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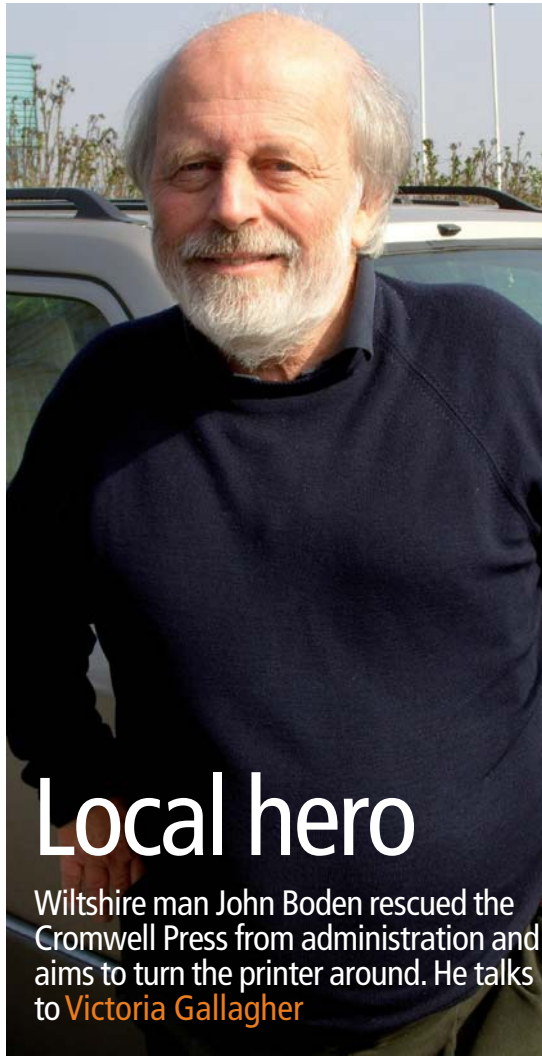
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Local hero

Wiltshire man John Boden rescued the Cromwell Press from administration and aims to turn the printer around. He talks to **Victoria Gallagher**

A few months ago, John Boden was contemplating retirement when he heard that Cromwell Press in Trowbridge was facing closure.

He has been in the printing industry since the late 1960s and was not particularly looking for a new challenge. But when the Wiltshire-based company went into administration he felt he had to step in. "I wouldn't have gone out looking for anything else, it was just this factory," he says as we walk through a warehouse full of thundering presses. "I live six miles away, and it was like a dream really. I've got a book background, I like books, I like the book trade. It's a lovely plant, it's modern, and I thought in for a penny, in for a pound."

So in January Boden acquired Cromwell from administrators KPMG. He freely acknowledges the fragility of the UK printing market, but feels Cromwell is a viable business with a technological cutting edge that will see them through the rough times. "Our equipment is top

of the range, which means we've got a future."

Living locally, Boden says that he knew a number of the staff there and fondly looks upon them as "a good lot". When Cromwell went into administration, 40 of its 63 staff found themselves without a job. Boden has reinstated some of those employees—staff numbers are up to 30—and he hopes to continue to do this as business increases.

He says morale is high and his plan now is to "stabilise" the business, which deals primarily with academic and journal publishing, and had an annual turnover of around £7m before going into administration. "We've had a good response from our customers, every week it has grown."

Falling in

Despite spending almost all his working life in the print industry, Boden says he "fell into it for my sins". After going to a secondary modern school and completing his O levels, his first job was as a management trainee with the British Printing Corporation.

From this he went on to work at the Aylesbury printers Hazel, Watson & Viney, before moving to South Africa to work in book printing there. He came back to the UK in 1974 to become an estimator for Pitman Press, and in the 1980s Boden started his own business, Bath Midway Press, which he ran for 15 years until he sold it on in 1999. He worked in marketing for the last nine years before deciding to take on Cromwell.

Boden enjoys the community aspect of the print industry, particularly in Wiltshire and Somerset, which is the home of J F Print, Butler, Tanner & Dennis and CPI Antony Rowe. "It was always quite a big printing area. I know them all, they all know me." He adds that he still goes out for a beer with peers to "compare notes".

Despite the current economic climate, with many printers facing closure, Cromwell Press is still a hive of activity. The company services approximately 300 publishers, producing around five million books a year. Notwithstanding the technological improvements, Boden says book production really has not changed since he started. "It's still the same, it's just a lot quicker."

After nearly 45 years in the print industry you'd think that Boden would be looking to tie up loose ends and take to holidaying throughout the year, but he has no such plans. He says with a smile: "This is my retirement, the plant is my retirement home. It's all right isn't it, quite warm."

CV

1947	Born in Bath
1966–68	Management trainee, British Printing Corporation
1969–72	Hazel, Watson & Viney, printing company at Aylesbury
1973	Cape and Transvaal Print in South Africa
1974–83	Estimator, Pitman Press
1984	Founds Midway Press
1999–2008	Works in marketing
2009	Acquires Cromwell Press
	Married, two children