

# Bryan Donkin Biography

## Bryan Donkin

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## Biography

Bryan Donkin was born in Northumberland, England, in 1768. Apprenticed to papermaker John Hall in Kent, England, Donkin was given the task of setting up and improving the automated papermaking machine designed in 1798 by the Frenchman Nicolas Robert (1761-1828). Donkin established plants in 1803 and 1804 at Bermondsey and Frogmore with the first practical Robert machines and continued to build better models--191 of them--through 1851.

In 1811, Donkin and Hall purchased Peter Durand's 1810 patent for using tin cans to preserve food by the method of heat sterilization invented by Nicolas Francois Appert. Donkin and his partners set up England's first cannery in 1812 at Bermondsey, supplying tinned meats and soups to the Royal Navy as well as to the royal family. The cannery's success was assured after its products were used on John Ross's (1777-1856) expedition to the Arctic in 1814 and on Otto Kotzebue's (1787- 1846) voyage in search of the Northwest Passage in 1815.

Donkin's involvement in papermaking fostered his subsequent interest in printing technology. In 1813 he patented one of the first rotary presses. Although the machine itself was a failure, the composition rollers made of glue and treacle were an important innovation widely adopted by the industry.

Donkin was a founder in 1818 of the Institution of Civil Engineers. An avid amateur astronomer, he served for a time as president of the Royal Astronomical Society. Donkin died in London, England, in 1855.