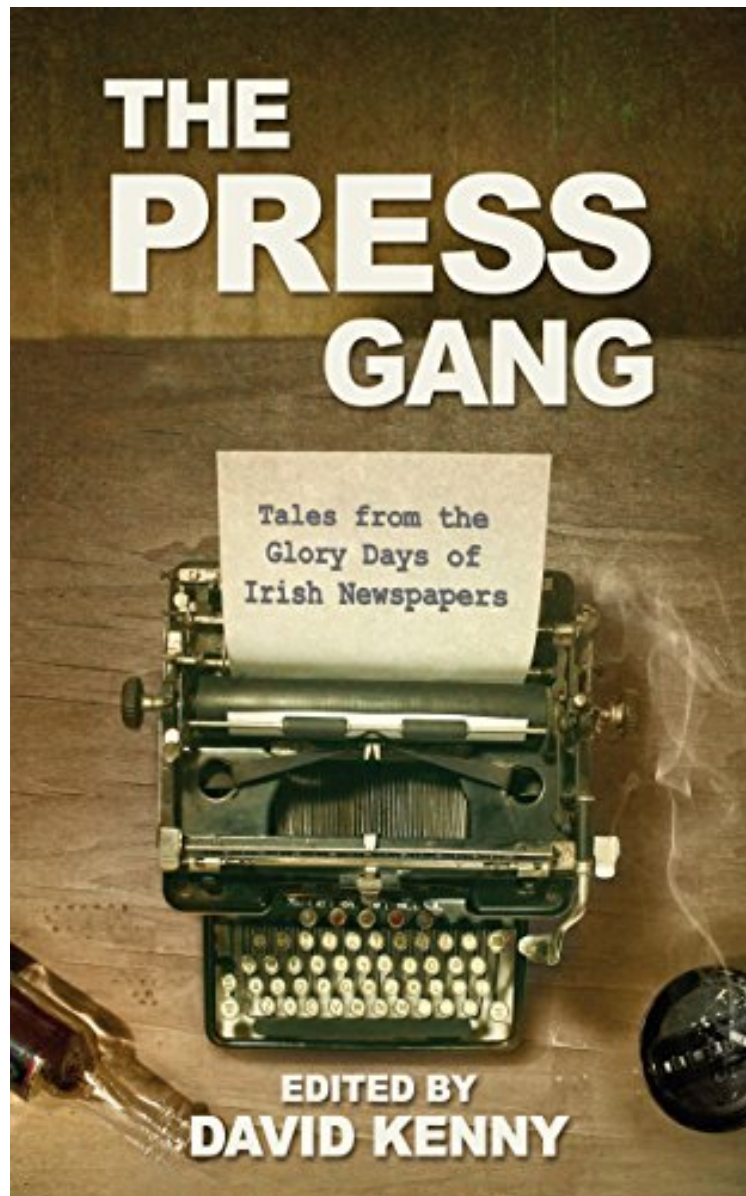


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The Press Gang: Tales from the Glory Days of Irish Newspapers

David Kenny

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David Kenny : The Press Gang: Tales from the Glory Days of Irish Newspapers before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Press Gang: Tales from the Glory Days of Irish Newspapers:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful window into a bygone era of Irish journalismBy Catman1111I loved this collection of 55 recollections of the heyday of Irish print journalism, specifically at one of its

pillars: The Irish Press group. As a former journalist, I have to admit to a bias for the topic, and have worked with or known several of the types of reporters and editors highlighted in this volume. But it's difficult to imagine the sheer number of talented, devoted and certainly idiosyncratic men and women who kept these newspapers at the fore of the Irish journalism for more than six decades after its opening in 1931. There's also more than a little evidence showing hard drinking had a prominent place in the world of hard-working journalists. Some of the short reflective columns, by reporters, editors and pressmen, require a bit of knowledge about Irish politics and current affairs, but most are simply entertaining and provide insights into the everyday workings of a newspaper. I found myself almost laughing out loud when reading about the journalist who, in pursuit of a bit more income, wrote a column for his paper under a pseudonym. But when his supervisor wanted to meet the columnist, the moonlighting employee "killed" him off and then had the temerity to ask for and receive time off to attend the "funeral." An unusual perspective is revealed in another anecdote involving a reporter who finds himself taking shelter in a doorway with an elderly woman as a riot between British troops and Irish youths flares in front of them. When she finds out that the reporter is a Scotsman from Gorbals, a tough slum in Glasgow, she, amid the din taking place in front of her, responds, "The Gorbals? In Glasgow? God, I'd hate to live there. I believe it's fierce wild." And then there's the writer sent out to do a piece on a performance featuring a young American dancer who hopes his ambitious production, "Riverdance," will appeal to the public enough to be taken on the road. Finally, I was saddened when reading about the American venture capitalist who ultimately brought ruin to the Irish Press, only a few years after he decimated the newspaper chain I worked for in America's Midwest. But you don't have to have been in the trade to appreciate reading about the way it works. Kudos and several tips "the hat to" "The Press Gang," edited by David Kenney, who also is an Irish Press veteran and a contributor to the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Press gang By Clare O'Beara Tales of the days in the newsroom from the journalists, subeditors, printers, photographers, compositors, copy takers and editors of the Irish Press. Glamorous it wasn't. On Dublin's Burgh Quay, next to pubs which profited greatly from their presence, the journalists inhaled printers' ink and cigarette smoke as they worked. They had to cover events and phone in copy to copy takers, or take shorthand notes, come back and type them up with a copy boy tearing sheets from the typewriter at the end of a paragraph. The words were checked by an editor, who might demand to know the source and proofs, then sent to a sub editor for shaping to desired size and readability. The words were taken downstairs to the compositors who created the page from hot metal, melting metal to form the letters, inserting them into a block on the stone - hard surface, so a stone subeditor could read it back to front and upside down. This is where the phrase minding your ps and qs came from, not mentioned in the book. Then it would go to print with a roar and clatter as the presses started, while vans and motorbikes waited outside to take deliveries. The descriptions are tremendous. The Irish Press, Evening Press and Sunday Press operated out of the same building, sharing it in shifts and simultaneously. A foreword from Tim Pat Coogan, editor, sets the scene. We don't get much on the news of the day, more about the politics of the owners, since it was in the hands of three generations of DeValeras. A falling circulation and competition from more technically advanced papers saw a partnership bid with an American group, which quickly went to court battles, union strikes, firings and closure. From 1931 to 1995 is a long time and many great journalists, editors and personalities went through the building, male and female, many going on to jobs in other papers or RTE, or novels like John Banville. I read the Evening Press at home from an early age, spreading it out to focus on racehorses and anything of interest to a child. Moving on to the women's page, Eanna Brophy, the syndicated Erma Bombeck, not mentioned. I took to reading Con Houlihan although I knew nothing about Gaelic sport. The Herald went to tabloid size, much easier to read on commute, and the Press had a cartoon on the front page showing a tramp lying on a bench covered in a broadsheet saying "Bigger is better," not mentioned. I thought it wasn't a great example. I read my boss's Irish Independent during the day and he got the Evening Press on his way home, because the Evening Herald was the Independent's news recycled. When the Press closed, the price war between the two evenings was of course over, so the Herald promptly doubled in price, not mentioned. The short pieces all come across as about a family, a strange, muddled, beery, loud, evolving, picky cast of characters, underpaid, overworked, highly trained on the job and loving what they did. I'm delighted that this segment of Ireland's past has been preserved, with too many gaps for people like the late Con Houlihan. This book will mainly interest Irish people who remember those days, or anyone who wants to learn about the history of newsprint. The Print Museum in Beggar's Bush, Dublin is free to visit and contains many of the kinds of equipment described in the book.

In September 1931, Eacute;draig Pearse's mother started a revolution in Dublin. She pushed a button, and the presses began rolling at Eacute;amon de Valera's legendary Irish Press Newspaper Group, changing the landscape of Irish journalism forever. In The Press Gang, for the first time, fifty-five of its former writers and editors celebrate its glory days, from the 1950s to its closure in May 1995 - when the pub was the real office, and newspapers were full of insane, and insanely talented, people. There are stories of IRA gunmen in the front office, the reporter who broke his leg in two places (Mulligan's and the White Horse), Mary Kenny challenging the old boys' network, tea with Prince Charles, Johnny Rotten in a Dublin jail cell, and the hunt for Don Tidey. The Press Gang paints a poignant and

hilarious pen-picture of an industry that has changed beyond recognition, and recalls an age of characters, chances, geniuses, and above all, brilliant journalism.