL THE FIRST WORLD WAR, THE BRITISH EMPIRE WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT MARKET FOR NORWEGIAN SARDINES. THE DESIGNS ON THE LABELS WERE CLEARLY AFFECTED BY THIS, WITH A PREPONDERANCE OF

The largest companies in the business were naturally enough those which had the most influence in the work of marketing. That is why we most often find Stavanger Preserving Co., C. Houge Thiis, Carl O. Olsen & Kleppe, John Braadland Ltd and Christian Bjelland & Co. most often represented at the big international exhibitions. All the medals and distinctions which they reaped were actively made use of in the next round, for the marketing of their products. It is the same companies which launch the largest marketing campaigns and print the finest posters. Christian Bjelland & Co. also showed Norway's first advertising film, launched in 1909.



In spite of both the knowledge and the will of many of the factories in Norway, part of the glory for the efforts in marketing must be shared with an Englishman - Angus Watson from Newcastle. His amazing career as a distributor of canned

food began with an agreement with Christian Bjelland & Co. in 1905. At that time he ordered an enormous quantity of first-class summer brisling. As he described it, it was as if Christian Bjelland was doubtful both as to whether he could deliver so much, and that he would be able to sell most of it.

The following year the order was increased, and Bjelland was to be the company's only supplier of first-class brisling. In 1907 the supply to Angus Watson had increased to a combined value of more than 1 million kroner, about half of Bjelland's total sales for that year.

With a head office in Newcastle, Angus Watson built up a company which was the largest buyer of Norwegian sardines in the world. It has been

claimed that in particular years his purchases amounted to almost 40% of the total sales of Norwegian brisling. That amount was so large that after just a few years Christian Bjelland had to give up and give other suppliers a chance. Angus Watson however remained the company's largest client with a share of between 25 and

50% of the company's annual output. The background to his success can be attributed largely to systematic and widespread marketing. In 1911 the company spent nearly £50,000 in efforts to promote sales. Through his rapid expansion, Angus

Watson was an important stimulus for a number of other canning factories. He functioned often as the channel which opened up British markets and provided large and secure deliveries for local producers.

Technical improvements, systematic marketing and good abilities to make use of the changing conditions of the international markets seem to have been the most important causes of the impressive growth which the Stavanger canning

industry enjoyed in the years up until 1920. The whole of the local society was influenced by this development. Not least in the printing industry, can we easily see the close connection with the canning industry.

TO JUDGE FROM THE LABELS, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A LARGE NUMBER OF MERMAIDS AROUND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. THIS LUSCIOUS EXAMPLE WAS PRINTED BY THE STAVANGER LITHOGRAFISKE ANSTALT FOR CHR. BJELLAND IN 1907.

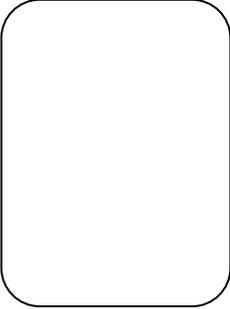
SEVERAL EDITIONS FOLLOWED, BOTH FROM BJELLAND AND OTHER FACTORIES. BEING OUTSIDE THE NORMS OF THE DAY, SUCH ILLUSTRATIONS MUST HAVE PROVOKED SOME, AND BROUGHT DELIGHT TO OTHERS.

“Signs are it’s  
going to be a hard winter,  
- there’s no brisling to be seen”

*The quotation above is taken from a letter from the Stavanger branch of the Norsk Litografisk Forbund. It comes from the pen of the then manager, E. Sandsberg-Eriksen, and is printed in Norsk Litografia no. 1/1909. The sentence comes right at the end of the letter, as a heartfelt sigh from a manager who fears difficult times ahead for himself and his colleagues in the business.*

The close connection of the printing industry with the canning industry has been adduced as an explanation for the high number of printing companies in Stavanger. After Oslo, Stavanger has always had the highest number of members in the country’s printing unions.

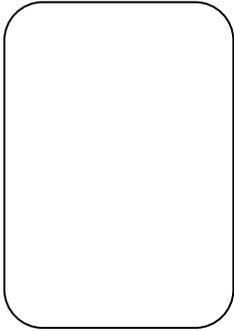
In the archives of the Norwegian Canning Museum is preserved a thick and well-worn Record Book with the title: *Proof Book for Dreyers Bookprinters* (Prøvebog for Dreyers



Bogtrykkeri). The book can be dated to the late 1890s and contains a rich selection of printed items. The industrial life of the city is well represented by share certificates, price lists, envelopes and invoices, while at the same time the social life of the city

can be traced through wedding songs, invitations to balls, and funeral songs. Among the proofs there are also labels for different kinds of items such as soap, medicinal tablets, wine, soft drinks, medicines and canned products. Typically, labels are printed on coloured paper, using two colours at most.

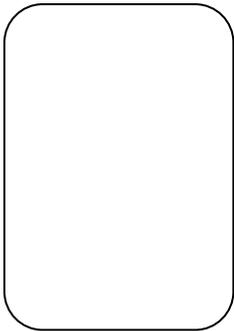
At the turn of the century Dreyer was a small printing business with a total of ten staff. The largest in the business was Stavanger Lithografiske Anstalt, with 30-40 employees and a well-equipped printing department.



In 1895 there were seven printing companies in the city, with a total of 92 employees. The situation in 1895 can be compared to what we find in other Norwegian cities at the time. The city had several larger printworks which had the printing of newspapers as their

major activity, two which printed different kinds of printed material - books and booklets, and one company which could also take on lithographic assignments.

The Norwegian Canning Museum has another “Proof Book” in its collections. This can be dated to 1913 and belongs to the company



Stavanger Etiketfabrik a/s. In terms of the number of proof copies of printed matter, this book is almost exactly the same as the first, each having about 1,000 different items. But this is however almost the only similarity.

THERE ARE MANY LABELS WITH WOMEN AS THEIR THEME. THIS IS ALSO THE THEME WHICH SHOWS THE WIDEST VARIATION, FROM TITILLATING MERMAIDS, VIA WOMEN SKIERS TO BEAUTIFULLY DRAWN PORTRAITS LIKE ELLA. THIS TRADEMARK FIRST CAME INTO USE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR, AND WAS USED FOR YEARS LATER. THIS EDITION IS FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR WHEN CANNED FOODS HAD A LIMITED SHELF LIFE OWING TO THE USE OF BLACK SHEET IRON

In the book from Stavanger Etiketfabrik we find page after page with labels from the canning industry. A mere twenty or so are for items other than canned products. In the corresponding book from Dreyer, the canning business accounts for about 5 -10% of the proofs. The labels in the proof book of 1912 are also of a completely different sort, being four-colour lithographs with a sprayed coating.

Sadly there is no corresponding proof book from Dreyer from this (later) period. However there is a strong probability that such a work would have shown the same trend; a dominating position for the canning industry. In the 15 years which lie between these two proof books, the printing industry in Stavanger went through extensive

development and restructuring.

The number of companies increased to 15, and by the end of 1912 these employed 862 people. The growth both in the number of companies and of employees continued for several years before levelling out, followed by a partial decline.

A clear trend from the figures in that the increase in the main business took place in the companies which produced lithographic printed matter for the canning industry. It is thus natural to present some of the pioneers within the printing business in the city.

#### STAVANGER LITHOGRAFISKE ANSTALT

Was founded on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1876, with Hans G.B. Sundt Hansen as the main partner. To begin with, the company was an ordinary book producer and binder with a small lithographic department. Printing was done with a hand press under the direction of a German lithographer. Although the demand for labels was limited for

THE CANNING FACTORY "MIRA" A/S WAS ONE OF MANY THAT WERE ESTABLISHED JUST BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR. IT CARRIED ON ITS BUSINESS IN ALMENNINGSGATA (STREET) RIGHT BY THE FISH PIER. TODAY THE BUILDING IS USED BY THE ARTIST REIDAR BERGE WHO HAS CREATED HIS OWN MUSEUM IN THE FORMER CANNING FACTORY.

the first few years, the printing capacity soon became far too small. In 1879, at the same time as the machine press was introduced, the company moved to its own premises in Øvre Holmegate. Thus the company was well prepared to meet the canning industry's increasing demand for labels. The development in production can well be illustrated by the following figures from the company.

1878	20,000 3-colour labels per week
1891	640,000
1901	1,000,000
1912	3,000,000

Although the lithographic department became increasingly significant, the company decided to continue with, and extend, its book-printing side. Then in 1909 it added its own block-printing department. In this way the company was less vulnerable to the periodic fluctuations in demand. In 1912 the number of employees was increased to 46. This company is the only one of the printing businesses which is still in operation.

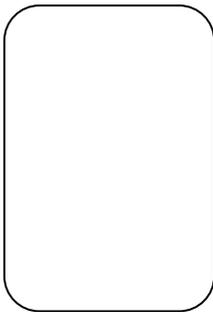
#### DREYERS BOGTRYKKERI

Was established in 1846 as a book-printer. In contrast to Sundt Hansen had little inclination for 3 or 4-coloured labels. He would have replied to such demands by saying that canning factories shouldn't have to bother about such things. "If the contents of the can were good enough, newspaper and newspaper-quality printing would be good enough as packaging." The contents of the company's "proof book" are, understandably, not particularly exciting, although the company did nevertheless decide to go in for lithographic production of labels around 1900. Starting at his father's printing works at no. 5, Hetlandsgate (street), in 1987, Jakob Dreyer instigated a new period of creativity for the company.

He began with his own block-printing works, Dreyers Reproduktionsanstalt, which was later joined to the book-printing department.

In the years up to 1915, the production premises were extended several times with the purchase of properties in Hetlandsgate and Berglandsgate. At the same time machines were purchased which enabled the company to meet most demands in the area of printing. Apart from the book-printing side, the company also obtained work rooms for reproductions, a book-binding shop, lithographic and steel-printing equipment, and its own can-making factory. The end result was the city's largest paper-printing works, employing, in 1912, 83 people.

Dreyer also busied himself with finding new materials for his offset department. In the 1920s, four numbers of the journal *Kunst og Kultur* ("Art and Culture") were printed by Dreyer. These have been described as some of the best items ever printed using that technique. The company was closed down in 1982.



STAVANGER BLIKEMBALLAGEFABRIK A/S, established in 1896, represented a new era of work within the printing industry in Stavanger: lithographic printing on metal. The main product was containers for the canning factories, but the company also produced advertisements and toys, as well as containers for tea, tobacco, butter, biscuits and other similar products.

The local market was the most important, but in a presentation of 1912 the company announced that they also "deliver tin cans and advertisements all over the country, as well as having a large international clientele." In 1912 Stavanger Blikemballagefabrik was the largest printing works in Stavanger. At the end of that year the number of

UP TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR THE CANNING COMPANIES OFTEN PARTICIPATED IN TRADE EXHIBITIONS ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE MEDALS WON AT SUCH EXHIBITIONS WERE STRONGLY EMPHASISED IN MARKETING OF THE COMPANY'S PRODUCTS. HERE THEY ARE USED AS AN EYE-CATCHING DEVICE ON A TIN OF "RØGET LAX" FROM STAVANGER PRESERVING CO. THIS TIN IS ALSO A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN TIN MANUFACTURE AFTER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. THE TIN HAS ITS "LABEL" DIRECTLY PRINTED ON THE METAL, AND HAS A CLEAR SCORELINE AND "TONGUE" TO ATTACH THE KEY TO. ALL THESE INDICATE A TIN FROM AROUND 1905, DESIGNED FOR SEALING IN THE NEW SEAMING MACHINES.

employees was 263. However, the company no longer controlled the market, and in the same year two new printing works were established, Vestlandske Bliktrykkeri & Mekaniske Verksted, and Chr. Bjelland Papir- og Bliktrykkeri. Nor must we forget that Stavanger Bliktrykkeri og Maskinværksted had been in existence since 1905.

#### STAVANGER BLIKTRYKKERI OG MASKINVÆRKSTED

The founders of Stavanger Bliktrykkeri og Maskinværksted were Albert Barstad, H. Abel Lunde and Paul Scholtz. After a cautious beginning with 51 employees, they quickly chose to invest in extending the building and in new production equipment. Thus the company was able to extend its range of products alongside the various types of printed packing materials, as well as developing its machinery and presses.

We get an impression of the work processes in the production of metal pressing through a presentation of the company in 1912:

*“In order to produce a label, first one must find an artist’s business where the label is designed, drawn and painted; then to a lithographic workshop where the design is transferred to zinc, before it goes to the presses. On top of all that, you have to find a special artist’s workshop, where the colours are prepared and mixed.”*

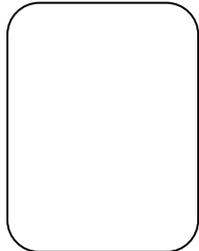


In the 1930s, Stavanger Bliktrykkeri took over Vestlandske Bliktrykkeri, which in the 1920s had itself joined forces with Stavanger Blikemballagefabrik. Today the company continues under the name of Skanem A.s.

## VESTLANDSKE LITHOGRAFISKE KUNSTANSTALT

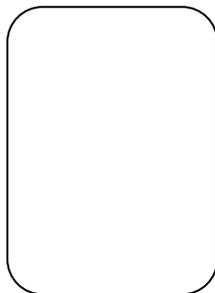
was another example of specialisation that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The company was started by Max Dreschler in



1898 as Max Dreschler & Co. Lithografisk Kunstanstalt. The company's speciality was labels, advertisements and invoice forms, and the client base included a number of companies in Bergen.

In 1900 the name of the company was changed to Vestlandske Lithografiske Kunstanstalt, and John Grønlund joined as a part owner. Four years later Drechsler sold his share to Fr. Pedersen and John Grønlund. They proceeded to invest in a high-speed press and increased the number of employees from 8 to 34 by 1908. In the same year they also introduced the lithographic rotary press in Stavanger. This had a far larger production capacity than the earlier presses and made the company very competitive further afield.



The main product of the Vestlandske Lithografiske Kunstanstalt was labels for the canning industry. The majority of the labels from the VLK have on them the stone which was used for their production. This has made the labels from this firm very attractive to

collectors.

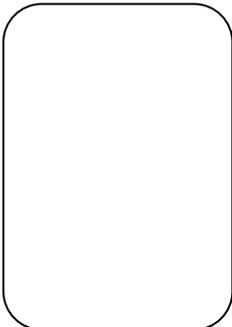
LABELS WERE VERY IMPORTANT FOR CATCHING ATTENTION ON THE WORLD MARKET. HOWEVER THERE WERE ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF "NORWEGIAN" MOTIFS WHICH COULD BE USED. TO JUDGE FROM THE MOTIFS USED ON LABELS, NORWEGIAN SCENERY AND VIKINGS WERE THE BEST KNOWN ABROAD. IN THE PERIOD UP UNTIL 1920 A QUANTITY OF LABELS WERE PRODUCED WITH TRADITIONAL NORSE MOTIFS. "NORMANNA" (1912) IS A GOOD EXAMPLE

With the current state of accessioning, it seems that the company had more than 1,000 stones in use, and there is evidence for labels from about 600 of these. In addition to these documented facts, one collector has also preserved a significant collection of original designs for labels. These factors combine to make Vestlandske Lithografiske Kunstanstalt an interesting subject for research. The company was wound up in 1929.

STAVANGER ETIKETFABRIK A/S was the other company established as a specialist printer of labels. The founder in this case was Andreas T. Behrens who rented premises in the winter of 1907/08 and installed a high-speed press. His “Proof book” from 1912 is evidence of a wide customer base and extensive productivity. At that time the company was based at its own premises at no.5, Erlandsgate (street), with 22 employees, and two branches - Haugesunds Etiketfabrik and Koperviks Etiketfabrik.

One reason why many remember “the label factory at Våland” is because of the fire which severely damaged the company in 1916.

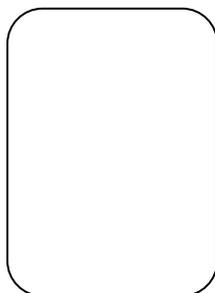
Thousands of labels were scattered over large parts of the city. Several weeks later there were still labels and other litter lying in the streets, to such an extent that one of the inhabitants of Våland was moved to write to Stavanger Aftenblad (the city newspaper) with the request that those responsible clean up this “paper pigsty”. The company was



closed down in 1920.

## AKTIETRYKKERIET

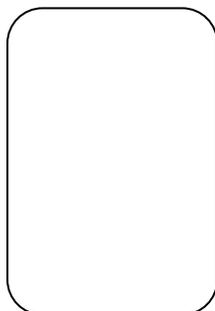
Was started by Nils Stabenfeldt in 1913 and in the first instance specialised in the production of labels. This activity was however soon broadened to include book-printing, book-binding, block-printing and later publishing as well. Many associate Aktietrykkeriet with the production of *Se* magazine from the early fifties. The factory was significantly extended in the fifties with a new building in (the street) Tanke Svilandsgate. Activity ceased in 1985.



### AN INSATIABLE DEMAND FOR LABELS

The ever-increasing number of canning factories had a seemingly insatiable demand for labels. Every factory had to have its own, in several different varieties, as well as the demand from

grocers and merchants for their own labels. Labels were also produced in several varieties according to different weights and flavourings.

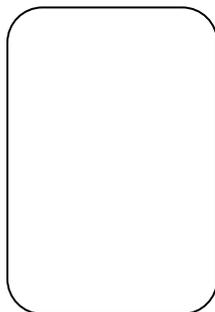


Several people have tried to work out the total number of different labels, not least by going through old collections. Some of these collections are dated and arranged systematically. But before 1918 many of the labels do not carry the name of the printer. In cases where

they do, the majority come from these three printers: Vestlandske Lithografiske Kunstanstalt, Stavanger Etikettfabrik, and Dreyer.

FRIDTJOF NANSEN WAS ONE OF FEW NORWEGIANS WHO WAS FAMOUS OVERSEAS. IT WAS THUS NATURAL THAT CHR. BJELLAND & CO. LAUNCHED A TRADEMARK WITH NANSEN FIRMLY PLACED ON THE POLE, AS EARLY AS 1896. OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT FEW YEARS MANY LABELS WERE PRODUCED, SHOWING POLAR RESEARCHERS, LANDSCAPES AND WILDLIFE.

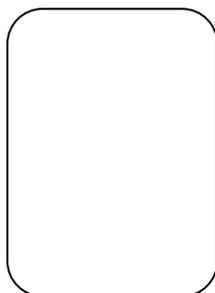
The old albums also contain labels from Stavanger Lithografiske Anstalt, Asktietrykkeriet and Bjellands Printworks, and some from printers in other parts of the country. These must have had a much smaller share of the market than the printers based in Stavanger.



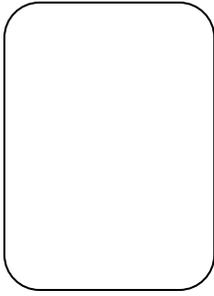
By comparing a number of the older collections, it is reasonable to claim that between 6 and 8 thousand labels were in existence in 1915. The minimum quantity produced of each was 10,000, and most had print runs of 50,000 and more. Today it is reckoned that more than 40,000

different labels were produced.

The matter of the number of different labels can also be approached from another angle. In April 1900 there was a discussion in the magazine *Farmand* about the introduction of a tax on labels. One of the contributions came from Christian Bjelland who provided the information that “our use at this company (i.e. Stavanger Lithografiske Anstalt) in 1899 was about 6 tons or exactly 2,628,146 individual labels.” So the total production would have been about 15 tons



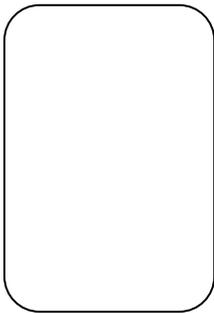
or 5 million labels. These totals are probably too low in that the company in another context provided the information that it could produce over 600,000 labels a week at that time.



The needs of the canning industry for printed material were however wider than just labels. The companies needed letterheads, invoice pads, account books, envelopes, price lists, brochures and posters. Many of these were skilfully produced

printed items with large print runs.

A special category was writing paper with richly illustrated letterhead. This was usually engraved, and the printers considered that it was a more demanding work-process to create such letterheads, than 4-colour labels.



When we take into consideration both the labels and all these other printed materials which were required by the canning industry, it is easy to understand the growth in the printing industry in Stavanger. In the 1920s the dependence of the printing business on the canning

industry is clearly shown. Then export fell dramatically for several years, and many factories had to be closed down. Unemployment of printing workers was an immediate result. The unstable situation in the canning industry also resulted in many deciding not to use printed cans. These were more expensive and less flexible than plain blank cans. The result was that the metal workers in particular had to reduce their activity.

MANY LABELS ARE DECORATED WITH MARITIME SUBJECTS. THERE IS A WIDE VARIETY, FROM CATCHING FISH THROUGH SAILING SHIPS TO THE HUGE ATLANTIC LINERS AND WARSHIPS. *THE WHEEL* IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE MANY SUBJECTS PROVIDING A CLOSE UP VIEW FROM THE SAILING SHIPS.  
THE LABEL WAS PRINTED BY STAVANGER LITHOGRAFISKE ANSTALT IN THE 1920S.

## THE LONG LINES

The growth in the canning industry at the beginning of the twentieth century was so widespread that it encouraged the development of a number of other supporting industries. Their profitability was to a great extent dependent on conditions in the international canning market. That connection could be clearly seen in, amongst others, the printing industry.

From the beginning of the 1930s the situation in the canning industry became more stable and Stavanger had about 50 canning factories in operation until 1960. At that time there began to be a structured change in the business which, over the course of the next decade, reduced the number of factories from 50 to a mere 15 by 1970. One example of than conversion process is the company Mogens Canning, with its premises in Johannesgata (street)

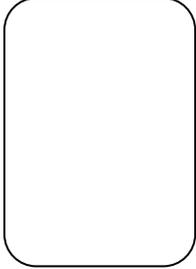
## MOGENS CANNING CO.

Was a family limited company which was founded in the autumn of 1916 by Peter Martinius Pedersen. The company constructed its production premises at no.21, Johannesgata, and in its first year of operation had just over 50 employees. The accounts for the 1920s show a company trying hard to make a profit, but that was hardly an unusual situation for a canning company at that time.

In the mid-1930s Per Mogens took over as Director of the company. At the same time the activities were extended, first with the take-over of Standard Canning Co. in Kalhammeren, and then with the extension of the factory in Johannesgata with new smoking kilns. The increased production capacity laid the foundation for greater profitability during the war years.



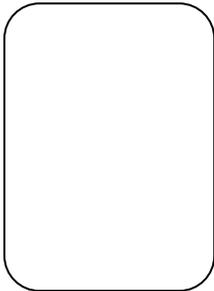
After the war the activity gives the impression of a company with ambitions. In order to expand



production, Mogens Canning bought the brisling quota and the smoking kiln rights of the Hviding Canning Co. and Hafrsfjord Preserving. With this, productivity at the Johannesgata factory reached 30,000 cans per day.

In the high season there were almost 100 people at work in the factory. This then provided the opportunity for further expansion, first by raising the height of the ceiling at Johannesgata, and then with the building of a brand new office and warehouse in Erfjordsgata (street) in 1959.

The adjoining property owners were not always

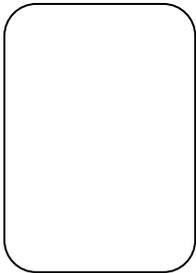


quite so enthusiastic about the increased activity. At the office of the Buildings Council there are protests about the height of the building, and the noise and smell from the activity at the factory. Such reactions are understandable, from the point of view of the

people living there. It can hardly have been enjoyable to have been awakened at 5 a.m. on a Sunday, by the noise of lorries being loaded up. The smell of fish, and shrimp waste could, understandably, also be annoying. With the close-packed factories and homes in that part of the city, it is actually quite surprising that the protests weren't more vocal. Part of the reason for that was no doubt that in many cases the noise and smell came from their own places of work.

*THE MAN WITH THE FISH* WAS ALWAYS THE MOST FAMOUS OF CHR. BJELLAND'S TRADEMARKS IN THE NORWEGIAN MARKET. THE ORIGINAL, DESIGNED BY THEODOR KITTELSEN, IS NOW OWNED BY THE NORWEGIAN CANNING MUSEUM. IT WAS REGISTERED IN AUGUST 1905, AND HAS SINCE BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN ITS DIFFERENT VERSIONS, ON MILLIONS OF CANS OF SARDINES.

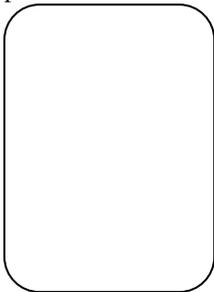
The structural changes in the business at the beginning of the 1960s also hit Mogens Canning Co. very hard. It required considerable new investment in both equipment and marketing, and in 1964 the company was forced to bring its activity to a close. This was a fate which they shared with many canning factories, which came about through the difficulty of finding new owners for the property. The liquidating



management solved the problem by dividing the property. Larsen and Mortensen took over the part in Johannesgata, while Aske Trykkeri took over the warehouse building in Erfjordsgate. These premises were later considerably enlarged.

#### THE EARLIER “SARDINE CITY”

today no longer has a single factory where “smoked sardines in oil” are packed. Other industries have taken over both as the city’s economic backbone, and in the former factory premises in the eastern part of the city. The traces of the hundred year long canning epoch are however readily to be seen, and its history preserved, both at the Canning Museum (Norsk Hermetikkmuseum), and the Norwegian Printing Museum (Norsk Grafisk Museum). At both places the activities of the past are brought to life



through the smells, sounds, and a living account of the story.

# **SARDINES AND THEIR LABELS**

**A SHORT HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION  
OF THE CANNING AND PRINTING INDUSTRIES  
IN STAVANGER FROM 1900 - 1920**

**BY**

**JOHN GUNNAR JOHNSEN**

English translation by Piers Crocker

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