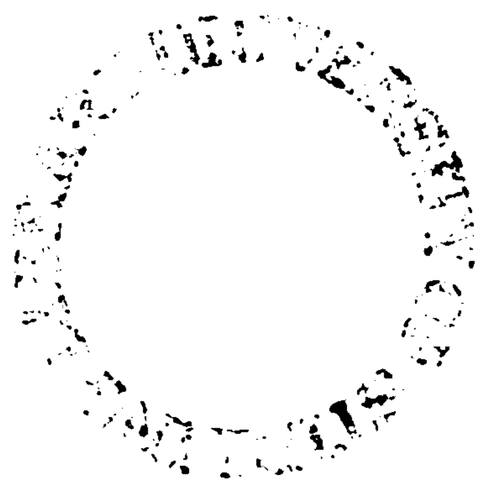
UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

A. T. WATTS

The Newspaper Press in the Town of Reading 1855-1980

Doctor of Philosophy



September 1990

7/91

THIS THESIS CONTAINS MICROFILMS THAT COULD NOT BE DIGITISED.

PLEASE CONTACT THE UNIVERSITY IF YOU WISH TO SEE THIS MATERIAL.

THE NEWSPAPER PRESS IN THE TOWN OF READING 1855-1980

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations		*page* v
Acknowledgements		vii
Preface		ix
Part One		1
Chapter I	Background: The Newspaper Press in Reading 1723-1855	2
Chapter II	Technical Development in Printing during the Nineteenth Century	13
Chapter III	The Post-Repeal Expansion — 1855-1872:	30
	Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce	35
	Berkshire Guardian	35
	Reading Advertiser and *Berks Telegraph*	38
Chapter IV	The Expansion Continues — 1868-1912:	46
	The Reading Times and *Reading Herald*	46
	Berkshire Weekly Times and *Berkshire Weekly News*	54
	Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian	56
	Reading Examiner and *Berkshire County Chronicle*	58
	Reading Express and Berkshire Independent	63
	Daily Mail and Evening Post	68
	Reading Record	69

Chapter V	*Reading Mercury & Oxford Gazette* 1855-1914	72
Chapter VI	*Berkshire Chronicle* 1855-1914	96
Chapter VII	*Reading Observer* 1873-1924	129
Chapter VIII	*Reading Standard* 1886-1914	170
Part Two		186
Chapter IX	Technical Development in Printing during the Twentieth Century	187
Chapter X	The Reading Newspaper Company Ltd 1914-1977 and Argus Press 1977— *(Reading Mercury* and *Berkshire Chronicle)*	207
Chapter XI	*Reading Standard* 1914-1965	244
Chapter XII	*Evening Gazette* 1935-1939	282
Chapter XIII	*Evening Post* 1965—	297
Conclusion		320

Appendices

Appendix A	Newsprint Prices 1914-1980	333
Appendix B	Population figures: 1855-1900 for Reading and for a selection of other towns situated 30-60 miles from London; 1900-1980 for Reading	334
Appendix C	Newspapers published in Reading 1855-1980: a bibliographical handlist of sources held in British Library (Colindale) and Reading Reference Library	335
Appendix D	(Microfiche records from Department of Trade and Industry, No. 133053) Records relating to Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd 1914-1990	*

Appendix E	(Recorded on microfiche) *Berkshire Chronicle, Reading Mercury* and *Football Chronicle* Balance Sheets 1927-1935	*
Appendix F	(Recorded on microfiche) Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd, Directors Reports and Accounts 1967-1972	*
Appendix G	(Microfiche records from Department of Trade and Industry, No. 324239) Records relating to Reading Standard Ltd 1939-1969 and Thames Valley Newspapers Ltd 1969-1988	*
Appendix H	(Recorded on microfiche) The Reading Standard, Income and Expenditure Accounts October 1933-January 1937	*
Appendix I	(Recorded on microfiche) Reading Standard Ltd, Directors Reports and Accounts 1948-1962	*
Appendix J	(Recorded on microfiche) Reading Standard Ltd 1963-1969 and Thames Valley Newspapers Ltd 1969-1979, Directors Reports and Accounts	*
Bibliography		344
Index		367

* The Appendices on microfiche are held in a separate binder.

ILLUSTRATIONS

§

1	Cruchley's County Map of Berkshire (1861)	*page* xii
2	Simmons Map of Reading 1882	xvii
3	*Reading Mercury or Weekly Entertainer* July 1723	5
4	Cowper two cylinder two-feeder press	21
5	The Hoe reel-fed rotary press 1873	24
6	*Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce*	36
7	Prospectus for *The Reading Times* September 1868	47
8	*Reading Mercury* in 1855	77
9	The new *Mercury* office in Market Place, Reading, built 1873	86
10	*Reading Mercury* composing room at the turn of the century	88
11	*Berkshire Chronicle* in 1855	97
12	*Berkshire Chronicle*'s new Hoe rotary press in 1907	118
13	First edition of the *Reading Observer* 2 August 1873	134
14	The Wharfedale flatbed stop cylinder press	141
15	David Payne's two-feeder Wharfedale press	145
16	*The Reading Standard* in January 1887	174

17 Coded punched tape used in the Thomson Computerset system 202

18 Diagram of Model 713 Textmaster phototypesetter 203

19 Foster 4 unit rotary press installed by the *Mercury* in 1939 223

20 The ex-*Daily Express* 4 unit Hoe press installed in the *Chronicle*'s office in 1955 227

21 Advertisement for the new *Reading Chronicle* September 1965 235

22 The front page of the new *Reading Chronicle* 10 September 1965 236

23 The *Reading Standard*'s first rotary press in 1923 249

24 *Reading Standard*'s front page September 1952 265

25 *Reading Standard*'s new-look front page in October 1952 266

26 Four unit Goss rotary press installed by the *Reading Standard* in 1959 270

27 The grand London Street premises of the *Reading Standard* 1959 272

28 Last edition of the *Reading Standard* in September 1965 280

29 Front page of the *Evening Gazette* no. 1 August 1935 290

30 The *Evening Gazette*'s circulation area in 1935 293

31 First edition of the *Evening Post* September 1965 298

32 Diagram of the Thomson Computerset layout 306

33 *Evening Post* logo used in advertising campaign 309

34 Lord Thomson viewing the first edition of the *Evening Post* to come off the press. John Pole is standing behind him. 312

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

§

I would like to acknowledge the considerable help and assistance afforded to me by the staff of the Bodleian Library, the British Library, the Guildhall Library, St Bride Printing Library, Bristol University Library, and Reading University Library. In particular I am indebted to the staff of the British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale, for the patient way they dealt with my many questions and requests for information about some of Reading's more obscure publications. A similar service was performed by the staff at the various branches of the Public Records Office which I visited, and at the Department of Trade and Industry when I sought information at Companies House.

Much of the research for this study was undertaken in Reading Reference Library, and to Daphne Phillips and her successor as Senior Librarian, Margaret Smith, I owe a particular debt of gratitude, for they allowed me considerable freedom to consult the local newspaper collection at will. Without that freedom the task of searching through the extant copies of local newspapers would have been considerably more difficult, and in some instances virtually impossible.

My very special thanks, too, to the many members of Reading's press, both past and present, who gave me their help, in particular the late F. E. Holloway (of the *Reading Standard*), E. G. B. Atkinson (Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd), S. A. Mayes (*Reading Standard)*, H. G. Fedrick

(*Reading Standard*), A. Sandall (*Reading Standard* and *Evening Post*), J. F. Hancock (*Reading Standard*, *Evening Post* and Argus Press), R. Lacey (Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd and *Evening Gazette*), the late Basil Amps (Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd and *Evening Post*), W. G. Garner (*Reading Standard* and Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd), Clive Pullman (*Evening Post*), and last but not least the late W. J. Pettengell (*Reading Observer* and *Reading Standard*), whose enthusiasm for local press history long ago sowed the seeds which were ultimately responsible for this study.

I am indebted also to David Bowyer, the current editor of the *Reading Chronicle*, for making time to talk to me and for allowing me to borrow and copy those few old company balance sheets which still exist. Trevor Wade, recent editor of the *Evening Post* was also kind enough to afford me the privilege of being able to use the *Post*'s own library, for which I am most grateful.

I wish, too, to express my sincere thanks to Dr J. R. B. Horden, whose encouragement and guidance helped me through the early periods of this work, and to my current tutor, Dr Donald Low, for the valuable criticism and wise counsel he has given me during the latter period of this study.

Finally, my thanks go to my wife, Jennifer, without whose support I would sometimes have faltered and whose skills have produced this fine typescript.

PREFACE

§

The subject of this study concerns the history and development of the newspaper press in the town of Reading from 1855, the year of the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Tax, until 1980. In particular the approach to this account of provincial press history has been primarily from the production viewpoint, in which the newspapers are seen as business enterprises, emphasis being placed on the patterns of ownership and processes of production rather than on readership and newspaper content.

Significantly, 1855 represents a major watershed in the history of the press in this country, for the repeal of the so-called 'taxes on knowledge' opened up the way not only for a press free from the fetters of government control but also for a cheap press. For, increasingly after 1855, commercial and economic forces began to dominate a newspaper's activities, at the expense of what had previously often been political ones. In short, newspapers had to become attuned to matters of business in order to survive.

This commercial awareness became essential to provincial newspaper companies throughout the period under review, and many factors became influential in a paper's success or failure. For example, the improving transport system, particularly that of the railways during the second half of the 19th century, allowed local papers to deliver their copies

for sale in other towns in the district. This apparent advantage worked both ways, for newspapers produced in other localities could be transported to towns which already had a strong press presence of their own and was a particular problem for newspapers in towns close to large or growing metropolitan districts. Such a problem was perhaps most acute during the latter years of the nineteenth century when local weekly papers, which had up to that point provided their readers with national and international news, found that they were in direct competition with London and provincial daily papers which could be despatched and sold in provincial towns with great speed. Similarly, during the period between the two world wars, many provincial papers which had enjoyed a profitable income from local advertising were faced with severe competition from the large national newspaper companies, who themselves were seeking to enlarge the scope of their advertising coverage by becoming involved in the provincial press, thus enabling them to offer their advertisers a more comprehensive penetration of the potential market.

In addition, the ever-rising costs of labour and new equipment led increasingly to a situation whereby only profitable companies could afford to modernize their plant and machinery. Since the Second World War, labour and, particularly, equipment costs have risen to unprecedented heights and only large organizations have the necessary capital to equip and reorganize newspaper production units, thus forcing many provincial papers to sell out to large newspaper conglomerates.

When considering these issues, Reading is in a unique position, for not only is the town close to London and connected to it by one of the best railway services in the country, but during the second half of the nineteenth century the town also had rail transport to most of the

significant towns in the circulation district around it. Many of those towns and villages had grown up in the Thames and Kennet valleys, along which the roads also passed, and when the railways were constructed their lines followed the same natural routes which had been used for the distribution of Reading's newspapers since 1723, when the *Reading Mercury* had been established.[1] During the same period Reading's population tripled, whilst the population throughout the country as a whole only doubled,[2] and much of Reading's population increase was due to the town's proximity to London and its consequent popularity with businesses which required easy access to the capital. Other towns around London were not in such a fortunate position, for many, such as Luton, Guildford, Reigate, St Albans, and Bedford, had considerably smaller populations than Reading. Many were also already served by newspapers from neighbouring towns which had a well established press, for example Bedford, with Northampton some twenty miles to the northwest and Cambridge a similar distance to the northeast, each with a newspaper press which had existed since the eighteenth century.[3]

Earlier research indicated that the press in Reading during the period 1855 to 1900 was worthy of more thorough investigation,[4] and the town's location in relation to London — being close enough to be

---

1 See map overleaf.

2 See Appendix B.

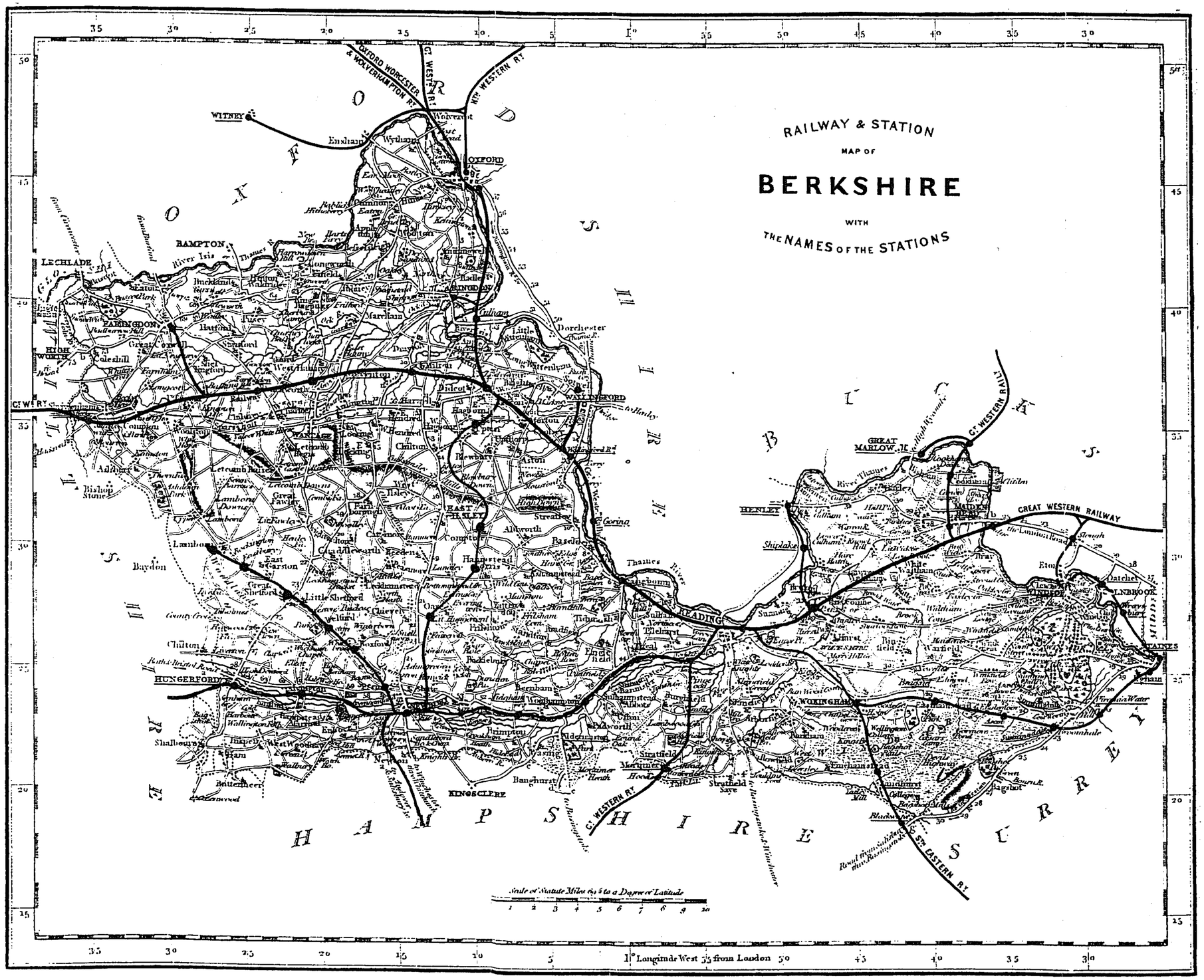
3 *Mercury and Herald* (Northampton) established 1720, *Cambridge Independent Press and Chronicle*, established 1744.

4 A. T. Watts, 'A Survey of the Newspaper Press in the Town of Reading from 1855 to 1900', unpublished MA thesis, Leeds, 1977. It should be noted that, in order to present a complete account of the development of the newspaper press in Reading from 1855 to 1980, some material from this earlier work has been included in the current thesis. Such material has been subjected to extensive revision and augmented with new information.

CRUCHLEY'S COUNTY MAP OF BERKSHIRE (1861)

This map has been amended to include additional railway lines opened in the area between 1861 and the end of the 19th century:

Wallingford branch line	opened in July 1866
Marlow branch line	opened in 1873
Didcot to Newbury line	opened in April 1882
Newbury to Winchester line	opened in May 1885
Newbury to Lambourn line	opened in April 1898



threatened by Fleet Street yet far enough away to retain its own identity — has presented a valuable area for research for the years up to 1980.

Many historians regard newspapers solely as purveyors of news and vehicles for political and public opinion but, as already mentioned, newspapers, like any other business, have to be commercially viable. In order to achieve this, proprietors must steer an extremely careful course in order to attract customers in the form of both readers and advertisers for, increasingly after 1855, the revenue from advertising became a critical factor in a paper's ability to survive. This fact led to the classic circular situation, whereby newspapers cannot attract advertising without a good circulation and yet cannot guarantee a good circulation without advertising. The amount of advertising necessary for a newspaper to enjoy a reasonable revenue is difficult to quantify precisely, for factors such as production costs, unit cost, advertising rates, and revenue from sales, also have a bearing on the situation. However, much of the research which has been conducted to date into newspaper advertising indicates that Victorian newspapers worked on the basis that between 40% and 50% of their papers' content would contain advertising.[5] There is no hard and fast rule concerning this ratio but it has been used in this study as a guide to the measurement of a newspaper's success.[6]

For newspapers to be successful in the precarious situation of balancing circulation and advertising content, they need to pay careful attention not only to the journalistic content but also to typography and production. Without the restrictions of the Advertisement Tax and the

---

5 Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, (1985), p. 16; Alan Lee, 'The Structure Ownership and Control of the Press 1853-1912', in *Newspaper History*, (1978), pp. 118-19.

6 The method used to measure content is to calculate the column inches occupied by advertising and general content.

Stamp Duty, newspapers were able to expand their circulations, thus allowing them to lower their unit costs. In order to increase circulation further and thus reduce unit costs even more, newspapers needed to utilize the rapidly developing technologies of printing and paper making. This move towards a cheaper press reached a point in the late nineteenth century whereby cheap daily papers were sold at a price below their cost, and the difference between that selling price and a paper's profit was made up from advertising revenue. While this state of affairs initially affected the daily press, it increasingly applied to the provincial daily press and, eventually, also to the provincial weekly press.

As the production methods and equipment used by Reading newspaper proprietors played an important part in their papers' success, and in order to obviate the necessity for the repetition of information, two chapters have been included which explain the major developments in printing technology which have taken place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

For students of history, local newspapers provide an invaluable source of information, for not only do their columns contain a wealth of historical evidence but the fabric of the local press itself plays an important role in the history of any local area. Unfortunately those who are concerned with the history of newspapers are faced with the problem of a lack of source material, for there is an absence of consistent and detailed information, particularly where the provincial press is concerned. Government enquiries such as the Royal Commissions on the Press in 1947-9, 1961-2, and 1974-7, while providing statistical information covering the national press, present considerably less information about the provincial weekly press.

Apart from these reports, very little reliable information has been published concerning the provincial press and few details are regularly and systematically recorded. As a result, there are virtually no records, either privately or publicly compiled, which concern the press in Reading.

Business records of companies have long since been lost or destroyed or, if any do exist, are somewhat scrappy and incoherent. Circulation figures were often used inaccurately by newspapers in an attempt to persuade both customers and advertisers of a paper's success, while in other instances newspapers maintained complete secrecy as to the extent of their circulations.

Those Reading newspapers which have endeavoured to tell the public about their own individual histories, (usually in order to celebrate an anniversary or as a special sales promotion) have all too frequently produced glib or vague and somewhat fragmentary accounts, which contain too many inaccuracies to be of any real value to those involved in historical research.

In order to reconstruct a record of the working of the press in Reading, it has been necessary to refer directly to the columns of the newspapers themselves. This entailed extensive reading of volumes of newspaper files, coupled with the search for any other relevant records which often proved to be scattered and difficult to uncover. For the latter period covered by this study, there are numerous people still alive who have been able to supply verbal accounts of the press as they remember it. However, even these were often too anecdotal and lacking in accuracy to be of great value, while some others which concerned personalities involved in the local press would have been libellous if included in this work.

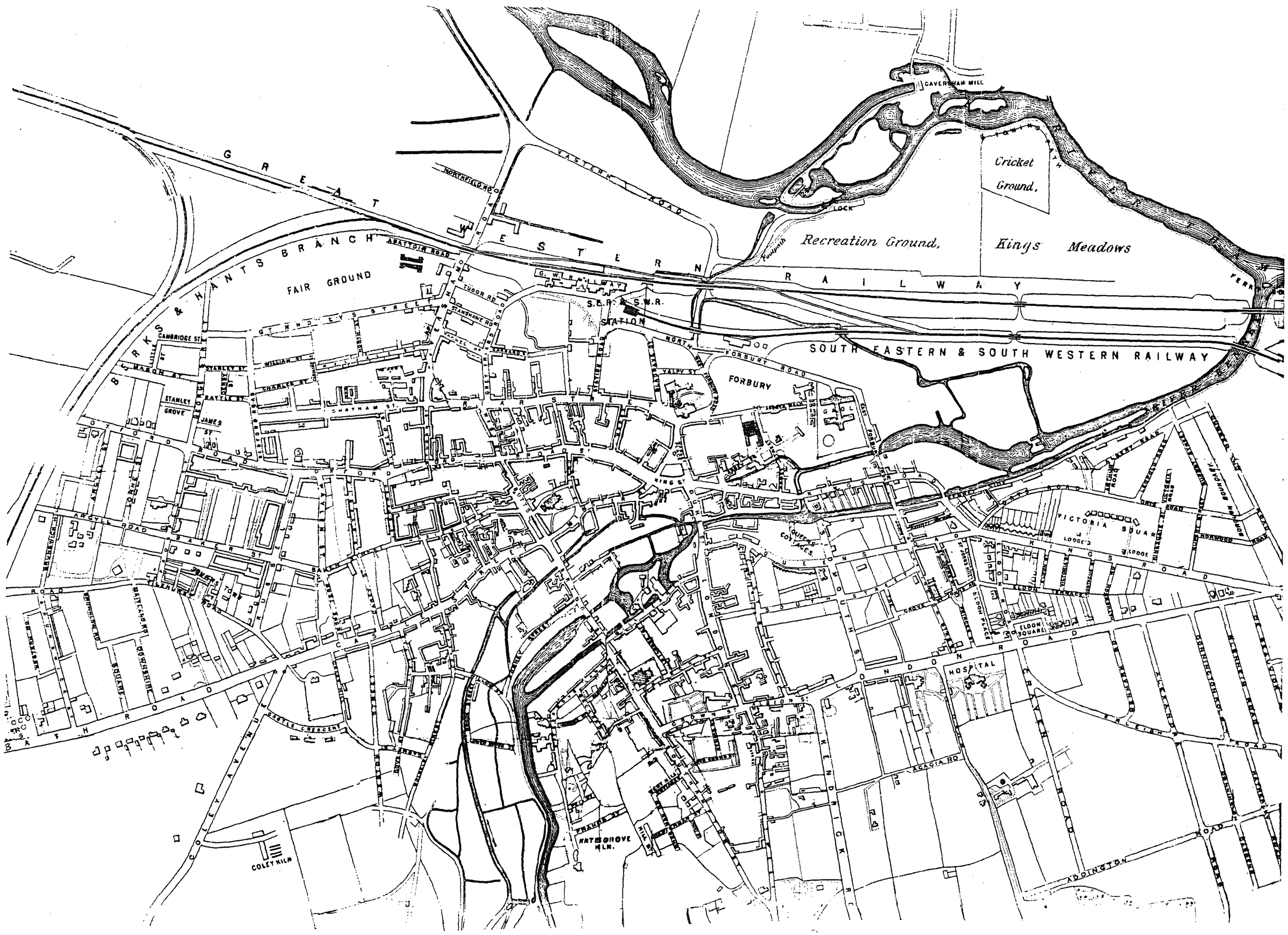
Fortunately, there are virtually complete files of copies of Reading's major newspapers, either extant or on microfilm, held at the British Library and at Reading Reference Library. Records of most of the shorter-lived papers produced in the town are unfortunately not so complete. In some instances, evidence exists only in the form of a few cuttings, odd extant copies, or isolated entries in local directories.

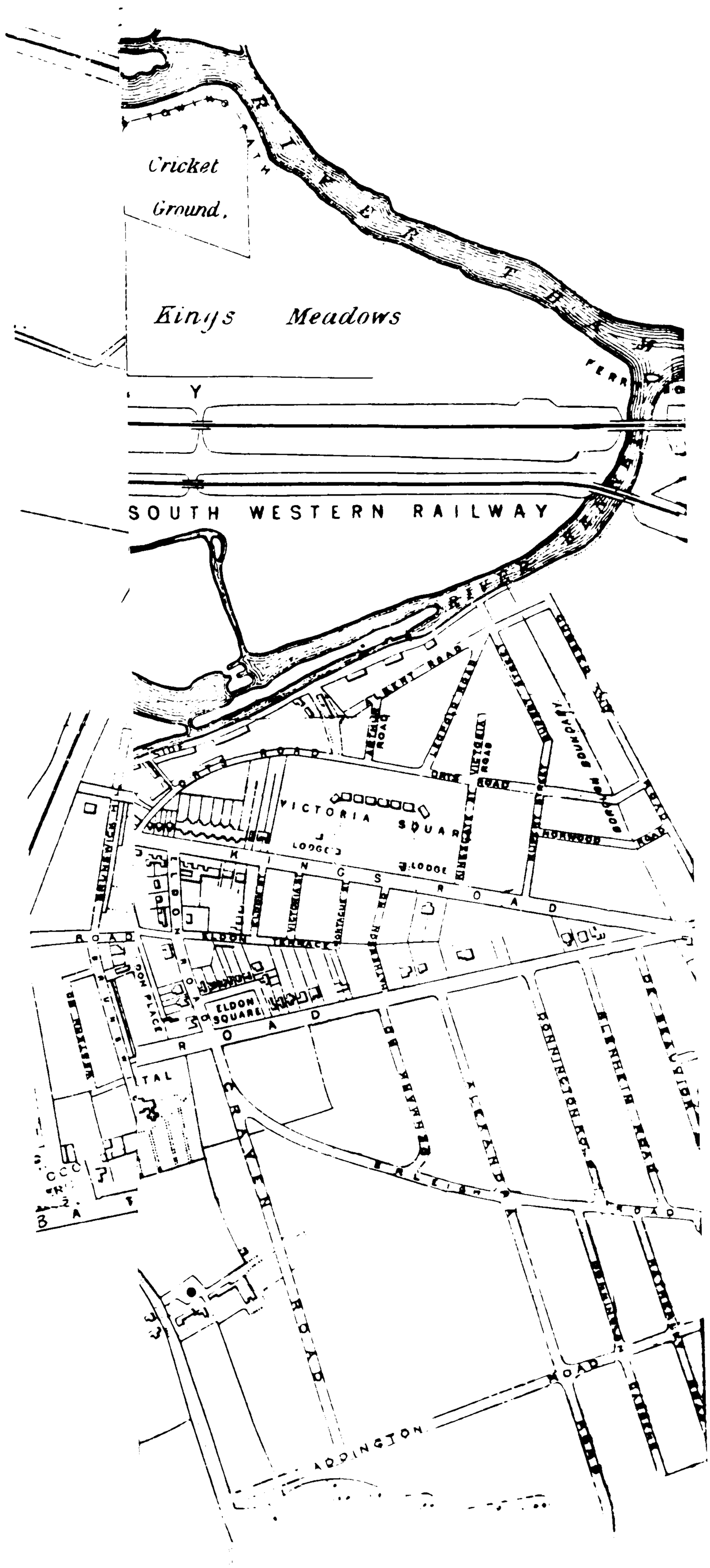
Reference has already been made to company records, many of which have long since been destroyed or disappeared; however, during the course of this study a few financial records have come to light, and these have been presented in the Appendices in microfiche form, in order that other researchers may be able to use them.

Inevitably, the lack of detailed information about the English provincial press during the period under review has made it virtually impossible to place Reading's press in a neat context by making a direct comparison with the local press in other towns in the country. In addition, the nature of the somewhat fragmented and incoherent information which has come to light concerning Reading's newspapers has resulted in a study biased towards the descriptive rather than to the analytical.

However, it is hoped that, by presenting as coherent a history of the Reading newspaper press as is possible from the information currently available, this study will complete one more piece in the jigsaw of press history and provide a useful source of accurate reference material for others involved in research into the provincial press.

SIMMONS MAP OF READING 1882




Cricket
Ground.
Kings Meadows
SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
RIVER
VICTORIA SQUAR
ELDON SQUARE
ADDINGTON

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

§

BACKGROUND: THE NEWSPAPER PRESS IN READING 1723-1855

Perhaps the most significant event in the development of the newspaper press in this country was the lapse of the Printing Act in 1695, which resulted when the House of Commons was unable to accept a number of amendments which the House of Lords had made to the Printing Act Renewal Bill.

Until that time the press had been regulated by law, and all printers and publishers were obliged to submit printed matter to be officially licensed prior to publication, failure to comply with this legislation leading to the liability of prosecution by the Government. The regulations had also ensured that the printing trade was confined to London; thus, when the Act lapsed in 1695, printers were no longer bound by any geographical restrictions nor by the limitations of pre-publication censorship.

Despite the fact that this new-found liberty was due more to parliamentary inefficiency than to any conscious desire for press liberty on the part of the Government, the printing trade was free to expand — not only in London, but out into the provincial areas of the country as well. Such was the desire for news at this time that the first significant

development in the printing trade was the proliferation of pamphlets and newspapers obviously intended to provide the population with the information it desired concerning the affairs of government: ironically, the very knowledge that the Government itself was only too anxious to suppress.

Inevitably, endeavours were made to reintroduce legislation to replace the lapsed Act, but between 1695 and 1714 some fifteen Bills relating to the book trade failed to gain parliamentary approval, by which time the matter of copyright had been covered with the 1710 Copyright Act and the whole of the printing trade, particularly those producing pamphlets and newspapers, had been subject to the Stamp Duty Acts, through which Robert Harley had successfully attempted to acquire revenue for the Government.

The fact that printers were no longer restricted to working in London meant that the pressure on the overcrowded trade was released as printers moved out into the provinces to exercise their skills. So great was the desire for news of any kind amongst the people outside London that most of the newly established presses were used for printing newspapers.

By 1725 newspapers had been established in most towns of a reasonable size, and their success was so great that many of them survived well into the nineteenth century, some (such as *Berrow's Worcester Journal* and the *Reading Mercury)* even into the twentieth century. Surprisingly, for a town so close to London, Reading did not have its first printer until 1722[1], and its first newspaper, *The Reading Mercury or Weekly Entertainer*, did not appear until July 1723.

---

1 A charge for printing 225 invitation tickets to the Mayor's Public Feast dated 24 September 1722 appears in the *Memorandum of John Watts, Esq.* edited by K. G. Burton, (1950), p. 81.

At this time Reading was a somewhat small, unimportant country town, set in the middle of a fairly large, sparsely populated and rather poor agricultural district.[2] This whole area had suffered during the Civil War period and wool production, which had once dominated the county, had virtually disappeared, little except very general mixed agriculture, replacing it. Despite this, Reading's first printers, William Parks and David Kinnier, must have seen something to attract them, for they not only settled in the town but expressed considerable surprise that the town should have been '...so long slighted by our Brother-Types...'[3]

Kinnier had been apprenticed to the London printer, Matthew Jenour, and was only released from that apprenticeship on 3 September 1722[4] when, it appears, he came directly to Reading. His experience with Jenour would undoubtedly have included the production of newspapers, for Jenour was very much involved with this form of publishing, both as printer and also as a stockholder in such papers as the *British Mercury*.

Parks, on the other hand, does not appear to have served an apprenticeship in London, but was known to have been involved in printing in Ludlow in 1719 and in Hereford in 1721, and was twenty-five years old at the time of his arrival in Reading. It is quite possible that his experience also included the production of newspapers, for one of the country's earliest provincial papers had been produced in Worcester, which is close enough to Ludlow or Hereford for Parks to have had some contact. Parks was only involved in the business for a short while, for in

---

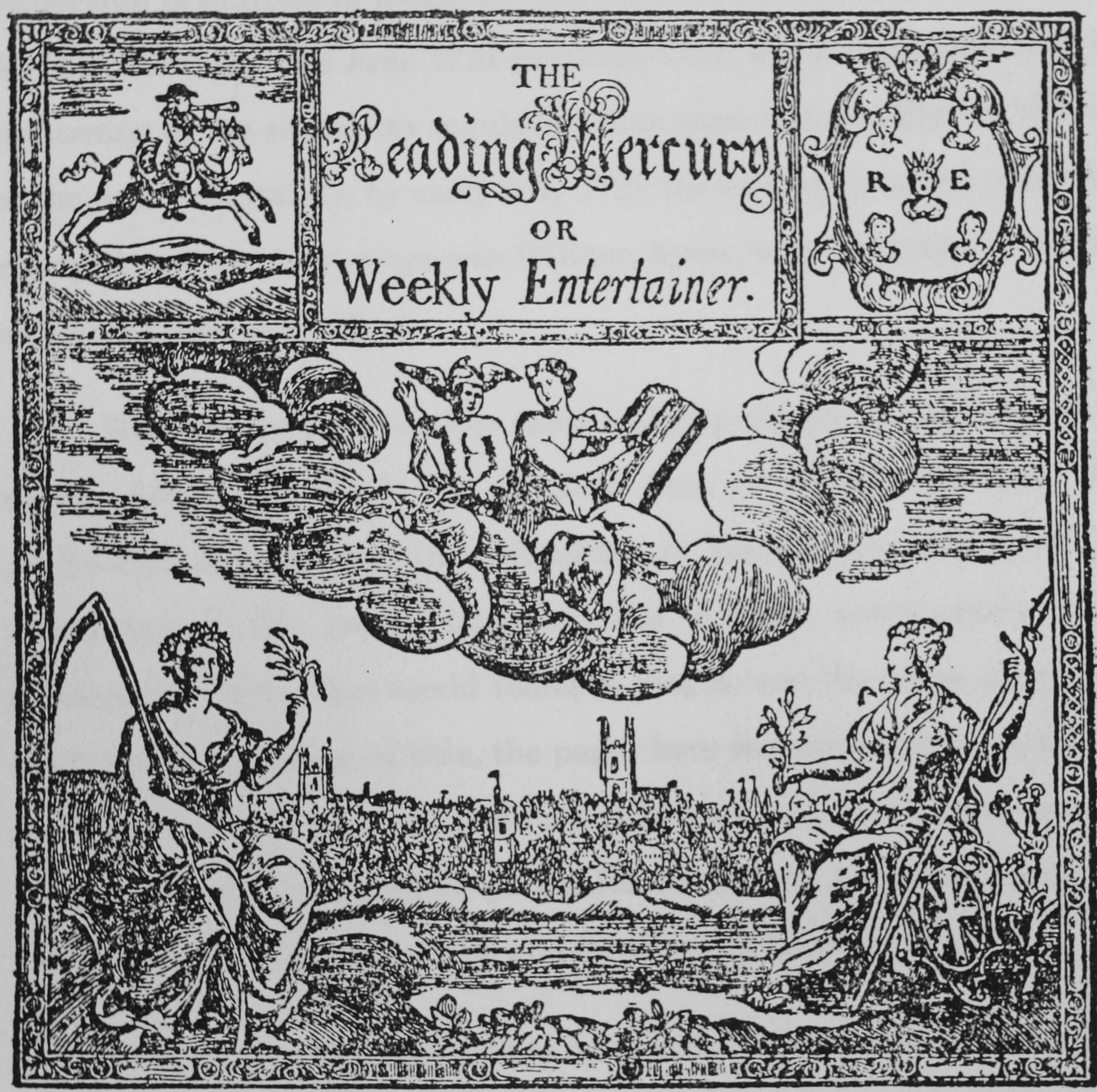
2 The only population estimate for Reading during the eighteenth century is of 8,000 people in 1761, in D. and S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia Berkshire*, (1806, reprinted 1978), p. 338.

3 *The Reading Mercury or Weekly Entertainer*, I, no. 1, Monday 8 July 1723.

4 D. McKenzie, *Stationers Company Apprentices, 1701 to 1800*, (Oxford, 1978), p. 195.

Facsimile of No. 1, July 8th, 1723

VOL. I. Numb. 1.



Monday *July* 8, 1723. (*To be continued Weekly.*)

READING:

Printed by W. PARKS, and D. KINNIER, next Door to the *Saracen's-Head*, in *High-street*: Where all manner of Printing Business is handsomely done, as Books, Advertisements, Summons, Subpœnas, Funeral-Tickets, &c Shop keepers Bills are done here after the best manner, with the Prints of their Signs, or other proper Ornaments. Also Gentlemen may have their Coats of Arms, or other Fancies curiously cut in Wood, or engrav'd in Mettal.

[Price of this Paper, Three-Half-Pence per Week.]

January 1724 he emigrated to America, where he became a very successful and wealthy printer.[5]

The degree of success enjoyed by the *Mercury* under Kinnier's ownership is difficult to judge, for there are no extant copies of the paper for the period from 12 June 1724 to 3 July 1727, but it is possible that the tightening of the stamp tax regulation may have had an effect on the sale of the paper. Certainly, by early July 1727 the ownership of the paper had changed, and the new owner was William Ayres, whose printing office was at Fishers Row in Reading.

With the new ownership came a slight change in the title of the paper, Ayres naming it the *Reading Post or Weekly Mercury*, with publication day changed from Saturday to Wednesday each week. The numbering of this paper, however, was a direct continuation of the *Reading Mercury*. This would indicate that it was the same paper and, apart from the change of title, the paper bore the same appearance as its predecessor. Perhaps Ayres' main claim to fame was the fact that at some point in 1730 he employed the young John Newbery, who was to later own the paper and also to gain fame and fortune as a London bookseller.

Ayres' ownership appears to have ended late in 1736 or early 1737, when the name of William Carnan appeared on the imprint of the paper, now called the *Reading Post or Weekly Mercury or London Spy*. His ownership was short-lived, for he died towards the end of 1737, and in his will left his personal estate (including ownership of the paper) jointly

---

5 Lawrence C. Wroth, *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland 1686-1776*, (1927). See also Williams Parks Club Publication No. 3 (Richmond 1926), p. 70.

between his brother Charles and John Newbery[6], who later (in 1739) married Carnan's widow Mary.

Newbery's interests were almost certainly focused more on book production and bookselling than that of newspaper production, and by 1740 he had employed Charles Micklewright as a printer, to continue the production of the *Mercury* as well as the printing of a number of books. Among the first of these books was *The Whole Duty of Man*, published in 1740, but many others followed between 1740 and Micklewright's death in 1755.[7]

Micklewright's daughter, Mary, continued the paper for a short time until her marriage to Charles Pocock, and from January 1756 his name appeared as the publisher of the *Mercury*, a state of affairs which existed until the end of 1761 when the Carnan family took over the paper. It is likely that the Carnan family had retained a substantial interest in the paper throughout, and at this point they took the paper over again in their own name.

The name appearing on the imprint in January 1762 was that of Anna Maria Smart, John Newbery's stepdaughter. She had married the poet Christopher Smart in 1752, in a secret marriage that had cost Smart his fellowship at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, when the college authorities heard of it. Smart suffered numerous bouts of insanity and was constantly in debt, and his wife and daughter left him for a period to live in Dublin, before returning to Reading to take over the *Mercury*.

---

6 *Reading Mercury*, XVIII, 18 August 1740.

7 For example: Samuel Johnson, *An Explanation of Scripture Prophecies*, (1740); Charles Thompson, *Travels of the Late Charles Thompson*, (1744); Anthony Addington, *An Essay on the Sea-Scurvy*, (1753); Arthur Here, *The Four Gospels Harmonised*, (1750).

This situation is clarified to some extent by the terms of John Newbery's will, in 1767, in which he carefully ensured that Anna Maria would receive an income from his interests in Reading, but which was organised in such a way that her husband could make no claim against the estate.[8]

John Carnan and Anna Maria continued running the paper until Carnan's death in 1784, and from that time the name of T. Cowslade appeared on the imprint with that of Anna Maria Smart.

Thomas Cowslade was a member of an old Newbury family and had been apprenticed to John Carnan in 1770. Freed from that indenture in 1781, Cowslade had continued to work on the *Mercury* and early in 1784 had married Anna Maria's eldest daughter, Marianne. As a printer already experienced in the production of the paper, he was well qualified to take over the management of his wife's share of the business, which she had inherited, jointly with her sister and mother, on John Carnan's death. The Cowslade family were to control the destiny of the *Mercury* until 1914, when age and infirmity compelled Frederick Cowslade to sell the paper with which his family had been associated for 144 years, during 129 of which they had been proprietors.

The only other newspaper to appear in Reading during the eighteenth century was the *Reading Journal* which was first produced at some time during 1736 and which, by 10 March 1746, had changed its title to *The Reading Journal or Weekly Review.*

---

8 Last will and testament of John Newbery dated 27 November 1767. A photostat copy of this will is held at Reading Reference Library.

This paper was possibly started by David Henry, who later in his life was to take over control of the *Gentleman's Magazine*.[9] Henry was born in Scotland in 1710, and left his home for London before the age of 14, never to return.[10] According to the Stationers Company records, he was apprenticed to Samuel Aris at Creed Lane, Ludgate, on 1 Jan 1725 for a term of 7 years, and his father's occupation is described as being that of gardener. Late in his life Henry described his parents as being leaders of Scottish society, and possibly the earlier duplicity was used by him in order to give the impression that he was from a poor background, so that his parents would not be expected to pay for his apprenticeship. It may also have been a ploy to divert attention from the fact that he might have run away from home and had no wish to be traced.

Working for Aris would have given Henry considerable experience in the London print trade, particularly in the production of newspapers as Aris was much involved in the newspaper business. It is likely also that Henry had worked for Edward Cave, the proprietor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*; certainly he must have known Cave fairly well, for he married Cave's sister, Mary, in 1736.

Whether or not Henry started the *Reading Journal*, he was almost certainly responsible for the second series of the paper which was started

---

9 K. G. Burton suggests that David Henry set up the *Reading Journal* in 1736, but there is evidence to suggest that this was not so. Plomer *et al.*, in *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers, 1726-1775*, pp. 122-3, states that Henry set up his press in Friar Street, Reading, in 1745, and the sudden change in the appearance of the *Reading Journal* at this time would seem to suggest that this might have been David Henry's first venture into publishing his own paper. In the light of the fact that Henry had married Edward Cave's sister, it is also interesting to note that William Ayres, who had owned the *Reading Mercury* until 1736, had served his apprenticeship in London with Freeman Collins I at the same time as Edward Cave, so maybe the possibilities of a printing business in Reading were given to Henry through this contact.

10 *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 63 (1792), p. 578.

in October 1743 with the sub-title of *Weekly Review*; at the same time a Winchester edition was introduced, under the title of *The Winchester Journal or Weekly Review*. Later, between late 1745 and early 1746, he prefixed the name of each journal with 'Henry's', and these titles were maintained until the papers' cessation during 1748.

By 1749 David Henry had returned to London and was living in Wine Court working as a publisher, and upon the death of Edward Cave on 10 January 1754 he became joint proprietor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* with Cave's nephew Richard, an occupation he maintained until his retirement.

With the demise of Henry's papers, the *Reading Mercury* was without competition in the district around Reading and, by the turn of the century, guided by the firm hands of the Cowslade family, the paper became an organ for the Whig/Liberal political views in the area. Through the columns of the paper, the family energetically supported the movements for Parliamentary reform to such effect that on the passing of the Reform Bill, in 1832, Francis Peter Cowslade was presented with a large silver cup by the 'Mechanics of Reading'. The inscription read 'NOBLE ENGINE OF FREEDOM, may thy energy never be cramped by the minions of despotism and corruption', and this was no doubt also in recognition of the vigorous support that the *Mercury* had given in 1825 to the formation of the first Reading Mechanics Institution.[11]

During the early years of the nineteenth century, the *Mercury* was always a voice for reform, and the paper's development through this period is described as being '...from a lifeless catalogue of news into a

---

11 A. T. Watts, 'The Foundation and Development of the Reading Mechanics Institution, 1825-1830 and 1840-1860', (unpublished Dip.F.Ed. dissertation, University of London, 1976), pp. 18-30.

spirited organ of political opinion'.[12] It was perhaps this strident Whig voice of the *Mercury* which eventually led to the formation of the rival Conservative paper, the *Berkshire Chronicle*, in January 1825.

This new paper was printed and published by William Drysdale at 7 The High Street in Reading, but the principal proprietor was a successful and well-known local solicitor by the name of John Jackson Blandy, later to become Reading Town Clerk.

Politically, the *Chronicle* opposed the *Mercury*, being somewhat right wing or '...offensively Conservative', to the degree that the local Whigs referred to it as the 'Berkshire Slop-Pail'.[13] It is suggested that the *Chronicle* was founded in order to voice the Tory and Church of England views (in opposition to the pro-Whig, pro-Catholic *Reading Mercury*) at the time of the 1826 election, and that the journalistic battle it fought at this time was responsible for its immediate success.[14] However, to compete with a newspaper so well entrenched as the *Mercury*, which had just celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary in 1823, was a difficult task, and over the next four years the *Chronicle* appears to have had difficulty in surviving.

After a succession of printers and publishers, the paper possibly suffered a brief suspension in 1835, and when Richard Welch bought the paper, probably some time in 1836, it had obviously passed through a very difficult period in its history. The Welch family, however, revived the

---

12 W. M. Childs, *The Town of Reading during the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century*, (1967), p. 77.

13 K. G. Burton, *The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire, 1723-1855*, (1954), p. 77.

14 J. Lingwood, 'The Impact of Local Printing on the 1826 Election Campaign', unpublished Open University Assignment, 1976.

fortunes of the *Chronicle*, and during the next fifty or so years it was a successful and vociferous rival to the Cowslades' *Mercury*.

Only one other newspaper appeared in Reading before 1855, *The Berkshire Independent*, which made its appearance in November 1850. The proprietor was James Macaulay, a local letterpress and copperplate printer, bookseller and stationer of Broad Street, Reading, and his paper had a Non-Conformist bias to it. In its first edition the paper openly attacked both the *Mercury* and the *Chronicle*; unfortunately this appears to have been its sole edition for no other copies are extant, the only known copy of the first edition now being held in the Reading Reference Library.

However, with the repeal of the Stamp Duty Act in June 1855 it was not long before the two Reading rival papers were to face a succession of competitors, some lasting a few days and some a few years, while others were to succeed up to recent times, and it needed a merger of the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* in 1914 to ensure their continuance until the 1980s.

CHAPTER II

§

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRINTING DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY[1]

By the end of the eighteenth century, printing techniques had changed very little from those used by late fifteenth-century printers. Type was still cast letter by letter in a hand mould and all text matter was assembled by hand, by compositors using a setting stick and picking each letter from a type case. Printing was performed on wooden hand presses which, although subject to a number of minor improvements over the years, still worked on much the same principle that Gutenberg's press had done. Paper was still made by hand, every sheet being individually formed on a hand mould from rag fibres, and letterpress illustrations consisted for the most part of woodcuts or wood engravings printed simultaneously with the text.

The nineteenth century, however, was to witness far-reaching changes to industrial processes, and it was this tremendous technological progress which, by the beginning of the twentieth century, had revolutionized the methods of printing production.

---

1 The text of this chapter has appeared in a privately printed limited edition under the title *Technical Progress in Nineteenth-Century Printing*, edited by Anne Hunter, and published by Oxford Polytechnic Publishing Department in 1983, as a student exercise.

Not surprisingly perhaps, in view of the ever-increasing popularity of the newspaper, it was the newspaper press which led the demand for technological change throughout the nineteenth century. A rapidly expanding population which demanded more and more news prompted newspaper proprietors to continue seeking ways of producing their papers in larger numbers and more quickly and cheaply than their competitors. It was this demand, probably above all else, which thrust the newspaper industry to the forefront of developments in printing production technology .

Initially these new developments were employed by the national and provincial daily press, but it was not long before the provincial weekly press had grown to a size where it, too, had to adopt the new technology to keep pace with the growth demanded of it.

Inevitably, other areas of the printing industry benefited from this industrial progress, and from the 1830s onwards many aspects of new technology developed for the production of newspapers had been adapted or improved to suit the needs of the printing industry at large. Broadly speaking, these developments took place in four areas: papermaking, the press, illustration, and typesetting, and a brief survey of these developments acts as a useful guide when considering the context of newspaper expansion in Reading.

The first of these major developments concerned the manufacture of paper by mechanical means. A Frenchman, Nicholas Louis Robert, invented a machine that was eventually to supersede the making of paper by hand. Handmade paper was naturally limited by the size of mould that a vatman was capable of controlling, particularly when filled with its weighty content of pulp. Machine-made paper was not subject to such a

limitation and, without the larger sizes of paper produced mechanically, the printing machine could have done little more than to run off more quickly the small four-page folio or eight-page quarto paper of the hand press.

Robert brought his ideas to England, where they were improved and put into practice by Henry and Sealy Fourdrinier, who erected the first paper-making machine at Frogmore, Hertfordshire, in 1803. The effect of this machine was considerable for, whereas from 60 to 100 lbs of paper could be made daily by hand, the new paper-making machine could produce up to 1,000 lbs per day.[2] This meant that the supply of paper would no longer restrict the rapid expansion of the printing industry and, further, this increased speed of paper production, combined with the repeal of the paper taxes and the discovery of cheap, readily available wood pulp, caused the price of paper to fall dramatically: between 1800 and 1900 it fell from 1s. 6d. to 1d. per pound weight.[3]

A further important factor concerning paper made by machine was that it was made in a continuous web, a fact which enabled the reel-fed rotary press to be developed later in the century. Unfortunately, however, in the first half of the nineteenth century the British paper taxes required that the individual sheets of paper should be stamped, a restriction which considerably stifled the development of the rotary press until 1861. As James Moran states:

> Until the tax was repealed, sheet-fed machines continued to be used for the most advanced newspaper printing, and the desire to increase

---

2 S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, (1955), p. 191.

3 Ibid.

> productivity led to an increase in the number of feeding stations on presses until they became too large and too unwieldy to accommodate.[4]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were some four hundred Fourdrinier machines in British paper mills, but by this time the paper-making industry was struggling with the ever increasing shortage of cotton 'rag' which was still the sole fibre source for paper-making pulp. This shortage led to experiments being made with other materials, and these in turn led to the discovery of esparto grass and wood as alternative sources for paper-making fibres. It is not necessary to go into the elaborate story of the search for these materials, but the important fact, from the newspaper standpoint, was the introduction of 'mechanical wood' or ground wood pulp between 1870 and 1880 and 'chemical wood' or wood cellulose in the period 1880-90.[5] From this time, the supply and use of cheap and quickly produced newsprint became the normal practice. The quality of this early wood-fibre newsprint left a lot to be desired: all the Reading newspapers which were printed on this material are now very brittle due to the over-short fibres, very yellow and stained due to the impurities left in the pulp when reduced from solid wood, and all display very poor paper surface which causes most of the paper to appear grey and blotchy. This paper must have caused the printer a considerable number of problems when being run on the press.

The first major development to affect the printing press was the invention of an all-iron press by Lord Stanhope in 1800.[6] This press and those which followed it, such as the Albion, Columbian and Britannia,

---

4 J. Moran, *Printing Presses*, (1973), p. 175.

5 *Newspaper Owner and Manager*, Magazine no. 31, 3 August 1898.

6 Wilhelm Haas of Basle had been the first to use a cast-iron staple for a hand press but Stanhope was the first to add a system of compound levers to increase power and accelerate the printing operation.

were particularly important in the area of newspaper production, because they allowed a larger sheet to be printed. The fact that they were made from iron meant that it was possible to make a larger, stronger and more accurate platen which, when operated by a system of levers, allowed a complete forme to be printed at one pull at the press, not the two pulls which had always been necessary with the wooden hand press. This fact alone meant a higher production speed and, in addition, it made possible the production of a larger format newspaper.[7]

Although the all-iron presses were a great improvement on their wooden predecessors, particularly where print quality was concerned, they did not significantly raise the production speed, owing to the difficulty incurred in handling larger sheets of paper. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the needs of a provincial newspaper such as the *Reading Mercury* were not hampered by the limitation of the hand press for, as the paper was only published once a week, the printer had the whole of that week in which to prepare and print the paper.

By the latter part of the eighteenth century, the format of the London daily papers was firmly set at four four-column pages, with advertisements completely occupying the front page. This format was peculiar to the British press and was not a custom in America or in Europe.[8] A most important feature of newspaper advertising in eighteenth-century London was the daily theatrical announcements or 'bills', and such was their importance that they had an instant claim on the front page. As the daily press expanded and developed, advertisements became increasingly important and some papers put advertising

---

7 The *average* production speed of the hand press was approximately 200-250 sheets per hour, although this could not be maintained for long periods.

8 A. Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper*, (1973), p. 35.

first, to such an extent that news was regarded as a filler. Because the outer pages (that is, pages one and four) were filled with the early and controllable advertising copy, it became a matter of technical convenience to print these first, leaving the inner pages for late advertisements and later news copy.[9] This format of front page advertising was a feature of the nineteenth-century newspaper, both daily and weekly, and all of the papers which appeared in Reading in the second half of the century conformed to this traditional format.

The first really revolutionary development in the printing industry was the invention of a cylinder printing machine, powered by steam. In 1790, William Nicholson took out a patent for a new type of printing press[10] and, although he considered this idea to be 'insufficient and superficial',[11] Frederick Koenig, in conjunction with Andreas Bauer, used a number of Nicholson's ideas in the manufacture of their press. This was designed to print from type placed on a flat metal bed, with impression to be effected by a cylinder and inking to be done automatically by rollers.

One man who was quick to realize the tremendous potential of Koenig's machine was John Walter II, proprietor of *The Times* in London. In 1814, two of Koenig's machines were installed in *The Times* office, and the first newspaper 'printed by steam' was produced on 28 November 1814.[12] Koenig's press was a double-cylinder machine, printing simultaneously two copies of a forme on one side only, with an output of

---

9 A. Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper*, (1973), p. 35.

10 Patent no. 1748 taken out by William Nicholson on 29 April 1790.

11 J. Moran, *Printing Presses*, (1973), p. 101.

12 The Koenig and Bauer steam-powered press was so revolutionary that John Walter thought it necessary to construct the machine in secret.

1,100 impressions an hour, thus quadrupling the output of the hand press.[13]

The Times was expanding so rapidly during the first half of the nineteenth century that frequent improvements were necessary in the machine department to keep pace with the demand. Between 1801 and 1855 the circulation of *The Times* rose from 2,500 copies per day to nearly sixty thousand copies per day,[14] and in 1848 an Applegath eight-feeder machine was installed. This machine worked on the rotary principle, which had first been embodied in Nicholson's designs; the printing cylinder had type fixed around it, while impression was effected by eight small impression cylinders, each fed with paper from separate feedboards. Because they used type and embodied the rotary principle, these machines were known as 'type revolvers'.

From America came a much improved type revolver from the factory of Richard Hoe, and in 1856 a Hoe six-feeder was installed to print *Lloyds Weekly Register*.[15] This machine was such an obvious improvement on the Applegath that the proprietors of *The Times* ordered a pair of Hoe ten-feeder machines, each capable of 20,000 impressions per hour.[16]

It was not long before the manufacture of curved stereo plates was perfected. These could be cast and fitted to a central cylinder, thus enabling printers to duplicate formes and run several machines at the same time.

---

13 J. Moran, *Printing Presses*, (1973), p. 17.

14 A. P. Wadsworth, 'Newspaper Circulations 1800-1954', in *Proceedings of the Manchester Statistical Society*, (1955), pp. 9-11.

15 J. Moran, *Printing Presses*, (1973), p. 188.

16 A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association*, (1954), p. 16.

When the Paper Tax was repealed in 1861, and the problem of making curved stereos appeared to have been solved, the way was open for the development of printing from a continuous web of paper, and in 1866 the reel-fed rotary perfecting machine was patented by *The Times*. This machine was installed in 1868, and produced 10,500 perfected eight-page papers in an hour.[17] From this time, web-fed rotary machines were installed by many daily newspapers and by the beginning of the twentieth century many of these machines were arranged in huge decks, printing from as many as eight reels simultaneously, and with all the processes (from feeding to folding and counting) mechanized.

These great revolutionary developments were almost entirely confined to London during the early years of the nineteenth century and it was not until the second half of the century that daily papers were established in the provinces.[18] In the provincial towns where only small weeklies or biweeklies were produced, the printers were therefore adequately served by iron hand presses and flat-bed cylinder machines. This was very much the case in Reading, where the *Mercury* (which had the largest circulation) installed a cylinder press in 1846.[19] It would appear that the *Mercury* was in fact well advanced for a provincial, newspaper for the machine in question was a two-cylinder Cowper and it was also steam driven.

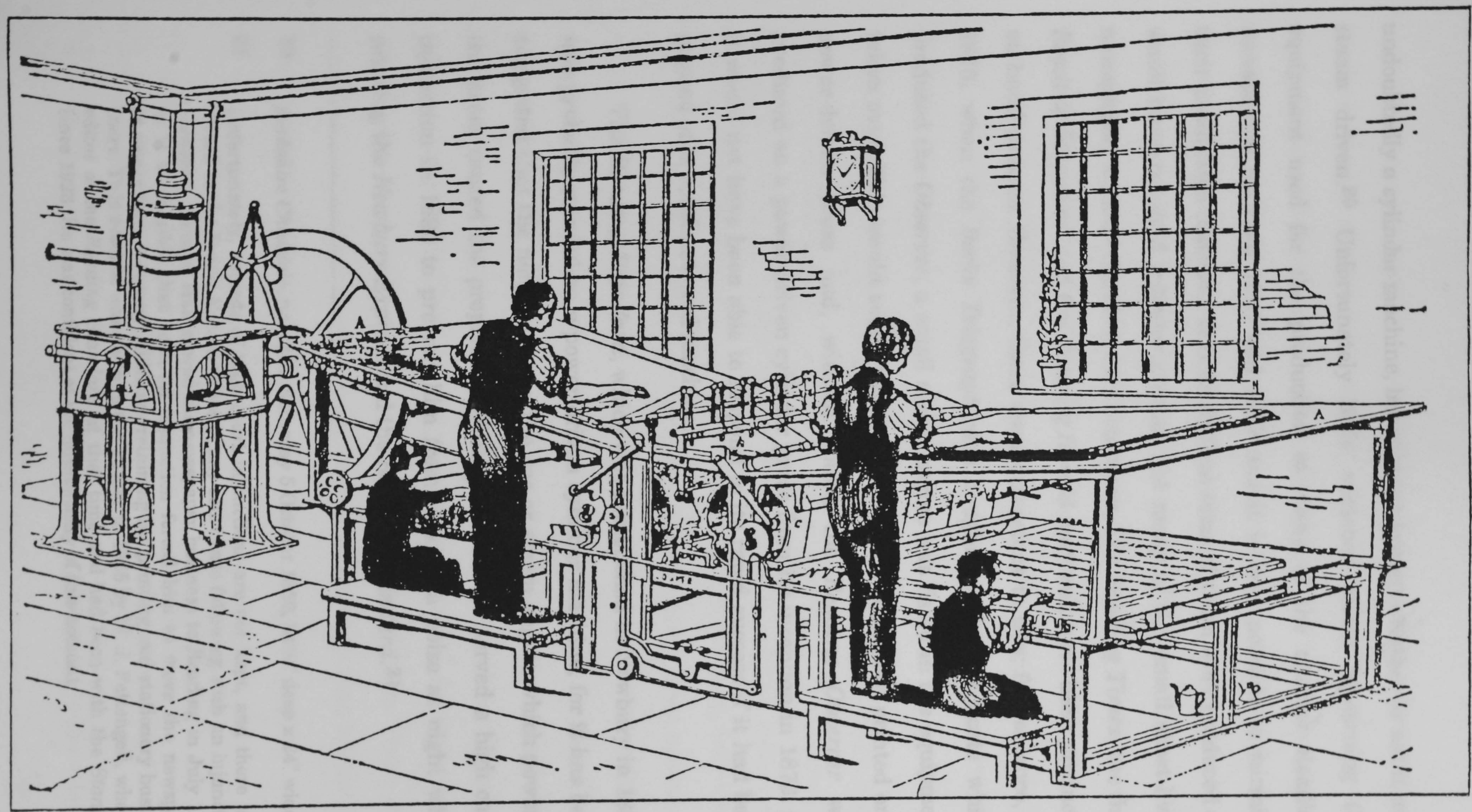
The *Berkshire Chronicle* installed a 'new and powerful' machine in 1850; and from the size of newspaper produced on this press it was

---

17 M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, (1975), pp. 26-7.

18 The earliest of these was probably the *Liverpool Telegraph & Shipping Gazette* in 1826, but by the 1850s towns such as Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Darlington had daily papers.

19 *Reading Mercury*, cxxiv, Saturday 3 January 1846.



Cowper two cylinder two-feeder press

undoubtedly a cylinder machine, but it is not known whether or not it was steam driven.[20] Unfortunately little evidence exists concerning the equipment used for the production of many of the smaller Reading newspapers between 1855 and 1905 and it is only possible to surmise their production methods. It is likely that some of them were produced on small hand-powered cylinder presses but many of the small short-lived newspapers such as the *Berkshire Guardian*, *The Reading Times*, the first *Reading Standard*, and the *Reading Herald* may well have been produced on hand presses. However, there were exceptions to this; for instance, in 1873, when the *Berks Telegraph* was bought by the syndicate which produced the *Observer*, a small steam engine was listed in the equipment taken over. This would suggest that the *Telegraph* had been printed on a power-driven press and, without doubt, the *Reading Observer* was produced on a power-driven cylinder press from its inception in 1873, for it would not have been able to respond to its rapid success if it had been printed on a hand-powered machine.

The *Reading Standard*, which was established in Newbury in 1886, was probably printed on a power-driven cylinder machine, for it has been suggested that the noise made by the gas or steam engine which powered the press caused the proprieter, William Hall, to be served a high court injunction in 1890 to prevent him from making a noise at night when printing the *Newbury Express* and the *Reading Standard*.[21]

---

20 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1315, Saturday 5 October 1850, 34¼" deep x 24" wide.

21 Unfortunately, records of high court injunctions are not kept, and there is no record in the Public Record Office of any court case following such an injunction. However, William Hall moved his newspaper business to Reading in July 1892, so it is possible that such an injunction forced him to move the newspaper business from Newbury, although retaining his printing and stationery business there. This account was given to the author in 1965 by W. J. Pettengell, who was editor of the *Reading Standard* at that time and had been with the *Standard* since 1923. He was confident of the authenticity of this account.

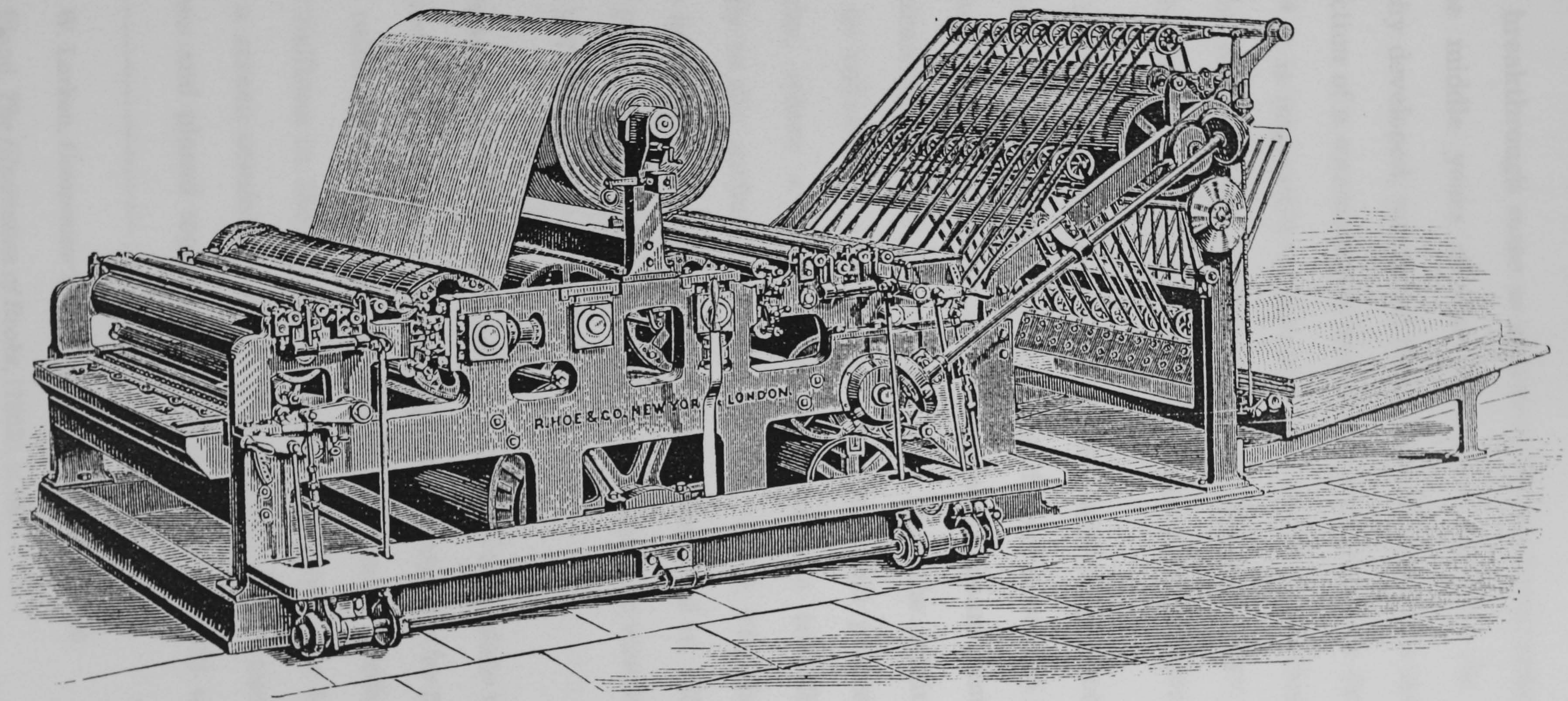
As the more successful papers in Reading began to expand during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they gradually moved from single-feeder machines to the more productive two-feeder Wharfedale machines: first the *Mercury* in 1878 (which had already been produced on a two-feeder Cowper), followed by the *Observer* in 1880 and the *Chronicle* in 1895, whilst the *Reading Standard* changed to a two-feeder in 1905. The rapidly expanding *Observer* was the first to change to a rotary press when, in May 1897, it installed a Hoe rotary perfector machine, together with a stereotyping plant, but it was some ten years before it was followed by the *Berkshire Chronicle*, which installed a Hoe two-unit rotary press in 1907.[22]

One area of newspaper production which left a lot to be desired was that of illustration. The normal method of providing illustrations in newspapers during the first half of the nineteenth century was to use woodcuts and wood engravings. These wooden blocks had to be drawn and then cut before they could be printed and, as the process often needed an artist to do the drawing and a craftsman to cut the block, their production was both expensive and time-consuming. Frequently the wooden blocks were not capable of withstanding the pressures of the cylinder and rotary presses and consequently an electrotype had to be made for the actual printing. As a result of the expense and the time needed for their manufacture, few newspapers included illustrations in their pages. There were some notable exceptions, such as the *London Illustrated News* which used news and pictures in its pages.[23]

---

22 See illustration overleaf.

23 The first edition of the *London Illustrated News* in 1842 contained 33 engravings.



The Hoe reel-fed rotary press 1873
(Source: St Bride Library)

The breakthrough came as experiments in photography progressed during the middle years of the nineteenth century. As the art of photography developed, more and more experiments were made towards the production of a commercially successful printing plate for letterpress printing.[24] It is impossible to give accurate credit to all those who took part in the development of photoengraving, for the latter part of the nineteenth century was rich in research work on photographic processes.

In 1851, Robert Langton discovered a method of photographically transferring an artist's drawing onto the surface of a wooden block, which would then be engraved by hand.[25] This process meant that the artist's original drawing was left intact, and also that the original could be enlarged or reduced. It was a short step from this process to that of zincography, where a line illustration would be transferred photographically to the surface of a sheet of zinc, which was then etched to leave the image in relief. This process was discovered in 1859 by Firmin Gillot, of Paris, and this method of block manufacture was in general use by about 1873.[26]

Success was finally achieved when the half-tone plate was invented, which permitted continuous tone photographic images to be printed by the use of a relief plate. George Meisenbach, a German, produced the first practical halftone in 1881 by photographing the image to be reproduced through a screen consisting of two glass plates, each closely ruled with black lines and placed together so that the lines crossed one another.[27]

---

24 H. W. Larken, *Compositor's Work in Printing*, (1961), p. 306.

25 D. Bland, *The Illustration of Books*, (1962), p. 85.

26 G. A. Glaister, *Glossary of the Book*, (1960), p. 231.

27 M. Plant, *The English Book Trade*, (1965), p. 319.

The light passed through the screen and the size of the resulting dots varied according to the proportion of light passing through the individual squares. When this screened image was placed on the surface of a metal plate and subsequently etched, the result was a relief printing plate, which was covered with dots of varying surface size. Prints taken from such a plate give the impression of having a variety of tonal values, unlike the line block which appears in terms of black and white only.

From a news illustration point of view, the introduction of the halftone should have made a considerable impact, but unfortunately at that time there was no method of converting halftone plates in a way that would enable them to be printed on a rotary press. The only way that the national daily paper could reproduce a photograph was to re-draw it in line form, and a particular technique was developed in this connection.[28] However, halftones could have been printed easily on the flat-bed cylinder presses used by most weekly provincial newspapers. Unfortunately, very little is known about the use by the provincial press of halftones at this time and this would seem to be a fertile area for further research.

What has come to light, however, is the fact that the *Newbury Express* produced a halftone illustration in its first edition in 1886 and excited a great deal of interest in so doing.[29] It is not yet known whether this was the first example of a photograph in an English provincial newspaper, because so little work has been done in this area. However, it was certainly a very early example of the use of a halftone in newspapers in this country, for the first halftone in a national daily newspaper did not

---

28 A. Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper*, (1973), p. 84.

29 *Newbury Express*, no. 1, Thursday 11 March 1886; see Chapter VIII.

appear until 1891.[30] Nevertheless, it was not until November 1894 that halftones were next used in Reading, when they appeared in an edition of the *Reading Observer*.[31] Charles Slaughter, who was one of the proprietors of the *Observer* at the time when these illustrations were reproduced, suggested that the *Observer* was one of the first provincial newspapers to use halftones successfully.[32] If he is correct, then it would appear that the late nineteenth century provincial newspaper press missed an opportunity to gain an advantage over the national daily press, for the real breakthrough to effective half-tone reproduction in their rotary-printed newspapers did not come until 1904.[33]

While great advances were being made in the techniques of machine printing, every en of type was still being set and distributed by hand. Attempts to produce mechanical composing machines in the first half of the nineteenth century had all resulted in failure, although machines designed and built by Charles Kastenbein in 1869 and Robert Hattersley in the same year were sufficiently successful to be used commercially. However, it was the Linotype machine made by Ottmar Mergenthaler in 1885 which was to revolutionize the newspaper composing room.

These machines used a keyboard similar to that of a typewriter and, when operated, a number of brass matrices were assembled in the order in which they were selected on the keyboard. When a full line was assembled, this line of matrices was then arranged so that molten type

---

30 *The Daily Graphic*, 4 November 1891.

31 *Reading Observer*, no. 1829, Saturday 24 November 1894.

32 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

33 A. Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper*, (1973), p. 87.

metal could be forced through a slot and into the assembled moulds. This caused a whole line of type to be cast in one solid piece, hence the name 'Linotype'. The first installation of machines such as these in this country was at the *Newcastle Chronicle* in 1889, but this was very quickly followed by many others, and all four Reading papers, the *Berkshire Chronicle*, the *Reading Mercury*, the *Reading Observer*, and the *Reading Standard*, had installed Linotype machines by 1898.

Output from these machines averaged five thousand to six thousand ens per hour[34] (although much higher figures could be reached under ideal conditions) and they were particularly suited to newspaper offices, in which they rapidly displaced hand composition. When it is considered that the average speed of a compositor setting by hand during the nineteenth century was approximately one thousand ens per hour,[35] some measure of the importance of these machines to the improved setting of news text can be seen. Another advantage of the Linotype was that solid lines were very much easier to handle in the rush and bustle of newspaper production. There was, also, the additional advantage of being able to throw all the lines back into a metal melting pot to be reused when a job was complete.

By 1902 there were over 1,172 Linotype machines being used in Britain and the majority of these were in provincial newspaper offices.[36] This is attributed to the fact that the provincial press was by this time showing signs of being extremely enterprising and to the fact that the compositors in London had greeted the Linotype with a formidable

---

34 A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association*, (1954), p. 87.

35 P. Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, (1974), p. 54.

36 A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association*, (1954), p. 87.

amount of opposition.[37] Many of them had feared that they would lose their jobs because of this new typesetting machine.

Developments in the areas of paper manufacture, the printing press, illustration, and typesetting were therefore probably those which most affected the newspaper industry during the nineteenth century. At first these developments were almost completely incorporated in the national daily press but, with the expansion of the newspaper industry in the provinces, particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century, many of these technical developments were adopted by the provincial daily and weekly newspapers as well. This trend in technological change is reflected in the development of the newspaper press in Reading into the early years of this century.

---

37 M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, (1975), p. 28.

CHAPTER III

§

POST-REPEAL EXPANSION — 1855-1872

From the latter years of the eighteenth century and through the early decades of the nineteenth century, Parliament was increasingly under pressure to abolish the stamp taxes, and gradually the clamour for their repeal forced the government to comply.

The effect of the 'war of the unstamped press' during the early nineteenth century was such that the government was forced to reduce the Newspaper Stamp quite drastically from 4d. to 1d. in 1836, lowering the Paper duty from 3d. to 1½d. at the same time.[1]

Further agitation led to the abolition of the Advertisement Duty in 1853, followed by the Newspaper Stamp Duty in 1855 and the Paper Duty in 1861 and, although all three affected the newspaper industry, the Newspaper Stamp Duty was the tax which had perhaps most aroused passions in the discussion leading to its abolition.

Those who opposed the movement to abolish the taxes were greatly concerned that such a move would lead to a cheap radical press, which it was thought, would spread 'dangerous ideas' to the 'dangerous classes'.[2]

---

1 James Curran *et al.*, *Mass Communication and Society*, (1977), pp. 198-202.

2 Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press*, (1970), pp. 26 and 147.

This notion was expressed very clearly by the nineteenth century economist and statistician, J. R. McCulloch:

> We much doubt whether the circulation of low-priced journals can ever be of advantage. Such papers are, speaking generally, addressed to the lower and poorer classes of the community; and their writers find it more to their advantage to flatter the prejudices entertained by their readers, and that espouse their peculiar views, how inconsistent soever these may be with the interests of society in general, than to inculcate sounder though less popular principles. Hence the revolutionary character of the greater number of the lower-priced papers, or, at least, of such of them as are read by the lower orders. This, perhaps, may be a necessary evil in a highly advanced country like this; but whether it be so or not, there can be no doubt of its existence, and of its formidable magnitude.[3]

Whilst it is perhaps possible to understand politicians and those of the landed and privileged classes holding such a view, it is less easy to follow the arguments of the Provincial Newspaper Society, which declared that the abolition of the stamp duties would be to:

> ...lower the character of the newspaper press in this country, by the competition for cheapness and by the increase in number of publications diminishing the means of incurring the large outlay made for every respectable journal.[4]

This Society was the major organization for proprietors of provincial newspapers and one would have thought that an increase in the number of provincial newspapers would be to the Society's advantage, leading, as it would, to an increase in both its membership and influence. However, it would appear that the Society was more concerned that its members should be men of substance and 'be GENTLEMEN in the true sense of the word'.[5]

---

3 J. R. McCulloch, *Dictionary of Commerce* , (1854), *p. 893.*

4 H. Whorlow, *The Provincial Newspaper Society 1836-1886*, (1886), p. 23.

5 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, (1846), p. 104.

By the 1840s however there existed a considerable anti-tax movement which campaigned vigorously against the continuation of press taxes, and organizations such as the 'Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge' and the 'London Committee for Obtaining the Repeal of the Duty on Advertisements', both founded in 1849, represented the spearhead of that campaign.

Leading politicians such as Richard Cobden, Thomas Milner-Gibson, and John Bright, together with many other reformers, never lost an opportunity to attack the government on the subject and, by means of a carefully organized campaign, put their views not only to Parliament but also, through the newspaper press, to the general public. Their argument was that the newspaper duties restricted the market of printed journals by virtue of the excessive cost of such items. As Cobden said, with reference to the Stamp Tax:

> So long as the penny lasts, there can be no daily press for the middle or working class. Who below the rank of a merchant or wholesale dealer can afford to take in a daily paper at fivepence? Clearly it is beyond the reach of the mechanic and shopkeeper.[6]

Another argument put forward by those agitating for repeal of the taxes was that they not only forced up the price of newspapers but were responsible for the high price of books as well, making them unavailable to those who were being educated to read:

> We make a great stir about teaching everybody to read, and the state — that is, the nation — pays a quarter of a million a year in teaching children to do little more than read. Then we proceed to tax the very first thing that everybody reads. In this way the newspapers pay for the education of the country, for they find their expenses aggravated and

---

6 Richard Cobden, as quoted in Fox-Bourne, *English Newspapers*, (1887), p. 210.

> their circulation restricted by an impost about equal to the sum spent in educating the masses. But we have several times enlarged on the absurdity of a tax which, as it is a tax on news, is a tax on knowledge, and is thus a tax on light, a tax on education, a tax on truth, a tax on public opinion, a tax on good order and good government, a tax on society, a tax on the progress of human affairs, and on the working of human institutions.[7]

Although the *Times* expressed the case for the repeal of the 'taxes on knowledge' so eloquently on this occasion, it should perhaps be noted that it usually took the opposite view and argued against a cheap press.

The government eventually succumbed to the pressure for repeal, and in June 1855 the Newspaper Stamp Bill became law, while abolition of the Excise Duty on Paper followed in 1861. Those, like John Bright, who predicted that freedom from the Stamp would enable the Press to expand, had their predictions amply fulfilled, for from 1855 the printing industry experienced tremendous growth.

This expansion was particularly evident in the area of newspaper and periodical production: new daily papers were established; weeklies, biweeklies and triweeklies multiplied; while magazines, periodicals, 'Popular Educators' in parts, and books, greatly increased in number. Printed matter of every kind became cheaper and more readily available to all levels of society. One indication of the tremendous expansion in newspaper production can be seen from figures published annually in the *Newspaper Press Directory* which in 1851 had stated that there were 563 journals in existence. In 1862, one year after the removal of the Paper Duty, *Mitchell's Directory* gave the total as 1,165 newspapers plus 213 magazines; by 1870 these totals had risen to 1,390 newspapers and 626 magazines; and in 1900 the numbers had risen to an amazing 2,488

---

7 *The Times*, 17 May 1854.

newspapers and 2,446 magazines; of the newspaper total in 1900 1,394 were in the English provinces.[8]

Further evidence of the tremendous growth of the printing industry after 1855 can be seen by the figures gleaned from the census returns. These show that the numbers of people employed in printing in England and Wales increased from 23,000 in 1851 to 138,000 in 1911, representing a 600% increase, with London being the largest printing centre, where some 43,000 people were involved in the industry.[9]

The repeal of the newspaper taxes coincided with a period of increasing prosperity during the 1850s and 1860s and this, together with the possibilities of using the press as a weapon in the cause of political reform, attracted many people to invest their money in the newspaper business. Improving communications in the form of the railways and the electric telegraph and increasing urbanization with its attendant market potential added considerably to the attraction of newspapers as possibly profitable enterprises.

According to Alan Lee, most of those who became newspaper proprietors were already involved in the printing and publishing industry, and those who were not tended to employ professionals to run their businesses for them.[10] This was certainly true of all those who owned newspaper presses in Reading, as they were either printers, journalists, or members of families which owned local Reading papers.

---

8 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, 1851, 1862, 1870, and 1900.

9 A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association*, (1954), p. 80.

10 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press*, (1976), p. 94.

Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce

In the light of this, it is perhaps not surprising to find that when the taxes were repealed in June 1855 the first people in Reading to embark on new press ventures were already involved with both printing and publishing. The first arrival was the *Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce*, started on 11 July 1855 (just ten days after the duty was removed), and printed and published by William Wallace Cowslade, the owner of the *Reading Mercury*.[11] This paper sold not only in Reading but also in Newbury, where it appears to have been more successful, for it changed its title to *Newbury Telegraph and Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce* in November 1855. Its only competitor in Newbury at this time was the *Newbury Journal*, first started on 6 September 1855 and lasting just six months before it was incorporated into a new paper entitled the *Berkshire Guardian*.

Berkshire Guardian

This new paper was printed and published in Reading and a reference to its having incorporated the *Newbury Journal* appeared in the editorial of the first issue:

> The projectors of the *Berkshire Guardian* have thought it advisable to take up the NEWBURY JOURNAL, as a basis, — a newspaper which has, in a very short period, attained a considerable circulation, and secured public respect.[12]

Added to this was the fact that this first copy of the *Berkshire Guardian* was numbered vol. I no. 26, suggesting that it had indeed taken over the six-month-old *Newbury Journal* and was continuing its numbering sequence.

---

11 See Chapter V.

12 *Berkshire Guardian*, I, no. 26, Wednesday 27 February 1856.

Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce.

No. 3. WEDNESDAY EVENING, JULY 25, 1855. Price 1½d.

AGRICULTURE.

THE CORN TRADE.
(From "The Mark Lane Express.")

BRITISH.

The weather during the week has presented a broken aspect, with a diminished temperature; but the soil being very absorbent from the previous drought, much grass that lay in Monday's rain was carried on Wednesday. The bulk of the corn will be greatly increased by the copious showers, however some may be deteriorated in sample as the consequence of being laid. The Wheat-plant, in many places, was getting starved for lack of moisture before the late rains; and though they will somewhat delay the ripening of the grain, there will be more to ripen; while the benefit to spring corn will be immense should fine sunny weather continue.

Considering that it has been hay-harvest, which is little more than half completed, the supplies to the country markets have been fair; but millers by the reserve principle having kept their stocks low, good samples have found a more ready placement generally at improved prices, but the amount of business has continued limited in the absence of foreign order, the French and Belgian markets having kept dull and on the decline, while the fear of any American demand is at an end, the Wheat-harvest in some of the southern States being finished, and proving very abundant, with every promise of a like result in the north, where supplies have arrived since the opening of the navigation beyond the usual amount. Our own foreign arrivals have lessened, the dullness of our markets not favouring importation, and stocks keep accumulating in store; we are, nevertheless, again favoured with a cry of famine—with statements so self-contradictory, as well as *ultra* *utopia fa/cu* that they scarcely excite argument. Instead of waiting three months, a Devonshire correspondent as well as others tell us that some forward Wheats will want the sickle in a fortnight; and though it be true that June showed a very low temperature, yet it is equally true that no corn was in blossom to be then hurt by the frost; and it is well for us that the bloom was left to the present month, for it has saved the harvest; and if it be most desirable and important that there should be favourable weather for the ingathering of the crop, yet the highest importance belongs to the time of bloom, for in the one case human industry is of great avail—in the other it is powerless. Good arrivals may now be expected from the Danube, where 500 vessels have been loaded with Indian Corn and Wheat since the opening of the navigation. Every effort is being made to get the surplus stock of Maize shipped from America while high prices last, and with new potatoes on our table every day, we feel thankful in believing that famine is at a distance.

The sales of English Wheat last week were 85,865 qrs., at 75s. 11d.; those of last year were 44,000 qrs. The importations of foreign Wheat and Flour for the week ending July 11th amounted to 52,104 qrs.

FOREIGN.

The temperature of the weather having increased at Paris, there was less disposition to purchase on the part of bakers. The marks of Flour remain quoted at 92f., which is 1 franc reduction. Foreign Wheat was in plenty, and sustained decline of 50 centimes to 1 franc. The general tendency in the departments was towards decline, the utmost reduction being noted at Lille, and reaching 2 francs 25 c. Rye and Barley are offered, without buyers. Oats though holders were willing to submit to lower terms, could not find placement. It appears that a considerable quantity of old Wheat has been held at Toulouse, which, in consequence of the favourable harvest weather, is now offering.

The Belgian markets are dull, with little alteration to note; but some trifling decline is quoted in Wheat prices. Brussels, on the 19th, was calm; and Antwerp equally so. Such was also the case in Holland, where the crops were looking well, and prices rather receding.

In the Baltic the crops proceed favourably, and Rye in some places now looks equal to Wheat.

Advices from America favourably describe the progress of harvest in the Southern States, and note better supplies at the leading markets, with declining prices, though fine Flour at New York is in so small compass that rates are comparatively well sustained.

MARK LANE MONDAY, July 23.

From Essex and Kent the supply of wheat by land carriage samples was short; that of barley, beans, and peas from all the near counties was moderate. The fresh arrivals of English oats were very trifling, with no Scotch; but those of Irish rather larger than of late.

There have been tolerably good imports of foreign grain, with an increased quantity of flour, principally from Spain.

The weather was very wet on Monday and Thursday; in other respects quite favourable for the crops generally, and it still continues fine.

The town millers took off English wheat very slowly, at about the prices of last Monday, and some quantity remained over unsold, the fine weather checking business.

The demand for foreign wheat was limited, without any quotable variation in value.

Prime country flour met a moderate sale, at no change in its currency.

Barley realised former rates, with a steady demand.

Malt has been taken in rather larger quantities, at full prices.

Beans and peas met a slow sale, but were without any quotable change in value.

Choice heavy oats continue to sell steadily at former prices, but those out of condition met a limited demand, at 6d. to 1s. per qr. reduction.

Liverpool, July 21.—The *Gazette* returns of sales of British wheat for this week are 85,865 quarters, at 75s. 11d. per quarter, the average price of the last six weeks being 75s. 6d. per quarter. We have fair supplies of wheat, flour, and Indian corn. The weather has been variously hot, close, cold, and wet, but, on the whole, not unfavourable for feeding the grain and root crops. Prices of wheat and flour have not altered much in the interval since Tuesday, but the rates for Indian corn have been unsettled. The Corn-Exchange yesterday had a fair attendance of millers and dealers. A steady, but not large demand was experienced for wheat, flour, oats, barley, and beans, the full prices of Tuesday last being well supported. The prices of Indian corn have fluctuated; on Thursday yellow and mixed corn declined about 2s. per quarter, but, having numerous buyers here yesterday, a large business was done, recovering 1s. in price. We quote white corn 42s. per 480lb., which is an advance on Tuesday's quotation of 2s. per qr., and mixed and yellow 37s. 6d. to 38s. per 480lb. which is a decline of 6d. to 1s. per qr. The trade in Brunswick-street to-day is firm, at the full prices of yesterday.

Liverpool, July 24.—(From A. F. and R. Maxwell's circular.)—The arrivals from Ireland and coastwise since Tuesday are moderate of wheat, flour, and oatmeal, but light of other articles. From European ports there has been reported 8,700 quarters of wheat, 13,820 sacks of flour, and from Egypt 9,200 quarters of wheat, 3,175 qrs. of beans, and 750 qrs. of Indian corn. The exports comprise 738 qrs. of wheat, 8,949 qrs. Indian corn, and 2,011 sacks flour. The weather has been variable during the week, but upon the whole favourable for the growing crops, and this morning we have heavy rain. Our trade has been without animation since Tuesday last, but in the business done in wheat and flour prices have been supported. Indian corn has attracted more attention, and an advance of 1s. per qr. has been established on mixed and yellow, and 2s. upon white, which is very scarce. At this day's market there was a moderate attendance of town and country dealers, and a very limited demand was experienced for wheat and flour, at about the prices of Tuesday last for the former, and 6d. per sack decline upon the latter article. Oats and oatmeal were in slow request, at late rates. Barley, being more plentiful, receded 1d. per 60 lb., but beans and peas brought former prices. Indian corn met with a good inquiry, especially white, which has advanced 3s. 6d. to 4s. per quarter from the lowest point during the week; yellow and mixed improved 1s. 6d. to 2s.; many holders have withdrawn their samples from sale for the present. We quote mixed and yellow 31s. to 39s., and white 44s. 6d. per 480 lb.

CURRENT PRICES OF BRITISH GRAIN AND FLOUR IN MARK LANE.

Shillings per Quarter

Wheat, Essex and Kent, white .... 76 to 78 fine up to	81		Old	33	33
Ditto ditto red, ...	70	77	Ditto, Potato	32	33
Ditto ditto, old	—	—	Irish feed, white	24	26
Ditto ditto new	—	—	Fine	—	28
Norfolk, Lincoln, and Yorkshire, red	71	76	Ditto, black	21	26
			Fine, ...	—	27
Barley, malting, new ..	37	33	Rye	40	43
Chevalier	34	36	Beans, Mazagan	40	41
Distilling	31	34	Ticks	39	43
Grinding...........	31	33	Harrows	39	44
			Pigeon	43	46
Malt, Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk new......	65	76	Peas, white boilers	43	47
Ditto ditto old	66	70	Maple	40	42
			Grey	37	40
Kingston, Ware, and town made new ..	70	77	Flour, town made per sack of 280lbs..	64	70
Ditto ditto old	66	71	Households Town ..	61	63
Oats, English feed	25	26	Country	54	60
Potato	26	29	Norfolk and Suffolk ..	53	54
Scotch Feed, new	28	29			

FOREIGN GRAIN AND FLOUR.

Wheat, Dantzic, mixed	84 to	85	Danish and Swedish feed	26	28
High mixed	87	92	Stralsund	27	29
Konigsberg	78	86	Russian	27	30
Rostock new	78	80	French	—	—
American white	80	85			
Ditto red	75	77	Beans, Friesland and Holstein	42	43
Pomerania Mecklg. and Uckermk., red	78	81	Konigsberg	39	43
Silesian	75	81	Egyptian	37	38
Danish and Holstein	69	76	Peas, feeding	39	40
Rhine and Belgian ..	—	—	Fine boilers	43	44
Odessa, Riga, &c. ..	70	74	Indian Corn, white ..	42	46
Barley, grinding	28	33	Yellow	37	40
Distilling	32	34	Flour, French per sack	60	61
Oats, Dutch, brew, and Poland	28	30	Spanish	60	61
Feed	26	28	American, sour per barrel 196 lbs.) Sweet	40	44

IMPORTATIONS OF FOREIGN AND COLONIAL CORN
in the Week ended July 11, 1855.

Total Quantities of Corn imported into the principal Ports of Great Britain (viz. London, Liverpool, Hull, Newcastle, Bristol, Gloucester, Plymouth, Leith, Glasgow, Dundee, and Perth)—Foreign, 139,971; Colonial 7 quarters.

COMMERCIAL.

PRODUCE MARKET.

Mincing-lane, July 24.

Sugar.—The market has opened with a good demand, and the extreme prices of Friday last have been freely paid. 1,270 hhds. of West India sold partly in public sale; Barbadoes, 35s. 6d. to 38s.; Demerara, 36s. 6d. to 39s. 6d.; Antigua, 36s. 6d. to 37s. 5,600 bags Mauritius were offered and all sold, 34s. 6d. to 39s. 800 bags Bengal also sold in public sale, 30s. to 39s. 6d. A cargo of yellow Havannah, 1,400 boxes, No. 16, sold at 26s. for a near port. The refined market steady: brown lumps, 46s. 6d.; grocery, 47s. to 52s.

Coffee.—170 casks and 230 bags Plantation Ceylon were offered in public sale, and chiefly sold at previous rates, 50s. 6d. to 63s. 200 bags fine native Ceylon sold, 49s. to 50s. The quotation for common quality is 48s. to 48s. 6d., at which 1,000 bags have been sold by private contract.

Tea.—The demand has rather improved to-day; about 1,000 chest common Congou reported sold at 8½d. per lb.

Saltpetre.—2,500 bags Bengal sold freely in public sale at a further advance. Refraction 2¾ to 5, 33s. to 33s. 6d.; refraction 6¼ to 7, 31s. 6d. to 32s.

Rice.—About 800 tons Bengal sold afloat to arrive at full prices.

Rum.—The demand revived to-day, and a full amount of business done. Demerara, 2s. 5d. to 2s. 6d. proof.

Cotton.—100 bales only sold.

Iron.—The market is more firm, and quoted 72s. 6d. to 73s.

Spices.—White pepper sold in public sale 6½d. to 6¾d. per lb.; Calicut ginger, from 39s. to 50s.

Tallow has advanced to 54s. 6d. on the spot.

In other articles no material alteration.

TALLOW, LONDON.—July 24.

The tallow market continues steady. The demand both for export and home consumption is good. Petersburg Y.C., on the spot, is quoted 54s. 9d.; July, 54s. 9d.; October to Dec., 55s. 3d. to 55s. 6d. Separate months, 56s.

METROPOLITAN CATTLE MARKET, July 23.

The show of foreign stock to-day was very moderate, but in somewhat improved condition.

A very limited supply of Beasts was received fresh up from our own grazing districts, and its quality was inferior. The Beef trade ruled somewhat active, at an advance in the prices obtained on Monday last of fully 2d. per 8lb. A few inferior Scots realized 5s. 4d., but the general top figure for Beef was 5s. 2d., per lb.

The show of Sheep was small, and we observed a great falling off in their weight and condition. We had an active inquiry for all breeds, at fully 2d. per 8lbs. above the rates current on this day se'nnight. Prime Downs were worth fully 5s. 2d. per 8lbs.

Lambs, the supply of which was rather limited, sold briskly at 2d per 8lbs. more money

The supply of Calves being good, the Veal trade was inactive, at barely stationary prices.

There was more doing in Pigs, the value of which had an upward tendency.

Per 8lbs., to sink the offals.

	s.	d.		s.	d.		s.	d.		s.	d.
Inferior Beasts ..	3	10 to	4	0	Prime coarse-wool	4	8 to	4	10
Second quality do.	4	2	4	4	Prime South Down	5	0	5	2
Prime large Oxen	4	8	4	10	Lamb	4	10	6	2
Prime Scots	5	0	5	2	Large coarse calves	4	2	4	4
Coarse Sheep.....	3	4	3	6	Prime small ditto	4	8	5	0
Second quality do.	3	10	4	4	Large Hogs	3	4	3	10
					Neat small Porkers	4	0	4	6

NEWGATE AND LEADENHALL, July 23

Per 8lbs., by the carcase

	s.	d.	s.	d.		s.	d.	s.	d.
Inferior Beef ...	3	4 to	3	6	Inferior Mutton	3	4 to	3	8
Middling ditto ..	3	8	3	10	Middling ditto ..	3	10	4	4
Prime large ditto	4	0	4	2	Prime ditto	4	6	4	10
Ditto small ditto	4	4	4	6	Lamb	4	6	5	8
Veal............	3	10	4	10	Small Pork......	4	6	4	6
					Large Pork......	3	8	4	0

Our market continues to be very scantily supplied with all kinds of meat. On the whole a fair amount of business is doing for the time of year, at very full prices.

PROVISION MARKET.—July 23.

In the Irish Butter market there was a good business transacted during the past week, buyers more desirous to purchase than of late, and a respectable quantity changed hands; the finest sorts brought an advance of fully 1s. per cwt. Foreign met a free sale, and the best Dutch advanced 4s. to 6s., and other descriptions 2s. per cwt.

Carlows 96s. to 100s., Waterfords, 96s. to 98s., Limericks, 96s. to 94s. Corks, thirds and fourths, 85s. to 90s., Best Dutch 102s. to 104s. landed.

ANOTHER REPORT.

A respectable amount of business was transacted in Irish Butter last week; all of fine quality, and also third and fourth Cork were cleared at an advance of 1s. Favourite brands of Limerick met ready buyers at 92s. on board, and at corresponding rates landed. The middling and inferior kinds were also rather more saleable, and the turn dearer. Foreign of all kinds was in steady request, and from 2s. to 4s. higher in value.

Bacon of prime quality, fresh and mild cured, both Irish and Hambro', was in limited supply, and wanted at 1s. over previous rates; but stale and secondary quality was difficult to sell on reasonable terms.

In Hams and Lard no change worth notice.

BOROUGH HOP MARKET.—July 23.

The continuance of favourable accounts from the hop districts causes the few hops remaining on offer in our markets to move off very slowly, and to effect sales to any extent reduced prices are submitted to. Duty £255,000.

Hop Intelligence.—The *Maidstone Gazette*, of yesterday reports that the accounts from the hop plantations continue to be highly favourable. Around Maidstone the bine has made extraordinary progress; and in many places so profuse are the lateral shoots that some of the planters have found it necessary to strip the lower branches, in order to give all possible access to the sun and air. From the Sussex and Surrey districts, including Farnham and Alton, the reports are as satisfactory as those from the Kentish plantations.

HAY MARKETS.—July 23.

Smithfield.—A moderate supply, and a steady demand.

Cumberland.—Supply rather limited, and trade firm.

Whitechapel.—Trade steady, with limited supplies on offer.

Per Load of 36 trusses.

	Smithfield.	Cumberland.	Whitechapel.
Meadow Hay	80s. to 120s.	80s. to 130s.	74s. to 120s.
Clover ditto..	90s. 130s.	90s. 130s.	90s. 130s.
Straw	24s. 30s.	27s. 32s.	26s 30s.

CURRENT PRICES OF ENGLISH WOOL.
London, July 23.

During the past week there has been only a moderate business doing in our market, arising from the manufacturers being better in stock, and to the somewhat large parcels brought forward of the present year's clip. There is, however, no inclination on the part of holders to accept lower prices, and we may consider the trade as healthy; very few foreign orders are in the market.

Down tegs (per lb.)	1	1	to	1	2
Down ewes	1	1½	to	1	2
Half-bred hogs	1	1	to	1	2
Half-bred wethers..................	1	1	to	1	1½
Kent fleeces.......................	1	1	to	1	2
Leicester fleeces, mixed...........	1	1	to	1	2
Combing skins	0	10	to	1	1
Flannel wool	1	0	to	1	3
Blanket wool	0	8	to	1	0

HIDE AND SKIN MARKETS.

	Per lb. d.	d.		Each. s.	d.	s.	d.
Market Hides, 56 to 64lbs	3¼ to	3¼	Horse Hides	5	6 to	0	0
Ditto 64 to 72lbs.	3¼	3½	Calf Skins, light..	2	0	3	0
Ditto 72 to 80lbs.	3½	4	Ditto, full	6	0	6	6
Ditto 80 to 88lbs.	4	4¼	Kents & half Breds	0	0	0	0
Ditto 88 to 96lbs.	4¼	4¼	Horse Sheep.....	0	0	0	0
Ditto 96 to 104lbs.	—	—	Lambs	2	2	3	4
Ditto 104 to 112lbs.	—	—	Shearlings	1	4	1	10

Tea Warehouses.—A return of all warehouses, in London and the outports of the kingdom, which have been approved by the Customs for the deposit of tea without payment of duty, under the provisions of the Customs laws, has been published. Eight places have been fixed upon in London, belonging to the East and West India Dock Company, the London Dock Company, the St. Katherine's Dock Company, Mr. J. Barber, and Messrs. Nicholson and Bealey.

Connection between Land Drainage and Fertility.—We must do little more than name land drainage as an observed cause of fertility—for it has been observed now so universally, and its benefits are so obvious in all cases of stagnant water, whether in stiff soils or light soils, that no one questions them. Though it is in point of fact the first step towards the reclamation of any land that is liable to fill with water, yet it comes last to be named in the order of benefits conferred upon the soil, for its principal advantage lies in the ability which is thus conferred on plants to use the fertilising matter already present in the land. It is as it were the key by which access is obtained to a warehouse that may be full of vegetable food, but whether full or not is valueless so long as locked. In land undrained, whether by Nature or by art, the water does not pass through the soil to feed the plants, it passes off the soil and leaves them starving. The use of water as a vehicle of food to plants, connects the subjects of drainage and irrigation. The volumes of the Society's Journal contain many references to the fertilising influence of irrigation; and the traveller in the vales of Hampshire and of Wiltshire cannot fail to have his observation drawn to the luxuriant growth of grass which by means of it are produced.—*Agricultural Gazette.*

Presentation of the Dunmow Flitch of Bacon.—On Wednesday, this ancient ceremony, which has been for many years past in abeyance, was revived with great enthusiasm. Some time since Mr. Harrison Ainsworth offered to defray the necessary expenses of the presentation of the flitch, the claimants being, according to the old custom, parties who have been married upwards of a year and a day, and who

"Never since the parish clerk, said, Amen,
Have wished themselves unmarried again."

Two parties claimed the flitch, a French literary gentleman and his wife, and a tradesman and his wife, residing at Chipping-Ongar. Large numbers of persons arrived in the town by excursion trains, and a general holiday was observed. The proceedings commenced with a mock trial at the town-hall, where the claimants made good their title to the flitch before a jury of maids and bachelors. Flitches having been awarded to both the French and English claimants, a procession, consisting of police constables, yeomen, ladies with garlands, a stud of horses, bands of music, banners, maids and bachelors of the jury, and flitches of bacon, carried by eight yeomen, was formed, and moved through the town into an adjacent meadow. The claimants were brought on to the ground in triumphal chairs, and certain ponderous oaths having been administered, the flitches were presented with due solemnity, amidst the hearty cheers of the spectators. Rural sports of every description followed, and a dinner was given, over which Mr. Harrison Ainsworth presided. The proceeds of the day, arising from the letting of seats, &c., are to be devoted to the rebuilding of Dunmow Town-hall.

THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

The proceedings of the Royal Agricultural Society in the North of England were commenced at Carlisle on Thursday by the partial opening of the show ground to the public. The admission, however, was confined to the trial yard, where experiments were made with various steam-engines and other machinery of large dimensions, to afford the judges the opportunity of testing their respective merits.

It appears from the list of entries that so far as horses, and especially stallions, are concerned, the ensuing show is likely to be superior to any ever held since the formation of the society. In this department it will surpass the great show at Windsor both in number and quality. The Clydesdale horses in particular are numerous and of very first-rate quality. In cattle the entries are, perhaps, an average number, but it is believed the show of Galloways and other local stock will prove a successful novelty. In the sheep department, too, which is not numerous, the Cheviots are likely to carry off the palm.

There were seven fixed engines in the yard, all, with one exception, of eight-horse power, exhibited by Messrs. Barrett, Exall, and Andrewes, of Reading; Clayton, Shuttleworth, & Co., Lincoln; Wm. Dray and Co., London; Ransome and Sims, Ipswich; J. Gray and Co., Huddingstone, Glasgow; Smith and Co., Glasgow; and Tuxford and Sons, Boston.

The array of portable steam-engines, both as regards beauty of appearance and excellence of finish, was, perhaps, superior to anything that has yet been exhibited under the auspices of the society. They were nine in number, and by the following makers:—Messrs. Clayton and Shuttleworth, Ransome and Sims, Crosskill, of Beverly, Garrett, and Son, Leiston, Tuxford and Sons, Lee, of Walsall, Barrett, Exall and Andrewes, of Reading; Hornsby, of Grantham, and Bleydell and Glasier, of London, manufacturers of the steam horse or traction engine. With these pieces of machinery Usher's steam plough may properly be classed.

So far as the trials have at present gone, Messrs. Barrett, Exall and Andrewes have done the most work, running two hours, one minute and a half, with 1 cwt of coal.

The experiments of the portable engines were attended with the usual amount of excitement and speculation among the makers, several of the machines appearing likely to run very close upon each other. The experiments of the day closed with the performance of Messrs. Clayton and Shuttleworth's engine of an amount of work exceeding any before effected, namely, three hours and 27 minutes, being an eight-horse engine, with 1 cwt. of coal.

With respect to the general show of implements, there is nothing very new or extraordinary. The number of combined thrashing, shaking, and winnowing machines is on the increase, and several of them appear to be much in advance of previous years. Besides the portable machines, there are three sets of fixed barn works for thrashing and fixing and weighing of corn ready for market; those of Messrs. Clayton and Shuttleworth, Garrett and Sons, and Ransome and Sims appear to be the principal rivals.

The trials of the engines were, as heretofore, conducted under the immediate inspection of Mr. C. E. Amos, consulting engineer to the society. The judges of the engines are Mr. J. V. Gooch, civil engineer and engineer to the Eastern Counties Railway, and Mr. W. Owen of Rotheram.

The revolving horse hoe is said to be exciting great interest among the farmers of the locality, which is a great turnip-growing district.

STATE OF TRADE.

Birmingham, July 21.—The demand for all descriptions of manufactured iron is good, and there is no inclination to disturb the prices lately declared. Pigs are considered to be at a fair price, and good ironstone in request and realising improved rates.—The coal trade continues extremely active. Preparations are, it is said, being made to obtain large supplies of thick coal from Tipton and the adjoining collieries, which, if accomplished, will have the effect of reducing the large quantities now brought into the manufacturing districts from distant parts of the country. Some of the colliers east of Dudley are still out upon strike, but the attempt to make the turn out general has proved a failure.

Manchester, July 21.—There is a slight improvement in the tone of this market. In some few of the heavier fabrics as well as the lighter, there has also been rather more business. The demand for printing cloth is moderate, but in domestics there has been but a small trade.

Nottingham, July 21.—But a limited business has been doing in hosiery this week, and that principally to assort up stocks for the home-trade houses. From the scarcity of labour, occasioned by so many of the young framework-knitters entering the militia or the regular army, goods must become dearer, if any thing like a demand should set in.—Like Manchester products, our plain net manufacture is greatly affected by the price of yarn, while the fancy branches are to a great extent, independent of the cost of raw material. Silk edgings are not quite so briskly in requisition as they were, but this being between seasons, no surprise is thereby occasioned. There is, however, still a nice trade doing in them.

Leicester, July 21.—There is not much doing for the home market, and, generally speaking, the hosiery trade is dull. At Hinkley, the operatives are only partially employed. In consequence of the recent advance in material, manufacturers have raised the price of goods, but nevertheless they experience great difficulty in effecting sales. Wools remain firm at the late rise. Spinners continue well employed.

Leeds, July 21.—The woollen cloth trade continues remarkably steady, the supply and demand being kept nearly equal. Prices, too, are very firm, with an upward tendency in full proportion to the recent advance in the price of clothing wools. The great bulk of the machinery employed in this district is running nearly full time, and very few of the operatives are disengaged.

The Tiptree Gathering.—Mr. Mechi has fixed his annual agricultural gathering for Saturday next, the 28th inst.

Bread.—The prices in the metropolis are:—wheaten, 10d to 10½d.; household bread, 8½d. to 9½d.; per 4lb. loaf.

Never keep old cows, for their milk is thin and poor. Strip the cows thoroughly each time they are milked, as the last pint contains more butter than the first quart. A tenant of a certain noble lord's, who, a few years ago, died worth 30,000*l*., and who had kept 45 cows only, made half his fortune by daily seeing to this point for 30 years.

Fairs during the Week.—*Thursday*, Great Bedwin (Wilts); Alresford, Mattingly, Portsdown (Hants); Sherborne (Dorset). *Friday*, Melksham (Wilts); Weyhill (Hants.)

Exeter Lammas Fair.—At this fair, which was held in the Cattle Market last week, there was a good supply of fat bullocks, in the sale of which a fair amount of business was done at from 11s. to 12s. per score. Working oxen of which there was a large number driven in, met purchasers at prices varying from 9*l*. to 15*l*. each. Of cows and calves there was but a limited supply, and former quotations were fully realized. There was a fair demand for young heifers and barreners. The sheep market was but thinly attended; there appeared to be, however, a sufficient quantity present to meet the demand. No alteration in prices.

It is likely that the *Newbury Journal* had been a four-page newspaper, for it was announced that the *Berkshire Guardian* was to be altered in size and would be printed as an eight-page paper with forty columns. The announcement also declared that the *Guardian* would be produced on good-quality paper, be printed from brand-new type and would form one of the cheapest provincial newspapers in the kingdom. Editors and reporters of long experience on the London and provincial press were engaged '...in order to render the *Berkshire Guardian* a newspaper of high class'[13].

The theme of the paper was to be 'The right to think — the right to differ — and the right to express that difference', and this aim was printed at the bottom of the masthead.[14]

The first issue of the *Berkshire Guardian* appeared on 27 February 1856 and it was to be published weekly on a Wednesday in three editions. The first edition was to be produced in time to be put onto the early morning trains to Basingstoke, Maidenhead and Hungerford, and was also despatched to other local towns which had a Wednesday market. The second edition, containing any later news which arrived during Wednesday morning, appeared at midday, while the third edition was to be published in the evening and was to contain the up-to-date London market news for the day. This evening edition was on sale in Reading, and was also sent to Newbury and other towns on the same evening as its publication. Regular subscribers could also obtain a copy by post.

The owners of the *Berkshire Guardian* must have intended to exploit the railway to the full, for the circulation area included (in

---

13 *Berkshire Guardian*, I, no. 26, Wednesday 27 February 1856.

14 Ibid.

addition to Reading) Newbury, Andover, Basingstoke, Maidenhead, Windsor, Abingdon, Hungerford, Marlborough, Swindon, Wantage, Faringdon, Odiham, Wokingham, and Guildford, all of which were readily accessible by rail.

The format of the paper was 19½" deep by 15½" wide and consisted of eight pages, each with five 15 em columns of type, and cost threepence, or fourpence if sent by post. According to the imprint it was printed and published for the proprietors by Benjamin Pechey Pask, a printer who had his business at 45 London Street, Reading.

Who the proprietors were, or how long this paper lasted, is not known, for there is little or no reference to it in newspaper handlists, or at Colindale, and only one known extant copy held in Reading Reference Library.[15]

Reading Advertiser and *Berks Telegraph*

One of the problems experienced by provincial newspaper proprietors, before the advent of the telegraphic system, was the acquisition of news, particularly national news, in time to typeset it and print it before that same news was on sale in the form of London papers, transported by the railway.

There was however a way around this problem, and that was for a local proprietor to sign a contract with a specialist London news agency company to supply him with from two to four pre-printed sheets. These pre-printed sheets contained much of the national and more general news, and to them the local proprietor could add local news and advertisements.

---

15 *Berkshire Guardian*, I, no. 26, Wednesday 27 February 1856.

It is thought that a barrister by the name of Douglas Straight first thought of the idea in 1850,[16] and Charles Knight certainly used the idea extensively with his *Town & Country Newspaper*, the publishing company of Cassells also supplying a considerable amount of material in this form.[17] Unfortunately this area of newspaper production is somewhat lacking in documentation and would be an interesting area for further research.

John Read, a local Reading printer, adopted this method of production when he published the *Reading Advertiser* early in 1860 and, although it has not been possible to discover which company was supplying Read with the pre-printed sheets, it is known that he received two pre-produced pages to which he added two of his own.[18] The paper was published every Saturday and cost either 1d. or 2d., presumably the twopenny edition being the charge for a copy sent by post.

The circulation area for the *Advertiser* was Reading, Wokingham, Henley, and Newbury, all of which were within easy reach of Reading by train. Unfortunately only a very small extract from one edition of the *Advertiser* is extant, and that is dated 11 October 1860. The extract is in fact the editorial for this particular edition and indicates that the paper was decidedly Liberal in its outlook, despite being listed in the *Newspaper Press Directory* as politically neutral.[19]

---

16 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914*, (1976), p. 90.

17 Harold Herd, *The March of Journalism*, (1952), pp. 178-9; and Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914*, (1976), pp. 90-91.

18 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

19 George Lovejoy's Scrapbooks, Reading Reference Library.

At some point in 1862, the name of the paper was changed to the *Berks Telegraph*, still at the same price as the *Advertiser*, keeping the same circulation area but now openly professing to be a Liberal paper.[20] As there are no copies of the paper from this period the reason for the change of name is not known, but it is possible that the company which was supplying John Read with pre-printed sheets from London entered into an arrangement to receive their news by electric telegraph, and wished to advertise the fact by changing the name of the paper to a more suitable one. The early 1860s certainly witnessed the formation of a number of news agencies created with the purpose of exploiting the telegraphic system, these companies offering to supply original articles, digests of news, and stereotyped matter for the use of its customers. The largest of these early agencies was the Central Press, founded by William Saunders and Edward Spender in 1862.[21]

The *Berks Telegraph* appears to have become reasonably well established quite quickly in Reading, although with no circulation figures available it is difficult to assess the extent of its profitability. However, one measure of its success appeared in the first extant issue of the paper, dated 11 July 1869, in which a a full-page advertisement announced that the paper was 'now enlarged to 8 full pages - 48 columns'.[22] At a price of 1½d. the paper was very competitively priced compared with its two established local rivals, the *Reading Mercury* which cost 4d. and the *Berkshire Chronicle* at 3d. Perhaps another indication of the fact that the *Telegraph* had established something of a foothold in the Reading area

---

20 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, (1863).

21 H. R. Fox-Bourne, *English Newspapers*, (1887), p. 277; and H. Herd, *The March of Journalism*, (1952), pp. 178-9.

22 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 483, 16 July 1869.

was that it was able to resist the competition from the other newspapers started in the town during 1868, two of which (*The Reading Times* and *The Reading Standard*)[23] each sold for 1d. and, like the *Telegraph*, declared their support for the Liberal cause. Unfortunately neither lasted for more than a few weeks. The third paper to appear at this time was the politically neutral *Reading Herald*, which sold at 1½d. (the same price as the *Telegraph*), and offered some competition until 1870 when it was sold and moved to Abingdon.[24]

The secondary, or sub-title, of the *Berks Telegraph* was *Henley Standard and General Advertiser for the Neighbouring Towns and Villages*, and perhaps this was another reason for John Read's success with the paper, for by restricting the circulation of the paper to places fairly close to Reading he did not need to be concerned with the expense of sending his paper to those larger towns further afield in Berkshire. Apart from Basingstoke, some 20 miles to the south of Reading, all the other towns or villages mentioned in the paper distribution area, such as Theale, Henley, Twyford, Wargrave and Bracknell, are within six miles of the town and easily reached by road or rail at this time. The *Telegraph* was also sold at thirteen newsagents or bookshops in the central part of the town, including the bookstalls at Reading's two railway stations.[25]

An inspection of the paper shows that the supplier of the pre-printed sheets produced pages 2, 3, 6 and 7, while John Read was responsible for printing local news and advertisements on the remaining pages. Altogether some thirty-one per cent of the paper's contents

---

23 See Chapter IV.

24 See Chapter IV.

25 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 483, Friday 16 July 1869.

contained advertising, suggesting that the paper enjoyed a reasonable circulation, and this percentage was maintained until early in 1873 when the amount of advertising dropped to around twenty-five per cent.

The *Telegraph* continued in this form until 1870, during which time the advertising content rose to around thirty-five per cent, perhaps justifying to some extent the paper's claim that it was 'the most profitable Medium for Advertising'.[26] However, during 1870 a number of changes occurred, starting in July when a four-page edition at 1d. appeared, with no secondary or sub-title but with the words 'Special Edition' over the main title and no explanation for the sudden change.[27] The same thing occurred in October of the same year except that on this occasion the price was reduced to ½d., but again there was no reason given for the paper appearing in this form.[28] One explanation could be that the supply of pre-printed news from London did not arrive in time to meet the local deadline, so John Read carried on with his own four pages in order to satisfy his customers.

It is perhaps significant that it was during that year, 1870, that the Liberal Central Press agency was sold by its owner, William Saunders, to a group of Conservatives. The circumstances surrounding this sale are somewhat clouded by the fact that Saunders continued to run an agency under the same name until 1873, at which time the Conservative group obtained an injunction obliging him to change the name of his agency. This he did, calling his new company the Central News agency.

---

26 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 521, Friday 8 April 1870.

27 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 533, Friday 1 July 1870.

28 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 549, Friday 21 October 1870.

If Read was using Central Press, which is probable, its unreliability caused by the sale situation may explain why the *Berks Telegraph* was experiencing problems of news supply, and why the paper was produced in two editions per week in early 1871, with one eight-page edition at 1½d. and a four-page edition priced at 1d.[29] This state of affairs lasted until October 1871, when the *Telegraph* reverted to one eight-page edition per week, but with the cost reduced to 1d., which, according to the proprietor, was made possible by the 'liberal support' he had received from advertisers.[30]

It could be that at this point John Read had decided to proceed with the production of the complete paper on his own, while using the services of Saunders' newly named company only for the supply of news items, an argument supported by the announcement which appeared in January 1872 under the heading of Latest News:

> We have much pleasure in stating that we have made arrangements with the 'Central News' Association to forward telegrams of all important events, Home and Foreign, up to the latest hour of going to press. Further arrangements are under consideration, and no pains will be spared to make the *Berks Telegraph* the best and most comprehensive *News* paper in the district.[31]

If the pre-printed sheets had still been supplied by the Central Press agency, it would appear unnecessary for Read to need telegrams of Home and Foreign News, as he would only have been responsible for local news and advertisements, another indication perhaps that the *Telegraph* was now being produced in its entirety by John Read. The 'Further arrangements...' referred to here were for an improvement in the staffing

---

29 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 564, Friday 3 February 1871.

30 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 599, Friday 6 October 1871.

31 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 615, Friday 26 January 1872.

of the paper. This also lends weight to the argument that the *Berks Telegraph* was, from this point, completely in Read's hands.[32]

Throughout the period of the *Berks Telegraph's* existence, the advertising content had never risen above 31%, except for a short period in 1870 when it was around 35%. The revenue from this amount of advertising was presumably enough to support the paper in its earlier form, but now that John Read was attempting to produce an eight-page newspaper on his own he began to run into the difficulty of costs, and by the end of 1872, despite an increased weekly sale, he was forced to reduce the size of the paper to four pages. In an editorial in December 1872 the editor, after giving a brief history of the paper, states that, despite the fact that

> ...the sale has increased week by week...the result has been a very serious loss to the proprietors as the cost of paper and the printing has not been covered by the amount received for the sale and the advertisements.[33]

This puts the blame squarely on the lack of advertising revenue, and also suggests perhaps that the paper was underpriced, particularly when compared with the *Telegraph's* two rivals, the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury*, which were still selling at 3d, and 4d. respectively. The solution to the problem, as Read saw it, was to reduce the paper to four pages but to increase the contents of those four pages by using smaller type and narrower margins and columns.[34]

Despite this move and a promise to subscribers that their interests would be amply catered for, the *Berks Telegraph* appears to have been in decline, and by January 1873 the advertising accounted for only 25% of

---

32 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 663, Friday 27 December 1872.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

the paper's contents.[35] It continued in this four-page form until the end of July 1873, when it was merged into a new Liberal paper, the *Reading Observer*. Throughout the last months of the *Telegraph's* existence, Read had doubtless been negotiating with those who were to form the ownership syndicate for the new paper, and dealing with the need for new staff, more capital, and new machinery and type — all of which were necessary before the *Reading Observer* could be launched on 2 August 1873.[36]

---

35 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 664, 3 January 1873.

36 See Chapter VII.

CHAPTER IV

§

THE EXPANSION CONTINUES — 1868-1912

After the initial flurry of newspaper activity between 1855 and 1860, Reading's press entered a short period of comparative calm, the two established papers (the *Reading Mercury* and the *Berkshire Chronicle*) competing with the new *Berks Telegraph* for custom. This state of affairs existed until 1868, during which year attempts were made to launch three new papers, and there followed a period of some eighteen years when a further seven newspapers were started, although only two of these (the *Reading Observer* and the *Reading Standard*) existed for any length of time.[1]

The Reading Times and *Reading Herald*

Some time during August or early September 1868, a newspaper prospectus appeared in Reading, advertising a new Liberal paper, to be called *The Reading Times*.[2] The proposed new paper was to be a weekly, priced at 1d., and the prospectus stated that the first edition of the paper would appear on Saturday 19 September 1868. In addition, the prospectus announced the aims and objectives of the new paper: apart from being

---

1 See Chapters VII and VIII.

2 *Reading Times*, Prospectus 1868. See illustration overleaf.

A

LIBERAL PAPER

PRICE ONE PENNY, called

THE READING TIMES,

Will be issued Weekly, commencing on SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19th, 1868.

To the Inhabitants of Reading and its Vicinity.

This is an age of progress, and as the Press is one of the principal bulwarks of England, it behoves all who have the welfare of their Country at heart, to do their best to promote so laudable an undertaking, calculated to further the interest of their fellow-creatures. To attain that end is the wish of the Proprietors of this Publication, who are determined not to leave a stone unturned to accomplish their purpose. We do not say that Reading and Berkshire are without advocates connected with the Press. We are aware that there are in this neighbourhood papers well-conducted and under most able management, and, in stating that in this borough, a medium is required, which will advocate the wants and suit the pockets of the humbler classes, it is not in the way of disparagement to these old-established papers.

Reforms of every description have taken place. Taxes on knowledge are entirely removed, and the time has arrived that men will boldly advocate those principles, for the furtherance of the cause of Reform and Retrenchment. But, hitherto Reading has made no movement with a view to fill up the gap, and it is to do this, that the Proprietors have determined to launch forth a paper, that in every way shall meet those requirements. It is our intention to make its literature purely local, to supply full and faithful reports of *all* public proceedings, to libel no man, at the same time to write the truth, to adjust a grievance wherever it is found to exist, and altogether to be the means of blending classes together. In fact, our duties will be to write plain local leading articles, setting forth, to the best of our ability, facts as they really exist. The price will be only ONE PENNY, and for that we shall supply as good a report, if not more truthful, than those which have appeared in contemporary issues. Although a working man's paper, the welfare of the middle and upper classes will be advocated. It will contain reports connected, not only with Reading, but with the towns and villages in the county. Our first number will appear on SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH.

We should like the public to understand that this paper is not a mere mushroom, just sprung into existence, but that it has already an extensive circulation in Newbury and its surrounding district; but Reading being the centre and most populated town, has determined the Proprietors to transfer their head office there. Upwards of 1000 papers will be freely distributed in the town of Reading, and the distribution will continue until a good circulation is obtained. The whole responsibility and entire management will devolve on Mr. F. J. Lock, to whom, as Editor, all communications must be addressed at Reading.

Yours faithfully,

F. J. LOCK, one of the Proprietors.

Prospectus for *The Reading Times* September 1868

politically Liberal, it was to 'advocate the wants and suit the pockets of the humbler classes'. Further to this the prospectus stated:

> It is our intention to make its literature purely local, to supply full and faithful reports of all public proceedings, to libel no man, at the same time to write the truth, to adjust a grievance wherever it is found to exist, and altogether to be the means of blending classes together.

Despite the declared intention to be a workingman's paper, *The Reading Times* was also to advocate the 'welfare of the middle and upper classes', no doubt in an attempt to appeal to all classes of society in the Reading district.

Although the prospectus advertised *The Reading Times* as a new paper to the inhabitants of Reading, it stated that it was

> ...not a mere mushroom, just sprung into existence, but that it has already an extensive circulation in Newbury and its surrounding district.

It was presumably published in Newbury under the title of the *Newbury Times*, although there appears to be virtually no record of such a title in any reference work. The only mention made of it suggests that it lasted for about a year, but it does not give a date for the termination of its short existence.[3] If the *Newbury Times* had existed during the early part of 1868, it would have been in direct competition with the *Newbury Weekly News*, which had been launched by James Blackett and Thomas Wheildon Turner in February 1867,[4] and which has survived as the lone Newbury newspaper up to the present time. It may well have been this competition which determined the proprietors to transfer the *Newbury Times* to Reading, which, as the most populated town in the county, would have offered a larger audience for a struggling newspaper.

---

3 V. F. M. Garlick, *The Newbury Scrapbook*, (1970), pp. 174-6.

4 *Newbury Weekly News*, no. 1, 7 February 1867.

The proprietors of *The Reading Times*, as it was subsequently called, were Francis John Lock, who was responsible for the entire management of the *Times* and was also its editor, and Henry Ford, who was in charge of the printing and publishing of the paper, from 12 Chain Street in Reading.

In order to gain a circulation for *The Reading Times*, the proprietors proposed to distribute up to 1,000 free copies in and around the town of Reading, and that free distribution was to continue until a good circulation had been obtained.[5] The format of the paper was 19¾" deep x 12½" wide, and it consisted of eight pages, each with four 15-em columns. Both copies of *The Reading Times* which are extant are uncut, showing that the paper was printed sheetwork on the press, with four pages to view.[6] Whether or not the paper was distributed in this uncut state is not known, although this was not an unusual method of presenting a newspaper during the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by the famous painting 'Waiting for *The Times*', which shows an uncut version of that great paper being read by a gentleman, while another waits patiently for his turn to read.[7]

The circulation of *The Reading Times* was declared to have been 2,000 copies for the week ending Saturday 17 October, but whether this figure included any free copies or not is not stated.[8]

---

5 *Reading Times*, Prospectus, 1868.

6 *Reading Times*, no. 6, Saturday 24 October 1868.

7 'Waiting for *The Times*'. A painting by Benjamin Robert Haydon, 1786-1846, owned by Times Newspapers Ltd, London. *The Times, Past Present Future*, (1985), p. 140.

8 *Reading Times*, no. 6, Saturday 24 October 1868.

Unfortunately, *The Reading Times* did not exist for very long, for by the end of November the two proprietors had parted company and were each publishing journals on their own. The breakup of the partnership does not seem to have been due to the failure of the paper, for if the circulation figures are correct it would appear to have been showing signs of early success. There were, however, some serious disagreements between the partners over the way the paper was run, resulting in Henry Ford moving to Broad Street, Reading, where he started a paper called the *Reading Standard.*[9]

The last issue of *The Reading Times* probably appeared on Saturday 14 November 1868, yet within a week both Lock and Ford had published new papers, Francis Lock in fact producing the first edition of his new paper on Wednesday 18 November.

Lock's new paper was called the *Reading Herald*, and in the first issue he explained the reason for the apparent change of title and the breakup of the partnership:

> It is possible that the inhabitants of Reading and the neighbourhood will be surprised to find that we have altered the title of our paper... One of the proprietors, who is a Conservative, ignores the claims of our Subscribers, and wishes to publish a paper when and how he pleases. To this we objected, as also to the carelessness with which the previous numbers have been printed. We have constantly endeavoured to let the number of mistakes be as few as possible; but through wild carelessness our corrections have been neglected.[10]

To refer to his ex-partner as a 'Conservative' was no doubt the height of insult, as far as Francis Lock was concerned, and was possibly an attempt to influence *The Reading Times* Liberal clientele against buying any paper Henry Ford was going to produce. Ford's new paper, the *Reading*

---

9 See below, p. 56.

10 *Reading Herald*, no. 1, Wednesday 18 November 1868.

Standard, certainly professed to be a Liberal paper, which tends to support that theory.

It would also appear that John Lock had rushed into print with his new paper in order to claim for himself the clientele, which had already been established, in advance of Henry Ford. The speed of producing the new paper was such that Lock had to apologize to the public for the lack of local news in the first copy, which was produced in remarkably quick time, starting production at 6 a.m. and being read by the inhabitants of Reading twelve hours later.[11]

The format of the *Reading Herald* was 20½" deep x 14½" wide and consisted of four pages, priced at 1d., but this was only for the first three issues, for copy number four was enlarged to eight pages.[12] This enlargement had been promised in one of the earlier issues, but the price of the fourth issue was increased to 2d. and included a supplement, which consisted of a single leaf measuring 13½" deep x 10" wide, and on which was printed a large black 3-em border, enclosing an obituary for a Dr. Cowan.[13] As this was printed on one side only, it appears to have been a very expensive supplement to buy; however, as Dr. Cowan was an extremely well-known and popular member of Reading society Lock no doubt decided to profit from the unfortunate doctor's death.

---

11 *Reading Herald*, no. 1, Wednesday 18 November 1868.

12 *Reading Herald*, no. 4, Saturday 5 December 1868.

13 Dr Cowan was the senior physician at Reading's Berkshire Hospital and was deeply immersed in the social life of the town. He and George Lovejoy, the bookseller, were instrumental in the founding of Reading's second Mechanics Institution, and Dr Cowan was its first president. He was a very eloquent speaker and always drew a capacity audience when he spoke publicly in the town. When he died, all the businesses in the town closed as a mark of respect and many private houses also displayed signs of mourning.

This high price was possibly only a temporary one, for in the last issue of the *Reading Herald* for 1868 there appeared an announcement that from the beginning of 1869 the price of the paper would reluctantly have to be raised to 1½d; it would therefore no longer be the cheapest of the Reading newspapers.[14] At this time the *Berks Telegraph* was also 1½d. for an eight-page paper, while the *Chronicle* cost 3d. and the *Mercury* 4d.; the only local paper to remain at 1d. was the *Reading Standard*, although this paper does not appear to have survived for long.

Despite the rise in price, the *Herald* boasted of its success and referred in its editorial to the fact that the demand for the paper had been so great that many regular readers had been unable to obtain copies.[15] From the typographic point of view, the paper certainly shows signs of good page make-up and of good presswork, and without doubt was the best-looking of the Reading papers at this time. The editor also went to great pains to explain to the public that he was going to make the paper suitable for 'the reading of every respectable family in the neighbourhood', and he was going to start with 'the suppression of all objectionable quack advertisements from our advertisement columns'.

At some point between the end of January and the middle of July 1869, the paper added '*Newbury Telegraph, Oxford Advertiser*' to its already rather lengthy title, which now read *Reading Herald, Newbury Telegraph, Oxford Advertiser, Wokingham Herald, Henley Chronicle, Basingstoke News, Thatcham Mercury, General Advertiser for Berks, Hants, Wilts, Bucks, Oxon and Somerset*.[16] Apart from the paper's main

---

14 *Reading Herald*, no. 7, Thursday 24 December 1868.

15 Ibid.

16 *Reading Herald*, no. 36, Saturday 17 July 1869.

title of *Reading Herald* and the two recent additions, all the other names appearing in the *Herald's* secondary title had been used for *The Reading Times*, and it is interesting to note that its circulation area appears to have been predominantly in towns and villages to the west of Reading.

During August 1869, Lock also commenced printing a Wednesday edition[17] costing the same price as the Saturday edition which, during the period between January and August 1869, had been reduced again to 1d. It may well have been that when Lock raised the price of the *Herald* to 1½d. in December 1868 he lost custom, and was forced to reduce the price to maintain sales.

The lowering of the price, and attempts to gain further revenue by attracting people to buy a midweek edition of the *Herald*, were possibly all slightly desperate manoeuvres to keep the paper alive, for in May 1870 the paper was purchased by George Rippon of Summertown, Oxford. He was the proprietor of the *Abingdon Herald and Wallingford Chronicle*, which had been established in 1867 and which was distributed in much the same circulation area as Lock's *Reading Herald*.[18] Rippon combined the two publications and the new paper was renamed the *Reading and Abingdon Herald*, the first issue appearing on Saturday 14 May. This title, however, was shortlived and it seems likely that the paper's success lay in its distribution in Abingdon and district rather than in the Reading locality, for at the end of August the title was altered yet again, this time to the *Abingdon and Reading Herald*. With this title it continued until October 1883, when '*Reading*' was dropped from the mastheadand it was thus known as the *Abingdon Herald*.

---

17 *Reading Herald*, no. 40, Wednesday 11 August 1869.

18 *Abingdon Herald and Wallingford Chronicle*, no. 147, Saturday 7 May 1870.

George Rippon continued printing and publishing this paper from his printing works in Oxford, although he used an address at 78 Broad Street, Reading, for the collection of local news, but from a glance through the editions of the *Reading and Abingdon Herald* it will be apparent that most of the paper's contents concerned events in the Abingdon district and that little news or advertising related to Reading; indeed it is surprising that George Rippon persevered for thirteen years before finally changing the name to identify his paper solely with Abingdon.

Berkshire Weekly Times* and *Berkshire Weekly News

Having disposed of the *Reading Herald*, it was not too long before Francis Lock was once again involved with a newspaper venture. An entry appears in *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory* listing a newspaper called the *Berkshire Weekly Times*, the proprietor of which was F. J. Lock.[19] According to this entry, the paper was established in August 1871, was politically neutral, was circulated in Reading and throughout the county, and contained the local and district news and advertisements and a 'selection of general intelligence'. Unfortunately there are no extant copies of this paper, so nothing is known of the regularity of publication, of its format, size or price; indeed the only reference to its existence is the one entry listed above.

However there are two copies of a newspaper called the *Berkshire Weekly News and Windsor and Eton Gazette* in the British Library, which stated in the imprint that it was published by Francis J. Lock at 50 Oxford Street, Reading. This was a four-page newspaper measuring 24½" deep x 19" wide, with seven 15-em columns, selling for 1d., and which, according to the masthead, was 'printed by steam power'. The first of

---

19 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, (1872), p. 82.

these extant copies is numbered '177' followed by '(BWN No. 3)' and appeared on Saturday 9 March 1872. This double numbering suggests that Lock may have changed the name of his *Berkshire Weekly Times* to encompass the Windsor and Eton area and that it had been published more than once a week to arrive at number 177 by March 1872. Alternatively Lock may have acquired another newspaper, which had already published 174 editions in the Windsor and Eton area and which he renamed when he took it over. Unfortunately, despite a careful search, no evidence has so far come to light concerning the existence of such a newspaper in the Windsor area which could have been subject to a takeover, and as copies of the first two editions have not survived there is no printed explanation concerning the paper's history.

According to a notice appearing in the third edition of the *Berkshire Weekly News*, the paper had a 'guaranteed circulation', although no figures are given to indicate the extent of this guaranteed sale. As well as the ordinary sales of the paper by newsagents and boys, the proprietor also guaranteed the distribution of five hundred copies every week to hotels, inns, public houses, literary institutions, reading rooms, and all places of public resort in Berkshire and the surrounding counties.[20]

In order to guarantee such a circulation to these establishments, many of these copies must have been free and, while such a distribution might have been of interest to those who wished to place advertisements in the paper, it was no doubt very expensive for Lock to maintain if there was insufficient advertising revenue to pay for it. It is likely that the expense of this distribution ploy was responsible for the paper's apparently short life, for apart from the one entry in *Mitchell's Newspaper*

---

20 *Berkshire Weekly News and Windsor and Eton Gazette*, no. 177 (BWN no. 3), Saturday 9 March 1872.

Press Directory for 1871, and two extant editions of the paper, nothing more is known of it.

Lock might also have lost some of his revenue due to the dishonesty of his staff, for a notice appeared in the same edition (BWN No. 3) stating that W. H. Hind Junior, of 17 Horn Street, Reading, had been discharged from Lock's employ in December 1871, and that he had no authority to collect Lock's accounts.[21]

Of Francis J. Lock himself, virtually nothing is known, except that prior to his arrival in Reading he had been a member of the 2nd Devon Rifle Volunteers and was, it seems, an excellent shot. At some point in 1871 he had published a book called *The Volunteer's Friend* and during the same year he had been chosen, with two others, as reserve for a shooting competition called the 'Eight Twenty' held at Wimbledon.[22] Apart from this brief insight into Lock's character, the rest of his life is something of a mystery.

Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian

After the breakup of *The Reading Times* partnership, Henry Ford, like Francis Lock, endeavoured to publish a newspaper of his own as soon as possible, no doubt in an attempt to maintain some continuity with the clientele already interested in *The Reading Times*. Unfortunately, Ford had to move premises to 19 Broad Street before he could embark on his new venture, and it was perhaps this delay that enabled Francis Lock to produce his newspaper first.

---

21 *Berkshire Weekly News and Windsor and Eton Gazette*, no. 177, (B.W.N. no. 3), Saturday 9 March 1872.

22 Ibid.

Ford's new paper was called the *Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian*, and the first edition appeared on Saturday 21 November 1868.[23] The format was 19¾" deep x 12½" wide, consisted of eight pages, and was priced at 1d.; its style and typographic layout, including the use of the head title block, were identical to that of *The Reading Times*. According to the masthead, the *Reading Standard* had incorporated *The Reading Times*, and, from all appearances, it would seem that Henry Ford had been the prime mover in the establishment of *The Reading Times*, and responsible for its production.

The secondary title for Ford's paper was *Wokingham Chronicle, Henley Herald, Basingstoke Mercury and Thatcham News, General Advertiser for Berks, Hants, Wilts, Bucks, Oxon and Somerset*, and it is apparent that Francis Lock, in producing his newspaper before Ford, had used the secondary titles of *The Reading Times* and forced Henry Ford (who would obviously have wished to use the same sub-titles in his own paper for continuity) to transpose the names. Thus the '*Wokingham Herald*' and the '*Henley Chronicle*' became the '*Wokingham Chronicle*' and the '*Henley Herald*' and so on.[24]

Despite Francis Lock's accusation that Henry Ford was a Conservative, the *Reading Standard* demonstrates a strong Liberal bias in the only two extant copies. The paper does not appear to have existed for very long, however, and although a number of cuttings in one of George Lovejoy's scrapbooks refers to '*The Standard*' it is unlikely that they are from the *Reading Standard*.[25] These cuttings are for dates

---

23 *Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian*, no. 1, Saturday 21 November 1868.

24 See p. 52.

25 George Lovejoy's Scrapbooks, Reading Reference Library.

between 30 August 1872 and 28 June 1878 and, if they were taken from the Reading paper, would suggest that it had existed for at least ten years from its first issue. It does seem unlikely that all but two copies of a newspaper which had existed for ten years should have been lost or destroyed and that no other records concerning the paper should have survived.[26] The cuttings in question deal with national issues and it is therefore highly probable that they were cut from editions of the famous *Standard*, a national daily published at this time.

In 1886 another paper was established in Reading with the title *Reading Standard* and it has been suggested that apart from the name there was no connection between the two papers.[27] However, Henry Ford ran a printing business in Newbury and the second *Reading Standard* sprang out of the *Newbury Express*, published by the Newbury printer William Hall; these Newbury connections therefore do hint at the possibility of some common background.

Reading Examiner and *Berkshire County Chronicle*

Early in 1872, when Lock's *Berkshire Weekly News* appears to have ceased publication, another new paper appeared in Reading, called the *Reading Examiner* and published by George Richard Smith in King's Road, Reading. Smith owned a general commercial and ornamental printing business, and also acted as an agent for newspapers published outside the town. Although it is not certain exactly when he started his

---

26 The only extant copies of the *Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian* are no. 1, for Saturday 21 November 1868, and no. 2, for Saturday 28 November 1868.

27 K. G. Burton, *The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire 1723-1855*, (1954), p. 151.

own printing company, his interest in newspapers was first apparent with the appearance of the *Reading Examiner*.[28]

Although Smith's name appeared as the publisher on this new paper, the *Reading Examiner* was in fact printed and published by William Edwin Baxter at 15 Duke Street, London. Baxter was responsible for publishing and printing a number of other papers in London and the south-eastern counties. Smith's contribution to the *Examiner* would appear to have been to supply reports of local events, to gather local advertising, and to be responsible for sales and distribution in the Reading area.

By the 1870s, W. E. Baxter was the owner of the largest chain of newspapers in the country and was an extremely influential man in provincial newspaper publishing, particularly in the south of England. Born at Lewes in Sussex in 1808 and educated at the local grammar school, he had started work in his father's bookselling and publishing business which had been established at Lewes during the early years of the nineteenth century. His father, John, had originally worked as a publisher in Paternoster Row in London, before ill health had forced him to move away from the city and retire to the south coast, where he started a bookshop. It was not long, however, before John Baxter was involved in various publishing activities, starting with local histories, and when William Baxter started work in 1829 he found himself in a publishing office rather than a bookseller's.

During 1836-7, the Baxters embarked on the publication of the *Sussex Agricultural Express*, and such was their reputation in the county

---

28 Neither George Richard Smith nor his company are listed in the 1871 census, so it must be assumed that the company was formed late in 1871 or early in 1872.

that before the paper was printed they had a subscription list of some fifteeen hundred names, including the majority of the landed gentry and wealthy farmers in the district. The paper was a success, and William Baxter followed this with the *Surrey Standard*, which he launched after a request from Conservatives in Surrey who wished to promote their political party interests. This paper was followed by the *Kent Mail* in 1839, and in 1849 he took over the running of the *Sussex Agricultural Express* which, to that point, had been run by his father. Baxter produced a local edition of the *Express* for Hastings in 1853 and two years later, in 1855, produced the *South London Journal*. During 1862 he started a number of other newspapers (at Dorking, Tunbridge Wells, and Worthing) followed in 1863 by papers at Eastbourne, Chichester, and Sutton, although most of these were local editions of other newspapers.[29]

Between 1854 and 1855, Baxter had been the president of the Provincial Newspaper Society, and when the Stamp Duty was lifted in 1855, he fought a vociferous battle for the Society's members to retain the right of transmission and re-transmission of their newspapers through the post. Through his efforts that right continued until the repeal of the Stamp and the cessation of the special privilege of free postage in 1870.

During 1866 Baxter acquired the *County Chronicle and Mark Lane Journal* and embarked on a newspaper business which endeavoured to supply newspapers in a 50-mile radius of London. The business had already been established to do this, but under Baxter's guidance special editions were produced which had the same, or very similar, news and

---

29 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914*, (1976), pp. 92-3.

advertising content but different titles according to the town of publication.[30]

Advertisers were attracted by the possibility of their advertisements appearing in all the editions and Baxter went to great pains to point out that the *County Chronicle* had a total circulation of 100,000 copies, which was considerably greater than any other paper in the distribution area.[31] At this time the *County Chronicle* was listed as having the tenth largest annual circulation amongst English provincial newspapers, while the *Reading Mercury*, with 55,000, was listed as thirty-third and the *Berkshire Chronicle* as eighty-fifth.[32]

Baxter owned the *Windsor and Eton Herald* and in early January 1871 this paper's title was changed to the *Windsor and Eton Herald and Berkshire County Chronicle*. It would seem likely that George Smith acted as a local agent for this paper when he first established his own business in Reading. William Baxter was a successful newspaper owner, with an obvious flair for extending the circulation of his papers, and it was no doubt the prospect of selling more papers in the town of Reading that prompted the subsequent introduction, in February 1872, of the additional title to the Windsor paper of '*Reading Examiner*'.

The *Reading Examiner* consisted of eight pages, each with six 15-em columns and a format of 24" deep x 17½" wide, and sold for 1d. per copy. Prior to this particular edition the paper's full title had been the

---

30 *Berkshire County Chronicle, Bedfordshire County Chronicle, Buckinghamshire County Chronicle, Cambridge County Chronicle, Essex County Chronicle, Hampshire County Chronicle, Hertfordshire County Chronicle, Middlesex County Chronicle, Northampton County Chronicle, Oxford County Chronicle.*

31 These figures are from the Government Returns of Stamped Circulations for the year ending 30 June 1870.

32 Ibid.

Windsor and Eton Herald, Maidenhead and Slough Journal and Berkshire County Chronicle, but the Maidenhead and Slough parts of the title were dropped when Reading was added.[33] The words 'Reading Examiner' were printed over the old masthead in 24-point Egyptian Expanded capitals, but this did not last for very long, for at the beginning of July 1872 the 24-point title had been replaced by 12-point Roman light, and appeared to be almost insignificant.[34] The reason for this change in title size is not apparent, but it may have resulted from the much lower sales figures in the Reading area than anticipated. Certainly the advertising content of the paper, which was some thirty-eight per cent, contained few advertisements for Reading people.

William Baxter died on 7 January 1873 and the chairmanship of his newspaper was taken over by his wife, who was executrix for his estate. During the period after his death, there appears no change in the form or content of the paper until January 1874, when the words 'Windsor and Eton Herald', which had previously appeared in one-inch high decorated letters curved over a royal crest, were cut from the head title and were replaced by the words 'Reading Examiner' in 48-point Roman letters, while the words 'Windsor and Eton Herald' were pushed down to 24-point Roman capitals under the royal crest.[35]

Again there is no explanation for this change in the emphasis of the title, but it is possible that this represented yet another attempt to increase newspaper sales in the Reading area.

---

33 *Reading Examiner, Windsor and Eton Herald and Berkshire County Chronicle*, no. 185, Saturday 17 February 1872.

34 *Reading Examiner*, no. 206, Saturday 13 July 1872.

35 *Reading Examiner*, no. 283, Saturday 3 January 1874.

Despite the fact that the imprint of the *Reading Examiner* named William Baxter's executrix as the publisher, it is likely that his papers were being managed for Mrs Baxter by their son, who eventually took over the network which continued to prosper under his guidance. However, the number of *County Chronicles* was gradually reduced to four after Baxter's death, and the *Reading Examiner* was possibly the last of these to close, when it ceased publication in early August 1874.[36] The last extant issue is dated 8 August of that year. Nothing in the contents of that edition suggest that the paper was about to cease, but a handwritten note on the British Library copy of this last extant issue states that it was discontinued at this date.[37]

Reading Express and Berkshire Independent

Just a little over four years after his seemingly peripheral involvement with the *Reading Examiner*, George Smith was once again concerned with a local newspaper, when he published the first edition of The *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent* towards the end of October 1878.[38] On this occasion, however, Smith appears to have been more directly involved with the paper's fortunes, for the imprint states that it was both printed and published at the *Express* office in King's Road, Reading. It was from this address, in fact, that Smith was to run his printing business until 1924.[39]

---

36 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914*, (1976), p. 93.

37 *Reading Examiner*, no. 314, Saturday 8 August 1874, last extant issue in British Library, Colindale.

38 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, (1879), p. 86.

39 The last reference to Smith's business being at this address is an entry in *Kelly's Reading Directory* for 1924.

The *Reading Express* started life as a four-page paper, measuring 28" deep x 20" wide, with seven 15½-em columns per page, and sold for 1d. Initially it was published once a week, on a Thursday unlike its local rivals, the *Reading Mercury*, *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Observer*, all of which were produced on Saturdays. No doubt this midweek publication time was a planned strategy by Smith to avoid having to compete for sales on the same day that the three local rival papers were published.

A shortlived Liberal newspaper called the *Berkshire Independent* had previously been published in Reading, in November 1850.[40] The printer and publisher of this early paper was James Macaulay, and although he was still in business in Reading in 1878 there appears to be no evidence to connect George Smith's paper with the earlier publication.

Unfortunately, the early issues of the *Reading Express* are missing, the first extant copy being number 28, for 10 April 1879; consequently it is not possible to discover much about its inception. An advertisement which appears in the *Newspaper Press Directory*, however, lists it as being:

> independent of political questions, but in every sense a popular journal, being, not only extensively circulated in the town, but has numerous agencies all over the county.[41]

The evidence suggests that the *Reading Express* was enjoying some success, for it had survived the first six months of its life and was drawing in enough advertising to fill 50% of its space. Then in early May 1879 an announcement appeared, stating that the *Reading Express* was to be

---

40 *Berkshire Independent*, no. 1, Saturday 30 November 1850.

41 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, 1879, p. 188.

enlarged to eight pages, which would make it 'the largest penny paper published in Berkshire'.[42]

The first eight-page edition appeared on Thursday 8 May, and with the increase in the number of pages came a slight change in the format, the size changing to 24¾" deep x 17½" wide with six 15½-em columns per page.[43] The editorial for the first issue in the new size explains the reason for the paper's enlargement:

> Our readers will not be surprised at the enlarged form of our issue this week, for, apart from the announcement of our intention to increase the size of the paper, the necessity has doubtless been apparent to all. The pressures upon our space have been very great even from the commencement, and we have rarely been enabled to find adequate room for all the multifarious items that week by week flowed in upon us.

From this editorial it would appear that the *Express* had enjoyed success from its birth, and this may possibly have been due to the fact that it was non-political and was directed at the family. Its price, at 1d., would have made it a direct competitor of the vociferously Liberal *Reading Observer* but cheaper than the threepenny *Berkshire Chronicle* and the fourpenny *Reading Mercury*: perhaps this too helped towards its apparent success.

Two weeks after the increase to eight pages, the numbering of the *Express* changed, suddenly jumping to 69 from the previous week's number of 34, and a notice on the back page of this issue stated that the *Reading Express* was not only the largest penny newspaper in the county but also the only midweekly that issued two editions each week: on a Thursday and on a Saturday.[44] There is no indication that this second

---

42 *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent*, no. 32, Thursday 1 May 1879.

43 *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent*, no. 33, Thursday 8 May 1879.

44 *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent*, no. 69, Thursday 22 May 1879.

edition was an innovation, and it is possible that before this change in numbering a second edition had been produced each week, bearing the same weekly number as the Thursday edition. Indeed, if this numbering change was effected to give each of the two weekly editions a separate number, then it would seem that the *Reading Express* had published two editions per week from its inception. Unfortunately, there are no extant copies of the Saturday edition and it is therefore not possible to determine exactly when they started or how different the two editions were in content or advertising.

From this date, the numbering of the *Express* increased by 2 each week until the edition on Thursday 30 October 1879, which was numbered 115 and which was followed by number 118 on Thursday the following week. This change suggests perhaps that a special edition had been published during that time. Another interesting break in the normal numbering sequence occurred for the papers published during the last week of May 1883,[45] when the increase in the issue numbers suggests that the *Express* was published on each of the six days from one Thursday to the next (presumably Sunday being excluded). This particular break in numbering sequence lasted for just one week and from then on the numbering was consistent with the normal production of two editions per week.

The early editions of the *Reading Express* were clean and uncut, and reasonably well printed, but by the middle of 1880 the quality of the whole production was showing signs of deterioration. Bad make-up, with bent and broken rules, together with badly aligned columns, was made to look worse by very bad press make-ready and poor inking. This poor

---

45 *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent*, no. 486, Thursday 24 May 1883, followed by no. 491, Thursday 31 May 1883.

quality remained, showing very little, if any, improvement right up to the last known issue of the paper in December 1884.[46]

During 1879, George Smith published a localized edition of the *Express* for the town of Henley under the title of the *Henley Express*, and a year later published another localized edition called the *Wokingham Express*. Each of these editions was published on Friday for Saturday, but how much news they contained directly relevant to the towns they served is not known as there are no extant copies of these specialized editions.

The last extant edition of the *Reading Express* is for 20 December 1884 but, although a notice appears in this copy stating that the paper would only be published in one edition during Christmas week, there is no indication in that issue that the paper was likely to cease publication.

Mays Press Directory for 1885, however, lists both the *Henley Express* and the *Wokingham Express* but makes no mention of the Reading paper; this tends to support the view that the *Reading Express* ceased publication around the end of 1884. How long Smith continued to publish the two local town editions is not known, for they are not listed in any press directory for 1886, suggesting that they, too, were closed shortly after the *Reading Express*.

The reasons for the failure of Smith's paper can only be surmised, for there is virtually no detailed information apart from the extant Thursday editions of the *Reading Express*, and there is little in their content concerning the newspaper itself. It could well be that the *Express* was only just making a profit during the first years of its life. The fact that throughout its existence it maintained a 50% level of advertising

---

46 *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent*, no. 651, Saturday 20 December 1884.

content suggests that although the income from that source was reasonable the costs of production were high. The deteriorating quality of the printing and the use of worn battered type also indicate either a lack of income or a reluctance to replace the damaged materials. Finally, during the last six months of the *Express's* existence it possibly had to face some increased competition from the *Mercury*, which had reduced its price to 2d. in September 1884,[47] and from the *Chronicle* which had dropped to 1d. in July of the same year.[48] The increased sales, however small, which the two established Reading papers may have gained from such reductions, could well have been enough to plunge the *Reading Express* into a situation where closure was the only option left.

Daily Mail and Evening Post

During March 1880, when the *Reading Express* was showing its first signs of bad make-up and deteriorating quality, George Smith published the first edition of a new daily paper called the *Daily Mail and Evening Post*, which was to be circulated in 'Reading, Newbury, Windsor, Abingdon, Henley, Maidenhead, Woking etc.'.[49] This paper consisted of four pages measuring 22½" deep x 17¼" wide, each page having six 15½-em columns, and the selling price was ½d.

There are only two extant copies of this paper: number 1, which appeared on Tuesday 23 March, and number 5, which was published on Monday 29 March 1880, and from the numbering it would appear that this paper was published every weekday, including days when the *Reading Express* was also produced.

---

47 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 162, Saturday 27 September 1884. See chapter IV.

48 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 3906, Saturday 5 July 1884. See Chapter V.

49 *Daily Mail and Evening Post*, no. 1, Tuesday 23 March 1880.

According to the first editorial this, the first of Reading's daily papers, the promoters were convinced that the growing importance of the county and its chief centres of industry demanded 'a more frequent issue of the press'.[50] It seems that their hopes were a little premature, for the paper appears not to have lasted for very long, and the only two known copies are to be found in Reading Reference Library. It would also appear, from the text of this editorial, that George Smith was not alone in this particular newspaper venture, and that he had at least one co-promoter, if not more.

Reading Record

Having had little apparent success with his forays into newspaper production and ownership, George Smith concentrated on his general printing business for a number of years, developing not only the printing and stationery side of his company but also the annual production of *Smith's Reading Directory*, which he maintained until 1924, when *Kelly's Directories* took it over. He also became a successful wholesale and retail newsagent, and ran a shipping agency from his premises.

In 1912, however, Smith embarked once more on a journal-publishing enterprise, when he introduced a monthly eight-page magazine called the *Reading Record*. This magazine was printed in black on smooth but cheap white paper in the rather small format of 9½" deep x 7" wide. The price of the journal was 1d., but the guaranteed minimum edition of 5,000 copies were to be delivered free of charge to 116 streets in Reading and its immediate surrounding districts.[51]

---

50 *Daily Mail and Evening Post*, no. 1, Tuesday 23 March 1880.

51 *Reading Record*, 19 October 1912.

There was a brief editorial in the first issue explaining the purpose of this new venture to the public:

> This journal is produced for complimentary circulation. It is none the worse, and probably all the better on this account. The time has been anticipated when all papers now sold at a small price will be given away. We claim to be among the forerunners of the movement. It used to be a maxim that things cheap were things nasty. We gladly record that the bubble is now burst. Obviously, if a thing is good at the price of a penny, it is better at no price at all.[52]

As with all 'free sheets', the object was to attract sufficient advertising to cover all the costs of production and distribution and still make a profit. The carrot for the advertisers was the guaranteed circulation of 5,000 copies to 'principal residents' of Reading.

The *Record* made no attempt to provide general or political news, concentrating on local social news and items of general and domestic interest. Articles on dressmaking, fashion, and health, and short stories, church news, competitions, and a London theatre guide are typical of the regular features which appeared in the first few copies of this paper.

Although there was a good percentage of advertising in the first two issues of the magazine, by the fifth edition the advertising had dwindled to virtually nothing. There are no extant copies after number 5, so it must be assumed that the *Reading Record* closed with that issue. It would also appear that the publishers had experienced some problems with the distribution of the *Record*, for in issue number 5 an 'IMPORTANT NOTICE' explains that no one connected with the distribution of the *Reading Record* was in any way authorized to demand or accept payment for copies.[53] If any of those people employed to undertake the distribution of the *Record* had indeed been unreliable, that too could have affected the

---

52 *Reading Record*, 19 October 1912.

53 *Reading Record*, 13 February 1913.

actual distribution, which in turn could have caused advertisers to withdraw their support for this magazine.

George Smith closed his printing business in the early years of the First World War, and his new office in King's Road, Reading, was used as a shipping office and the publishing office for *Reading Directory*. Whether he retired from business or was forced to cut his losses is not known, for there is no such information available concerning Smith or relating to the success or failure of his business.

CHAPTER V

§

READING MERCURY & OXFORD GAZETTE 1855-1914

When the Newspaper Stamp Duty was repealed in June 1855, the *Reading Mercury* was about to celebrate 132 years of existence as a provincial newspaper. Indeed, it was by far the oldest-established paper in Berkshire and one of the oldest in the country.

From its foundation in 1723 it had enjoyed a wide-spread influence, having agencies for its sale throughout the south-east corner of England and, although the formation of other newspapers in the counties adjacent to Berkshire had gradually reduced its circulation area, it was still distributed through Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Surrey, Sussex, Middlesex and Wiltshire. Unfortunately there are no circulation figures available for those areas, but it is probable that sales of the *Mercury* were comparatively small in the areas outside Berkshire, and that although the overall circulation of the paper was increasing during the middle years of the nineteenth century that increase was accounted for by the growing population in the larger towns and villages of Berkshire.

It was advertised as being the 'leading County Paper' and further boasted that it was circulated

> ...extensively amongst the principal families and wealthy classes as well as the commercial and agricultural community in the adjacent and distant counties.[1]

The weekly circulation of the *Mercury* had been increasing steadily and between 1837 and 1855 had risen from 2,432[2] to 4,217[3] copies, a circulation which was considered to be greater than any other journal within a sixty-mile radius of Reading and to outnumber any Berkshire paper by a ratio of five or six to one.[4]

To produce nearly two thousand five hundred copies every week on a hand press must have presented a considerable task to the printer, so it is therefore not surprising to discover that the *Mercury* had installed a Cowper two-cylinder machine in January 1846. This new machine was originally worked by hand, with one or perhaps two men powering the flywheel by means of a cranked handle This operation must have been back-breaking work for the pressmen, so much so that in September the paper announced:

> We have this week had recourse to that universal power, Steam, to accelerate the printing of the *Mercury* and to obviate the inconvenience and toil attached to hard labour when applied to the Printing Machine, to the extent which our large circulation requires.[5]

The Cowper double-cylinder machine, when power-driven, was capable of running at 2,000 sheets per hour, compared with 200-250 per hour from the hand press, so the production time of the *Mercury* was obviously greatly reduced.

---

1 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 153, Saturday 13 January 1873.

2 These figures are taken from Appendix 4 to the report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, (1851).

3 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 133, Saturday 7 July 1855.

4 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 134, Saturday 5 January 1856.

5 *Reading Mercury*, cxxiv, Saturday 26 September 1846.

In June 1855 the *Mercury's* format was 25½" x 17½", each of its eight pages having six 15½-em columns, and the paper was published every Saturday morning by Henry Hartley Cowslade and his nephew William Wallace Cowslade at 6 Market Place, Reading. The price of the paper was 5d., but with the abolition of the paper duty it was announced that the *Mercury* would reduce its price to 4d.; however a 5d. stamped edition was still available for those who wished to have the paper posted to them, or who wished to post the paper on to others when they had read it. Apart from the announcement concerning the price reduction, the *Mercury* made no comment on the repeal of the paper duty, which is a little surprising for a newspaper which had always fought against government restrictions and was such a great advocate for reform.

Nevertheless, while the *Mercury* may have had little to say concerning the new-found freedom from the 'oppressive stamp', the proprietors did embark on a more practical venture when they published a new paper some ten days after the duty was removed.

This paper was the *Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce* and was published by the Cowslades from the *Mercury* office in the Market Place, Reading. According to the prospectus for the *Journal* which appeared in the *Mercury* in July 1855, the new paper was to be published every Wednesay evening, starting on 11 July, and was to be 'a newspaper of convenient size and at a very moderate price'.[6] The purpose of the *Journal* was to supply the agricultural and trading community with useful and business information in the interval between the weekly issues of the local papers: in other words a midweek edition under its own title. Also the *Journal* would contain:

---

6 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 133, Saturday 7 July 1855.

> ...the leading Events of the week, Foreign and Domestic, and also the latest Reports of the London Markets, and Telegraphic despatches from abroad up to the hour of publication.[7]

The 'convenient size' referred to was 20½" x 12½", which was half the size of the *Mercury* format, and the 'moderate price' was 1½d.

In the editorial of the *Journal*'s first issue the paper's objectives were explained in more detail:

> The *Berkshire Journal* has no pretentions to occupy the position of established Local Papers, nor will it be within its scope to present copious Reports of Local proceedings throughout an extensive district... The *Journal* will, however, give an epitome of all important events, Foreign and Domestic (more particularly of the eventful War, in which England is so deeply involved), up to the hour of publication, as well as the current incidents of the locality, through which it is hoped the Paper will eventually circulate; and thus afford a means of cheap information to a large portion of the people, hitherto restricted in participating in political and general knowledge, but now enabled, by the removal of the compulsory Stamp, to enjoy the privilege of a Newspaper...[8]

Although the paper was published in Reading, the *Mercury* also had a registered office in the Market Place, Newbury, and this office was also used for the *Journal*. Having branch offices in other towns played an important part in increasing a newspaper's circulation, for local news and advertising could be collected in these offices, thus allowing the newspaper to include fuller and more accurate reports of local events. Inclusion of this material thus created a local interest which in turn resulted in more sales. Some measure of the importance of branch offices can be seen in the fact that all the local Reading papers had such offices in Newbury at different times.

The *Journal* appears to have enjoyed greater success in Newbury than it did elsewhere in the county, for in November an announcement

---

7 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 133, Saturday 7 July 1855.

8 *The Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce*, Wednesday 11 July 1855.

appeared in the *Reading Mercury* to the effect that in response to the patronage received from Newbury it was proposed to

> ...sanction the adoption of a new title, whilst extending its pages and will therefore appear on the 14th November as the *Newbury Telegraph and Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce.*[9]

From this time onwards the paper was listed as being published in Newbury, but this was probably a ploy to suggest to prospective clients that it was a local Newbury paper. Certainly there is no evidence to suggest that it was not still printed in Reading.

Unfortunately, despite the change of title, the paper did not survive for long and one year after its inception it ceased publication, the reason for its closure being given in the last issue:

> The subscribers to the *Newbury Telegraph* are respectfully informed that with the close of the parliamentary session this Journal will cease to appear, the termination of war combined with the absence of political interest in the legislative discussions rendering a mid weekly publication possessing the general characteristics of a newspaper no longer necessary.[10]

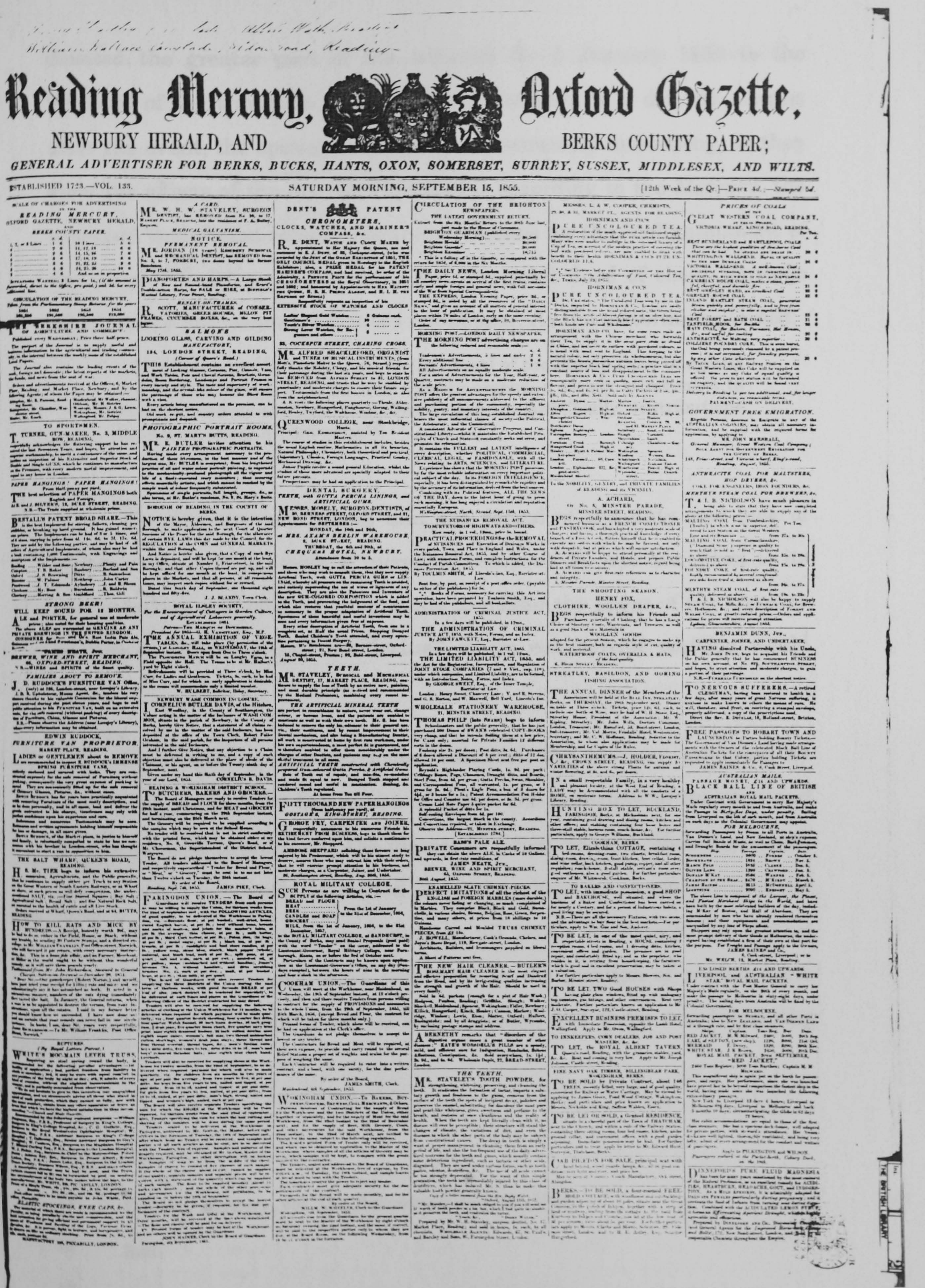
This statement suggests that the paper was bought and read primarily for its parliamentary reports and news concerning the Crimean War and that when peace was declared in early 1856 there was insufficient interest in the rest of the paper to sustain its circulation. It also indicates perhaps that those who subscribed to it were most likely from the 'principal families and wealthy' classes of the county, who would perhaps have had a greater interest in international and political affairs.

Although the *Reading Mercury* did little more than announce a reduction in the price of the paper, when the Stamp Duty was repealed it

---

9 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 133, Saturday 10 November 1855.

10 *Newbury Telegraph & Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce*, 23 July 1856.



Reading Mercury in 1855

devoted the greater part of the editorial for 5 January 1856 to the 'removal of the trammels of the press'.[11] Coming, as it did, six months after the event, the opinions expressed are extremely interesting, as they view the effects of the Act with hindsight. According to the *Mercury*, the expected 'inundation of new literary candidates for the "enlightenment of the people"'[12] did not materialize and the great flood of cheap journals which many had predicted just did not appear. As the editorial explained:

> ...however eager the promoters of the repeal of the Stamp Duty imagined the British Public to be for new literary organs, a steady attachment to the old beacons has been manifested, and the new 'Daily' contributions have been coolly looked upon[13]

The *Mercury* considered that the repeal of the duty and lack of response to it, in the form of increased competition, was beneficial to its own standing and pledged to continue to render the pages of the *Mercury* as 'varied, amusing and intellectual' as its commercial position would allow.

In concluding this particular editorial, the *Mercury* promised its continuing support for the return of peace, the reduction of taxation and for the general education of the masses in Great Britain. With three such popular aims so clearly identified it could perhaps be suggested that the *Mercury* was attempting to appeal to all levels of society: for almost everyone wanted peace; those who were in the position of paying taxes welcomed any attempt to lessen their burden; and there was increasing

---

11 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 134, Saturday 5 January 1856.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

pressure on the government, from many sectors of society, to introduce general education for all.[14]

The *Mercury's* support for such things as religious freedom, social and intellectual improvement, and liberal principles, together with a reduction in its price, all contributed to a steady gain in its circulation and by 1861 the weekly sales were some four thousand seven hundred copies, which represented a ten per cent increase in its 1850 circulation.[15]

Competition from other newspapers does not appear to have affected the *Mercury's* progress, for apart from the *Berkshire Chronicle*, which was its Conservative rival in the town, the only other paper of any standing in the county was the *Windsor Express*. Neither of these papers had circulations of much more than one thousand copies per week at this time, so the *Mercury* was clearly well ahead of its rivals.[16]

One reason for the lead was undoubtedly the long existence of the paper and the fact that it had already built a reputation among the people of Berkshire and beyond. Another reason perhaps was its quality, for it not only presented its readers with reliable reports of both national and local events but was also typographically extremely well presented and was always printed on good-quality paper. The Cowslades in fact went out of their way to advocate high standards and good quality, and nowhere is

---

14 There was a succession of Education Bills between 1847 and 1857, including three in 1855, all of which were defeated, mainly on the issue of religious denomination.

15 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturday 5 January 1861.

16 The only circulation figures available for these two papers are for 1850: the *Berkshire Chronicle* being 778 copies per week and the *Windsor Express* 730 copies per week. This figure of 1,000 copies is based on the possibility that these two papers had the same growth rate as the *Mercury*.

this more clearly demonstrated than in two editorials which appeared in 1861.

In the first it was stated:

> The luxury of the newspaper is no longer a monopoly - it is universal — it is the rule, and not the exception...it is an established fact that there is a 'cheap press', and very respectably conducted...with newspapers, as with everything else, *quality* is the test, and it is *there* that we take our *own* ground. We present an article that we submit is equivalent to its price, and that fact is endorsed by the demand for it.[17]

The *Mercury* always attempted to maintain this lofty stance, and until it was taken over in 1914 the price was never lower than 2d. and it was always printed on good-quality laid paper, unlike its competitors who resorted to using cheap newsprint in order to reduce their prices to 1d.

In the second, when the abolition of the Paper Duty was announced in October 1861, the *Mercury* again emphasized its desire to maintain high standards. After a detailed explanation concerning the duty remitted by the government, the *Mercury* went on to explain that the duty amounted to 1½d. on every pound weight of paper, and as nearly seven double sheets of an ordinary newspaper weighed a pound the actual saving on each copy of the *Mercury* would be less than a farthing. This sum they described as 'a fraction too trifling for the public to accept, or for us to propose'.[18] So instead of 'depreciating the quality' of the paper by reducing the price, the *Mercury* was enlarged to 25½" x 19½", enabling an additional 15½-em column to be printed on each page.[19]

It was also decided to cease publishing a stamped edition of the *Mercury* at this time and to rely on the services of newsmen to deliver the

---

17 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturday 5 January 1861.

18 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturday 5 October 1861.

19 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturday 12 October 1861.

paper to the country districts.[20] The proprietors argued that this method of delivery would be cheaper for the customer, and also considerably quicker, than relying on the post; this was probably very true.

In common with its competitors, the *Mercury* distributed its editions in Reading and the other larger towns around it, such as Newbury, Basingstoke, Windsor, Maidenhead and Wokingham. Delivery of newspapers to these towns was made easy by the fact that most of them were connected by the railway, and once the papers had arrived at their destination it was an easy task to distribute them in an urban area.

The *Mercury*, however, unlike its rivals, had a great many subscribers who lived in small villages and isolated farms dotted over a very large area. For them the *Mercury* represented a lifeline to the outside world, and undoubtedly the quickest and most reliable method of distribution in these areas was on foot or horseback. Newsmen or 'trampwells', as they were called, would collect copies of the paper and then walk or ride over their routes to deliver the *Mercury* to these country customers.

When Prince Albert died in December 1861, the *Mercury* marked the sad event with a two-week display of mourning.[21] All the text in the eight pages of the paper was enclosed within a six-point bold rule and each column was also divided by the same rule. Although the other local papers also marked the royal death by using bold rule to divide their columns, the *Mercury's* display was by far the most elaborate and certainly the most typographically pleasing.

---

20 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturday 12 October 1861.

21 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturdays 14 and 21 December 1861.

It is perhaps not surprising that the owners of the *Mercury* should demonstrate such elaborate mourning in their paper for Prince Albert, as well as enjoying general popularity, had also been the leading patron in the Reading Mechanics Institution. The Cowslade family had always played a leading role in that Institution during its existence and Frederick Cowslade was almost certainly one of the members responsible for successfully seeking patronage from Prince Albert in 1840.[22]

In April 1866, Henry Hartley Cowslade retired from the business, at the age of sixty-seven, having been a co-proprietor of the *Mercury* since November 1839, and the paper was left in the hands of Henry's nephew, William Wallace Cowslade, and one of William's sons, Frederick William Cowslade. Eighteen months later, in October 1867, William Wallace Cowslade's other son, Henry Alfred Cowslade, also became one of the joint proprietors and the paper's imprint read 'Published for William Wallace Cowslade...by Frederick William Cowslade...and Henry Alfred Cowslade...'

The circulation of the *Mercury* continued to expand, although very slowly, and by the beginning of 1873 had risen to 4,800 copies a week, representing an increase of 100 copies per week since 1861.[23] Perhaps one reason why the increase in circulation was so small was the extra competition which the *Mercury* had to face at this time, primarily from the *Berks Telegraph*,[24] which professed to being a strong Liberal voice in the town, but also from some six other papers which were launched

---

22 A. T. Watts, 'The Foundation and Development of the Reading Mechanics Institution, 1825-1830 and 1840-1860', unpublished Dip.F.Ed. thesis, London University, (1976), p. 36.

23 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 139, Saturday 12 October 1861.

24 Originally the *Reading Advertiser*, and later to become the *Reading Observer*.

between 1860 and 1872.[25] Despite the fact that all six of these papers were only in existence for a short time, their very presence must have retarded the *Mercury's* sales a little, particularly as each of them, including the *Berks Telegraph*, sold for 1d. At this time the *Mercury* was still 4d. per week, while the *Berkshire Chronicle*, its Conservative rival, was only a little cheaper at 3d.

On 1 February 1873 the *Mercury* celebrated its 150th anniversary, and devoted the whole of that week's editorial to the history and achievement of the paper.[26] As an added attraction the proprietors published a free special facsimile edition of the 'first edition' — although only the front page was a true facsimile, the rest of the pages having been reset in modern type from the original edition.

The *Mercury's* proprietors had unfortunately misinterpreted the date of the copy which they thought to be the earliest extant edition of the paper, and as a consequence celebrated their anniversary some five months too early. The 'first edition' which they reproduced was dated 1 February 1723, but because the old year had been calculated from 25 March this was in fact a copy of the *Mercury* produced in 1724.

The extant copy of the real first edition was presumably not available at that time, for it is clearly marked vol. I, no. 1. The interesting aspect of this facsimile, however, is its front page, which was produced photographically and therefore represents a fairly early example of the line block. From the description of the block manufacture which appeared in the *Mercury*, however, it is difficult to decide whether it was a

---

25 *The Reading Times, Reading Standard, Reading Herald, Berkshire Weekly Times, Berkshire Weekly News*, and *Reading Examiner*. See Chapter IV.

26 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 151, Saturday 1 February 1873.

photographic image etched in metal or a wooden block engraved by hand from an image fixed to its surface by some photographic process.

The process for making this block was described in some detail in the *Mercury*:

> The original page is placed before the camera and a negative taken; this negative is then transferred by a new process to the surface of a wooden block, which is coated with a peculiar chemical preparation, the negative surface being then submitted to the action of acid which bites out the parts representing the 'light' of the picture; the block becomes 'engraved' as if by the 'graver' and can be printed from with the same ease as the surface of type. That several thousand copies should be taken from a surface engraved from the action of 'light' with other accessories is another triumph of the art of the 19th century.[27]

This description of the blockmaking process appears to be a little confusing, due to the reference to the action of acid biting out the 'lights' of the picture, on a wooden surface.

Prior to 1859, photographic images had been projected onto the chemically prepared surfaces of wooden blocks, but then engraved by hand in order to use them for printing. This process was apparently not as easy as it sounds, and it would appear that some considerable experimentation had been undertaken before a satisfactory image could be projected onto wood, which had sufficient definition to enable the engraver to work on it.[28] However, in 1859 Firmin Gillot introduced the method of projecting a photographic image onto the surface of a sheet of zinc. The chemicals which formed the image on the zinc were treated in such a way that they acted as a resist when the zinc plate was subjected to acid, and allowed the 'lights' of the illustration to be eaten away. These printing blocks, usually referred to as zincos by printers, were in fairly

---

27 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 151, Saturday 1 February 1873.

28 Geoffrey Wakeman, *Victorian Book Illustration*, (1973), pp. 75-81.

general use by the 1870s, although the extent to which they were used in newspapers is not really known.

In the case of the *Mercury's* facsimile, however, it would seem likely that the reporter who wrote this piece was not altogether clear about the process, and that he was in fact describing the process for making a zinco.

If the intention of producing this facsimile was to attract attention from the reading public, then it appears to have been extremely successful. Not only was considerable local interest aroused, but, according to the proprietors, their curiosity had resulted in requests for copies from the British and South Kensington Museums, as well as from every postal district in the metropolis. Indeed, the fame of the production had spread nationwide, for the *Mercury* had received requests for copies of the novelty from 'the cities of York, Liverpool, Oxford, Southampton, Manchester, Bath, Exeter, Bristol, and many others'.[29]

The success of this particular venture apart, the *Mercury* appears to have maintained its popularity for, despite competition from some eight other local newspapers, the circulation had risen to 4,800 copies per week.[30] Without doubt the newspaper was considered to be financially secure, for the proprietors decided that new premises were needed. Accordingly a larger plot of ground was acquired on the opposite side of the Market Place and the erection of the new building was started in the summer of 1873. It was a purpose-built newspaper office and was not only large and spacious but had an elegant, fifteenth-century, Gothic-style frontage, constructed in Bath stone with Forest of Dean piers and Portland bases.

---

29 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 151, Saturday 7 February 1873.

30 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 151, Saturday 4 January 1873.

An old photograph of the Market Place, Reading, showing the Obelisk, Messrs. Sutton & Sons' Royal Seed Establishment, and "The Reading Mercury" Office on the right.

Altogether the premises consisted of a basement (housing the strongroom), and three storeys: the publishing and advertisement offices, the accounts department and the newspaper library on the ground floor; the proprietor's office and the editor's, reporters' and readers' rooms on the first floor; and the works dining room and caretaker's quarters on the second floor.

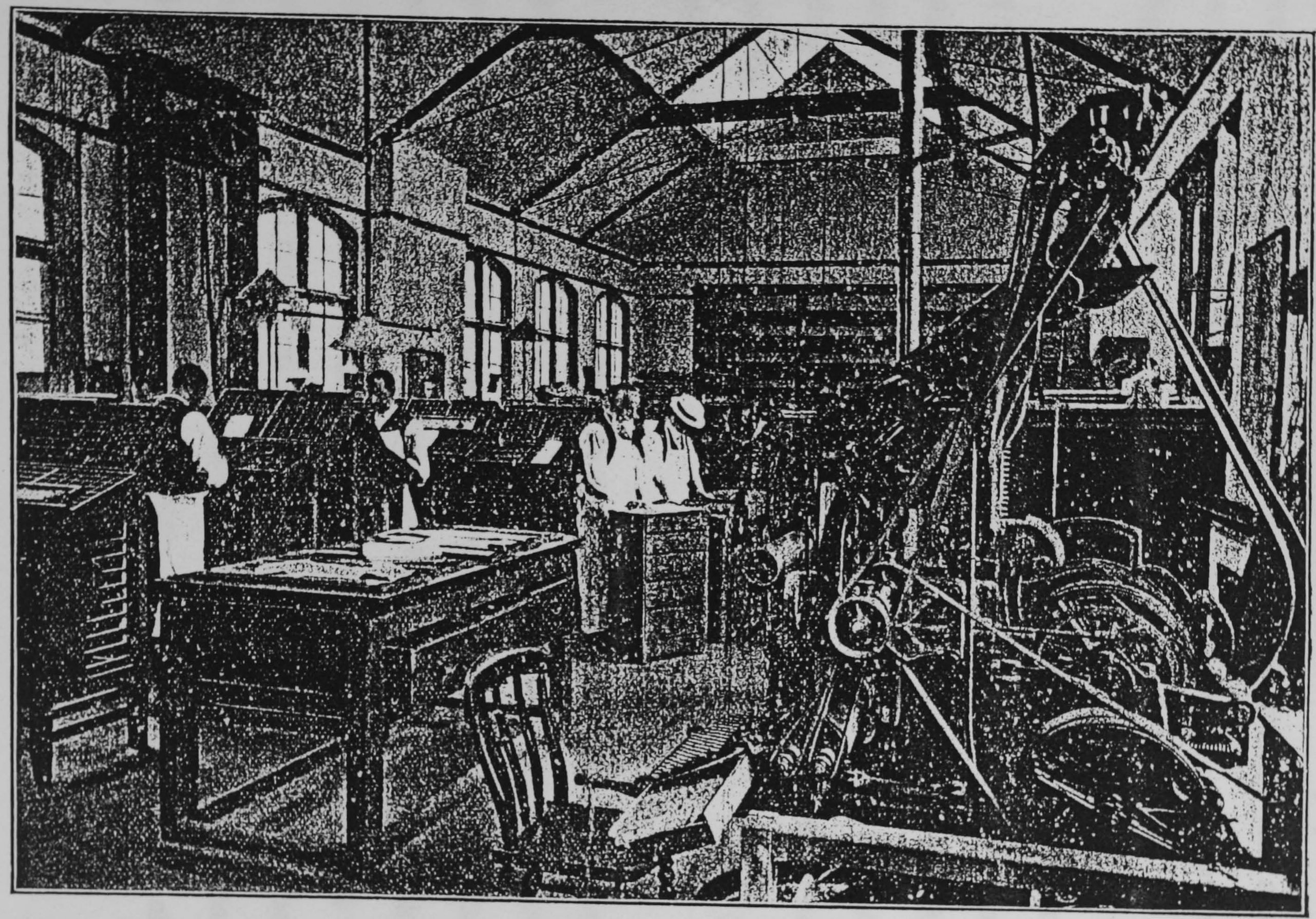
The printing department was located at the rear of the building, with the press room (some 45 feet by 23 feet) on the ground floor together with a boiler room and a steam engine to drive the press. This engine had been replaced by a gas engine and electric motor by the early years of this century. The composing room was situated on the floor above the press room. Measuring some 70 feet by 24 feet, the room was well lit and spacious, and formes for the press room were conveyed by lift between the two floors.[31]

One year later, in June 1874, the *Mercury* moved out of the old premises, where it had been produced for over a century, into the newly completed building. This move, it seems, was the first stage in a number of improvements which the *Mercury* undertook, for in May 1876 a new printing press was installed. Presumably the paper had been printed for some thirty years on the Cowper two-feeder installed in 1846, for there is no mention of having a new press during that period, nor is there any evidence to suggest that the paper was produced on different equipment.

Unfortunately there are few details of the new machine, apart from the fact that it was installed by William Dawsons of Otley. This information suggests, however, that the new press was a single-cylinder

---

31 *The British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*, 26 October 1905.



Reading Mercury composing room at the turn of the century

two-feeder machine.[32] Dawsons designed and built these presses during the 1870s and they were extremely popular with provincial newspaper proprietors. Indeed, during this period the majority of Dawsons's machines were designed for the production of newspapers and their popularity stemmed from the fact that they were not only fast and reliable but also versatile, enabling the production of various-size sheets with only slight alteration to the press.

With the introduction of the new press came an increase in the size of the *Mercury* to 27" x 20½", a format which effectively enlarged the paper by more than half a page overall.[33] This extra space had been rendered necessary by the increasing pressure on the newspaper advertising coverage, which at this time had risen to 50% of the paper's content, and which had frequently obliged the editors to curtail local news and information of interest.

William Wallace Cowslade retired from the *Mercury* at the end of 1877, leaving control of the paper in the hands of his two sons, Frederick and Henry; their names appeared as proprietors on the *Mercury's* imprint from January 1878.[34] It was said that William Cowslade had taken little, if any, active part in the day-to-day running of the paper after his wife had died in 1872. However, his retirement at the age of fifty-nine did not mean a quiet life, for he was a keen horseman and rode frequently until one of his legs was crushed in a riding accident at the age of eighty.

---

32 See illustration, Chapter VII, p. 145.

33 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 154, Saturday 20 May 1876.

34 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 156, Saturday 5 January 1878.

Despite this setback, he is said to have remained extremely active until his death in 1915, at the age of ninety-seven.[35]

It needs a feat of imagination to realise that William Cowslade was born at the end of George III's reign and had witnessed the tremendous changes of the nineteenth century and of the beginning of the twentieth century. For he most certainly saw the sedan chair, the coming of the railway, the industrialization of the country, and at the end of his life witnessed the coming of the motor car and the aeroplane. As a leading citizen of the town and a strong Liberal, he would have personally known Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd and such literary figures as Charles Dickens and Mary Russell Mitford, for all had close association with Reading society.[36]

Under the ownership of Frederick and Henry Cowslade, the paper maintained its high typographical standards and continued to maintain a politically Liberal view, although in a very moderate and restrained manner. In addition to the Conservative *Berkshire Chronicle*, the *Mercury* faced competition from a number of rival Liberal newspapers between 1860 and 1873, many of which lasted only a short time. However, in 1873 the *Reading Observer* was established as the official organ of the Liberal party in the area[37] and proved to be a serious rival to the *Mercury*, for after only three years of existence the *Observer's* circulation had risen to

---

35 *The Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 37, no. 2, Autumn 1933, pp. 93-106.

36 William Cowslade's father, Frederick, was an active member of the Reading Mechanics Institution, whose president was Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd until his death in 1854, when he was succeeded by Charles Dickens. Mary Russell Mitford lived for a time in London Road, Reading, and was a regular visitor to George Lovejoy's bookshop, which was in London Street situated next to the Mechanics Institute. See A. T. Watts, 'The Foundation and Development of the Reading Mechanics Institution 1825-1830 and 1840-1860', unpublished Dip.F.Ed. thesis, London University, (1976), pp. 43-9.

37 See Chapter VII.

approximately five thousand copies per week, comparable to that of the *Mercury*. However, while the *Observer* became the hardline Liberal mouthpiece for the county, the *Mercury* maintained its more genteel political viewpoint which, combined with its high quality and its 'county' image, enabled it to maintain its position in the battle for circulation.

The *Mercury's* increase in circulation was very slow, and by the end of the nineteenth century had probably never exceeded seven thousand to eight thousand copies per week.[38] On the other hand, by 1900 the *Mercury's* two major rivals, the *Reading Observer* and the *Reading Standard*, had both made considerable headway, the *Observer's* circulation standing at 12,000 copies for the weekly edition and the *Standard's* weekly sales around thirteen thousand.[39]

It is clear that from the late 1870s the *Mercury* was slowly losing ground to its two main rivals, firstly to the *Observer*, which, with its strong allegiance to the Liberal party and its drive for advertising, was expanding rapidly, and later the *Reading Standard*, which coupled a drive for advertising with photo-journalism in its efforts to obtain a high circulation. Both these papers were increasing their circulations in the towns of Berkshire and the adjacent counties at the expense of the *Mercury*, which continued to circulate in the more rural areas of Berkshire and the adjacent counties of Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Middlesex, and Surrey.

---

38 These figures are an estimate based on the rate of gradual increase which had taken place since 1850. It must be emphasized that it is only an estimate.

39 *Observer* circulation figures quoted in *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, 1901. *Standard* figures are based on growth circulation figures for 1891 and 1913.

Its main features were its agricultural reports and its original articles dealing with such items as livestock prices, wheat prices, and modern farming techniques. Also the paper reported extensively on agricultural shows, fairs, and many other rural functions. Surprisingly, it had kept its price at 4d. after the abolition of the Paper Duty, but in September 1884 '...in deference to the wishes of their most influential supporters...' [40] the proprietors reduced the price of the *Mercury* to 2d., at which price it remained until 1914, when it was sold. The proprietors hoped that the reduction in price would place a '...high class family paper within the reach of all'[41] and thus increase the circulation. Whether this ploy was successful or not is difficult to tell, for although the *Mercury* stated that its circulation did increase there are no circulation figures available for this period to substantiate the claim.

At the beginning of 1898, the pressure on the *Mercury's* space, by both advertising and news, led to the proprietors increasing the size from eight to ten pages by the inclusion of an additional leaf (containing pages 5 and 6) which was inserted into the centrefold of the paper.[42] This increase in size was said to have made the *Mercury* one of the largest newspapers in the United Kingdom,[43] although if that were true then the other Reading newspapers must also have been in that category, for they all contained much the same column space.

Another important addition to the *Mercury's* plant was the installation of a Linotype machine at the beginning of 1898, for it is

---

40 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 162, Saturday 27 September 1884.

41 Ibid.

42 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 176, Saturday 1 January 1898.

43 The *British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*, 6 October 1905.

doubtful whether the increase in the paper's size could have been satisfactorily produced without additional typesetting facilities. A close inspection of the newspaper suggests that the Linotype was possibly first used for the new ten-page edition of the paper in January 1898.[44] One of the features of advertising typography at this time was the ingenious but rather tedious repetition of a company's name or product, which could sometimes run down a complete column. Such setting must have been extremely time-consuming, and very boring for the compositor to handset, so the introduction of a Linotype machine must have been very welcome. Another disadvantage, however carefully such an advertisement was set by hand, was that slight variations in spacing due to the squeeze on the forme would show up in the printed page. However, once the line of matrices had been assembled in the Linotype machine, any number of lines could be cast, all of which would appear identically on the page with no such variation of spacing:

THOMAS APPLEFORD GROCER
THOMAS APPLEFORD GROCER
THOMAS APPLEFORD GROCER
THOMAS APPLEFORD GROCER
THOMAS APPLEFORD GROCER

From this time, the *Reading Mercury* started to include larger and more open advertisements, using more than one column width, plenty of white space, and display typefaces such as Egyptian Light Extended and Modern Face captions and headlines. These changes, however, were all typographical and no illustrations appeared in the *Mercury* — not even a standard wood block or line engraving for advertisements. In fact it was not until December 1905 that the *Mercury* first started to include line

---

44 Unfortunately the copies of the *Reading Mercury* for 1898 are only available on microfilm, making careful inspection very difficult, but the appearance of a new typeface, with occasional signs of hairlines between letters, occurs only after 1898.

blocks in its advertisements, many of which were for national companies such as Cadbury's Chocolate, Robinson's Barley Water, Sun Fire Insurance and Rowntrees Chocolate. Such companies used advertising agents to arrange their advertising for them and the advertisements were usually designed and typeset by the agency, who then had large numbers of stereo plates made so that identical advertisements could be produced throughout the country. This practice also meant that an agency could ensure total coverage in a particular area by buying advertising space in all local papers and supplying identical advertisement to each of them. The *Mercury* included few illustrations in its pages, and those which did appear were usually in the form of a line illustration for a map, diagram or drawing. Halftone illustrations did not appear in the paper until 1912.

The signs are that the *Mercury* not only maintained its position in the local press, but actually improved it during the first decade of the twentieth century. Despite the lack of circulation figures for this period, it seems reasonable to suggest that the paper could not continue to carry forty to forty-five per cent of advertising unless the advertisers were happy with the exposure their advertisements were getting, and it is likely that the *Mercury's* better circulation in the country districts throughout Berkshire and the neighbouring counties was responsible for this. National advertising agencies needed to ensure that their clients' names reached districts outside the urban areas, and local Reading businesses also wished to attract people into the town from the outlying districts, so the *Mercury's* predominantly rural coverage was ideal for this. For its own part, the *Mercury* obviously benefited from the revenue from advertising which its unique position attracted.

The *Mercury* had been owned for just thirty-four years by the brothers Frederick and Henry Cowslade when, in December 1911, Henry

died quite suddenly, leaving Frederick to continue on his own. This he did for the next three years, despite ill health, but by 1914 he felt unable to continue running the paper and, at the age of seventy, and with no heir, he sold the paper which had been in the Cowslade family for one hundred and thirty years.

The new owner was Henry Mortimer Hobson who, at this time, also bought the *Mercury*'s old Conservative rival, the *Berkshire Chronicle*. It is somehow fitting that, at a time when vociferous political argument was fast disappearing from the provincial newspaper, these two old nineteenth-century rivals should be joined together under the umbrella of the Reading Newspaper Company Ltd.

CHAPTER VI

§

BERKSHIRE CHRONICLE 1855-1914

The *Berkshire Chronicle* had little to say about the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Duty in June 1855, and its editorial column was merely preceded by a short statement that the price of the *Chronicle* would henceforth be 4d. unstamped and 5d. stamped. A subsequent paragraph explained how a stamped newspaper could be sent by post as often as desired during the fifteen days following the date of the stamp.[1]

Such a brief reaction might seem strange, given that the Press had just been freed from an imposition which many had considered a tremendous burden, and which had severely restricted circulation because of the consequently high price of newspapers. However, the *Chronicle* was very much a Conservative newspaper and was doubtless suspicious of any move by the Liberal party to reduce newspaper prices. Essential to the establishment of a cheap press were the extension of the franchise, the redistribution of parliamentary seats in favour of the urban areas, and the agitation to provide universal elementary education. These, combined with increased prosperity in the country, were all developments promoted by the Liberal party and were therefore viewed with considerable suspicion by Conservatives.

---

1 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1547, Saturday 30 June 1855.

Berkshire Chronicle,

Windsor Herald, and General Advertiser for the Counties of Bucks, Oxon, Hants, Surrey, Middlesex, and Wilts

VOL. XXXII., No. 1551. READING, SATURDAY, JULY 28, 1855. PRICE FOURPENCE, (STAMPED FIVEPENCE)

READING RACES will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 14th and 15th August.

THE READING RACE COMMITTEE

BOROUGH OF READING.

GOLD SIGNET RING LOST.

SHADES TAVERN, GUN STREET, READING.

GUINNESS and CO'S DUBLIN PORTER.

INDIA PALE ALE and DUBLIN PORTER STORES, 46, BROAD-STREET, READING.

GUTCH'S GENERAL DRAPERY ESTABLISHMENT, 40, MARKET PLACE READING.

WILLIAM WYATT, TROUSERS MAKER.

ARCHERY, FISHING-TACKLE, AND CRICKETING WAREHOUSE.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT ROOMS.

RECENT VICTORIES IN THE CRIMEA.

EDUCATION.

RAILWAY EXPENSES SAVED by purchasing TEAS AND COFFEES

THE CADIZ WINE COMPANY

GUIDE TO LIVING MEDICAL AUTHORS

MANURE FOR SALE.

TO BE LET.

IMPORTANT TO ADVERTISERS!!!

MR. THOMAS BUNCE

BOROUGH OF READING.—LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH. TO PAINTERS AND OTHERS.

TO BRICKMAKERS AND BRICKLAYERS.

LIBRARY, WINDSOR, MIDSUMMER, 1855.

MILNERS' HOLDFAST AND FIRE RESISTING SAFES

SUPERIOR FURNITURE, BEDDING, CARPETS, &c. &c.

PERSONS FURNISHING

WONDERFUL POWER of the STOMACH.

ELECTRICITY AND BATHING, PROPERLY USED.

TEETH.

MR. STAVELEY, SURGICAL and MECHANICAL DENTIST, 17, MARKET PLACE, READING.

THE ARTIFICIAL MINERAL TEETH

INSTANTANEOUS PORTRAITS.

SEA BEDDING, Cabin Furniture, Clothing.

THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY of ENGLAND

FAMILIES ABOUT TO REMOVE.

J. D. RUDDOCK, UPHOLSTERER, HOUSE AGENT, &c.

H. STARK (from London), MATHEMATICAL BOOT MAKER, AND CHIROPODIST, 115, BROAD STREET, READING.

STRONG BEER! WILL KEEP SOUND FOR 12 MONTHS.

GOOD FITTING SHIRTS!!!

SAMUEL BROTHERS, 29, Ludgate Hill.

OUTFITS FOR INDIA, AND FOR ALL PARTS of the World.

GLENNY'S Balbriggan Stockings and Socks.

BARRETT, EXALL, & ANDREWES

ELEMENTARY COLLODION CAMERA.

W. MUNT'S BREWERY, 46, BROAD-STREET, READING.

CHINA, GLASS, & EARTHENWARE, 15, MINSTER STREET, READING, AT LONDON PRICES!!!

NOTICE OF REMOVAL.

THE SALT WHARF, QUEEN'S ROAD, READING.

QUEEN'S ROAD COAL WHARF, READING.

SALMON'S LOOKING GLASS, CARVING AND GILDING MANUFACTORY, 184, LONDON STREET, READING.

ARTISTICAL PAPER-HANGINGS.

THE LARGEST, CHEAPEST, & BEST CARPET BEDDING, & HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE REPOSITORY in BERKSHIRE.

BLAIR'S GOUT & RHEUMATIC PILLS.

TASTELESS PILLS.

INDIGESTION, STOMACHIC, AND LIVER COMPLAINTS, &c.

SPOKES' RHUBARB, GINGER, AND DANDELION PILLS.

SLACK'S NICKEL AND ELECTRO PLATE

FURNISH YOUR HOUSE WITH THE BEST ARTICLES AT DEANE'S IRONMONGERY & FURNISHING WAREHOUSES.

PIGGOTT'S GALVANIC BELT

CERTAIN RELIEF FOR THE AFFLICTED. DR SCOTT'S BILIOUS AND LIVER PILLS.

PRICES OF COALS BY THE GREAT WESTERN COAL COMPANY, AT THEIR STORES, VICTORIA WHARF, KING'S ROAD, READING.

PAYMENT—CASH ON DELIVERY.

GOVERNMENT FREE EMIGRATION.

FREE PASSAGES to HOBART TOWN and LAUNCESTON

AUSTRALIAN MAILS. BLACK BALL LINE OF BRITISH & AUSTRALIAN ROYAL MAIL PACKETS.

FOR MELBOURNE.

THE Inclosure Commissioners for England and Wales

PURSUANT to a Decree of the High Court of Chancery

TOLLS TO LET.

Berkshire Chronicle in 1855

The proprietor of the *Chronicle* at this time was Richard Welch, who, at the age of thirty-three, had bought the paper from the previous owner, Henry Clark Pidgeon.[2] Born in Englefield, a village near Reading, Welch came 'from a long line of substantial yeomen',[3] who had farmed there for some considerable time, and who would seem to have been reasonably wealthy. Significantly, most of the family were buried near to the church door in Englefield churchyard,[4] and Richard Welch had certainly received a good education, for his journalistic expertise was much praised by his contemporaries.[5]

Little is known about Welch before he bought the *Chronicle* but there is evidence to suggest that he was a printer and also owned a stationery shop. This interpretation is supported by his purchase, in 1837 after buying the newspaper, of another printing business from a Mr Wrake, who had been a bookseller, stationer, printer, and owner of a circulating library. Welch then moved into new premises at 16 Duke Street, Reading, and in September 1844 he moved again, this time to 12 The Market Place, Reading, where the *Chronicle* remained until 1891.

Precise circulation figures for the *Chronicle* at the time of Welch's acquisition of the papers are not known, but the *Windsor Express* carried

---

2 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 596, Saturday 30 July 1836.

3 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1906, Saturday 22 August 1863.

4 Up to and including the nineteenth century, the middle and upper classes, who were frequently great benefactors to the Church, were usually the only people who could afford to be buried in family vaults or have their own family burial plots and headstones in parish churchyards. The very wealthy were often buried, or had memorial tablets erected, inside the church itself, while those who could afford family plots often arranged to be buried near to the church door in order to be as near to God as possible after death.

5 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 141, Saturday 22 August 1863.

a report suggesting that the *Chronicle* may have suspended publication for a short period:

> Our ancient enemy the *Berkshire Chronicle* has appeared once more in the field, having been suddenly resuscitated by the result of the late Election. We had really imagined that this Journal was altogether defunct, but we find that it was only asleep.[6]

Whatever the truth of this report, the *Chronicle's* circulation was very small, being approximately six hundred copies per week for 1837 and 1838, only rising to just under eight hundred copies a week by 1850.[7] Even so it would seem that the paper was enjoying moderate success, for in late 1850 its format was enlarged to the very unwieldy size of 24" wide x 34¼" deep. This extra space was declared to be necessary in order to include more news material:

> To introduce a larger quantity of news by using a smaller type, or carefully to condense every article inserted, is open to objections on the part of the readers, and difficulties in the compilation, alike insuperable.[8]

Although still only containing four pages, the *Chronicle* was now double the size of previous issues, and was 'advanced to the limits imposed by the Newspaper Act',[9] but in order to produce a newspaper of this size a new printing press was installed, being:

> ...a powerful machine of the largest size constructed by the most eminent engineering firm in Great Britain.[10]

---

6 *Windsor Express*, no. 1226, 16 January 1836.

7 These figures are taken from Appendix 4 to the report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, (1851).

8 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1315, Saturday 5 October 1850.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

Unfortunately there is no evidence about the make of this press but, as it was installed at a period in the nineteenth century when a considerable number of companies were designing and building printing presses, one can only speculate as to what type of press the *Chronicle* had bought. However the reference to the 'most eminent engineering firm in Great Britain' narrows the possibilities and it is likely that the new press was a Napier cylinder press, for at that time David Napier's printing machines were regarded as the most successful and were extremely popular with printers. From 1822 onwards Napier designed and manufactured a considerable number of newspaper machines, in particular the Desideratum, which was a single-cylinder machine, and the Double Imperial, which was a two-cylinder machine, both of which could be driven by steam.[11] For a newspaper with the level of circulation which the *Chronicle* had, it is most likely that the single-cylinder press was sufficient for its publisher's needs.

In addition to buying a new press, the *Chronicle* also acquired new founts of type from Stephenson Blake & Co of Sheffield, '...the beauty and clearness of which our readers can judge for themselves'.[12] Despite having the new press, Welch continued to publish the paper in the large unwieldy folio format until the end of 1851, when:

> In consequence of the very numerous suggestions which have reached us from so many of our subscribers that the size of the *Berkshire Chronicle* as a folio paper was inconvenient to the readers...[13]

the size was reduced to 23½" x 17½", which the *Chronicle* referred to as 'quarto form', but the extent was increased from four to eight pages. This new format was retained from this time until 1907, when the *Chronicle*

---

11 James Moran, *Printing Presses*, (1973), pp. 132-3.

12 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1315, Saturday 5 October 1850.

13 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1378, Saturday 27 December 1851.

was produced in tabloid form. The price of 4d. unstamped and 5d. stamped was kept until October 1861, when the Act for the Abolition of the Paper Duty came into effect, and once again the price was reduced, this time to four pence stamped or three pence unstamped.[14] The repeal of this Paper Duty, which represented the last of the 'taxes on knowledge', was greeted with some enthusiasm by the *Chronicle*, which went into considerable detail in order to emphasise that a lower price would not mean a cheaper product. As they stated in their editorial:

> So far from reducing in any way the quality or the quantity of our Journal, we shall endeavour to improve both so as to render it an intelligent exponent of public opinion...[15]

It must be said that, despite the *Chronicle's* declared intention to present an intelligent view, its editorials were often biased to both the Conservative and Church of England points of view, and this was never more clearly demonstrated than in its editorials prior to the 1860 election. One of the candidates was Sir Francis Goldsmid, the Jewish Liberal, who came from the wealthy London banking family, and who was an active worker on behalf of the rights of the Jews. The *Chronicle* greeted the news that Sir Francis Goldsmid was to be a candidate with an extremely anti-Jewish attack in its editorial:

> We had supposed, in common with every Conservative in the country, that our borough had already, in a political sense, descended as low in the scale as it was possible, and that the obnoxious epithet of 'radical Reading' could not have received even a stronger signification. We were mistaken. There is a lower depth still, into which the town is threatened to be plunged by the return of a Jew candidate, whose ultra-radical principles are a mere trivial objection when compared to his religious position.[16]

---

14 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1808, Saturday 12 October 1861.

15 Ibid.

16 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1716, Saturday 17 December 1859.

The whole editorial of approximately two thousand words was written in this vein, and the theme was continued through to the end of January 1860 when, to the town's credit, Sir Francis Goldsmid was elected, much to the dismay of the Conservatives.

When the Prince Consort died on 14 December 1861, the news was announced in the *Berkshire Chronicle* in an edition with six-point bold rules separating all its columns and another at the head and foot of each page.[17] This full display of mourning was just for one edition, although the columns containing the report of the funeral the following week were also separated by bold rules. On 22 August 1863, the *Chronicle's* columns were once again divided by bold rules, this time to record the unfortunate death of Richard Welch, the proprietor, who had been ill for some time with an 'organic disease'.[18]

From his obituaries, both in the *Chronicle* and in the rival *Mercury*, a little more may be learned about the man whose connection with the *Chronicle* had started 'in times of great political and religious excitement', and who was both a 'devoted member of the Church of England and a true Conservative'. Both of these attributes are evident in the columns of the *Chronicle*, particularly his strong allegiance to the Conservative cause. Although his politics may have led him beyond the boundary line of courtesy to his political opponents, '...in his kindly bearing to all in the private discharge of social duties he has never been remiss'.[19]

---

17 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1818, Saturday 21 December 1861.

18 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1906, Saturday 22 August 1863.

19 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 141, Saturday 22 August 1863.

Given his background, his interests and sympathies 'naturally clung to the agricultural interests and to the middle class'.[20] Despite this he appears to have enjoyed the respect and friendship of people from all classes, and from many of those politically opposed to him. Indeed the Liberal *Reading Mercury*, Welch's rival local paper, lamented his passing from the 'old political contest' regretting that 'The Conservative cause has lost a faithful friend, and the Provincial Press an able editorial writer'.[21] Welch's funeral took place at Englefield on the following Wednesday, and although it was intended to be a small family service many of Reading's local dignitaries also attended to pay their respects. The cortege included the Mayor of Reading Mr J. O. Taylor, Henry Cowslade the owner of the *Reading Mercury*, and George Palmer of Huntley and Palmer. In Reading, many of the shops and offices closed for part of the day and apparently many private houses also displayed their respect.[22]

Following Richard Welch's death, the *Berkshire Chronicle* was published by his executors. In fact, according to the evidence of the imprint this provision continued for nearly fifteen years before the name of Francis Whitehall Welch appeared.[23] The reason for this is still unknown, although an explanation may be offered. When Richard Welch died, he left all his property to his wife, Mary Anne Welch, together with the sum of £6,000,[24] and it is quite possible that she was in no position, or had no desire, to control the paper herself and that the executor (who may

---

20 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1906, Saturday 22 August 1863.

21 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 1907, Saturday 29 August 1863.

22 Ibid.

23 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 3527, Saturday 19 January 1878.

24 Last will and testament of Richard Welch, proved 14 September 1863.

well have been her eldest son Herbert) allowed the *Chronicle* to be run on her behalf.

Herbert himself, if he were the executor, presumably had no wish to take a practical hand in the affairs of the company. After studying at Oxford University, from where he graduated in 1856, he had entered the Admiralty as a clerk third class, working in the Supply Correspondence and Records Department, and later rose to the position of senior clerk in the Department of the Accountant General of the Navy and Comptroller of Navy Pay,[25]. Throughout his career in the Admiralty he may have had aspirations to enter the Church, for in 1878 he left the Admiralty and returned to Oxford to study for an MA, and became curate of Brampton by Dingley, near Market Harborough, in 1879.[26]

Arthur Welch, the second son, who had worked on the paper as a journalist when a young man, was studying law at this time, and in 1871, at the age of 33, he was admitted to the Inner Temple and subsequently called to the Bar in November 1873.[27] After this time he was a judge on the Oxford circuit, but may well have combined his legal duties with those of running a newspaper, for his obituary in 1899 mentions that he had been editor and part-proprietor for over thirty years. If this were so, then it would seem that he did in fact become involved in the running of the paper on behalf of his mother.

---

25 *The Navy List* for the years 1858-79.

26 There is a discrepancy between J. J. Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*, which lists Welch as curate of Brampton Ashe in Norfolk, and the *Clergy List* of 1883, which gives the above information. As Herbert Welch was ordained by the Bishop of Peterborough, the *Clergy List* would seem to be accurate.

27 J. J. Foster, *Men-at-the-Bar*, a biographical handlist, (1883).

Little is known of the third son, Francis Whitehall Welch, who was about fourteen years old when his father died, and approximately twenty-nine when his name first appeared in the *Chronicle* as its printer and publisher.

Mary Anne Welch died on 15 September 1877 and, apart from several minor bequests, her estate was divided equally between four of her five children: Arthur, Lucy, Margaret, and Francis, with Arthur and Lucy being the joint executors.[28] The sum of £100 was left to Herbert Welch, the smallness of this bequest possibly being due to the fact that Herbert's religious beliefs had caused him to reject worldly possessions. It is interesting to note that it was almost immediately after his mother's death that Herbert left the Admiralty and entered the Church.

Francis Welch's name appeared on the imprint of the *Chronicle* three months after his mother's death, and it remained there for the next ten years.[29] During that period, Francis Welch maintained the strong Conservative bias for which the *Chronicle* was renowned, never missing an opportunity to attack the Liberal opposition in the editorials. The quality of the paper was also maintained, and its appearance remained clean and typographically crisp.

At the beginning of July 1884 the price of the *Chronicle* was cut dramatically from 3d. to 1d. This considerable reduction was no doubt the result of the *Chronicle's* attempt to become more competitive with its local rivals and also to expand its circulation amongst those people about to join the electorate for the first time as a result of the 1884 Reform Act. This Act extended the borough household and lodge franchise to the

---

28 Last will and testament of Mary Anne Welch, proved 24 March 1874.

29 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 3527, Saturday 19 January 1878.

counties, causing the county electorate to be nearly tripled, and was followed by the Redistribution Act of 1885. This was an attempt to attain the democratic ideal of equal electoral districts by accepting a rough proportion of one seat for every 54,000 inhabitants as the basis for parliamentary representation. As a result, seventy-nine small boroughs were deprived of independent representation when they were merged with the counties and some thirty-six larger boroughs in the country were reduced to single-member representation. One of the latter was Reading, where the town's voters lost their ancient right to record two votes, and where the redistribution of the electorate had a considerable influence on the election result of 1885.[30]

The *Chronicle's* local rivals were all biased towards the Liberal cause, and it no doubt faced considerable competition, particularly from the *Observer* which consisted of eight pages and sold for 1d. Between 1880 and 1884 the *Observer* claimed that it had nearly doubled its circulation from 5,627 to 10,058 copies per week.[31] If this claim is accurate, it was making serious inroads into the circulation of the other local papers. In addition to the *Observer*, the *Chronicle* also faced competition from the *Reading Mercury*, which possibly had a circulation of between five and six thousand copies per week, but which sold at 4d. at this time (although this was to be reduced to twopence in September 1884)[32] and from the eight-page *Reading Express*, which had been a penny paper since 1879.

In announcing the reduction in price, the *Chronicle* stated that the reason was:

---

30 See Chapter VII.

31 *Reading Observer*, no. 1258, Saturday 12 January 1884.

32 See Chapter V.

> ...to meet the demand for a First Class Conservative County Paper, issued at such a price as to be within the reach of all, it has been determined to publish the *Berkshire Chronicle* at ONE PENNY weekly... No trouble or expense will be spared in order to render the *Berkshire Chronicle* a popular and trustworthy record of Local and General Events, and a vigorous and efficient exponent of Conservative Opinions...[33]

The *Chronicle's* aim to expound vigorously the Conservative party message appears to have been successful, for in November 1885 the Conservative candidate, Charles Murdoch, was elected as Member of Parliament for Reading with a narrow majority over the Liberal, George Shaw-Lefevre, who had represented Reading since 1863. This was the first time for thirty-six years that a Conservative had been returned to represent the town, and although Murdoch's majority was only 129 votes the *Chronicle* expressed considerable jubilation at the result, describing it as a 'Great Conservative Victory'.[34] The success of this victory was said to be in no small part due to the outstanding support given to the Conservative cause by the *Chronicle*, and to the 'fine literary flair' of its editor, Arthur Welch. To celebrate the victory, a number of copies of the editorial page of the current issue of the paper were printed on silk and hung up in prominent places for all to see.[35]

Francis Welch continued to be the printer and publisher of the *Chronicle* until July 1888 when, with no explanation, the imprint was suddenly altered to read 'Printed and Published by the Proprietor Arthur Welch'.[36] The abruptness of the change suggests that Francis had either died or had left the *Chronicle* to go elsewhere, but there appear to

---

33 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 3905, Saturday 28 June 1884.

34 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 3979, Saturday 28 November 1885.

35 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 3980, Saturday 5 December 1885. There is currently a framed copy of this silk edition in the *Reading Chronicle* office in Reading.

36 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4113, Saturday 28 July 1888.

be no extant records concerning his fate, no obituary in the local papers, and no record of his burial in the family church at Englefield.

While Arthur Welch had been involved in his judicial duties on the Oxford circuit, it appears that he may well have been responsible for some editorial work on the paper, but left the day-to-day running and the printing to his younger brother Francis. However, at the age of fifty-two and with failing health, Arthur Welch probably decided to retire from the rigours of legal life and to devote all his time to producing the newspaper.[37]

Very little change is apparent in the *Chronicle* under the ownership of Arthur Welch, except perhaps for some sign of deterioration in the quality of printing produced during 1891, which was done with dirty and worn type, while the make-up shows signs of bad justification and spacing and bent and broken rules proliferate. Despite this, however, the *Chronicle* must have maintained its success, for in 1891 the paper moved to a new site in Valpy Street, into a building which had been specially built to house it, and where it remained until 1986.[38]

Arthur Welch remained the proprietor of the *Berkshire Chronicle* until the end of 1894, when it was sold to James Neale, whose name appeared on the imprint of the paper in January 1895. Again, there was no announcement to explain this change of ownership, but Arthur Welch's poor health may have been a contributory factor in his decision to sell the

---

37 In his obituary in the *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4667, Saturday 20 May 1899, reference is made to Arthur Welch's long illness.

38 See map on p. xvii.

Chronicle, for his obituary in 1899 stated that he had taken no active part in public or journalistic life for some years.[39]

James Neale had worked for the *Chronicle* for some twenty-eight years, firstly in the position of reporter and later, presumably, as editor, so his acquisition of the company ensured a measure of continuity in the paper's views. It is no surprise to find that in his first editorial as owner he re-emphasised the *Chronicle's* political standpoint in 'vigorously supporting the Conservative cause'.

The first aspect of the paper which needed attention was the typographic appearance which had deteriorated considerably during the last few years of Arthur Welch's ownership. Neale immediately set about changing this situation, and the *Chronicle* at once showed signs of improvement in its typography. To improve the actual quality of the presswork, a new two-feeder Wharfedale was installed, capable of printing between three and four thousand copies an hour. In addition, Neale altered the masthead of the *Chronicle* by placing a new royal crest beween the words 'Berkshire' and 'Chronicle', which were themselves printed in a new Outline Gothic type.

The first halftone illustration appeared in the paper in June 1897, when two portraits were printed, one being of Mr W. Ferguson, the Mayor of Reading, and the other of Prince Christian.[40] Considering the poor quality of the paper used at this time, these prints are quite good. During the Welch family's period of ownership the *Chronicle* had, like its rival the *Mercury*, always been printed on good-quality rag paper, and Neale continued this practice during the first year of his ownership. However, by

---

39 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 177, Saturday 27 May 1899.

40 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4580, Saturday 12 June 1897.

the early months of 1896 he had no doubt discovered that to keep the price of the *Chronicle* down to 1d. it was necessary to economise on materials and, as a result, from the early part of 1896 onwards the paper was produced on newsprint.

This move to the use of cheaper paper was doubtless necessary in order to compete on price with two of its local rivals, the *Observer* and the *Reading Standard*, both of which had been penny newspapers since they had been established.[41] Unlike the *Reading Mercury*, whose circulation was mainly in the country districts and agricultural areas, the *Chronicle* was reliant on sales in Reading itself and in the other larger towns in the county, and here it was in direct competition with the *Reading Observer*, the *Reading Standard*, and also, to a lesser extent, the *Reading Mercury*. With four newspapers seeking sales and advertising revenue in a somewhat limited market, the competition must have been considerable.

The *Chronicle* was certainly unable to attract as much local advertising as its competitors, for only thirty-three per cent of its contents contained advertisements compared with thirty-five percent in the recently formed *Standard* and fifty per cent in each of the *Mercury* and *Observer*. In addition to improving the paper's appearance, Neale obviously needed to work hard at acquiring more advertising revenue and to do this he had to improve both the circulation and the style of advertising. Indeed, one noticeable change in the paper's appearance from this point was the increasing inclusion of display advertisements, particularly those which, for the first time, were placed across two-column widths, a trend already set by the *Reading Standard*.

---

41 See Chapters VII and VIII.

During the latter part of 1897, the *Berkshire Chronicle* possibly installed a Linotype machine. There is no mention in the paper of any such new piece of machinery but some text columns and advertisements show signs of having been set on a Linotype, hairlines appearing between letters in some instances where the liquid type-metal has been forced between the matrices during the casting of a line. The *Chronicle* was certainly using a new typeface, which appears to be Linotype Roman No. 2, and this, together with the use of repeated words in many of the advertisements in the paper, also suggests the use of a Linotype machine for typesetting.[42]

Despite James Neale's investment in new machinery, and his efforts to improve both production methods and the appearance of the paper, it is likely that the *Chronicle* was suffering financial difficulties and that the worry of running the company was having an adverse effect on Neale's already indifferent health.[43] In the early part of 1901 the company was placed in the hands of Frank Cooksey, a local auctioneer and valuer, in order to be sold, further supporting the hypothesis that the *Chronicle* needed the fresh injection of capital which only a new company could provide.

The paper was bought by The Berkshire Chronicle Company Ltd, which was registered on 4 June 1901 with a nominal capital of 1,000 shares of £5 each and an initial share issue of 500 shares. By the end of August, 494 shares had been issued, raising £2,470, and of this sum £1,338 1s. 1d. was used to purchase the company from Neale. A further

---

42 See also Chapter V, p. 93.

43 *Reading Observer*, no. 4783, Saturday 17 August 1901.

£350 was set aside in order to cover all book debts of the *Chronicle* and £21 to cover the cost of the company valuation and the sale transaction.[44]

It is fairly clear that this new company was formed by a group of local business people who wished to ensure that the Conservative party in Reading and district should maintain a newspaper which would continue to inform the public of that party's views. Indeed, the *Chronicle's* later owner, W. T. Hedges, described this group as being '...more interested in politics, than in running a newspaper'.[45]

The *Chronicle* had always supported the Conservative viewpoint, and all of its owners had been active members of the local Conservative party; indeed, James Neale himself had been the secretary of the Reading Conservative association for over eighteen years.[46] Whether the decision to purchase the *Chronicle* was made by the local Conservative party on a formal basis, or whether the shareholders of the new company came together as a result of their collective concern for the promotion of the Conservative cause, is not clear and unfortunately there are no known extant records to clarify this point. However, a glance through the list of shareholders shows quite clearly that most of them were actively concerned in various ways with the Conservative party, including Charles Edward Keyser, who had made three unsuccessful attempts to enter Parliament as Reading's MP, and who was one of the major shareholders, with sixty shares. Another major shareholder was Blackall Simmonds, a local brewer who also held sixty shares, and who for many years was the treasurer of the Reading Central Conservative

---

44 PRO BT 31/70389.

45 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5649, Saturday 23 March 1912.

46 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4783, Saturday 17 August 1907.

Club.[47] It is also interesting to note that Frank Cooksey, who was employed to make a valuation of the company and who was responsible for the sale transaction, was himself the local agent for the Conservative party.

On 12 August, just six weeks after the company had been sold, James Neale died at the age of 58, having been associated with the press in Reading for nearly thirty-eight years, most of which had been on the staff of the *Chronicle*.[48]

The new company appointed Harry Read, a local journalist, to be the general manager and editor of the paper, and under his guidance the paper embarked on a programme of expansion, starting with a move to a larger format on 3 August, increasing from 20" x 18½" to 25" x 20". This larger size allowed for an extra 16-em column to be added to each page, thus making the *Chronicle* a 56-column paper, and with this extra space came a sudden and marked increase in the amount of advertising in the paper, rising from 33% in the old format to just over 41% in the new.

In October the company bought the *Maidenhead Argus* and increased its own size to ten pages, at the same time opening a London office in Budge Row for advertisers and correspondents.

Further improvements were made at the beginning of 1902 when the *Chronicle* was enlarged still further to twelve pages and consequent changes made to the contents of the paper. From this time on it was proposed to include a weekly syndicated story, an illustrated 'Events of the Week' feature, an illustrated weekly article on dressmaking, 'Hints for

---

47 PRO BT 31/70389.

48 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4783, Saturday 17 August 1901.

the Home', and instructions on home decoration. All of these features and articles were undoubtedly directed at encouraging a wider family audience, more particularly the women in the town and district.

The paper was now illustrated regularly with numerous line and halftone blocks, and throughout 1902 and 1903 there was a steady increase in the photographic illustrations included in the paper. With this change in weekly content came occasional special eight-page supplements on such topics as 'Spring Fashion' or 'Holiday Supplement'; all these items were accompanied by an increase in the advertising content of the paper, which had risen to 46% of the paper's space.

The form of the advertising had also changed. An increasing number of quarter-page and half-page advertisements were gradually included in the paper, many of these being for national companies such as Sunlight Soap, Colmans Mustard, Lifebuoy Soap, Lux, Pearles Butter and Van Houtens Cocoa, most including line illustrations in their make-up. Additionally, instead of all advertising appearing in full columns, some advertisements now appeared in isolated positions in the paper, giving the effect of more space and less close text.

The twelve-page version of the paper continued each week, priced at 1d., until the early part of 1904, when it was announced that the *Chronicle* was to start the publication of a second edition on a Tuesday afternoon each week.[49] This first appeared in early February [50] and consisted of a four-page paper costing a 1/2d., while the Friday edition was reduced to eight pages at 1d.[51]

---

49 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4920, Saturday 6 February 1904.

50 *Berkshire Chronicle*, Tuesday Edition, Tuesday 16 February 1904.

51 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4923, Friday 19 February 1904.

In announcing this new venture, the *Chronicle* made much of the advantages that this twice-a-week publication would present to advertisers and, although this may well have been true, it is also a fact that the customer was now having to pay more each week for twelve pages of newspaper. The evidence suggests that the move to a twelve-page paper costing 1d had not resulted in the anticipated rise in circulation, and that even with a 46% advertising content the income was insufficient to ensure the paper's profitability. There is no doubt that the *Chronicle* endeavoured to reduce its costs during this period, for the actual newsprint on which the paper was produced was obviously extremely cheap; the paper used in all the extant editions of the paper from 1902 to 1906 was of such poor quality that they are now too brittle to handle.

It appears therefore that the company split the *Chronicle* into two editions, charging for each part, rather than instituting a price rise for the twelve-page edition, which may have deterred customers. In addition, the publication of the paper in two editions on different days gave the company more time to produce the paper and reduced the pressure of trying to print a twelve-page paper on one day on an obsolete printing press.

One other change which occurred during 1904 was the introduction of James Neale's son, Frank, as the publisher and editor of the paper.[52] There was no explanation for the change but F. W. Neale's name appeaed in the imprint from early July, with no reference to Harry Read.

Neale continued to publish the *Chronicle* twice a week until the end of 1906, when the company changed hands again. The editorial for the *Chronicle* on 5 January 1907 announced 'On Saturday last the "Berkshire

---

52 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4961, Saturday 1 July 1904.

Chronicle", the great constitutional organ of the Royal and Ancient County, passed to a new proprietory' and to mark the event, and to bring the *Chronicle* 'within the reach of all' the price was reduced permanently to 1/2d

The new owner was an advertising agent named William Thomas Hedges, who had acquired a major shareholding in the Berkshire Chronicle Company Ltd by purchasing 525 of the 900 shares issued, and he, George Baker (the company secretary), and Frank Neale (the editor), were listed as directors of the company.[53]

Hedges obviously had ambitious plans for the *Chronicle*, for the editorial described other future developments for the paper:

> Other far-reaching evolutionary measures are in progress, details of which it would be inopportune to announce at this juncture. Suffice it, therefore, to say in the meantime that the entire plant by which the paper has been recently produced is in the process of being scrapped, and that in its place will be erected within a few weeks, a plant the like of which no newspaper office in Reading, and, indeed, few weekly newspapers in the British Isles has the equal. When the new plant is running innovations even more revolutionary than the reduction of the price of the 'Berkshire Chronicle' will be effected.[54]

There seems little doubt that the production methods of the *Chronicle* needed to be considerably improved, particularly if the paper were to be expanded as Hedges proposed. By the paper's own admission, the printing of the *Chronicle* on the two-feeder Wharfedale took from 'early afternoon till after midnight', even with continuous running, and the printed sheets had to pass through a folding machine before they

---

53 PRO BT 31/70389.

54 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4777, Saturday 5 January 1907.

could be despatched and sold. The average production rate for producing the paper this way was in the region of one thousand copies per hour.[55]

The old machinery was therefore completely scrapped and a new Hoe reel-fed rotary press powered by electricity was installed in its place, together with the necessary equipment to mould and cast curved stereo plates to fit the press. This new press was capable of producing 27,000 copies of the paper per hour, completely folded and counted in quires. Also included in the new plant was a single-cylinder flat-bed Wharfedale press, on which the weekly 'Contents Bill' was to be produced, and, in keeping with a Conservative paper, this was to be printed in bronze blue.

The new press was able to produce the paper in the more convenient format of 20" x 12½", with the Saturday edition containing sixteen pages and the midweek edition eight pages, each edition selling for ½d.

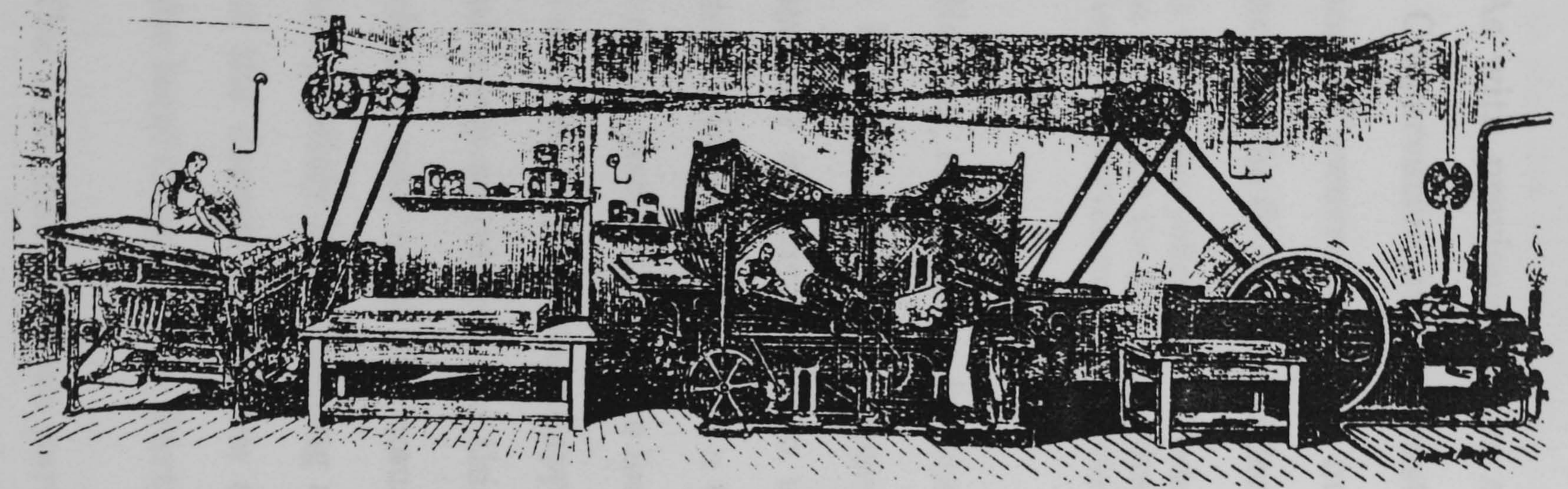
The first of the 'revolutionary innovations' appeared in September, when the *Chronicle* introduced a special 'Football Edition' for Saturdays, which was to be 'absolutely the most up to date football paper ever published in England'.[56] Whether this boast was true is difficult to prove, for none of the *Football Chronicles* for this period is extant. However, this edition included the latest results, notes on the championship race, cartoons, sporting portraits, and competitions, amongst many other such features. One of the much advertised attractions for this football paper was that the *Berkshire Chronicle* had acquired the exclusive right to the only telephone at Elm Park, Reading Football Club's stadium, and was therefore able to offer the most up-to-date report of any local match. The

---

55 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4490, Saturday 30 March 1907.

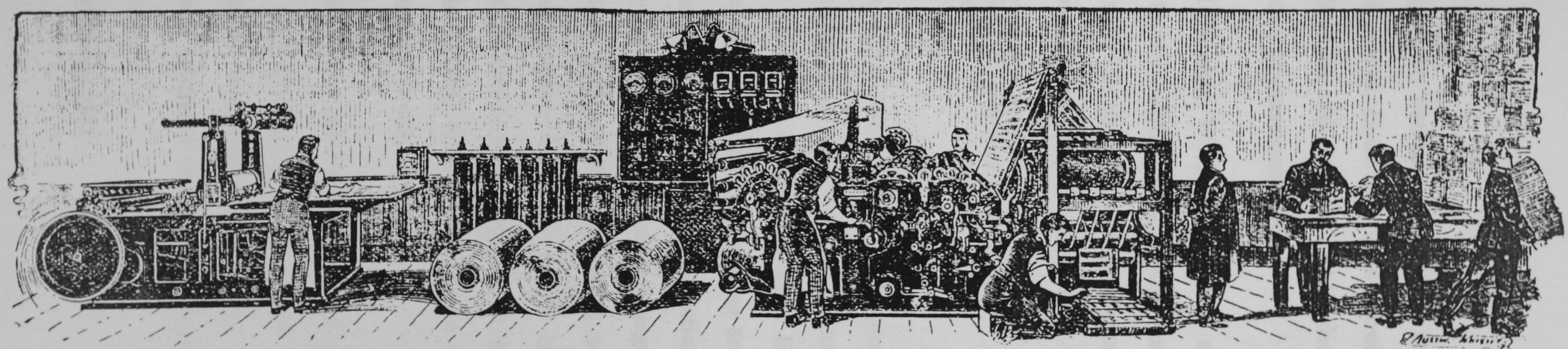
56 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5140, Saturday 14 August 1909.

HOW THE "CHRONICLE" WAS PRINTED.



FOLDER. FLAT BED PRINTING MACHINE. GAS ENGINE.

HOW IT IS PRINTED NOW.



POSTER MACHINE. ROLLS OF PAPER EACH FIVE MILES. SWITCHBOARD. ROTARY PRINTING MACHINE. PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT.

Football Chronicle consisted of eight pages, in the same format as the weekly and midweekly papers, and sold at ½d. Such was its apparent popularity that it was published every football season up to 1914, when the shortage of newsprint caused publication to cease until 1919.

As with previous owners of the *Chronicle*, W. T. Hedges was an ardent Conservative and he wasted no time in assuring the public that the change of ownership would not endanger the paper's avowed political allegiance. In the first issue under his ownership the paper declared:

> It will be the policy of the 'Berkshire Chronicle' to support in the future as in the past the great Constitutional Party of the Empire, the tenets of Loyal Conservatism and Imperial Unionism.[57]

Hedges' enthusiasm for the Conservative cause led him into some trouble in 1909, when he abused his position as the owner of a local newspaper by endeavouring to use the *Chronicle* to his own ends. He apparently wished to stand as a Conservative candidate for Reading and put his name forward to to the local Conservative party for consideration. He was not selected and there appears to have been some dispute amongst the local party members over this decision. Hedges felt aggrieved at not being chosen and used the usually Conservative *Chronicle* to air his grievance publicly by publishing adverse comments and criticisms on the views of the chosen candidates and being highly critical of the way in which the local Conservative Party conducted its business.

The local Conservative party responded to this move by setting up another newspaper called the *Reading and County Times*, in order to counter the views printed in the *Chronicle* and, more importantly, to convey their views to the public. This new company was formed during

---

57 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 4777, Saturday 5 January 1907.

the latter months of 1909 and registered on 30 December of that year as The Reading and County Times Ltd.[58] The nominal capital of the company was just £100, divided into 400 shares of 5s. 0d. each, and there were four major shareholders, each of whom had seventy-six shares and who were also the directors of the company.

One of the directors was John Paxton Petty, managing director of the Reading branch of Petty's Press — a large family printing business which had other printing interests in Leeds and whose Reading company occupied premises in Valpy Street, very near to the *Berkshire Chronicle*.

The first edition of the *Reading and County Times* appeared on Friday 31 December 1909, consisted of 12 pages printed on smooth imitation art paper, with a format of 17¼" x 11", and cost ½d.[59] Like most other newspapers, it declared its intention in the editorial of the first issue:

> We stand for Constitution and Empire — in a word for Freedom and Self Preservation. At a very critical moment in our political history, when Freedom is jeopardised by the threat of what would amount to a single chamber government — when our National existence may become at stake through a weak policy of Defence, when the Union itself, so jealously guarded in the past, may be broken asunder by the granting of Home Rule to Ireland — at this more than critical moment we make our appeal as a new paper to the public of Reading. We shall support with all the energy at our command the Unionist cause and the Unionist Candidates.[60]

Not surprisingly for a paper set up specifically to support a political cause, the content consisted primarily of political articles supporting such topics as 'Tariff Reform' and 'Preferential Treaties with Colonies' About forty-six per cent of the contents consisted of advertising, perhaps not

58 PRO BT 31/106739.

59 *Reading and County Times*, I, no. 1, Friday 31 December 1909.

60 Ibid.

surprisingly as one of the four directors, Arthur Grantham, was also the managing director of a large Reading advertising agency.[61]

Initially it would appear that the *Reading and County Times* received favourable support in the town, for after the next weekly issue a Tuesday midweek edition appeared, consisting of eight pages, and after the subsequent Saturday issue the owners declared that the success of the paper was such that they had decided to enlarge it to sixteen pages each week and to drop the midweek edition.[62] Changes continued when issue number 7 was produced in the new format of 22" x 17" and printed on newsprint, making the *County Times* appear much more like a conventional newspaper, and by early August the paper contained sports results, marriage, birth and death announcements, and was attempting perhaps to appeal to the public as a 'Family and Unionist Journal for Berkshire and the adjoining Counties'.[63]

The last edition of the *County Times* appeared on 10 August 1910 after just thirty-five editions had been produced, and with no announcement of its cessation. However, during the early months of 1910, W. T. Hedges had healed his rift with the local Conservative party and had entered into an agreement with John Petty to buy the *County Times* for the sum of £150, which represented the costs which had been incurred in producing the paper. Due to a disagreement over the terms, the sale did not go through, but Hedges was taken to court and sued for the sum of £200, apparently being the sum set aside as surety should the sale of the paper not proceed. The judge found in Petty's favour, and Hedges was

---

61 PRO BT 31/106739.

62 *Reading and County Times*, I, no. 4, Saturday 15 January 1910.

63 *Reading and County Times*, I, no. 7, Saturday 5 February 1910.

obliged to pay, but Petty was still heavily out of pocket over the running of the paper and was in some considerable trouble with his family for having entered into such an arrangement and incurring such a debt.[64]

Early in 1910, the Berkshire Chronicle Company turned its attention to other towns in the county and, starting with Newbury in the spring, followed by Windsor and Wokingham in the autumn, initiated the production of local editions of the *Chronicle* for those towns, each with its own title. These were followed in 1911 and 1912 by the *Maidenhead Chronicle* and the *Slough Chronicle*.

The production of those extra editions meant that the press was kept busy throughout the week, for in addition to the midweek *Chronicle* published on a Tuesday, the *Maidenhead Chronicle* was published on Wednesdays, the *Newbury Chronicle* on Thursdays, both the *Windsor* and the *Slough Chronicles* on Fridays, and the *Wokingham Chronicle*, the weekly *Berkshire Chronicle*, and the *Football Chronicle* on Saturdays.

With all this expansion activity it must be reasonable to assume that the *Chronicle's* circulation was increasing, and certainly from October 1908 onwards the paper dropped its old secondary head title and replaced it with the words 'LARGEST CIRCULATION GUARANTEED IN READING AND COUNTY OF BERKS'.[65] It also boasted that its circulation for 1910 showed a certified 24.42% rise over the previous year, but despite this there are no actual figures to show exactly what the circulation was.[66] The only clue to the extent of the circulation at this time came in 1912 when Hedges commented that 'Five years ago the

---

64 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5532, Friday 7 June 1912.

65 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5050, Saturday 3 October 1908.

66 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5197, Saturday 5 March 1910.

circulation of the "Chronicle" was little more than 1500 copies per week', indicating the extent of the circulation at the time when Hedges acquired the *Chronicle*.[67]

According to Hedges, the *Chronicle* had broken all previous records in 1911 and at that time had undeniably the largest circulation of any paper published in Reading, the County of Berks, and the adjacent districts.[68]

Hedges was in fact reviewing the progress of the *Chronicle*, since taking it over in 1907, at a special dinner given to celebrate the formation of a new company for an injection of fresh capital. This company was to be called the Chronicle Company Ltd, and his new partner was A. S. Appelbee, who had been the successful proprietor of a group of newspapers in Hertfordshire and who was to join the new company as managing director. Perhaps the most interesting feature of Hedges' speech was his reference to the fact that the new company had three times the capitalization of the old one.[69]

It appears very much as if the rapid expansion engendered by Hedges and the considerable outlay on new plant and machinery had left the Berkshire Chronicle Company Ltd extremely stretched in financial terms, and it most likely had little working capital left. Appelbee had expressed a desire to join the enterprise and to back up his request with a 'very substantial sum of capital',[70] in order that the company could continue the programme of expansion. He had been impressed with the

---

67 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5469, Saturday 23 March 1912.

68 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5350, Saturday 28 January 1911.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

tremendous progress the *Chronicle* had made in such a short time and was keen to invest his money in a business that would show a good return in the form of profits.

The newly formed Chronicle Company Ltd was registered in January 1911 with a share capital of £15,000 in £1 shares, the two shareholders being Hedges (with 10,000 shares), and Appelbee (with 5,000).[71] It is evident from the registration documents that it was Appelbee's investment of £5,000 in cash that was needed, for Hedges' 10,000 shares were just a paper transaction, being the value placed on the old company and transferred to Hedges as being full paid-up shares in the new one.

In September 1911, the *Chronicle* was involved in the inauguration of the first official aerial post service between London and Windsor. This service was set up to demonstrate the possibility of using aviation as a practical means of transport for mail items, and the *Chronicle* approached the organising committee to suggest that the public should also have the opportunity of sending messages from Windsor to London.[72] The initial objection to this idea was that the cost of transporting mail by air would be extremely high and that there would be insufficient mail from a small town like Windsor to warrant the cost, or the risk to the pilots. These objections were eventually overcome and the *Chronicle* was granted a special concession by the Postmaster General to organise the sending of special messages by air, using the *Chronicle's* Windsor office as the official post box for such items. The *Chronicle* also had the sole selling rights for the special aerial postcards and envelopes to be used for the experiment

---

71 PRO BT 31/113810.

72 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5416, Saturday 16 September 1911.

and arranged, through its pages, for the public to be able to send cards or letters to the *Chronicle* under separate cover, for onward transmission by the air postal service.[73]

This experiment proved to be a great success, for not only was it demonstrated that mail could be carried by air but the *Chronicle* gained a tremendous amount of publicity from the venture, their post boxes being besieged with mail to be transported by air.

Following the injection of new capital and the considerable publicity accruing from the air post venture, the *Chronicle* embarked on the ambitious production of a daily evening paper in the town, launching the project at a grand inaugural dinner to which many local dignitaries were invited. In an after-dinner speech, W. T. Hedges announced the forthcoming *Berkshire Daily Chronicle* and emphasised that Reading was well suited to support a daily paper of its own, for with a population of approximately a hundred thousand and a potential market of some three hundred thousand throughout the county it was better placed than many towns such as Cambridge and Gloucester, each of which had only fifty thousand inhabitants but published successful evening papers.[74]

At this time, the *Chronicle's* circulation for all editions had risen to 30,000-40,000 copies per week. This figure, reported the *Chronicle*, 'represents something like twice the total of the combined circulations of all the other newspapers in Reading, and to exceed that of all the other newspapers in the county put together'.[75] This claim, like many others made by papers themselves, has to be treated with care, for during this

---

73 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5414, Saturday 9 September 1911.

74 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5469, Saturday 23 March 1912.

75 Ibid.

same period the *Standard* was claiming to have approximately '50,000 readers',[76] while the *Observer's* circulation was probably around twelve thousand five hundred copies,[77] and the *Mercury's* at a rough estimate would be about ten thousand copies a week. Allowing for the fact that the *Standard's* claim was probably based on two or three readers per household, that would leave a circulation of 16,000-25,000, so the combined circulation of the *Chronicle's* three rivals was at best approximately 38,500, excluding the other papers in the county.

The first edition of the *Berkshire Daily Chronicle* was published on Monday 25 March 1912 with the same 20" x 12½" format of the weekly and midweekly *Chronicles*, and was an eight-page paper selling for ½d. The declared intention was to publish two editions each day in the form of an 'Afternoon Edition' and an 'Evening Edition', but at the end of May the publishers were advertising additional daily editions. These were to take the form of an 'Early Sporting Edition' published at 10 a.m., a 'Luncheon Edition' at 1 p.m., an 'Afternoon Edition' at 3 p.m., an 'Evening Edition' at 5 p.m., and a 'Cricket Edition' (close of play) at 6.45 p.m. With this announcement appeared a slight change in title, now to be *Berkshire Daily Chronicle and Evening Chronicle*.[78]

It would seem to have been somewhat over-ambitious for the *Chronicle* to attempt to publish so many editions per day before ensuring that there would be a demand for them. Unfortunately it is not possible to establish how long the *Chronicle* produced this many daily editions, for

---

76 *Reading Standard*, no. 2005, Saturday 11 January 1913.

77 This figure is based on the estimate given by the *Observer* in the prospectus for its sale in 1918, a copy of which is in George Lovejoy's Scrapbook, Reading Reference Library.

78 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5525, Friday 31 May 1912.

only the evening edition is held at the British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale, and Reading Local Reference Library only has copies of the weekly edition.

As well as these various daily editions, the *Chronicle* continued to produce its special editions for other towns in the county, and as a consequence its production system would have been working to capacity, even with the use of the Linotype machine and the Hoe rotary press. One of the results of copies of these weekly special town editions not being extant is that it is not now possible to compare them to see how much they differ from each other. It may well have been that the make-up of the special town weeklies, the Reading midweek edition, and perhaps even part of the Saturday edition were identical and that very little matter was added or subtracted from one edition to another. The advertising, for example, could remain and be identical in each edition, as too could the main stories and articles for the week. By this method the amount of work in producing each separate edition could be kept to a minimum.

Whatever method was used would have entailed considerable effort, and it would have needed a good circulation for all the editions to make that effort worthwhile. There is little doubt that the company had over-extended its resources, and in December 1912 an extraordinary general meeting was held to initiate winding-up proceedings, Arthur Gould, a local chartered accountant, being appointed as voluntary liquidator.[79] Within a month the company stopped publishing the local town editions and, although there was no announcement in the *Chronicle* to the effect that these editions would cease, the separate town names were no longer

---

79 PRO BT 31/113810.

listed in the advertising order form for each paper.[80] In addition, the list of addresses of local offices was dropped from the imprint, which now contained only the Reading and London addresses.

Other aspects of the paper's content which changed during 1913 were the amount of space devoted to advertising which had dropped to thirty-three per cent, and the number of halftone illustrations which had virtually disappeared. All these signs pointed to the fact that the *Chronicle* was in financial trouble, and during 1913 the paper passed into the hands of Henry Mortimer Hobson, the owner of the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, who also purchased the *Reading Mercury* in the same year, forming The Reading Newspaper Company Ltd to run the two papers.

---

80 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 5775, Friday 21 February 1913.

CHAPTER VII

§

READING OBSERVER 1873-1924

Between the years of 1855 and 1873, the Liberal party was particularly strong in Reading and Liberal candidates had always represented the town in Parliament. Two of their candidates, Sir Francis Goldsmid and George John Shaw-Lefevre, had held the two Reading seats for most of that period, Goldsmid being elected in 1860 and Shaw-Lefevre in 1865. Although they had always enjoyed a healthy majority over the Conservatives, that majority was greatly increased in 1868 as a result of the larger electorate, following the 1867 Reform Act.

This Act had removed nearly all the rotten and nomination boroughs in the country, given the vote to many large towns previously unrepresented, and considerably increased the county electorate. Further to this the Act had extended the franchise in towns by giving the vote to all adult males who, for at least twelve months before the election, had occupied a dwelling house either as owner or tenant, and to those in lodging for the same period in premises of the value of ten pounds per year unfurnished. The effect in Reading of this Reform Act was a rapid increase in the electorate, which rose from 2,146 to 3,228 in November 1868, rising still further to over 6,000 in 1884[1], but with this greater

---

1 A. Aspinall *et al.*, *Parliament Through Seven Centuries*, (1962), p. 96.

increase the political pendulum swung in favour of the Conservatives until 1892.

Sir Francis Goldsmid, although having a good majority, had therefore to face considerable opposition from the Conservatives in the town, particularly from the *Berkshire Chronicle* which expressed a frankly vitriolic opinion concerning the fact that Goldsmid was a Jew. During the election of 1860, the *Chronicle* lived up to its reputation of being 'offensively Conservative'[2] by vigorously attacking Goldsmid in its pages even after he had won the election:

> Had Sir F. Goldsmid been returned for Tower Hamlets or Lambeth or some dirty little seaport, no surprise would have been felt, but that a town so celebrated for its religious profession should have thus deliberately abandoned its distinguishing characteristic is truly marvellous... So the return of a Jew is a standing indignity to the religion we are equally bound to protect from insult.[3]

The *Chronicle* even accused the *Mercury* of awaking from its 'comatose condition', to assume the character of 'Jewish Advocate' and, after such press reports as this and the numerous anti-semitic posters and pamphlets published in the town, it is to Reading's credit that Goldsmid was elected and continued to represent the town until his untimely death in 1878, caused by an accident when alighting from a train at Waterloo Station.[4]

The other Liberal MP, George John Shaw-Lefevre, was the nephew of Viscount Eversley who, as Charles Shaw-Lefevre, had also represented Reading as Member of Parliament from 1802 until 1820. Both Goldsmid and Shaw-Lefevre had distinguished political careers whilst representing the town.

---

2 K. G. Burton, *The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire (1723-1855)*, (1954), p. 77.

3 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 172, 21 January 1860.

4 *The Times*, 4 May 1878.

In the light of the enlarged electorate, the Liberals, with more foresight than the other political parties, realized that in order to attract voters and win elections they needed a more efficient party organization and a better means of communication with the newly enfranchised voters. With two such distinguished representatives in Parliament as Goldsmid and Shaw-Lefevre, the local Liberal party in Reading felt that the time had arrived when it should '...have an up-to-date newspaper as its own organ'.[5] This move to launch a new Liberal newspaper in Reading may also have been influenced by the fact that the Liberal Central Press Agency was sold to some Conservatives by its owner, William Saunders, in 1870. The circumstances surrounding this sale are not altogether clear and it appears that certain leading members of the Liberal party lost confidence in the ability of this agency to represent their party's interest. In order to overcome the problem, a number of influential Liberals formed the National Press Agency; this was financed by J. J. Coleman, the Liberal MP for Norwich and himself a newspaper proprietor,[6] with help from Edward Spender[7] and Lord Wolverton, the Liberal Chief Whip.

This keen interest in the use of the press by the Liberal party is reflected in the political distribution of provincial newspapers at this time, for between 1860 and 1874 there were nearly twice as many Liberal papers as Conservative ones, indeed Liberal papers represented half the country's provincial papers at this time. Over the same period the Liberals always had between three and five newspaper proprietors as MPs in the

---

5 *Reading Observer*, no. 1, Saturday 2 August 1873.

6 J. J. Coleman was owner of the Liberal *Eastern Daily Press*.

7 Spender was co-proprietor with (William Saunders) of the *Western Morning News* and had established the Central Press agency with his partner in 1863.

House of Commons, none of the other parties being represented in this way.[8]

Perhaps it was this keen awareness of the power of the press that led the local Liberal leaders to form a syndicate[9] with the intention of setting up and publishing 'A New County Paper', the title of which was to be *The Reading Observer*, with the subsidiary titles of *Berks Telegraph, and Bucks, Hants, Oxfordshire and Surrey Newspaper.*[10] One of its declared functions was to make the Liberal policy, both locally and nationally, thoroughly understood; and another was to vindicate Liberal measures and the actions of the members and representatives of the Liberal party, which were persistently misrepresented by a portion of the local press.[11]

To embark on a venture of this kind was undoubtedly something of a gamble. The two old-established Reading newspapers, the *Reading Mercury* and the *Berkshire Chronicle*, were still both thriving journals and represented severe competition to any new paper, as too did the *Newbury Weekly News* and the *Windsor Express*, in the west and the east of Berkshire respectively. To the north of the county, competition could be expected from the *Abingdon Herald* and the Oxford papers.

Politically, the *Berkshire Chronicle* was a vociferous supporter of the Conservative party and was therefore recognized as being the

---

8 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914*, (1976), pp. 294-6.

9 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924. Unfortunately no details of the composition or formation of this syndicate have yet been found but it is likely that John Read, the owner of the *Berks Telegraph*, was one of the members, as he was retained to print this new paper.

10 *Reading Observer*, Prospectus, 17 July 1873. George Lovejoy's Scrapbook, Reading Reference Library.

11 *Reading Observer*, no. 1, Friday 2 August 1873.

Observer's main political rival. Indeed, the *Observer's* opinion of the *Chronicle* was really scathing, regarding it as an organ which:

> ...took a very active share, not indeed, in political discussion, but in party warfare which if it did not recommend Conservative principles at least made all Liberal persons the objects of incessant abuse.[12]

The *Reading Mercury* on the other hand was primarily a Liberal paper, although by 1873 its support for that political viewpoint could best be described as restrained. Certainly the *Observer's* syndicate did not consider it much of a rival in that respect for, in an editorial in August 1874, the *Observer* described the *Mercury* as having:

> ...arrived at that venerable age at which the inclination to express an opinion on political questions is no longer felt, and the quiet of dignified neutrality preferred to the heat and agitation of party dispute.[13]

The *Windsor Express*, like the *Mercury*, had tempered its political voice with the years and by the 1870s, although its view was still tinged with Liberalism, it was endeavouring to steer a more neutral course. The *Newbury Weekly News*, however, founded just six years before the *Observer*, had from its commencement been a non-party paper.

The Liberal syndicate initially acquired the *Berkshire Telegraph*, which had been published in the town since about 1860 by the printer, John Read.[14] His paper was biased towards the Liberal cause, but for most of its existence only two of its four pages were printed locally by Read, the other two pages being printed in London.[15]

---

12 *Reading Observer*, no. 53, Saturday 1 August 1874.

13 Ibid.

14 *Berks Telegraph*. See Chapter III.

15 It should be noted that the *Berks Telegraph* was produced in an eight-page form for a short period during 1871 and 1872, when Read may have been printing the whole paper himself. See Chapter III.

Reading Observer,

BERKS TELEGRAPH, AND BUCKS, HANTS, OXFORDSHIRE, AND SURREY NEWSPAPER.

No. 1.] SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 1873. [ONE PENNY.

FERGUSON & SON,

FAMILY BREWERS,

WINE AND SPIRIT MERCHANTS,

BROAD STREET, READING.

NEW COUNTY PAPER.

On and after Saturday, the 2nd August, a new Liberal County Paper will be published at Reading. It will consist of Four large Pages, will be well printed from new type, and by new machinery specially erected for the purpose, and will be issued every Saturday, at the price of One Penny.

The short title will be the

READING OBSERVER,

with the subsidiary title of "Berks Telegraph, and Bucks, Hants, Oxfordshire, and Surrey Newspaper."

The present "Berks Telegraph" will be incorporated with the New Journal.

The Reading Observer will be the organ of the Liberal party in the Town of Reading and County of Berks. Its columns as heretofore will be opened to under it an able and worthy representative of Liberal politics.

An efficient Editorial and Reporting staff has been specially engaged, and every department of the Paper will be under the most competent management.

In the Editorial selections, the Reading Observer will discuss all questions of public interest with spirit and freedom. Special attention will be given to the local affairs of the County generally, and of the Towns comprised in it; and economy, efficiency, and public spirit in the management of Local Institutions will be constantly and energetically enforced. The chief labour in all these matters will be that so long and knowledgably urged by the Liberal journals of the city of all Public Institutions should be for the profit of the welfare and happiness of the great body of the population. In the discussion of Political affairs, the Reading Observer will be the unwearied advocate of all wise legislation; the uncompromising opponent of all special privilege and monopoly; the one guiding principle will be that which is at the foundation of the Liberal policy, and which has made England prosperous and great—the principle that government exists for the advantage of the governed, and that every institution which the whole nation is called on to support, should be for the use and benefit of all the people, and not of any class or section.

One of the functions of the Reading Observer will be to make the Liberal policy, both locally and nationally, thoroughly understood; and to vindicate Liberal measures, and the Members and Representatives of the Liberal party from the prejudicial misrepresentations of a portion of the local press.

The social legislation of late years, both educational and sanitary, is of the greatest importance to local communities. The Acts of Parliament comprised in the Report of the Royal Commission in 1869 for purifying the Thames particularly affect the population of Berkshire. One object of the Reading Observer will be to watch, in the interest of the public, the proceedings of local bodies charged with the execution of these Laws; not with the view of creating ill-will and personal bitterness towards those who may be engaged in administering them, but rather to secure a wise and economical discharge of necessary duties, and so to advance the happiness and well-being of the inhabitants of the County.

In the Sub-Editorial department special attention will be given to local doings. The Reading Observer will aim at giving a far more complete and accurate account of meetings and other matters of local interest than is now provided for the public of Reading and the other towns of the County. While Liberal meetings and movements will have the prominence which their importance demands, but which they do not obtain from the existing local press, complete justice will be done to all public matters. The Reading Observer will give a full, impartial, and faithful account of the weekly news of the Borough and County.

The columns of the Reading Observer will be open to correspondence, on all matters of public interest. The Editor, so far as his space will allow, will give all parties an opportunity of fair and courteous expression of their views.

The determination of the promoters of the Reading Observer is to establish a new Liberal County Paper for Berkshire, which, though published at a lower price than any journal in this locality, shall be equal in point of vigour, efficiency and general ability to any County Paper in England, and shall not be inferior in tone and character to the Metropolitan Journals of the highest class. They confidently appeal to the public for the support which will add the influence of a real circulation to that which the Paper will command by the vigour and energy of its management.

Office:—King-street, Reading.

Reading, July 17th, 1873.

TEMPERANCE FETE

WHITEKNIGHTS' PARK,

ON MONDAY, AUGUST 4TH, 1873.

The Band of the Royal Berks Militia, Great Vampshire Band, Jermyn Band, Wargrave Band, and the Reading Hand Bell Ringers have been engaged for the occasion.

OPEN AIR CONCERT

By Band of Hope Children.

TEMPERANCE MEETING

READING AMATEURS' AND COTTAGERS' FLOWER SHOW,

(By permission of the Mayor) in the

CORN EXCHANGE,

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13.

J. A. POYNDER, Hon. Sec.

S. H. WHITING,

BUILDER, UNDERTAKER, &c.,

THE GROVE, WATLINGTON STREET,

READING.

Published by G. LOVEJOY, London Street.

WEBSTER'S

READING DIRECTORY,

ESTABLISHED UPWARDS OF 30 YEARS.

C. PHILLIPS,

FURNISHING IRONMONGER, EDGE TOOL AND PLANE WAREHOUSE,

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE BOROUGH OF READING.

Gentlemen,

THE beautiful declarations of two Tory Candidates and their friends that they are certain of defeating us at the next Election for your Borough, suggest to me that a few words of sympathetic home thoughts may be not unseasonable.

At the General Elections of 1868 and 1869 the Voters of Reading unanimously made Candidates only of the best material. Subsequent reflection seems to have convinced them that Employers thus unanimously have, and now, with the confidence natural to men engaged in a legitimate enterprise, they have ventured into the opposite extreme, and have disturbed the peace of the Borough unnecessarily twice.

Has there they stopped here. A great authority among their party has advised their brethren throughout boroughs to commence a personal canvass, and has given for that advice two reasons, which illustrate Tory notions of fairness to opponents and to the Constituency. The first reason is that the sitting Members cannot canvass at present, so that the canvass would be all on one side. The second reason is that it may be easier hereafter procedure of canvassers now than a few months hence. In other words, it is hoped that some among you might be weak enough to ponder the—rather three early and sneaky which Gladstone hoisted! that promises, even if they repeated it so long before the Election.

Apart from these happenings derisive, the home interests are and are opportunity to simple enough.

In 1868 you will see on the previous occasions when you did so this honour to elect and my more obscure as I thought. The decided conflict pronounced by the country on that occasion against Mr. Disraeli's Ministry led at once to the enfranchisement; and Mr. Gladstone's Government was called to power. One of my accepted offers under that Government, and the other has afforded to it an independent support.

Outlining the current Session (which it is not yet too early to review), let us inquire what are the chief things accomplished by the present Cabinet, or by Parliament under its advice, during the first four Sessions of the ordinance?

The Irish Church (which was the Church of a small minority of the population of Ireland) has been disestablished and disendowed. An Act has been passed affording important amendments of the law respecting the Ownership and Tenure of Land in Ireland. In England and Scotland, systems of elementary Education have been instituted, which, though they need acquire improvements are great steps in advance. Religious Tests in the English Universities (except as far as they relate to degrees in divinity) have been swept away. The system of Purchase in the Army (which substituted to a great extent money for merit as a condition of advancement) has been abolished. The Licensing Laws have been altered with the view of discouraging intemperance. The long opposed vote by Ballot has been introduced as per the necessary and conciliatory elections, for the purpose of preventing intimidation, and making bribery more difficult. And laws have been enacted for lessening the costs and hardships encountered by those who are employed in Mines. During the same interval, and up to the present time, the Country has enjoyed uninterrupted and unprecedented prosperity, due in a great measure to the maintenance of peace and to the wise control of the Finances. Military and Naval expenses have considerably reduced. Taxation to the amount of nine millions has been remitted, of which more than one half honourably fell on the food of the people, and the National Debt has been lessened by several millions.

The question you will have to decide at the Elections in the course of next year will be, whether you, who have hitherto been Liberal, prefer the supporters of the Ministry by whom all these great things have been effected, or the Tory party by whom most of the measures referred to have been opposed, and who have on two occasions attacked the policy of the present Government.

We believe that you will agree with us in thinking that those who have done so much in the past may be expected to deal with future questions with similar energy and success, and that we shall be right in continuing to them our support, until that expectation is disappointed.

For ourselves, we have always experienced at your hands the greatest cordiality and kindness. We cannot hope that during the long period for which we have now been your Members, every vote we have given has been satisfactory to you. But we believe that it would be difficult to find an instance in which there has not in the whole been greater community between a Constituency and its Representatives. We know that the proportions of Electors still on the Register who voted for us at the last Election to those who used their influence against us, is not very far from two to one. And as to the idea with which the Tory leader appears to have heaped up his Candidates, that the majority of the new Electors are Tories, we are not aware what ground there is for it except the sanguine hopes and fertile fancies of those who have put it forward.

Of our opponents we will at present only say, that, so far as we have been informed, their unfavorable and qualifications are not such as are likely to tempt you to abandon your political convictions, and to desert old friends in order to support new ones. It only remains for us to assure you that we shall at the proper time again solicit your suffrages, grateful for the trust which you have repeatedly reposed in us, and confident of the renewal.

We have the honour to remain, Gentlemen,

Your faithful Servants,

FRANCIS H. GOLDSMID,

G. SHAW LEFEVRE.

London, 17th May, 1873.

MR. JOHN OLD,

PROFESSOR OF PIANOFORTE, SINGING, AND HARMONY,

OLD ESTABLISHED PRINTING OFFICE,

BARCHAM & BRECROFT

THOMAS TURNER,

GUN AND RIFLE MANUFACTURER,

MARKET PLACE, READING.

CENTRAL FIRE AND OTHER BREECH LOADING GUNS,

W. SICKLEMORE,

BILL POSTER, &c.,

NEAR SQUARE, BRIDGE STREET, READING,

ESTABLISHED SEVERAL YEARS.

A1. AWMACK'S.

LAWN MOWERS IN GREAT VARIETY,

BEAUMONT AND CO., Agricultural Engineers,

MERCHANTS' PLACE, FRIAR STREET, AND CATTLE MARKET, READING.

LONDON HAT WAREHOUSE,

14, MARKET PLACE, AND 16, MINSTER STREET, READING.

THOMAS REED

The Berkshire General Sewing Machine Depot,

E. OXFORD STREET, READING.

Proprietress—MISS M. PHILLIPS.

SOLE AGENT FOR WHEELER AND WILSON'S GENUINE MACHINES.

CHEAP AND GOOD STATIONERY

SOLD BY J. READ, PRINTER, &c., 8, UNION STREET, READING.

NOTE PAPER.

DRAPERY, HOSIERY, SKIRT, AND UNIFORM CLOTHING ESTABLISHMENT,

30, OXFORD STREET, READING.

MRS. S. LANGSTON,

NEW FASHIONABLE AND CHEAP GOODS

LADIES' UNDERCLOTHING IN STOCK AND MADE TO ORDER

30, OXFORD STREET, READING.

J. S. SALMON AND SONS

TEAS,

12, MARKET PLACE, READING.

GUARANTEE OF QUALITY. As a guide to the selection of suitable Teas, we have endeavoured to affix to each number a full description of its respective properties, and amongst the varieties quoted, you cannot now scarcely fail to select a Tea suited to your taste, and will be able to identify by simple comparison the improvement in quality with the gradual increase in price. Universally good value at the comparatively prices may always be relied upon.

Extract of the Five quoted below, can be delivered, packed in one lot (carriage paid), amounting 10, 20, 30, 40, and 120 each.

Sent J. S. Salmon and Sons's Descriptive Tea List.

No.		Per Pound s. d.
1	BLACK TEA. A strong rough Tea, of good quality and producing deep color.	1 8
2	BLACK TEA. Excellent Congou, strong, full bodied, rough, and pungent, very recommended. This the general healthy tea, and we recommend it with confidence as good and strong Tea. Since the alteration of duty to sixpence per pound, this Tea has been in great demand.	2 0
3	BLACK TEA. Fine Pekoe flavoured Kaisow Congou. We think it does general justice to this Tea for quality and price. It is strong, full and lasting, even to second water, and equal to Tea often sold at much higher prices. It has been remarked as the "Prince of Teas." In preference to pungent flavor, choose a deep, rich, liquor, and consider all the qualities essential to fine Tea.	2 8
4	BLACK TEA. Fine Pekoe flavoured Souchong, strong, full bodied, rich and pungent, very recommended. Souchong is a leaf rolled and twisted, and is, or is intended to be, smoked. It will generally be found the difference to strong or general, it is particularly recommended that this Souchong, on much reason, be used slight and spurning, as by its rich and pungent qualities the most astonishing results may be produced.	2 8
5	BLACK TEA. Fine Pekoe flavoured Kaisow Congou. We think it does general justice to this Tea for quality and price. It is strong, full and lasting, even to second water, and equal to Tea often sold at much higher prices. It has been remarked as the "Prince of Teas." In preference to pungent flavor, choose a deep, rich, liquor, and consider all the qualities essential to fine Tea.	3 0
6	BLACK TEA. Fine Pekoe flavoured Souchong, strong, full bodied, rich and pungent, very recommended. Souchong is a leaf rolled and twisted, and is, or is intended to be, smoked. It will generally be found the difference to strong or general, it is particularly recommended that this Souchong, on much reason, be used slight and spurning, as by its rich and pungent qualities the most astonishing results may be produced.	3 0

"," Where Mixed Teas are preferred, equal value is given of the same prices.

For full descriptions of Black, Mixed and Green Teas, see J. S. Salmon and Sons's Descriptive Tea List, sent free on applications.

Agents for W. & A. GILBEY, Wine Importers and Distillers, London, Dublin, and Edinburgh.

FRIEND OF ALL.

KNOWN IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS.

FOR ALL DISEASES AFFECTING THE STOMACH, LIVER, KIDNEYS, AND BOWELS.

These Pills may be confidently commended to the world as a safe and certain remedy for all diseases affecting the stomach, liver, kidneys, and bowels. They do not disturb the system, or weaken the frame, but thoroughly invigorate the digestive organs, gently rouse the languid and torpid, effectually clear blotches, or pimples, from the skin, and expel the humors which produce boils, abscesses, and ulcerations. Holloway's Pills, free of any poisonous mixture, for checking disease, purifying the blood, and expelling from the system all gross humours.

WEAKNESS, LANGUOR, AND DEBILITY.

These humors Pills will immediately remove all sense of lassitude and languor, and weakness, are generally the effect of some, or they speedily expel all languor from the system, and give tone and energy to debilitated constitutions, and bestow and strengthen the nervous system in a most wonderful manner.

BILIOUSNESS, LOSS OF APPETITE, AND LOW SPIRITS.

The Pills effect a wonderful change in persons subject to bilious attacks, as they stimulate a healthy appetite, correct indigestion, remove the causes of bile, and, generally speaking, bilious complaints, and all the evil consequences generated by an unhealthy condition of the liver.

THE KIDNEYS—THEIR DERANGEMENT AND CURE.

If these Pills be used according to the printed directions, and the Ointment rubbed over the regions of the kidneys, first at night and last in the morning, or on a heated brick wrapped in flannel, or on a heated brick wrapped in flannel, it will penetrate the kidneys and remove any derangement. Should the affection be chronic or general, it is particularly recommended that this Ointment, on much reason, be used slight and spurning, as by its rich and pungent qualities the most astonishing results may be produced.

The Pills and Ointment are sold at Professor Holloway's Establishment, 533, Oxford-street, London, also by vendors of medicine throughout the Civilized World, in Boxes and Pots, at 1s., 1s. 6d., 2s., 2s. 6d., 4s., 6s., and 33s. each. The smallest box of Pills contains from dozen; and the smallest pot of Ointment one ounce.

Full printed directions are affixed to each Box and Pot, and can be had in any language, gratis, in Portuguese, Arabic, Armenian, Persian, or Chinese.

Just Published for Two Stamps,

TO THE NERVOUS AND DEBILITATED.

Send the New Publication by Dr. J. A. BARNES, M.D. (U.S.), entitled NERVOUS DEBILITY or WORDS OF WARNING, AND TREATMENT of EXHAUSTIONS, and REMEDIATIVE VITALITY.

The AUTHOR has for years given the exclusive attention to the treatment of Nervous Debility, Mental and Physical Decay, Premature Decay of the Human Frame in Youth and Early Manhood, Impotency, Sterility, Nocturnal Emissions, Lassitude, Pimples, Loss of Memory, Loss of Energy and Appetite, Pains in the Head and Limbs, Timidity, Self Distrust, Blotches, Loss of Sexual Vigour, Gleanings, Fears, and many other affections, which, if neglected, lead to miserable ends. This valuable work, which has been widely sought for, is published in a sealed envelope, price 2s. 6d., or two stamps, by the author, Dr. BARNES, 1, Lansdowne Square, Bermondsey, London, S.E.

Important to Country Patients.

DR. BARNES may be consulted personally or by letter, on all particular and confidential cases, and on the health of Nervous Sufferers who cannot visit town, he will, on receiving a description of their case, enclosing a stamped envelope for reply, be ready to give his opinion upon the nature of the case, and the principles of treatment which he adopts in such cases.

Address, Dr. BARNES, 1, Lansdowne Square, Bermondsey, London, S.E.

MELLODYNE (registered).

The best and most efficacious Remedy yet discovered. For Coughs, Colds, Asthma, Bronchitis, Shortness of Breath, &c.

Sold in bottles, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d.

By Mr. Ainsworth, Broad-street; Mr. Sandham, Fisher-street; Mr. Webb, Kingsland, Reading; Lambourn, Agent, Bangor, and Evans, 138, Oxford-street, W. Please Mark the Pots—"MELLODYNE."

ESTABLISHED NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY.

WELLMAN'S

GROCERY AND PROVISION STORES,

37, CHATHAM STREET.

A trial of the noted TEAS and COFFEES, which can be confidently recommended, and will give unequalled satisfaction, is respectfully solicited.

EDWARD COLLINS,

PURVEYOR OF FIRST-CLASS MEAT,

70, KING'S ROAD, READING.

E. M. GLADDEN & SON,

PLUMBERS, PAINTERS, AND GLAZIERS,

CONTRACTORS FOR GENERAL REPAIRS,

84, LONDON STREET, READING.

NEW YEAR, 1873.

EDWIN AWMACK,

CALLS attention to his extensive stock of useful and ornamental Goods, comprising

CLOCKS, METAL TRAYS, LOOKING GLASSES,

MAIN BRUSHES, TOWELS, SOAP,

EDWIN AWMACK,

82, BROAD STREET, READING.

W. SHEPHERD,

FAMILY GROCER, WINE, SPIRIT, & BOTTLED ALE MERCHANT,

DEAN STREET, KING'S ROAD, READING.

CUTLERY! CUTLERY!!

H. GILLAM,

CUTLERY FACTOR, WHOLESALE DEALER IN TABLE, PEN, AND POCKET KNIVES, RAZORS, SCISSORS, BRITANNIA PLATE AND BRITANNIA METAL GOODS.

LIST FREE.

Address: CARBROOK, SHEFFIELD.

PICTURES! PICTURES!!

W. SALMON,

8 AND 11, LONDON STREET, READING,

HAVING purchased a VERY LARGE STOCK of GOLD AND ARTISTIC CHROMOS, ENGRAVINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ILLUMINATED TEXTS, &c., &c., (after the best Masters), invites an inspection of the same.

LOOKING GLASSES.

The Largest, Best, and Cheapest Stock in the County.

Old Work Re-gilt Equal to New. Old Frames Lined, Cleaned, and Restored; Picture Frames of every description.

CARPET WAREHOUSE, UPHOLSTERY, AND CABINET MANUFACTORY.

W. SALMON, 8 & 11, LONDON ST., READING.

A FEW COPIES LEFT

Rev. Clerk Beards, 2s. 6d., with Portrait in

MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. W. LEGG, M.A.

(Thirty eight years Pastor of Broad Street Chapel, Reading) by the

REV. G. GOLDSMIE, M.A.

Contents of Chapters: Early Years—Preparation for the Ministry—Settlement at Reading—Marriage—Establishment of an Independent Church at Castle Street—Great Controversy—Death of Mr. Douglas—Sir James Graham's "Factory Bill"—Troublous Year of Jubilee—Testimonials—Fame and Not Gladstone—Equal Rights—A Church Rate Contest—Sir and Marriage—Repeal of the Income Tax—Death of Dr. Morrison—Presentation from Castle Street and Trinity Chapels—Partnership of the Rev. D. Massey—The Bishop of Oxford and the Dissenters—Industrial Exhibition—Second Jubilee—Retirement—The End—With copious extracts from speeches on various subjects.

Reading: Published by Barcham and Brecroft.

To be had of J. Read, Union Street, Reading.

The Reading Savings' Bank.

(THE WHOLE AMOUNT DUE TO DEPOSITORS INVESTED IN GOVERNMENT SECURITIES.)

IS OPEN EVERY MONDAY and SATURDAY, from Eleven to One, Wednesday from Twelve to Two, and Saturday evenings from Six to Eight.

The people are now encouraged informed, added half penny on every 5s. of deposited. A man, his wife, and children, may each have separate accounts. One shilling to £20 in each year, making With Government.

JOHN BLAGRIVE.

JOHN REGINALD CO.

Reading, January.

WILLIAM SOPER,

GUN MAKER and ENGRAVER,

23, FRIAR STREET, READING.

MUZZLE AND BREECH LOADING GUNS and RIFLES made to order on the most approved principles.

A SELECT STOCK ON HAND.

Patentee of Soper's Patent Lever Breech Loading Rifle, and Soper's Patent or Mid-range Target.

J. TAWS

ANTI-CORROSIVE WRITING AND COPYING INK.

In Bottles at Sixpence, One Shilling, & Two Shillings each.

J. READ, PRINTER, UNION STREET.

NOTICE.

Mr. J. H. CARTER, Dentist,

(Late Sharp House, Reading),

HAS RETURNED TO HIS ABOVE ADDRESS,

88, HIGH STREET, KENSINGTON, LONDON, W.

CHEESEMAN'S OILS.

A Speedy and Sure Cure for Rheumatism.

THE extract and of these remarkable OILS is by pursuing the attacks of the sufferer. In this will be found the source of prevailing opinion—to have cure in Rheumatic and Gout, are rapidly and practical, a cure is always adequate and certainable as Rheumatism, and the painful forms of the disease, as Neuralgia, Sciatica, Lumbago, &c., and cure be found.

FREDERICK CHEESEMAN,

38, PRAED STREET, PADDINGTON.

Price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. a Bottle.

TO THE NERVOUS AND DEBILITATED.

Just published, great loss for two stamps.

PRESCRIPTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS for the CURE of NERVOUS DEBILITY. By Dr. HENRY SMITH.

PRESCRIPTIONS and INSTRUCTIONS is a New Medical Work on the Effective Treatment of all Diseases of the Nervous System, Nervous Debility, Mental and Physical Degeneration, Palpitation of the Heart, Nervous Irritation, Loss of Memory, Lassitude, Impaired Sight and Hearing, Indigestion, Loss of Energy and Appetite, Pains in the Back, Timidity, Self Distrust, Dimness, Loss of Sexual Vigour, Gleanings, Fears, Weakness, Morose Melancholy, Blotches, Pimples, Premature Decay, Sterility, Loss of Nerve, Fears, &c., &c., including testimonials from grateful Patients who have been by post to any address, on receipt of two penny stamps.

Address: Dr. H. SMITH, 4, Burton crescent, London.

IMPORTANT TO COUNTRY PATIENTS.

CONSULTATION BY LETTER WITHOUT FEE.

DR. H. SMITH, the Eminent Specialist for the cure of all Debilitating Diseases will be in the Reading of Country Patients who cannot consult him personally, on receiving descriptions of their case, and for advice, with advice and directions for the most successful treatment to health and vigour.

Address, Dr. H. SMITH, 4, Burton crescent, London, W.C.

EXTENSION OF PREMISES.

WILLIAM FOX,

(LATE SMALLER, ARMOURER & GENERAL SMITH)

KING'S ROAD, READING,

BEGS to thank his Customers and public generally for the share very liberal support during the past 18 years, and to inform them that, in addition to his present premises in Bermondsey, he has taken the extensive premises lately in the occupation of Messrs. Pickford and Co., and hopes by strict personal attendance to all matters entrusted to him to merit a continuance of their patronage.

N.B. Carriages of any description bought, sold, or taken on exchange.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY,

DRAPERS, SILK MERCERS, HOUSE FURNISHERS,

30, 31, 32, 33, MINSTER STREET, AND 108, 110, BROAD STREET, READING.

BEDROOM FURNITURE.

Lime and Stain Bedsteads of every description, Mahogany, Walnut, Plain and Black Ordinary Bedsteads, Best made Suites of Pitch Pine, Plain and Decorated Pine, and Japanned and Enamelled Wash Stands, Elegant Bedroom Suites of Black Mahogany and Walnut, Toilet Glasses and Toilet Ware, Sponge and Japanned Ware.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY, READING.

DINING ROOM FURNITURE.

Mahogany and Oak Dining Tables, with Patent Telescopic Screw Action, Dining Chairs, Easy Chairs, Lounges, and Two Seat Ottomans, Couch, Fire Screens, Rugs, and Mirrors. Walking sticks and Oak Sideboards and Buffets, Dresser Waggons, &c., &c.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY, READING.

DRAWING ROOM FURNITURE.

Elegant Carved Walnut Drawing Room Suites, Upholstered with Damask, Gros Grain, Damask, and Rich Silks. Handsome Carved and Inlaid Walnut Cure Tables, Card and Occasional Tables, Whatnots, Work Tables, Walnut Chiffoniers, Cabinetwaggs, Music Cabinets, Walnut and Ormolu Cabinets, Music Stands, Chimney Glasses, Gilt Cornices, &c., &c.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY, READING.

LIBRARY & OTHER FURNITURE.

Mahogany and Oak Bookcases, Writing Tables, Secretaires, Wall Paper Inlaid of all kinds, Fenders, Fire Irons, Fire Screens, Clocks, Pole and other Fancy Stands.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY, READING.

BELGIAN CARVED OAK FURNITURE.

Massive and Elegant Carved Oak Furniture, imported direct from Belgium, at very moderate prices.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY, READING.

CARPETS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION

Consisting of Turkey, Axminster, Wilton, Pile, Brussels, Tapestry, Brussels, Kidderminster, and Felt of the best makes. Floor Cloths, Linoleums, Mattings, Venetians, Hearth Rugs, and Oilcloth, Stair Rods, including the celebrated Hebeverine Wool.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY,

78, 77, 32, 33, MINSTER STREET,

AND

108, 110, BROAD STREET, READING.

CLAY CROSS WHARF, READING.

JAMES LAWRANCE,

BUILDERS' MERCHANT,

(The Oldest and Largest House in the Trade.)

BANGOR, PORT MADOC, AND OTHER SLATES

PLASTER OF PARIS, HAIR, WHITTING, AND LATH.

MARBLE AND ENAMELLED SLATE CHIMNEY PIECES.

Fire Bricks, Lumps, Tiles and Clay, White, Black, and Blue Flooring Bricks, Hearthstones, Slabs and Square Paving Bricks, &c.

ORNAMENTAL TILING AND GARDEN BORDER TILES.

York Stone, Fire Clay, Encaustic and Vitrified Stone ware, Kitchen Sinks, Lynton Stable Rangers, Washstands, Cucumber Beds and Health Pottery.

Patent Stoneware Bonded Bricks for Hollow Walls, a sure preventative against damp.

Full Loaded Trucks and to any station on Hereford's Lines.

SEVENTH SEASON.

THE ARTIST'S OWN ART UNION,

Under the Sanction of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council.

ONE SHILLING PER SHARE

THE DRAWING ON AUGUST 25TH, 1873.

PAINTINGS AND WATER-COLOUR DRAWINGS,

VALUE FROM £500 DOWNWARDS.

Prices: 1st, The Ambulance Fight, after by R. Ansell, £100; 2nd, Kingston Bridge, on the Thames, by G. Frank, £50; 3rd, Children in the Wood, by Montague Laslett, £30. Tickets, price One Shilling, may be had of Mr. J. Keen, Union Street.

KINLOCH'S CATALAN.

"Crown" Red & White Catalan 30 per doz. Bottles.

Diamond " Red & White " 15 " " "

Star " Red & White " 15 " " "

The "Red" Wines, full bodied, delicious, finely Port flavour. The "White" exquisitely delicate, rich and nutty, equal to Madeira. These Wines are recommended by medical men as the most strengthening wine known.

AGENT AT READING:

C. E. BIRD, 31, MINSTER STREET.

The Wines will be forwarded from London direct on receipt of remittance or references.

J. Kinloch & Co., Rochdalebury, London, E.C.

ANNUAL CLEARANCE SALE

OF SEASONABLE GOODS,

ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 5TH, 1873.

ANNUAL CLEARANCE SALE

OF SEASONABLE GOODS,

ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 5TH, 1873.

HEELAS, SONS, & COMPANY, READING.

CARPETS, FLOOR CLOTHS, CABINET & UPHOLSTERY WAREHOUSE, KING STREET, READING.

DAMASK, REPS, &c. We hold a very large variety of very best class things in this department, and have experienced and conditioned hands for working up if not sooner.

MISCELLANEOUS. Feathers, Fire irons, Lockets, Japanned Travelling Trunks, centralized assortment of Portmanteaus, Bonnet Cases, Bags, Bagnolle Baskets, Bottles, &c.

SECOND-HAND FURNITURE of every class, together with Articles of Vertu, &c.

FUNERALS completely furnished with personal care, experienced, and attendance at the lowest possible charge.

AUCTIONEERING and Appraising are under the sole charge of the senior Partner, whose great local experience of now thirty years qualifies him as an unusual degree for the proper discharge of the duties.

FULL SIZED BILLIARD TABLE, very good Slate Bed, by Burroughes & Watts, London, with all the accessories, a great bargain.

DANIEL HENSLER,

COAL AND CORN MERCHANT,

HOPE WHARF,

62, GREAT KNOLLYS STREET, CAVERSHAM ROAD.

Orders received at 19, Southampton Street, Reading, and at CAVERSHAM.

The favour of your patronage is respectfully solicited.

PHOTOGRAPHY!

WILLIAM BARBER, Jun., begs to announce to his friends and the public that he has now OPENED HIS STUDIO (which has been erected under the supervision of an eminent London photographer, with whom W. A. has been for some time past under tuition) for the production of First Class Photographs, &c., &c.

W. A. has studied himself of all the most recent improvements in connection with the art, and feels confident of being able to give satisfaction.

11, London Street (opposite Queen's road), Reading.

May 1, 1873.

CARTES DE VISITE, in any quantities, 50 for 10s.

READING AND COUNTY BOOK DEPOT

J. FEAR,

BOOT AND SHOE MANUFACTURER,

36, BROAD STREET, READING.

BOOTS AND SHOES MADE TO ORDER

REPAIRING IN ALL ITS BRANCHES

Expeditious in Executing Orders.

4000 PAIRS ALWAYS IN STOCK

STRICT ATTENTION TO THE QUALITY OF GOODS.

For Prices and Style unsurpassed.

ALL GOODS MARKED IN PLAIN FIGURES.

J. F. respectfully solicits your patronage and influence.

TO THE BOOT PUBLIC.

NEW "CLAIMANT"

(Who has not been Under the Hammer.)

Never had shoes to be marked down. Wrapping (Old Shoes). Not sold under the same Roof with Ironmongery. No nothing is "Shoes Into" marked with your money. (Old Shoes sold.)

"The work be unequaled." If you can make a new TRIAL of another shop.

GENUINE CIGARS, TOBACCOS, AND SNUFFS.

Unsurpassed as to price and quality, the Manufacture Brown, and other Fancy Pipes, Pouches, Fancy Cigar Cases, Ornamental Jars, and Wholesale Stocks at very "Reduced prices."

"MARK" IT PLACE,

31, FRIAR STREET, READING.

FITTER, Proprietor of Photographer's celebrated "HERBIT MIXTURE," registered.

Pipes Repaired and Mounted. Licensed Victuallers and the Trade supplied on London Prices. Country orders promptly attended to.

MARTIN LYONS,

18, UNION STREET, READING,

MARINE STORES, &c.

LEFT OFF WEARING APPAREL

First edition of the *Reading Observer* 2 August 1873

It is possible that in the first instance the syndicate's intention was to continue the *Telegraph* but, having acquired the plant and machinery, it was perhaps deterred by the limited capacity of the press. The press was very slow-running and could accommodate only two pages at a time, and required two men to work it, one to hand-feed the sheets and the other to take them off as they were printed.[16]

At this point the syndicate therefore decided to start afresh with an entirely new newspaper. New premises were acquired in King Street, Reading, new types were bought, and new machinery was specially installed for the purpose.[17] John Read was retained as printer (he may also have been one of the members of the syndicate), and a journalist was employed to deal with all local news and reports. This journalist was the only reporter the *Observer* had and appears to have been something of an eccentric character, for he was described as being:

> A Tall robust Irishman with an eyeglass always screwed into his right eye. He wrote a system of shorthand which was his own and embodied the principles of several systems then in vogue. He could report verbatim any and every of the public speakers who came before him and wrote paragraphs of news crisply and in an interesting style. He had any amount of self assurance and push and was just the man to represent a new paper whose appearance was rather resented by some people.[18]

Although the reporter's real name is not known, he later left the *Observer* to join a London news agency, where for many years he was apparently known and respected under the pseudonym of 'Sam Grogan'.[19]

The man appointed to be editor and feature writer of the *Observer* was the eminent London journalist P. W. Clayden. Clayden had been a

---

16 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

17 *Berks Telegraph*, no. 693, Friday 25 July 1873.

18 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

19 Ibid.

minister in the Unitarian Church, during which time he had become increasingly involved in journalism, writing on political and social questions for the *Fortnightly*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the *Edinburgh Review*, and for a long time editing the *Boston Guardian*. Thomas Walker, editor of the *Daily News*, had employed him to write occasional articles for the paper in 1866, and two years later Clayden had resigned his ministry to become full-time leader-writer and an assistant editor of the *Daily News*.[20] He was recognized by his professional colleagues as an efficient and honest journalist and he is said to have 'greatly increased the influence of the *Daily News* as an organ of Liberal nonconformist opinon'.[21]

To some extent Clayden's employment on the *Observer* could be said to be something of a homecoming, for he was born in Wallingford, near Reading, in 1827 and spent the early part of his life there.

Clayden's involvement with the *Observer* was so arranged that he could continue his work as assistant editor on the *Daily News*, yet also travel to Reading once a week to discharge his duties as editor of the Reading paper. Such a journey each week was, it seems, no hardship for Clayden, for he is described as being a man with a tremendous amount of energy who filled every moment of each day. The manager of the *Daily News*, Sir John Robinson, declared himself overawed by the activity displayed by Clayden:

---

20 Although the composition of the *Observer*'s syndicate is not known, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that Goldsmid and Shaw-Lefevre were involved in the *Observer*'s formation and that Clayden's appointment was due to their influence. His position as leader-writer on the *Daily News*, a stalwart Liberal party paper, would mean that he and the two prominent Reading MPs would certainly have been acquaintances.

21 *Dictionary of National Biography*, Second Supplement, (1912), vol. i, p. 370.

> I declare that at times I am discussing with him the paper of the following day, and a quarter of an hour later he is haranguing a crowded audience at Islington on the iniquities of Her Majesty's Conservative Opposition. Yet another hour and he is somewhere in the neighbourhood of Tavistock Square, delighting an assembly of ladies of various age by proving to their excited satisfaction their intellectual superiority to the contemptible race of man. Yet a little later he is trying — too often in vain — to withstand the tyranny of the master printer as to what shall go in the paper and what shall be left out.[22]

The considerable work involved in the production of the London daily severely limited the time Clayden could devote to the *Observer*, but apparently he would arrive in Reading at 11 o'clock on a Friday morning and immediately start to read proofs of everything set in type. He would write one political leader and another article on local affairs, each apparently written with great speed and fluency, in a hand that was easily read by the compositor. This text matter was then typeset and Clayden, after reading and correcting the proofs, would hurry back to London.[23] Despite this short stay each week, it was no doubt extremely advantageous to have a man of Clayden's ability and stature overseeing this new venture.

The first edition of the *Observer* appeared on Saturday 2 August 1873 and, although the publishers considered that they had very carefully forecast the likely demand, it was completely sold out within a short time of its publication. Such was the demand in fact that a special edition had to be run on the Monday morning, in order that all those who wanted a copy should be able to get one.[24] The format of the paper was 26" deep x 20" wide, consisted of four pages, each page having seven 15-em columns, and the price was 1d. This compared well with the *Berkshire Chronicle*

---

22 Sir John Robinson, *Fifty Years of Fleet Street*, (1904), p. 332.

23 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

24 *Reading Observer*, no. 2, Saturday 9 August 1873.

and the *Reading Mercury* at 3d. and 4d. respectively, despite the fact that both of the *Observer's* rivals were eight-page newspapers. Almost certainly the fact that the *Observer* was so much cheaper than its rivals was responsible for its evident instant popularity.

Five weeks after its inception, the *Observer* started to publish a second edition on Saturday morning in order to give the public 'the latest intelligence up to the hour of going to press',[25] an indication perhaps that the popularity of the paper was being maintained.

After the *Observer* had, in the words of Slaughter, 'been running for some little while', some changes were made in the staffing: Charles Slaughter was appointed as general manager, and by early 1875 William Rivers had been appointed as chief reporter to replace 'Sam Grogan' who had left to join a London news agency.[26]

Rivers brought with him both experience and useful knowledge concerning the local press, for he had worked as chief reporter on the *Oxford Times* after serving with the *Surrey Advertiser* at Guildford.[27]

It was also during 1875 that P. W. Clayden acquired the *Observer* from the syndicate which had launched it and Charles Slaughter became the new publisher in place of John Read, indicating perhaps that Read had indeed been one of the members of the original syndicate. Certainly Read no longer appears to have had any further dealings with the *Observer*, although he continued to practise as a jobbing printer at 18

---

25 *Reading Observer*, no. 6, Saturday 6 September 1873.

26 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

27 *Reading Observer*, no. 1732, Saturday 23 February 1893.

King's Road, Reading, until 1903, when the business was bought by Knill & Sons, another printing company.[28]

The *Observer* was showing signs of success when, in May 1875, it was enlarged by increasing the depth of the paper to 28" and at the same time reducing the head and tail margins, thus giving an extra 3" per column.[29] This had the total effect of adding an extra three and a half columns to the extent of the paper. The increase was the result of great pressure on the advertising space in the paper, which had reached such a level that the proprietors apologized in an editorial because they were receiving complaints from the public that there was more advertising than news.[30] In fact fifteen of the twenty-eight columns were devoted to advertising, just over fifty per cent, and it is possible that the paper's success in attracting advertising revenue was due to the experience of Clayden and to the go-ahead attitude of Slaughter and Rivers. Unlike the other newspapers in the district, the *Observer* had followed the example of the 'great London journals' and set their advertisements in different types from that used for the text. This enabled them to have more white space in their advertisements which, in turn, made them easier to read and was '...to the advantage of both the reader and the advertiser'.[31]

There is no doubt that by now the *Observer* was a financially sound commercial venture for, despite the increase in space to allow for more news, the pressure from advertisers was such that by the end of 1877 the advertising content of the paper had again risen to 51%. Early in 1878,

---

28 *Kelly's Reading Directory*, 1903.

29 *Reading Observer*, no. 94, Saturday 15 May 1875.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

therefore, the secondary title '*Berks Telegraph, and Bucks, Hants, Oxfordshire and Surrey Newspaper*' was dropped, to allow more space, and the two words *Reading Observer* were pushed in towards the centre block, in order to run the left-hand and right-hand columns of the front page right up to the top edge of the sheet.[32]

This state of affairs lasted until the beginning of 1879, when the *Observer* was enlarged to eight pages in order to accommodate both the pressure from advertising and the need for more news space, particularly news for the county which the proprietors considered to have been neglected for lack of space. It was also necessary to acquire a new machine in order to cope with the extra printing involved, and one of David Payne's Wharfedale stop-cylinder presses was purchased so that the speed of production could be increased on this eight-page paper.[33]

Advertisers will not use journals unless they can be guaranteed a good circulation and this increase in advertising alone suggests that the *Observer's* circulation was growing to healthy proportions. Indeed, the editorial of the first eight-page issue of the *Observer* stated:

> The circulation of the Reading Observer during the past year has been larger than that of any other paper; our contemporary, the Reading Mercury, standing second to us in this respect.[34]

Whether this boast was justified or not is difficult to prove, for no accurate circulation figures are available, but the *Reading Mercury's* weekly circulation was 4,800 in 1873,[35] and could possibly have been about five thousand copies a week, allowing for some slow growth, while the

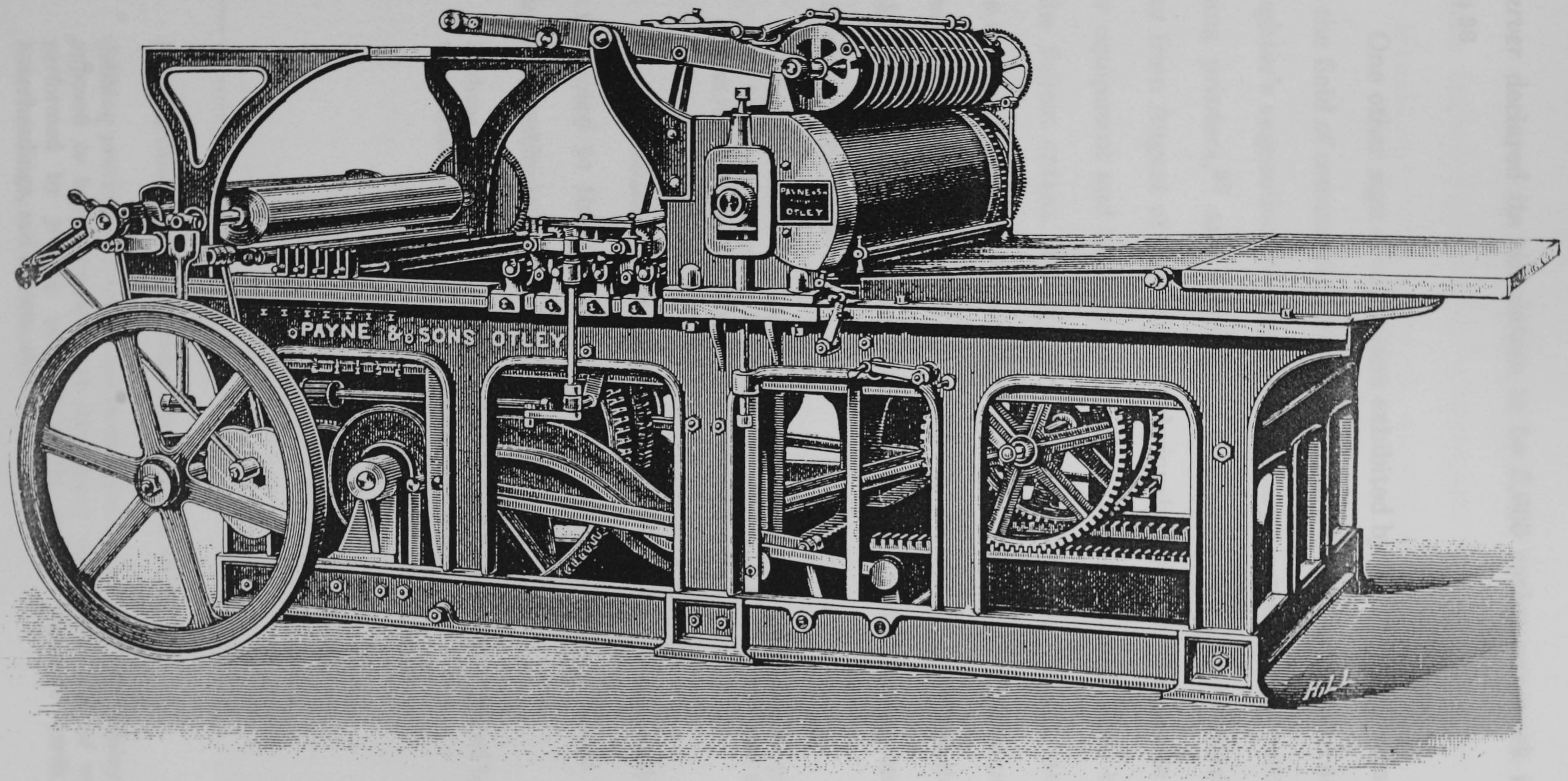
---

32 *Reading Observer*, no. 235, Saturday 26 January 1878.

33 See illustration overleaf.

34 *Reading Observer*, no. 284, Saturday 4 January 1879.

35 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, 1873.



The Wharfedale flatbed stop cylinder press
(Source: St Bride Library)

Observer declared its circulation to be 5,600 copies per week in March 1879.[36]

One other sign of expansion exhibited by the *Observer* was its move into the field of commercial printing during 1876. This they did at Charles Slaughter's suggestion, buying the necessary equipment and setting up as jobbing printers,[37] and advertising their new venture regularly in the paper from August of that year. It obviously made good sense to use both their equipment and (more particularly), the expertise of their craftsmen to the fullest extent. Weekly newspaper production at this time would have involved quite a number of printers to cope with the peak production times, but these men would have little to do for long periods during the week. Charles Slaughter, writing about the formation of the commercial printing venture, says:

> We found it useful in many ways, but one of the chief was that we could put hands on the general printing the first part of the week and take them for the paper on Thursdays and Fridays...[38]

It was fortunate that at that time the local newspaper industry was not subjected to the divisions of labour which were to come later, for Slaughter continues by saying:

> In those days we could get 'all round' men and were not hampered by so many trade union rules as was the case later on.

---

36 *Reading Observer*, no. 295, Saturday 15 March 1879.

37 Jobbing printing is a term used to describe commercial and display printing as opposed to book, magazine or newspaper work. The type of work usually performed by jobbing printers would include business cards, handbills, letterheadings, and posters, etc.

38 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

It was possibly towards the end of 1876[39] that P. W. Clayden found that his work in London was occupying more and more of his time and that, because travelling to Reading was becoming inconvenient, he should sell the *Observer*. Charles Slaughter and William Rivers pooled their resources, bought the paper, and by March 1879 had become business partners, Slaughter continuing to be publisher and manager and Rivers becoming the editor.[40] Such was their enthusiasm and industry that the circulation had risen to 5,627 by the end of 1879[41] and, despite the enlargement to eight pages at the beginning of that year, the partners felt it necessary to expand still further. To do this meant buying yet another new press, for their new Wharfedale and the old original press were not fast enough to produce the number of copies demanded by the *Observer's* rapid expansion. It was felt necessary to move out of the cramped premises in King Street, and a plot of land was therefore acquired in Blagrave Street enabling a new office block and factory block to be built, which would accommodate the newspaper presses and the complete commercial printing department, and allow enough space for future expansion.[42]

The position of the new premises was carefully chosen, for they were literally within a stone's throw of Reading's railway stations and Blagrave Street was increasingly becoming one of the main thoroughfares

---

39 Charles Slaughter states this to be in 1875 (*Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924) but the evidence indicates that it was later than this. In the same article Slaughter writes of suggesting to Clayden in 1876 the idea of starting a commercial printing business.

40 In the last will and testament of William George Rivers, 'certain articles of co-partnership dated the first day of March 1879' are referred to. Probate granted 13 April 1893; PRO Somerset House.

41 *Reading Observer*, no. 339, Saturday 3 January 1880.

42 *Reading Observer*, no. 363, Saturday 15 May 1880.

between the town centre and the railway station.[43] In addition, the new Reading Town Hall, Library, and Museum were being built on the other side of Blagrave Street. Similarly, both the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Standard* had also moved to that area by the early years of the twentieth century.

The two existing machines were installed, together with a new Wharfedale two-feeder which was specially built for the *Observer* by David Payne, the printing machine manufacturer of Otley in Yorkshire.[44] This press was capable of producing 3,500 to 4,000 copies per hour and possessed the further essential advantage of being able to print a much larger sheet. Any future expansion in the paper's size could therefore be accommodated without the need to buy yet another press.[45]

The two Wharfedales were installed side by side, so that they could be driven singly or together, and it was estimated that their combined production speed would be in the region of 5,000 sheets per hour and would enable the company to produce, if necessary, up to double its current circulation.[46] The two-feeder had a flyer delivery, so that only two men were needed to operate it, but it was still capable of printing only four pages to view. Not only was the newspaper getting new equipment, but the jobbing plant and machinery was also to be augmented to meet the growing demands upon that area of the company's business.[47] The complete move to the new premises was undertaken in the early part of

---

43 See map on p xvii.

44 See Chapter II and illustration overleaf.

45 This meant that, when required, the *Observer* could be produced with an extra column width on each page, as well as having an increase in the page depth.

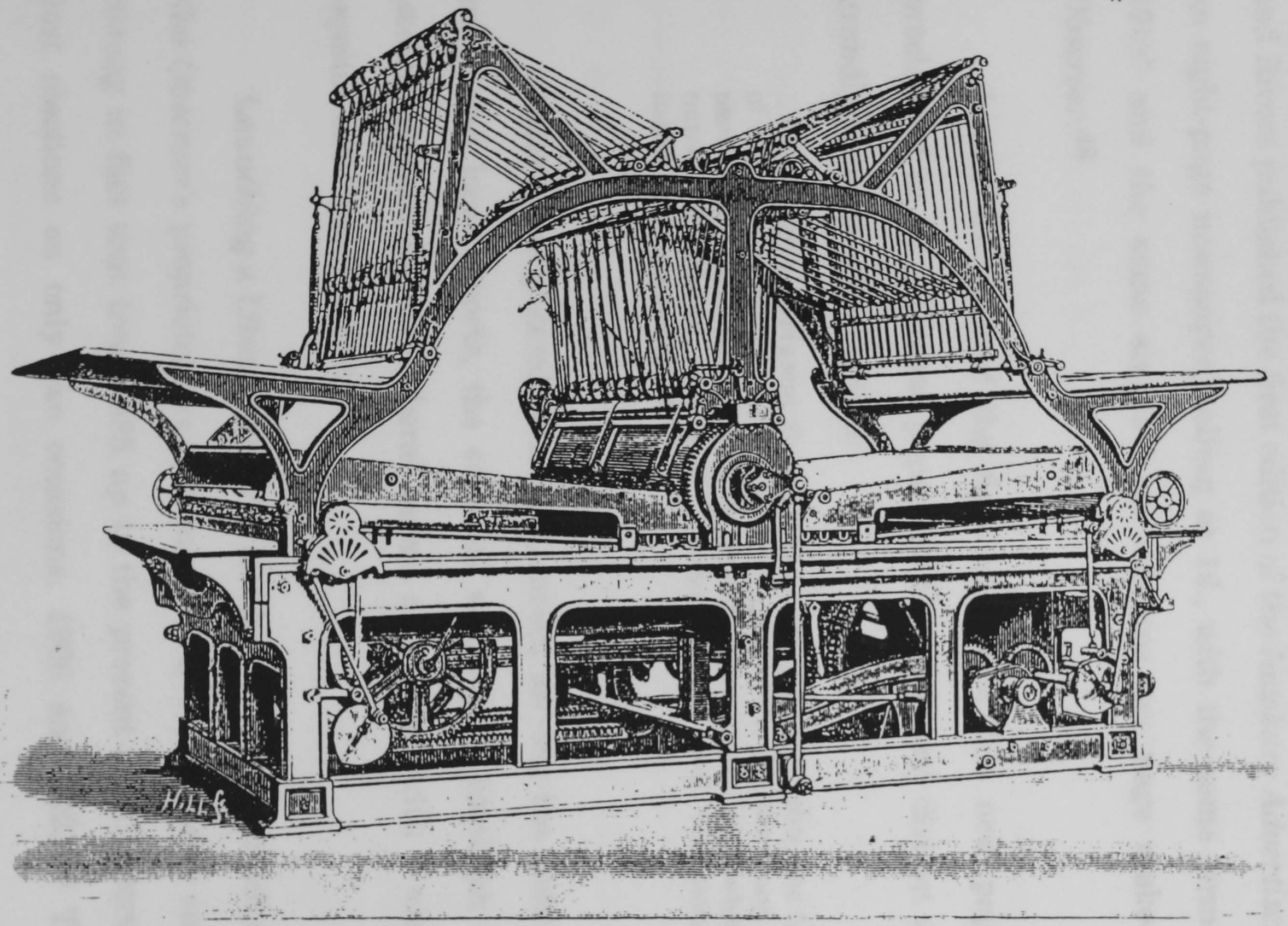
46 *Reading Observer*, no. 367, Saturday 12 June 1880.

47 *Reading Observer*, no. 364, Saturday 22 May 1880.

Important to NEWSPAPER PROPRIETORS and PRINTERS requiring to Print Different-sized Sheets.

NAMES OF A FEW FIRMS USING THIS MACHINE:

Messrs. HULTON & Co., *Sporting Chronicle*, Manchester; The PROPRIETORS, *Herald*, Preston; *Herald*, Wakefield; Messrs. PIKE, *Reporter*, Derby; GARNETT, *Advertiser*, Rotherham; WATKINSON & CRUST, *Free Press*, Spalding; TAYLOR & ROBINS, *Weekly News*, Chesterfield; KNIGHT & PORTER, *Chronicle*, Worcester; The PROPRIETORS, *Chronicle*, Oxford; *Norfolk News*, Norwich; *Catholic Times*, Liverpool.



NAMES OF A FEW FIRMS USING THIS MACHINE:—

Advertiser, Oswestry; Messrs. RIDON, *Times*, Oxford; SLAUGHTER, *Observer*, Reading; GRIFFIN and HAWKES, *Provincial Press Agency*, Birmingham; BRASH, Bros., *Herald*, *Cumberland Times*, Cockermouth; North Shields; CHANCE & BLAND, *Citizen*, Gloucester; Messrs. POTTS & Co., *Daily Standard*, Birmingham; BOOTH, *Advertiser*, Leicester; INGOLEY, *Midland Free Press*, Leicester, AND MANY OTHERS.

FOR PRICES AND FURTHER PARTICULARS, APPLY TO

DAVID PAYNE, OTLEY, YORKSHIRE.

N.B.—At the Exhibition, Stand No 27, Centre of Hall.

David Payne's two-feeder Wharfedale press

June 1880 and, with better working conditions and greater production capacity, the *Observer* turned its attention once more to expanding its business.

On 2 October 1880, just three months after the move, Slaughter and Rivers published the first edition of the *Newbury Advertiser*. This was an eight-page newspaper, selling at 1d., with the same format of 23" x 17½" and the same six 15½-em columns per page make-up as the *Observer*.[48]

In the editorial of the first edition of this new paper, it was proclaimed to be a Liberal paper for Newbury and district and (rather grandly) that the paper would:

> ...endeavour to represent those great progressive principles, the history of which dates back to the splendid struggles of the Puritans, and forms part of those modern conflicts on behalf of the people with which the names of Russell and Peel, Cobden, Bright and Gladstone are indissolubly connected.[49]

After some general statements about serving the community with news and local reports, the editorial went on to establish the paper's strong support for the Liberal cause, and ended with a violent attack against the Conservatives.

Launching a Liberal paper in Newbury was very much a gamble by the *Observer's* proprietors as Newbury was a Conservative stronghold, so strong in fact that from 1885 up to the present the Conservatives have lost elections on only two occasions, 1906 and 1923.[50] The town of

---

48 *Newbury Advertiser*, no. 1, Saturday 2 October 1880.

49 Ibid.

50 V. F. M. Garlick, *Newbury Scrapbook*, (1970), p. 36.

Newbury was not very large, having a population of 7,017,[51] and was already served by two other journals, the Liberal *Newbury Herald* (the Newbury edition of the *Reading Mercury*) and the locally printed independent paper, the *Newbury Weekly News*, which by this time was firmly established with a circulation of 4,500 copies per week.[52]

These odds against the paper's success were, it seems, too great, and at the end of December 1881, the *Newbury Advertiser* closed and was merged with the *Reading Observer*:

> ...of which Journal, as most of our readers will be aware, the Advertiser was, from its first appearance, an offshoot.[53]

Despite this setback the *Observer* appeared to be going from strength to strength, with a circulation which had risen to 7,800 copies per week during 1881, representing an increase of nearly one thousand copies over the previous year.[54] Advertising still accounted for over fifty per cent of the paper's contents, which suggests that the *Observer's* circulation was attracting advertisers, in turn increasing the paper's revenue.

Two minor changes had taken place over the previous year: in November 1880 the masthead block had been removed, together with the secondary title of *Berks Telegraph and Bucks, Hants, Oxfordshire and Surrey Newspaper*, and the paper's title was now *The Reading Observer*, set in gothic lettering.[55] Then, in June 1881, the proprietors quite

---

51 Census of England and Wales 1881, vol. I.

52 *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, (1881), p. 202.

53 *Newbury Advertiser*, no. 67, Saturday 24 December 1881.

54 *Reading Observer*, no. 1141, Saturday 10 December 1881.

55 *Reading Observer*, no. 392, Saturday 27 November 1880.

suddenly changed the numbering of the paper — to No. 1,116 from No. 442 the previous week. This was apparently to bring the numbering into line with that of the *Berks Telegraph*, which had preceded the *Observer*.[56] Perhaps this new numbering system was an attempt by the proprietors to give the *Observer* a 'longer history' than it really had for the changed numbering made it appear that the *Observer* was over twenty years old and this may have given some advertisers the impression that they were dealing with an 'old-established' business.

Whatever the reason, the paper continued to expand its circulation and attract a good deal of advertising revenue. From 1880 to 1884 the weekly circulation again rose, from 5,627 copies to 10,058 copies.[57] If those figures are correct then the *Observer* had nearly doubled its circulation in five years.

At the beginning of 1884, the masthead was altered yet again, this time to read *Reading Observer, General Advertiser for Berks, Oxon, Surrey, Bucks, Hants and Wilts*,[58] and in October of the same year the paper was enlarged from forty-eight to fifty-six columns.[59] This was achieved by increasing the width of the page from 17½" to 19", reducing the column width from 15½ ems to 14½ ems and pushing out the printed matter closer to the edges. The purpose of this enlargement was to include more advertising matter without curtailing local news, thus avoiding criticism from its readers.[60]

---

56 *Reading Observer*, no. 1116, Saturday 18 June 1881.

57 *Reading Observer*, no. 1258, Saturday 12 January 1884.

58 *Reading Observer*, no. 1259, Saturday 19 January 1884.

59 *Reading Observer*, no. 1301, Saturday 4 October 1884.

60 *Reading Observer*, no. 1300, Saturday 27 September 1884.

However it was not only in the field of advertising that the *Observer* attempted to outdo its local rivals, for it also worked hard to present the readers with a good news service as well. The standard of its editorial was always very good, particularly under the editorship of William Rivers, whose reports were invariably fair and correct and whose leading articles displayed lucidity and a competent grasp of the subject he was writing about. In addition to this, the *Observer* never missed an opportunity to provide an extra edition in order to cover some special event of particular local interest. They had often done this for elections, both local and general, by producing a free single news-sheet of the results, but for bigger events they sometimes went one better. When, for example, in 1882 the Royal Agricultural Society of England held its show in Reading, it was an event of considerable interest to those in the county. Throughout the week of the show, the *Observer* was published daily, giving up-to-date reports on the show's events. Similarly, during August 1888 when the Ancient Order of Foresters held their annual High Court Meeting in Reading, the *Observer* was selected as the official organ for reporting the day-to-day proceedings of the Court, the daily special editions consisting of one leaf only and selling for 1d.[61]

The *Observer* continued its successful progress, despite the competition from its local rivals particularly when both the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury* reduced their prices in 1884. The *Observer's* Conservative rival, the *Chronicle*, was the first to alter its price when, in the July, it was reduced from 3d. to 1d.; this was quickly followed by the *Reading Mercury* which, in October of the same year, lowered its selling price from 4d. to 2d. No doubt both papers were feeling the effects of the competition from the *Observer*, which had sold at 1d. from its

61 *Reading Observer*, Special Supplement, Monday 6 August 1888.

inception in 1873. One other rival newspaper also feeling the competition offered by the *Observer* was the *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent*, which had first appeared towards the end of 1878. Like the *Observer*, it had sold for 1d. and must have posed a threat to the *Observer* in the early years of its life. However, by 1884 the *Reading Express* was showing signs of deterioration in the quality of its production, with worn and battered type and poor make-up, and the paper seems to have ceased production at the end of 1884, or perhaps early in 1885.[62]

The successful business relationship between Charles Slaughter and William Rivers received a severe blow in February 1893 when Rivers died. Apparently he had suffered for some time from diabetes, but his illness accelerated suddenly and he died on 22 February at the age of forty, having worked on the *Observer* for eighteen years, fifteen of them as editor.

That week's *Reading Observer* announced his death and the whole of the editorial had its columns separated by 6-point black rules, as well as a black head rule.[63] William Rivers was survived by his widow and eight children, and it was one of his sons, Walter Vernon Rivers (who had already started to learn the newspaper business under his father), who was later to own the *Reading Standard* and subsequently take over the *Observer*.

After the death of his partner, Charles Slaughter took over complete ownership of the paper, and it was said that he had exercised his right under a special clause in the original partnership agreement which

---

62 The last extant copy of the *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent* is no. 651, Saturday 20 December 1884.

63 *Reading Observer*, no. 1732, Saturday 25 February 1893.

would allow a surviving partner to assume total ownership, without regard to the late partner's heirs. This move was to be the subject of some speculation later on, when it was said that young Walter Rivers was so incensed at being denied his father's share in the company that he set out to own a newspaper of his own.[64]

Subsequent press reports of this change in the partnership arrangement always implied that Charles Slaughter was the villain of the piece and suggested that he was responsible for depriving Walter Rivers of his rightful inheritance. However, the terms of William Rivers's will clearly specify that on his death his half-share in the *Observer* should be administered by his two nominated trustees, Felix B. Parfitt and John J. Cooper, who were given the power either to continue as partners with Slaughter in order to ensure that the profits could be divided for the benefit of the family, or, if they thought fit, to sell Rivers's share of the company and invest the money for the benefit of the family.[65] It is quite likely that the partnership agreement allowed for a surviving partner to have first option on the deceased partner's shares in the event that they should be available for sale. The will clearly states that if any of Rivers's sons wished to continue the partnership with Charles Slaughter they must find the necessary capital to buy that partnership share from the estate. This last clause may have incensed young Walter Rivers, who perhaps felt cheated by his father's demand, and stung him into wanting a newspaper of his own.

However strongly Walter Rivers may have felt about this episode, he remained at the *Observer* after his father's death, perhaps to continue

---

64 *Reading Standard*, no. 700, Saturday 30 August 1924.

65 Last will and testament of William George Rivers granted probate 13 April 1893; PRO Somerset House, London.

learning the newspaper business, and it was during the latter part of 1894 that he began to demonstrate ideas which he would later employ with such success in his own newspaper.

The Thames had been subject to severe flooding in the Reading area and Walter Rivers consulted Slaughter about the possibility of producing some photographic illustrations of the flood. Few newspapers used photographic illustrations at this time, and the usual medium of illustration took the form of line drawings reproduced as engraved wood blocks. The nearest company to Reading specialising in the manufacture of photographic printing blocks was Messrs Hentschel & Co., near Crystal Palace in London.[66] Four 85-screen halftone blocks were made and printed in the *Observer* at the end of November 1894.[67] The blocks each measured 4¾" wide, varied between 2½" and 3½" in depth, and were of fairly reasonable quality, considering the rather rough newsprint paper on which they were printed and the fact that the machine operators were almost certainly inexperienced at printing illustrations of this kind.

The *Reading Observer* was probably one of the first provincial papers in the country to use halftone illustrations successfully;[68] certainly Charles Slaughter seemed to think so.[69] It was indeed the first in Reading, for the *Berkshire Chronicle* did not use them until June 1897, the *Reading Standard* until 1901, and it was 1912 before the *Reading*

---

66 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

67 *Reading Observer*, no. 1829, Saturday 24 November 1894.

68 The introduction and use of halftone illustrations by the provincial press is an area about which very little is known at present. Certainly the use of flat-bed presses by many of the provincial newspapers meant that they were able to print halftone blocks, unlike those papers using rotary presses at that time, but to what extent the provincial newspapers took advantage of this is certainly an area worthy of further research.

69 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

Mercury first used a halftone, and that was for an advertisement, not to illustrate the text. The success of this idea was evident in the *Observer*'s circulation figure of 19,000 copies for the week during which these illustrations appeared.[70] Why the *Observer* did not continue using illustrations, certainly during the following year, is something of a mystery, and one can only suppose that perhaps the cost of photography and blockmaking, coupled with the inconvenience of having blocks made in London, rather outweighed the advantages of their use. However, after the beginning of 1897 the *Observer* had a new rotary press, thus preventing the reproduction of half-tone illustrations for it was not until the early years of the twentieth century that a satisfactory method of producing curved stereos of halftones was introduced.

The *Observer* always attempted to be ahead of its local rivals in putting new ideas into practice, and in 1895 the proprietors once again embarked on a new venture, in the form of a special football edition. Increasingly during the nineteenth century the pages of provincial newspapers included reports on numerous sporting events and towards the end of the century many papers included the forerunner of the modern sports page. The public's interest in the game of football was growing rapidly, and newspapers became important purveyors of sports news and results.

The *Observer's* publishers obviously felt that the great interest in football represented another untapped audience, and so on Saturday 12 October 1895 they printed the first edition of the *Reading Observer's Football Edition*, which they introduced by saying:

> The great and enormously increasing interest which is taken in Football has induced us to publish during the present Football season a Saturday Evening edition... We intend that the edition shall contain reports of

70 *Reading Observer*, no. 1830, Saturday 1 December 1894.

results of the whole of the matches of importance played in England and Scotland.[71]

As well as supplying general results and information each week, the paper would give special prominence to the various Reading clubs and to matches played in the district. In addition to sports reports, up-to-date news and advertisements were to be included and, as a special attraction, it was intended to run stories written by some of the prominent writers of the day. These stories were usually supplied to provincial newspapers by special companies like Tillotsons of Bolton, who, through their Fiction Bureau, were probably one of the largest suppliers of syndicated fiction to the provincial press during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[72] Authors such as Mrs Molesworth, S. Baring-Gould, Robert Buchanan and Miss Amelia Barr were among those whose stories were to appear in the paper, thus creating an appeal to more than just the sporting enthusiast.

Unfortunately the first edition of the football paper was hit by the problem of the late arrival of results from elsewhere in the country, preventing the paper from 'going to bed' until 7.15 in the evening. Thus, not only did many people in Reading not get a copy but the publishers were unable to dispatch copies to the surrounding districts. This was an embarrassing start to the new paper but the problems appear to have been ironed out quickly, for by the following Saturday the weekly edition of the *Observer* was confidently stating that the Football Edition would be available not only in Reading, but also in Wokingham, Bracknell,

---

71 *Reading Observer*, no. 1876, Saturday 12 October 1895.

72 M. L. Turner, 'Tillotson's Fiction Bureau', *Studies in the Book Trade*, (1975), pp. 351-78.

Newbury, Maidenhead, Theale and Pangbourne.[73] The format of the football edition was 19¾" x 13½, just half the normal *Observer* format, and it consisted of four pages and cost ½d. Although the first edition was printed on ordinary white paper, the second and many later editions appeared on green paper, a factor which made them distinctive.

By the end of 1896 the percentage of the paper devoted to advertising had once again risen to well over fifty per cent,[74] only 24 of its 56 columns being used for news and articles. The use of the maximum sheet size, the need to produce a football edition between September and April each year, and the still-rising circulation made it necessary yet again for the company to invest in new and faster printing machinery to cope with the expansion. During the latter part of 1896 and the early weeks of 1897, a new Hoe web-fed rotary perfector was therefore installed at Blagrave Street, and the basement of the premises was converted to hold the necessary stereotyping plant for producing curved plates for the press.[75] This particular machine was capable of printing, cutting, insetting, folding and counting an eight-page paper at 12,000 copies per hour, which represented a considerable increase in output compared with that of the Wharfedale two-feeder.

As is often the case when new equipment is used, the *Observer* encountered a considerable number of teething troubles during the first few months after the Hoe's installation, and the dimensions of the paper changed from time to time. The quality of the printing also varied, mainly

---

73 *Reading Observer*, no. 1877, Saturday 19 October 1895.

74 *Reading Observer*, no. 1935, Saturday 5 December 1896, is a random example.

75 See illustration, Chapter II, p. 24.

because of the newsprint used, which appeared to be somewhat inferior to the material used previously.[76]

The first copy printed on the rotary press was produced on Saturday 13 February and it was the same format as usual, but at the end of May the format was increased to 26" deep x 21¾" wide, with eight 15-em columns per page. This size was maintained for five weeks, when it reverted to the original format, but by early October the teething troubles seem to have been overcome, and the paper reverted once more to the larger format, with the announcement that:

> Today the Reading Observer is enlarged to 64 columns which makes it now one of the largest key newspapers published in the South of England.[77]

The paper continued to maintain its new, large format, and the increased production capacity enabled the proprietors to embark on yet another new venture in September 1897, in the form of a midweek edition.[78] This new midweek paper consisted of four pages, but was a smaller format than the weekly Saturday edition, being only 25½" deep x 17" wide; it was sold for ½d. The original intention was to publish the paper every Wednesday, but as this was early closing day for the shops in Reading few people would have been in the town to buy a copy; so, two weeks after the first midweek edition had appeared, its publication day was altered to early Thursday morning.[79]

---

76 See Chapter II, p. 16.

77 *Reading Observer*, no. 1978, Saturday 2 October 1897.

78 *Reading Observer*, no. 1977, Wednesday 22 September 1897.

79 *Reading Observer*, no. 1981, Thursday 13 October 1897.

It is difficult to know how successful this midweek newspaper was, for although it was published for the next sixteen years, which would seem to indicate that it was commercially viable, Charles Slaughter, writing of it in 1924, declared that it did not turn out to be the success which had been anticipated although the circulation was usually over 2,000, and much larger if there was a 'special report'.[80] Certainly the circulation figures did not compare favourably with those of the *Football Observer*, which were frequently between 10,000 and 12,000 copies per week.[81]

In some ways this midweek edition broke with tradition because it contained few if any advertisements, and those which did appear were very small. This in turn meant that news appeared on its front page, which was certainly a change from the conventionally accepted front page, seen on all the other Reading papers, which were normally devoted entirely to advertising.

From the middle of 1886, the *Reading Observer* had another rival newspaper to contend with, in William Hall's *Reading Standard*, which in 1892 had moved from its first premises in Newbury to Friar Street in Reading. And it was in October 1897 that the young Walter Rivers chose to leave the *Observer* in order to become the manager of the *Reading Standard*, a move which eventually led to Rivers acquiring the *Reading Observer* when it ceased production in 1924.[82]

However, Rivers's departure does not appear to have affected the immediate fortunes of the *Observer* and by the beginning of the twentieth

---

80 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

century its total circulation had risen to a figure in excess of 26,000 copies per week.[83]

With the new rotary equipment and the two regular editions per week, together with the *Football Observer* during the winter, the pressure on the composing department must have become considerable, for hand-set type has not only to be set up ready for printing but also has to be 'dissed' back into the case for future use.[84] On a newspaper which has peaks of pressure at deadline times, with slack periods in between, this does not always create problems, but the *Observer* was producing three editions a week, each to a deadline, and undertaking commercial printing as well. So, to relieve some of the pressure on typesetting, two Linotype machines were installed at the end of 1897. Unfortunately these machines brought problems of their own, for they were very early models (probably square-base Linotypes) and were therefore inferior in their operation to those which came later. Additionally, their arrival at the *Observer's* office created a considerable amount of consternation amongst the compositors, many of whom appear to have thought that these machines represented the death of hand composition and consequent job-losses. The installation of these Linotypes was followed by constant breakdowns and disablement of the machines, until a particularly expensive breakage caused Charles Slaughter to intervene in a decisive way. Calling the men round the stone, he told them that the unreliability was not the fault of the machines, that the Linotypes were there to stay, and that if any more

---

83 The figures for 1901, 1902 and 1903, for example, are 26,000, 26,000 and 26,500, as quoted in the *Observer* for 14 December 1901, 8 February 1902 and 24 October 1903 respectively. These totals are for all editions.

84 This is a printer's term used to describe the 'distribution' of type back into its typecase after use.

breakages occurred he would sack the whole staff.[85] From then on, there were fewer problems with the Linotype machines.

By the beginning of this century, the *Observer* had established itself as the leading local newspaper in Reading, and its circulation had risen to a total of 26,000 copies per week for the three editions.[86]

Local competition in the town existed in the form of the *Chronicle*, which sold for 1d. but was going through a very difficult time,[87] the *Reading Mercury*, which consisted of ten pages and sold for 2d, but which was owned and run by the last members of the Cowslade family, who were perhaps not the force they had once been in the local press,[88] and the *Reading Standard*, which had just been acquired by Walter Rivers,[89] who had left the *Observer* in 1897 but who had yet to exert his personal influence on the paper's future. Like the *Observer*, the *Standard* also contained eight pages and sold for 1d.

By 1902 the *Observer*'s circulation had risen to 27,500 copies per week and much of that success was the result of the company's commitment to attract advertising. In fact, during the early part of 1902 the *Observer* formed the Reading Observer South of England and General Advertising Agency in order to be able to place 'adverts in all the London and Provincial Newspapers, Magazines and Periodicals', although how

---

85 *Reading Observer*, no. 4360, Saturday 30 August 1924.

86 *Reading Observer*, no. 2403, Saturday 19 October 1907.

87 See Chapter VI.

88 See Chapter V.

89 Rivers acquired the paper in October 1899. See Chapter VIII.

successful this company was is not known, for there appears to be only one reference to it.[90]

This was undoubtedly another astute move on the part of the *Observer*, for it was now in a position to deal as a professional advertising agency, not only on behalf of its own clients but as a means of attracting bigger advertisers to the *Observer*. The results can be seen in the advertising pages of the paper, which by 1906 included advertisements from such nationally known companies as Lever Brothers, Cadbury's, Sun Fire Insurance, Allenbury Foods, Coleman's Starch, and Eiffel Tower Lemonade. Many of these advertisements were printed from trade-supplied stereos, which were sent out to magazines, journals and newspapers from the companies agencies. The object of producing the advertisements in this way was to ensure that the original advertisement could be designed, set in type, and then approved by the advertiser. Many stereos could be made quickly from this approved original, which ensured that advertisements were both correct and identical every time they appeared.

Another example of improving advertising to attract customers was the use of decoration and illustration. This resulted in the pages of newspapers gradually changing from being purely typographic to becoming more decorative and illustrative, and the *Observer* was no exception in this respect.

During the latter part of 1902, Charles Slaughter took his son into the business and it was renamed 'Charles Slaughter and Son'.[91] It was at this time that the company reached what was perhaps the pinnacle of its

---

90 *Reading Observer*, no. 2452, Saturday 12 April 1902.

91 *Reading Observer*, no. 2511, Saturday 1 November 1902.

success. Certainly the *Observer* considered the years 1902 to 1904 as being their most successful period for, much later (in 1918), the owners of the company used the profits for those years as an example in a prospectus for prospective investors in the company.[92] The average annual profits at that time were quoted as being some £2,200, this being before the issue of the *Football Observer*.[93]

Another reason for suspecting that from 1904 the paper was over its peak and in decline was that no circulation figures were published in the paper from this time onwards, unusual for a newspaper which had, up to this time, gone out of its way to let advertisers know exactly how many copies of the paper were sold each week.

It was from about 1905 onwards that the *Reading Standard* began to make inroads on the circulation figures of the *Observer*, for under the astute leadership of Walter Rivers the *Standard* entered the field of photo-journalism and each week contained a two-page insert of halftone illustrations, which would have attracted many buyers. To its detriment, the *Observer* persisted with its strong Liberal bias, and although the town was still represented in Parliament by the Liberal, Rufus Isaacs, his majority was very small. The break-up of the Liberal party after 1917 allowed the Labour party to take the Liberals' place as the party of the left, and from that time on, even when a Liberal candidate did stand for election in Reading, he was usually at the bottom of the poll.[94]

The persistent adherence to the Liberal cause and the competition from the *Reading Standard* were not the only reasons for the *Observer's*

---

92 PRO BT 31/158951.

93 Ibid.

94 A. Aspinall *et al.*, *Parliament Through Seven Centuries*, (1962), p. 97.

decline. In company with the other local papers, the *Observer* was obliged to reduce its size and production during the 1914-18 war, indeed the midweek and football editions were stopped altogether from August 1914.[95] After some fluctuation in size and format, the weekly edition was produced as an eight-page paper in the smaller format of 26" x 17" and during the last eighteen months of the war the paper was often reduced to just four pages.

During 1916, at the age of 73, Charles Slaughter decided to retire, leaving the business in the hands of his son, Charles Henry Slaughter, and for several weeks the paper was printed and published by 'E. Dennis Berry as trustee of Charles Slaughter'. Presumably this was an interim measure during the change-over of control, for on 4 August the imprint was changed to 'Printed and published for the proprietors by C. H. Slaughter'.[96] It may be reasonably safe to assume that the Slaughter family were still the proprietors but that the retiring Charles Slaughter had little to do with the day-to-day running of the paper.

By the end of the war, Charles Henry Slaughter was suffering increasing ill health and the *Observer* was in need of more capital, so an attempt was made to sell the paper. The Reading Observer (Newspaper and Printing Company) Ltd was therefore formed to acquire the assets of the *Reading Observer*.[97]

The proposed company was to have a nominal capital of five thousand £1 shares, and the qualification shares prescribed for directors

---

95 *Reading Observer*, midweek edition last published on 12 August 1914.

96 *Reading Observer*, no. 3990, Saturday 4 August 1916.

97 PRO BT 31/158951.

of the company were fifty £1 shares. There were four directors listed: Cyril Entwistle MP, Alfred Crossley Davies, newspaper editor, Gervase Robert Parnell, who was a local master printer, and John Frederick Paul, an assistant commissioner in the Ministry of Agriculture.

It was in the prospectus for this proposed company that the average annual profit of £2,200 was stated, together with the comment that:

> In more recent years, and particularly during the war, these profits have not been maintained, but marked improvement was made in 1918...[98]

This prospectus also contained a valuation of the business in terms of the assets to be acquired by any prospective buyer:

> 1) The freehold of premises 19 and 21 Blagrave Street valued at £2,300.
>
> 2) Rotary machine, engine, printing machinery and general equipment valued at £6,191.
>
> 3) Goodwill £450, book debts £100, total estimated value £700.
>
> Therefore total £9,191.

The purchase agreement was for the sum of £6,000, payable as £2,500 cash and the remainder to be satisfied by the issue of debentures to the value of £3,500 (part of a total issue of £4,000) in sums of £100 each redeemable at 15% premium within five years and bearing interest at 6.5%.

Crossley Davies became editor and immediately set out to improve the paper's flagging fortunes: indeed the *Observer* went from six to eight pages in September and from that time onwards there was a weekly inset sheet of two pages of halftones.[99] These were printed on a flat-bed press,

---

98 PRO BT 31/158951.

99 *Reading Observer*, no. 4101, Saturday 13 September 1919.

and presumably inset by hand, for they were slightly smaller than the newspaper format and printed on slightly better material. Those halftones which appeared in the rest of the paper were always very poor, suggesting that the rotary stereo-platemaker was still not able to cope with halftone illustrations.

Despite Crossley Davies's attempts to improve the paper, the proposed company was unable to raise sufficient capital to buy the *Observer* from the Slaughters, and in late 1920 Mrs Slaughter again attempted to sell the business, this time to a company trading under the name of Cornhill Syndicate for the sum of £6,500. Unfortunately, this attempt to sell the paper resulted in a very messy and complex court case.[100]

Apparently the Cornhill Syndicate resold the paper for the sum of £10,000 to a company called Compendiums Ltd. The contract was made on 12 January 1921, completion was to be on 10 February, and possession was granted before completion on 17 January. Compendiums took over the business at this point and ran it for a period but then threatened to close the business down, and a receiver had to be appointed.[101]

Compendiums refused to complete the contract because, they insisted, they had been badly misled as to the state of the company. They had been led to believe that the circulation was 12,000 copies per week, that £500 had been spent on type, and that the net profits of the business exceeded £1,000 per annum. According to their own figures during their period of management from January to May, the circulation was less than

---

100 PRO High Court Cases, July 1921, vol. A.

101 The imprint of Compendiums Ltd first appeared on *Reading Observer*, no. 4180, Saturday 19 March 1921.

2,000 copies and even less than 6,000 copies with the inclusion of the seasonal football edition. Nothing approaching £500 had been spent during the previous year on type, and the net profits of the business 'did not amount to anything approaching £1,000 per annum'.[102] They further claimed that the original accounts had been 'framed by the accountants' and that on attempting to form a company to run the *Observer*, which was to be called the Reading Observer Company Ltd, they discovered that a previous company called the Reading Observer Newspaper and Printing Company had been formed, and that both Mrs Slaughter and Mr Parker of the Cornhill Syndicate knew of this previous company but neither of them had informed Compendiums of its existence.[103]

Sadly, on the very day that the high court case started, Charles Henry Slaughter died, and Mrs Slaughter herself was too distraught to participate in the trial.

The case was not resolved at this time and Evelyn Slaughter was left to act as sub-manager and editor of the *Observer* on behalf of the Receiver until the case could be reopened at a later session, or unless negotiations between the parties resulted in an out-of-court settlement.

With her husband dead, a court case still to be settled, and the company in the hands of the Receiver, Evelyn Slaughter was faced with yet another severe blow when, on the evening of Saturday 17 September, a fire broke out at the *Observer's* premises, causing considerable damage to the machinery in both the press room and composing room.

---

102 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 6429, Friday 8 July 1921.

103 Ibid.

So poor Mrs Slaughter, who had tried to sell the paper because of her husband's bad health, now found herself without husband, without the money from the sale of the paper, without ownership of the paper because it was in the hands of the Receiver, and without the normal means of maintaining production of the paper. Many people might well have given in at this stage, but Evelyn Slaughter did not, and the next week the paper appeared on the streets, having been produced with the assistance of the Philip Palmer Press and the Classic Press, both Reading jobbing printers.[104]

The paper was only a four-page with a demy format, but at least it was still being published, and it would seem vital that the paper be continued if the Receiver or, more particularly, Mrs Slaughter were to get any money for the business at all. This she eventually succeeded in doing, for on 10 March 1922 the *Observer* returned to its original format, containing eight pages, and announced that it was now under new management. Exactly who the new managers were is not known for, despite an exhaustive search, no mention of the owners has yet come to light. The only person whose name is mentioned is that of P. W. Cleaver, who was to be the new general manager of the business, and a P. H. Palmer.[105] Cleaver was almost certainly employed for his experience in advertising, for during his career he had worked at the *Oxford Chronicle*, the *Bournemouth Graphic*, the *Export World*, the *North Wales Weekly News*, the *North Wales Standard* and last, but by no means least, at the *Daily Express* where he was classified advertisements manager, and where in a period of thirteen months he had greatly

---

104 *Reading Observer*, no. 4207, 24 September 1921.

105 It was almost certainly Philip Palmer, of the Philip Palmer Press, who helped to produce the *Observer* for a number of months when the *Observer's* equipment was temporarily immobilised as a result of the fire.

increased the advertising revenue from £759 to £7,800 a month. Just prior to his appointment with the *Observer* he had been a director of the National Advertising Service.

The new proprietors pushed ahead with every effort to improve and enlarge the paper, endeavouring to attract more readers with the inclusion of a two-page inset of halftones and entering into a 'free copy' campaign in an effort to re-establish the paper. This campaign consisted of distributing 15,000 free copies in and around Reading in order to draw people's attention to the 'resuscitated *Observer*', in the hope that they would see how 'greatly it had been improved'.[106] The paper reaffirmed its steadfast support for the Liberal party with a report of Asquith's speech at the Liberal Summer School at Oxford, and supported this by stating that the *Observer* was 'The ONLY LIBERAL PAPER in Reading and District',[107] a slogan repeated for four issues of the paper. In September the *Observer* announced that a new company, Reading Observer Limited, had been formed, which would run the newspaper and its large general printing and publishing business, and that this business was entirely new and had 'nothing to do with those private individuals who had owned the business prior to March last'.[108]

This company ran the *Observer* for the next year and appears to have made every effort to regain the circulation and custom it once had, for by the beginning of 1924 it announced that the *Observer* had 'made

---

106 *Reading Observer*, no. 4247, Friday 30 June 1922.

107 *Reading Observer*, no. 4253, Friday 11 August 1922.

108 *Reading Observer*, no. 4256, Friday 1 September 1922.

remarkable strides in public favour' and that 'The circulation has risen wonderfully...'.[109]

However, the anticipated revival was not to be, and in May the limited company appears to have sold the paper to new owners, for the imprint changed to 'Printed and published by Geoffrey B. Crouch and Horace Pettengell'.[110]

The new owners made a last-ditch effort to save the paper and pinned their faith on a change of political allegiance; for in the second issue under their management the editorial exhorted those who had previously voted Liberal to vote for the Labour party in the forthcoming election. Six weeks later the editorial went one stage further in changing the political bias of the paper when it announced:

> Now the Liberal *Observer* is dead and like a Phoenix rising from the ashes of its dead past comes forth the Labour *Observer*, full of promise for a great and glorious future. *The King is dead, Long live the King*, and we today would doff our caps and wish god speed to our new Labour Journal.[111]

Unfortunately this switch in political allegiance was not enough to save the paper, and after just three and a half months it was closed down and the goodwill and copyright of the *Observer* were purchased by Walter Rivers, the owner of the *Reading Standard*.

The *Observer* had undoubtedly been subjected to increased competition from the *Standard* from 1905 onwards and, after 1914, from the *Berkshire Chronicle* and *Reading Mercury* when the Hobson family had taken them over and began to make them profitable.

---

109 *Reading Observer*, no. 4327, Friday 11 January 1924.

110 *Reading Observer*, no. 4345, week ending 17 May 1924.

111 *Reading Observer*, no. 4352, week ending 5 July 1924.

All the local papers suffered as a result of paper shortages and lack of advertising during this period, but it appears that the *Observer* was the slowest to recover from the aftermath of the war in 1918. Perhaps the fact that Charles Henry Slaughter was a sick man and consequently not able to throw himself into the business of reconstruction after the war had something to do with the paper's demise. Certainly both the *Chronicle* and the *Standard* were quick to expand their business: by 1919 the *Chronicle* had entered the field of sports journalism by producing a football edition on Saturday, which undoubtedly severely eroded the circulation of the *Observer Football* edition, and the *Standard* had achieved a certified weekly circulation approaching twenty thousand copies.[112]

Against this competition it would have been a difficult fight, but the loss of custom and revenue caused by the court case and the fire finally sealed the fate of the *Observer* — the paper which, at the turn of the century, had been so successful and whose owners had shown the other local papers the way with their drive, enthusiasm, and business acumen.

---

112 *Reading Standard*, no. 2553, Friday 5 November 1921.

CHAPTER VIII

§

THE READING STANDARD 1886-1914

There is little doubt that during the second half of the nineteenth century the Liberal radical press had been more active than its Conservative counterpart,[1] and it was with a view to countering the radical press in the Newbury district that the local printer, William Hall, launched a newspaper called the *Newbury Express*, in March 1886.[2]

The secondary title for the paper stated that it was 'a Constitutional journal and General Advertiser for Berks Hants and Wilts' and, in the editorial of the first issue, the editor left no doubt concerning the allegiance of the paper to the Conservative cause:

> It is a notorious fact that up to the present time, in many parts of the country, the Provincial Conservative Press has been less active than the Radical Press. The want is one which cannot be adequately met by the extensive dissemination of London Newspapers, or of Newspapers published at other large centres of population; for the people of the rural district naturally attach great value to local news and are not satisfied with journals which, however sound and clear in their political teaching, and however well furnished with information of general interest, contain no mention of local occurrences. It will be our aim to supply this want for Newbury and the surrounding district, both in South Berks and in those portions of the Western Division of Hants and Wiltshire.[3]

---

1 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914*, (1976), pp. 133-46.

2 *Newbury Express*, no. 1, Thursday 11 March 1886.

3 Ibid.

The Newbury district had only one locally printed paper at this time and that was the *Newbury Weekly News*, which was founded in 1867 and was politically independent, but the three Reading papers were all distributed there, and the *Mercury* and *Observer* had tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to produce newspapers specifically for Newbury.[4]

The proprietors of the *Reading Mercury* had published the *Berkshire Journal* (later the *Newbury Telegraph*) from July 1855 until July 1856, while William Rivers and Charles Slaughter had attempted to expand the *Reading Observer* empire when they published the *Newbury Advertiser* from October 1880 until the end of 1881. Significantly, both of these papers were of Liberal persuasion, which tends to support the view that the Liberal press was the most active.

As Hall's editorial indicated, none of the three Reading papers was a local paper, and the amount of local Newbury news was limited to one or two columns only. So William Hall set out to provide the Newbury area with a new Conservative paper, which was printed and published from his Express Printing Works in the Broadway, Speenhamland, Newbury, where he had been in business as a general printer for a considerable number of years.

It is suggested that the *Newbury Express* was published by Hall as a result of the great debate on the Home Rule question, and it is perhaps worth noting that the Conservatives were about to enjoy considerable political success in the 1886 general election, when the Liberal party was defeated and a Conservative government returned to Parliament.[5] Whilst Newbury had always been a Conservative town, Reading returned a

---

4 See Chapters III, IV, and VII.

5 V. F. M. Garlick, *The Newbury Scrapbook*, (1970), p. 174.

Conservative candidate at this election for the first time in thirty-six years. No doubt Hall was aware of this political revival by the Conservatives and considered it a worthwhile endeavour to produce a local Conservative newspaper at this time.

The *Newbury Express* had a format measuring 24½" x 18½", with eight pages each containing six 16-em columns. It was published every Thursday at a price of 1d., and the first issue contained a halftone photograph of Sir William Mount, the Conservative candidate for Newbury. Apparently the appearance of this photograph created considerable interest, for the following week the *Express* was advertising prints of the photograph on toned paper for the cost of 3d. each, and the presence of the halftone perhaps explains why the circulation of the first issue reached 6,000 copies.[6]

Hall left nothing to chance when it came to ensuring that his new paper was available to those who lived in the rural districts around Newbury, for he employed some eight boys to effect delivery of the *Express*.[7] It is likely that these boys were employed only for the first few issues of the paper, for it was registered for post during the first week of its existence, and presumably all subsequent issues for the country districts were delivered by post.

Although Hall set out to provide a local paper for Newbury, the *Express* was also available in Reading; indeed the paper contained a number of advertisements for Reading companies and from the fourth edition onwards two columns on the back page were devoted to Reading and district news. This Reading column was headed 'The Reading

---

6 *Newbury Express*, no. 2, Thursday 18 March 1886.

7 Ibid.

Standard' in the issue for 17 June and the following week the masthead was altered to read *The Newbury Express and Reading Standard*, with the sub-title reading 'A constitutional Journal for Berks, Hants, and Wilts'.[8] It was also announced in this issue that a *Reading Standard* office was to be opened at 158 Friar Street, Reading, and that the paper could be bought from some twenty-two agents in the town, as well as from the Erleigh Conservative Club.[9]

Whether Hall had originally intended to publish a Reading paper is not known, but even though the *Express* had not been going for very long it was obvious that he was not able to offer serious competition to the *Newbury Weekly News*, which was already firmly established. At this time the population of Newbury was a little under 7,200 people and the *Newbury Weekly News* had already resisted the challenge from the *Newbury Advertiser*; it would appear therefore that there was just not room for another newspaper in the district. To survive, Hall may have switched to the Reading circulation area in an attempt to increase sales of his paper, despite the fact that there were already three papers in Reading fighting for circulation in a town with a population of little more than 70,000 people.

The first edition of the new *Reading Standard* almost certainly dates from June 1886. However, little information is available concerning the early editions of the *Standard*, for the first extant issue is number 44, for early January 1887, and no reference is made to the *Reading Standard* in the copies of the *Newbury Express*. This numbering would be consistent with the paper being numbered from the start of the *Newbury Express*.

---

8 *Newbury Express*, no. 16, Thursday 24 June 1886.

9 *Newbury Express*, ibid. The names and addresses of the agents were listed in this edition. Erleigh is a district of Reading.

The Reading Standard.

A Constitutional Journal for Berks, Bucks, Hants, Oxon, & Wilts.

No. 44 { REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD. } FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 1887. POST FREE PER QUARTER. { IN ADVANCE, 1s.; ON CREDIT, 2s. } PRICE ONE PENNY.

By Special Appointment to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

BRACHER & SYDENHAM

JEWELLERS, WATCHMAKERS AND SILVERSMITHS,

55 & 56, Minster Street, Reading.

DIAMOND ORNAMENTS, PEARL ORNAMENTS.

Designs made and sent Post Free for Bridesmaids BROOCHES, BANGLES & LOCKETS, &c.

SILVER PRESENTATION PLATE, ELECTRO PLATED GOODS.

Agent for ROGERS' best Sheffield Cutlery.

WATCHES.

B & S. beg to call attention to their NEW ENGLISH LEVER WATCH in solid Silver Hall marked cases and crystal glass with all the latest improvements, price £5 10s. cash. Sent post free. Every other kind of GOLD or SILVER WATCH kept in stock.

CLOCKS.

BRACHER and SYDENHAM beg to inform their Customers and the Public generally that they have opened in addition to their present Establishment No. 55, No. 56, MINSTER STREET, as a Show-Room for CLOCKS, BRONZES, FANCY GOODS, etc. No. 56, MINSTER STREET, will be found replete with a very large Stock of DRAWING ROOM, DINING ROOM, HALL and LIBRARY CLOCKS of the newest designs, also a large variety of CARRIAGE and FANCY CLOCKS suitable for presentation.

SOLE PROPRIETORS of HILL'S PATENT NIGHT CLOCKS.

GREENWICH MEAN TIME BY ELECTRIC CURRENT.

A Large Selection of MOURNING JEWELLERY.

BRACHER AND SYDENHAM,

55 & 56, MINSTER STREET, READING.

'OLD JOE'—A very Fine

'OLD JOE'—Flavoured

'OLD JOE'—Tobacco.

'OLD JOE'—Good

'OLD JOE'—for Smoking

'OLD JOE'—at any

'OLD JOE'—time

'OLD JOE'—of the Day.

'OLD JOE'—In Packets only.

'OLD JOE'—8oz., 1oz., and 4oz.,

'OLD JOE'—at 3d. per ounce.

BRIGHAM & SON, READING.

TOBACCO MANUFACTORY.

RODD BROTHERS,

THE BROADWAY, NEWBURY,

HAVE the pleasure to inform the Clergy, Gentry, and the public generally that they have taken the

HIGH CLASS TAILORING BUSINESS

Lately carried on by

MR. W. W. FOSTER,

Which has been superintended for some time by

MR. S. RODD,

And having had many years experience in the leading West End Houses, are prepared to execute any Orders entrusted to their care

GOOD FIT AND BEST WORKMANSHIP GUARANTEED.

W. JOHNSON,

PRACTICAL

WATCH AND CLOCK MAKER,

JEWELLER, & SILVERSMITH,

66, NORTHBROOK STREET,

NEWBURY

(Opposite Mr. John Staples, Cook and Confectioner), HAS A NEW ASSORTMENT OF CHEAP, GOOD AND USEFUL ARTICLES SUITABLE FOR PRESENTS, AT STORE PRICES.

All kinds of Repairs Neatly Executed on the Premises.

Patent Keyless Watches from 15s.; Clocks from 3s.

W. J. Johnson, [illegible]

ALEXANDER BURNS,

TAILOR & BREECHES MAKER.

12, BARTHOLOMEW STREET,

NEWBURY.

SERVANTS' LIVERIES,

LADIES' JACKETS & RIDING HABITS

Scotch Lambs Wool and Merino Underclothing direct from the Makers.

SILK AND FELT HATS, SCARVES, COLLARS, TIES, &.

THE NEWEST STYLES IN SCOTCH TWEEDS AND SUITINGS FOR THE SEASON.

COMPULSORY SALE

Of upwards of Two Thousand Pounds worth of

MEN'S & BOYS'

READY-MADE

CLOTHING,

BOOTS, SHOES, &c.

E. LANGSTON,

Begs to announce that

THE PEOPLE'S CLOTHING AND BOOT STORES

Will be RE-BUILT early in the new year, and having to TURN OUT by February 1st, he has decided to CLEAR OUT the whole of his large and well assorted Stock at

ENORMOUS REDUCTIONS.

The Stock consists of

OVERCOATS, SUITS, CORD AND CLOTH TROUSERS, HOSIERY, GLOVES, SHIRTS, HATS, CAPS, CARDIGANS, SCARFS, COLLARS, TIES, &c., &c., together with about

8,000 PAIRS OF BOOTS, SHOES, & SLIPPERS.

SALE NOW ON.

The entire Stock has been purchased for the present Season's Trade, and therefore offers a most unusual opportunity for securing

FASHIONABLE GOODS AT STARTLING PRICES.

All Goods Marked in Plain Figures and no further reduction made.

CATALOGUES ON APPLICATION.

No Goods sent on approval, but any article not approved will be exchanged at any time except after Five o'clock on Saturdays.

E. LANGSTON,

THE PEOPLE'S BOOT, SHOE, AND CLOTHING STORES,

93 & 94, *Friar Street, & 1a, West Street,*

READING.

READING STAINED GLASS WORKS.

EARTHY & GOODMAN,

Artists in

STAINED GLASS

FOR Ecclesiastical and Domestic Purposes, Plain and Geometrical Lead Glazing for Mansions, Public Buildings, &c.

Estimates and Designs Free.

Studio:—

98, LONDON STREET, READING.

SELLING OFF!!!

THE LADIES AND CHILDREN'S

OUTFITTING, UNDERCLOTHING, AND DRESSMAKING ESTABLISHMENT,

18 & 19, MINSTER STREET,

READING.

21 DAY'S SALE,

COMMENCING

JANUARY 8TH, 1887.

MRS. WOODWARD

BEGS to announce that in order to make room for her SPRING PURCHASES she is now offering the whole of her STOCK at an immense reduction.

N.B.—A Large parcel of HOME-MADE UNDERCLOTHING of Guaranteed Quality, at unprecedently low prices.

E. COX & SON,

MANUFACTURERS OF

SODA, SELTZER & OTHER MINERAL WATERS, LEMONADE AND GINGER BEER.

ST. MARY'S HILL, NEWBURY, AND

GREAT WESTERN MINERAL WATER WORKS,

GRAYS FRIARS ROAD, READING.

E. J. HUNT

(Late with Wm. Ridley and Sons).

TIMBER, SLATE, TILE, & CEMENT MERCHANT, SAWING, PLANING, & MOULDING MILLS, [illegible], Scaffold Poles, & Scaffold Planks, NORTHERN WHARF, CAVERSHAM ROAD, READING, opposite G.W.R. Works.

E. J. H. will be pleased to send Quotations for all kinds of Building Materials on application.

READING

KING'S ROAD CORNER.

ONLY ONCE A YEAR!!!

EDWARD JACKSON'S

GREAT

FOURTEEN DAYS' SALE.

SEND FOR DETAILED LIST.

Clearance of Good Collars, 1d. each.
Clearance of Paper Collars, 1d. per doz.
Clearance of Good Ties, 1d and 2d. each.
Clearance of Best Ties, 4½d. & 6½d. each.
Clearance of Good Hats, 4½d. each.
Clearance of Best Hats, 2/11 each.
Clearance of Best Shirts, 1/11½, 2/11½.
Clearance of Elastic Braces, 3½d., 6½d.
Clearance of Wool Undershirts, 1/11½.
Clearance of Hose, Half Hose, 4½d.
Clearance of Knicker Suits, 2/6½ to 7/11
Clearance of Rugby Suits, 7/11 to 12/6
Clearance of Little Boys' Overcoats, 3/11 to 6/11
Clearance of Big Boys' Overcoats, 5/11 to 10/6
Clearance of Youths Overcoats, 7/11 to 15/6
Clearance of Men's Overcoats, 7/11 to 18/6
Clearance of Men's Covercoats, 12/11
Clearance of Youths' Suits, 7/11 to 21/-
Clearance of Men's Suits, 12/6 to 35/-
Clearance of Pilot Jackets, 7/11 to 10/9
Clearance of Tweed Jackets, 6/11 to 8/11
Clearance of Serge Jackets, 2/6, 3/6, 4/6
Clearance of Tweed Trousers, 3/11 to 8/11
Clearance of Cord Trousers, 2/11 to 8/11
Clearance of Children's Boots, 1/- to 1/6
Clearance of Children's Stout Boots, 1/6 to 2/6
Clearance of Leather Boots, 1/11½ to 2/11
Clearance of Nailed Boots, 1/11½ to 5/11
Clearance of Youths' Boots, 3/11 to 6/11
Clearance of Smart Boots, 4/6 to 7/6
Clearance of Women's Boots, 1/0½ to 4/11
Clearance of Stylish Boots, 4/11 to 8/11
Clearance of Carpet Shoes, 1/0½
Clearance of Felt Shoes, 1/4½
Clearance of Leather Shoes, 1/6½
Clearance of Oxford Shoes, 3/11 to 4/11
Clearance of Strap Shoes, 8½d. to 2/11
Clearance of Railway Rugs and Driving Aprons
Clearance of Macintoshes and Oil Clothing
Clearance of Portmanteaus and Handbags
Clearance of Umbrellas and Gloves
Clearance of Leggings (all sorts)

SPECIAL IN SUITS TO ORDER, 42/-
SPECIAL IN TROUSERS TO ORDER, 10/6
SHECIAL IN OVERCOATS TO ORDER, 30/-

SPLENDID ASSORTMENT of CHOICE GOODS in all Departments at CLEARANCE PRICES.

SALE—JANUARY 7TH AND FOLLOWING DAYS.

SEND FOR PRICE LIST.

EDWARD JACKSON,

KING'S ROAD CORNER,

READING.

FURNITURE! FURNITURE!! FURNITURE!!!

FURNISH THROUGHOUT ON THE

NEW EASY CREDIT SYSTEM,

INTRODUCED BY

THE BERKSHIRE

FURNISHING COMPANY,

45, MINSTER STREET, READING.

GENERAL TERMS:

£2 worth,	Deposit 5s.	Balance 2s. 6d. weekly.
£5 ,,	,, 10s.	,, 3s. 6d. ,,
£10 ,,	,, 30s.	,, 5s. 0d. ,,
£20 ,,	,, £3	,, 10s. 0d. ,,
£40 ,,	,, £6	,, 20s. 0d. ,,
£50 ,,	,, £10	,, 25s. 0d. ,,
£100 ,,	,, £20	,, 40s. 0d. ,,

For any amount not specified above, special arrangements effected if required.

Being the actual Makers of the Bedsteads, Bedding, and Furniture we supply, we can confidently recommend them.

GOODS DELIVERED ON PAYMENT OF DEPOSIT.

No extra charge for Credit.

Call and inspect our New and Magnificent Dining, Drawing, and Bedroom Suites, arranged in spacious Show Rooms. All Goods Warranted.

ANY SINGLE ARTICLE WILL BE SUPPLIED.

LIBERAL DISCOUNT ALLOWED FOR CASH.

PROSPECTUSES & OPINIONS OF THE PRESS FREE ON APPLICATION.

MANUFACTORIES:—BIRMINGHAM AND LONDON.

"QUEEN'S"

FAMILY AND COMMERCIAL HOTEL, MARKET PLACE, NEWBURY,

(Next to Corn Exchange).

SPACIOUS COFFEE, COMMERCIAL, and LADIES' ROOMS.

MARKET ORDINARY on THURSDAYS at 1.30.

New and Commodious Stabling.

JOHN HAMLEN, *Proprietor.*

EDWARD MORRIS,

FUNERAL FURNISHER,

4, Market Place, Reading.

Modern Economic Funerals under Personal Superintendence.

FAMILY MOURNING.

Competent Dress Makers sent to take orders, which can be Executed with despatch in any extent.

JOHN G. MURDOCH & CO., LTD.

ESTABLISHED 1863. Incorporated 1885.

Reading Branch: 79, KING'S ROAD, READING.

South of England Depot:

BRIGHTON ROAD, REDHILL

SUPERINTENDENT: E. PHILLIPS.

Chief Depot in Australia: 23, Lonsdale Street, E. Melbourne. | Chief Depot in Scotland: 83 & 85, Union Street, Glasgow.

TWELVE HONEST OPINIONS OF

MURDOCH & CO'S PIANOFORTES,

MANUFACTURED ON THEIR OWN PREMISES,

(Price from 20 to 150 Guineas),

Selected from numerous letters sent to them.

1. AN EMINENT PIANIST'S OPINION.—"Excellent in both tone and touch."—Fountain Meen, Organist, Sacred Harmonic Society.

2. A CELEBRATED ORGANIST'S OPINION.—"I can highly recommend your Instruments. The quality of tone is pure, and the touch really good."—E. Minshall, Esq., Organist, City Temple.

3. A WELL-KNOWN SINGER'S OPINION.—"Excellent Instruments, bright and full-toned."—Madame Florence Winn.

4. AN EMINENT ORGANIST'S OPINION.—"Cannot fail to give every satisfaction. Can thoroughly recommend them as first-class Instruments."—J. W. Walker, Esq., Organist, St. Michael and All Angels, Chiswick.

5. A WELL-KNOWN MUSICIAN'S OPINION.—"Brilliancy of tone and agreeable touch."—W. Winn, Esq., Gentleman of Chapel Royal.

6. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"Excellent in tone, highly finished, gives great satisfaction."—J. Frost, Esq., Romford.

7. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"Everything that can be desired. Much admired by all musical friends."—E. S. Jones, Esq., Walham Green.

8. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"Admired by all my friends for its elegance and cheapness."—E. Evans, Esq., Wood Green.

9. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"Gives great satisfaction to myself and friends."—B. Daniels, Esq., Stratford.

10. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"A very good instrument, giving every satisfaction."—J. Walton, Esq., Parson's Green.

11. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"Has given me the greatest satisfaction, and I can with pleasure recommend them."—C. W. Holt, Esq., Stepney.

12. A PURCHASER'S OPINION.—"Very pleased indeed, with the Two Pianos purchased."—Mrs. K——, South Belgravia.

(This lady has since bought another Piano from us.)

The only Carpenter's Organs in Europe! Beware of misrepresentations. Tone:—rich, pure, smooth, and pipe-like. Touch:—Light, rapid, and responsive. Price from six guineas to 250 guineas. A 20-guinea instrument delivered to any respectable householder on payment of 20s. These instruments are really marvels of cheapness. An inspection will ensure sale. Everyone seeing them express their surprise at the splendid value for money. These instruments can only be purchased in the United Kingdom or Colonies from J. G. MURDOCH and Co.

Ten years warranty given with every organ. New Harmoniums from Five Guineas.

NOTE THE ADDRESS—

79, KING'S ROAD, READING.

MOORE'S, ZADKIEL'S & RAPHAEL'S

ALMANACKS FOR 1887.

SIXPENCE EACH.

Every Purchaser of these Almanacks will be presented gratis with a copy of

HALL'S

NEWBURY & HUNGERFORD GUIDE for 1887.

Sold by W. HALL, The Broadway, Newbury.

Hungerford—A. WITTS, New.

GEO. WINTLE

begs to announce that his

ANNUAL SALE OF

DRAPERY & FANCY GOODS

will commence

Thursday, January 13th, 1887,

when all Goods will be Reduced.

A special lot of Household Linens & Blankets.

Cheap Remnants from all Departments.

10 & 11, NORTHBROOK ST.,

NEWBURY.

HUNT & CO.,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS,

THE BROADWAY, NEWBURY,

(ESTABLISHED UPWARDS OF 50 YEARS.)

Agents for the following Whiskies:—

Dunville's. | John Begg's "Lochnagar."
Kinahan's LL. | The Lorne "Highland."
Begg's, Burton & Co.'s "B." | "Glenrose" Pure Malt.

42/- per dozen.

THE HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF NEWBURY AND ITS ENVIRONS 14s. and 6s. 6d. (only a limited number of copies to be had) at W. HALL'S, The Broadway, Newbury.

SMOKELESS CARTRIDGES

FOR

COVERT SHOOTING

KEEPER'S GUNS

THOMAS TURNER & SONS,

MARKET PLACE, READING.

DON'T

BUY another pair of Boots until you have seen GROVES' NEW SHOP, 21, BROAD STREET, the same side as the Market, 3 doors above it and 2 doors below Cross Street. It is well-stocked with all New Goods, made expressly for me by the first and best makers in England, and the prices are lower than anything yet offered in Reading, and every pair warranted.

Small Shopkeepers and Country Shoemakers will find many of my Retail Prices lower than they can buy them Wholesale, and having the largest Stock in the country, they will find it worth their attention.

Unless I can sell large quantities this business will be a failure, but as I am really and truly trying to sell good Boots cheap, without any kind of trick or trickery, I am hoping the public will give me their support. Those who desire to buy Low Price Goods, will find a large Stock, cheap indeed, for my profit on most of them does not exceed Threepence per pair; but I have a Splendid Stock of First-class Goods, the best money can buy, and there is not a pair in the shop on which my profits exceed a Shilling, and that is more than can be truly said by any man in the trade, or any Co-operative Stores in the Kingdom; and for high-class Goods I claim it to be the Cheapest House in the World. Everything is marked in plain figures, and a child can buy as cheaply as the sharpest dealer; and whether you want Boots, or only a pair of Laces, I shall be more than glad of the favour.

GROVES,

21, BROAD STREET,

READING.

READING.

BOTLY & LEWIN'S

WATCHES.

A SPLENDID GENTLEMAN'S WATCH
AND the MOST PERFECT WORKMAN'S WATCH
IS the PATENT HERMETIC WATCH,
Which received the ONLY PRIZE MEDAL
Awarded to DUST-PROOF WATCHES
At the INVENTIONS EXHIBITION, 1885.
THIS WATCH
IS an ENGLISH PATENT LEVER,
With MASSIVE SILVER CASES,
STRONG CRYSTAL GLASS,
IT WINDS and SETS HANDS AT BACK;
Has either a GOLD or CHRONOMETER BALANCE,
IS JEWELLED THROUGHOUT IN RUBIES,
HAS IMPROVED EXTENDED BARREL,
HARDENED and TEMPERED HAIRSPRING,
IS a MOST EXCELLENT TIMEKEEPER,
And WILL GO LONGER WITHOUT CLEANING
THAN ANY OTHER WATCH.
THIS WATCH
IS GUARANTEED THE FINEST QUALITY,
IS UNEQUALLED AT THE PRICE,
WILL GO IN ANY CLIMATE,
And IS ABSOLUTELY DUST-PROOF,
IT IS a GREAT IMPROVEMENT on
The ORDINARY LEVER WATCH,
And MUST GIVE SATISFACTION.
PRICE FREE TO ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, £3 0s. 0d.

GOLD and SILVER WATCHES in great variety from 21s. to £40.

GOLD, SILVER and DIAMOND JEWELLERY PRESENTATION PLATE, CLOCKS, BAROMETERS, SPECTACLES, &c.

BOTLY & LEWIN,

WATCHMAKERS, MANUFACTURING JEWELLERS,

AND PRACTICAL OPTICIANS,

KING STREET, READING

Established Over Forty Years.

FOOTBALLS

By Best Makers, at Lowest Prices,

at

W. HALL'S FANCY WAREHOUSE,

THE BROADWAY,

SPEENHAMLAND,

NEWBURY.

BRITTANIA BREWERY,

CAVERSHAM ROAD, READING.

W. J. PAIN,

FAMILY PALE ALE, BITTER & STRONG MILD ALES.

STOUT & PORTER BREWERY.

W. J. P. will guarantee these ALES to be BREWED from the BEST MATERIALS in the market, and will bear favourable comparison with any Ales in the neighbourhood.

OUR FAMILY SHILLING PALE ALES

The same class of Ales as supplied to the Royal Berkshire Hospital,

Are highly recommended by the Faculty.

A trial is earnestly requested.

PRICE LIST ON APPLICATION.

FRESH YEAST ALWAYS ON HAND.

The Reading Standard in January 1887

So Hall continued to publish the *Newbury Express* every Thursday and the *Reading Standard* every Friday, both papers having the same format and selling for 1d. Surprisingly, the two papers were substantially different in their content, although certain aspects of the make-up were common to both editions. As a rule the inside four pages (pages 3, 4, 5 and 6) were frequently the same, or certainly very similar, and contained national news and information of local interest in the county. However, the outside four pages (pages 1, 2, 7 and 8) were entirely different from each other, with local advertisements appearing on pages 1 and 7 and local news appearing on pages 2 and 8. Although this pattern of make-up was not always adhered to, it was the one most generally used, and William Hall appears to have planned and produced his two papers with considerable care. One advantage of the dual make-up for these two papers was that it was possible to offer advertisers the opportunity for their advertisements to appear in two papers for the price of one insertion.[10]

Producing two newspapers per week must have presented numerous problems for Hall, particularly as one of the papers had to be despatched to Reading for sale but, despite the problems and the competition from existing journals, the two papers appear to have thrived. William Hall was, however, presented with a particularly difficult problem during 1890 when he was served with a high court injunction to prevent him from producing his newspapers at night. It seems likely that his press was powered either by a gas engine or a steam engine and that the noise from this engine had disturbed Hall's neighbours. The result of this injunction was that William Hall moved his newspaper printing press

---

10 *Reading Standard*, no. 252, Friday 2 January 1891.

to 129 Friar Street, in Reading, and the Newbury and Reading papers were produced there.[11]

Despite or perhaps because of this problem, the *Reading Standard* appears to have gained a foothold in Reading and, in the face of severe competition in the town, particularly from the *Reading Observer*, it not only survived but expanded its circulation. Indeed, on 23 January 1891 the *Standard* declared that it had sold 12,300 copies the previous week.[12] Whether this was the total sale for both papers or just for the *Standard* is not clear, but such a circulation would, without doubt, represent a healthy state of affairs for William Hall.

Another sign that the *Standard* was enjoying a successful period was the inclusion of frequent notices to customers and subscribers apologizing for the fact that extreme pressure on space had caused various reports to be held over to the following week. Such was the pressure in fact that the *Standard*:

> ...made arrangements, by the elimination of advertisement blocks, to deal more satisfactorily with the immense amount of local and district news that comes to hand every week.[13]

By the middle of 1892 the *Standard* was obliged to invest in a new and faster Wharfedale press and new type, in order to cope with the growing circulation, and in July of that year the company moved to new premises at 24 Friar Street and recruited more office and reporting staff.[14] It is also interesting to note that with this move the secondary

---

11 See Chapter II, footnote 21.

12 *Reading Standard*, no. 255, Friday 23 January 1891.

13 *Reading Standard*, no. 269, Friday 5 May 1891.

14 *Reading Standard*, no. 330, Friday 1 July 1892.

title '*An Official Conservative Organ for Reading, Wokingham, and Berks*' was dropped and a new secondary title '*Berks, Hants, Wilts and Oxon Courier*' was used. Presumably Hall wished to drop the obvious political tie with the Conservative party and move towards being politically independent, a factor which could well have influenced the survival of the paper.

Another change which took place at this time was the introduction of William Hall's son into the newspaper business, for the imprint was altered to include William Edward Hall's name in addition to his father's. This partnership between William Hall and his son lasted for just two years until July 1894, when a notice appeared in the *Standard* announcing that the partnership was to be dissolved.[15] It is possible that William Edward Hall had edged the *Reading Standard* to the verge of bankruptcy, either by inept management or by virtue of some improper business practice, for in May 1895 the following notice appeared in the *Standard*:

> By order of Mr Justice Stirling, the printing and publishing business recently carried on by my son William Edward Hall, at 24 Friar Street Reading Berks, including the *Reading Standard* and *Newbury Express* now belong to me. I hereby request you to pay to me and to no other person whomsoever all debts and monies owing by you to the said William Edward Hall in connection with the said business, and please take notice that my receipt alone will be a sufficient discharge for the same.[16]

All remittances were to be made payable to William Hall and sent either to the *Reading Standard* office in Friar Street, Reading, or to the Broadway office at Newbury. Although the production of the two newspapers was undertaken in Reading, William Hall had continued his printing business in Newbury, under the title of 'W. Hall & Son'. However,

---

15 *Reading Standard*, no. 436, Friday 13 July 1894.

16 *Reading Standard*, no. 487, Friday 24 May 1895.

Hall's son appears to have had no further involvement in either of the business ventures, which were, from this time, continued by William Hall on his own.

Despite this change in management, the *Reading Standard* maintained its place in the local battle for circulation and, like the *Observer*, stressed the importance of the paper as an advertising medium. Indeed, the advertisements which appeared in the *Standard* were more typographically pleasing than those appearing in rival papers, and perhaps this was due to the fact that William Hall was, first and foremost, a printer and this might have influenced his management of the paper.

However, it was not only advertisers that the *Standard* endeavoured to attract, for each week the contents of the paper included such items as a women's fashion article, a gardening column, a society gossip column, quotes from the comics, and both a serial and a short story. In addition, there was good sports coverage and comment on national and local affairs. Increasingly during 1895 and 1896 line illustrations were used to illustrate the text until, by 1897, the use of such illustrations was a normal part of the paper's make-up.

The year 1897 was a significant one in the life of the *Standard*, for in October Walter Rivers left the *Observer* and joined the *Standard* as its manager, an action which was to result in a considerable change in the fortunes of the paper. Rivers immediately began to stamp his authority on the paper and one of the first changes he made was to declare that the paper would be independent of any political party. The masthead sub-title was altered to read 'Independent Newspaper for Reading and District'[17]

---

17 *Reading Standard*, no. 613, Friday 22 October 1897.

and, in his first editorial, Rivers emphasized his intention of freeing the paper from political bias:

> Whatever may in the past have been our real or supposed political leanings our readers may be assured that in the future no party colouring will be found in the comments we may have to make.[18]

He went on to say that the staff and the plant of the paper had been increased and that these improvements would

> ...inevitably serve such an increased circulation as to make the *Reading Standard* second to none as a local advertising medium...[19]

It would appear that Rivers's drive for more advertising was successful, for the percentage of advertising in the paper, which had always been about 35-40% of the paper's content, had increased to 44% by December 1897 and to 55% by the end of 1898.

Other changes which were made by Rivers were the introduction of an extra, Saturday-morning, edition and the increasing use of illustrations in the paper. Several times during 1898 halftones were used to illustrate articles on local places and people and these photographic illustrations were often augmented with line blocks as well.

Rivers continued as Manager of the *Newbury Express* and the *Reading Standard* for the next two years, producing the *Express* every Thursday and the *Standard* every Friday evening and again on Saturday mornings. However, in October 1899 William Hall announced in the *Newbury Express* that arrangements had been made for the sale of the newspaper plant and that the publication of the *Newbury Express* would cease with that issue.[20]

---

18 *Reading Standard*, no. 613, Friday 22 October 1897.

19 Ibid.

20 *Newbury Express*, no. 714, Thursday 28 September 1899.

The new proprietors of the *Reading Standard* were Walter Rivers and John James Cooper JP, a prominent Reading auctioneer and estate agent who had acted as executor for the estate of Walter Rivers's father in 1893. Although Cooper was the sleeping partner he was, it seems, always ready to offer sound advice and good judgement to Walter Rivers, and the success which the *Standard* later enjoyed was due in no small part to Cooper's contribution.[21] As their first publication of the *Standard* was produced on Friday 13 October, it would appear that they were not the least superstitious.

The first edition under this new ownership had a new masthead, with the title *Reading Standard* in a new, crisper and smaller outline gothic type, and in addition the sub-title was altered to read 'The Independent and Progressive Newspaper for Reading and District'. The aims of the new management were made very clear in their first editorial:

> We shall study to make it not only an interesting Family Paper, but shall endeavour to deal within its columns with every phase of life, so that all sections of the community will find within it news to interest them... In Political and Municipal affairs our position will be INDEPENDENT and PROGRESSIVE and every movement tending towards the benefit of the people at large will have our earnest support.[22]

There is little doubt that Walter Rivers had a good business sense and knew what would appeal to readers. He had demonstrated the attractions of using photographic illustration in newspapers during his time with the *Reading Observer* and he had included photographic illustrations in the *Standard* increasingly from the time he had first become manager.[23] Now that he was part owner of the paper, he was

---

21 *Reading Standard*, no. 2479, Saturday 5 June 1920.

22 *Reading Standard*, no. 716, Friday 13 October 1899.

23 See Chapter VII, p. 152.

obviously in a position to embark on a much greater use of illustration, and this he proceeded to do.

He included, for example, a large halftone of the ceremony in Reading of the Proclamation of Edward VII. This was printed on special art paper and inserted into the weekly paper as a supplement.[24] Later in the year he produced a supplement on which were printed photographic portraits of no less than 155 out of some 250 children who attended the Mayor's and Mayoress's Fancy Dress Carnival.[25] In June the *Standard* was printed on special, smooth white paper for the reproduction of some thirteen large halftones showing scenes of the return of the Berkshire Yeomanry from South Africa, including not only regimental pictures but photographs of the crowds in Reading who came to meet the regiment on its return.[26]

The paper was obviously making good progress and must have been profitable, for in May of 1901 it moved to new premises at 13 and 15 Valpy Street, virtually next door to two of its rivals, the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Observer*.[27] Like its rivals, the *Standard's* new premises were close to both the railway stations and to the new town hall and civic building and their new premises housed not only the newspaper business but its commercial printing department as well.

One other possible indication of the *Standard's* good progress was the change in numbering which occurred in early 1902, when number 846 for Saturday 11 January was followed by number 848 for Saturday 18

---

24 *Reading Standard*, no. 788, Saturday 1 February 1901.

25 *Reading Standard*, no. 800, Saturday 22 April 1901.

26 *Reading Standard*, no. 811, Saturday 22 June 1901.

27 See map on p. xvii.

January, suggesting that another edition had been published during the week. There is no mention of the *Standard's* intention to publish another edition, yet the numbers continue to indicate the production of a midweek edition of the paper. Subsequently there are occasional references to 'our midweek edition', but no information is available as to size, content, price, or day of publication as none of the midweek editions appear to be extant.

Despite the fact that Walter Rivers had stressed the independent nature of the *Standard*, it had frequently tended to side with the Liberal point of view in its editorial comment. In October 1902 the paper openly confessed that the political situation in the country was such that it had to support the Liberal cause and that henceforth the *Standard* would be a Liberal paper:

> *The Reading Standard* could do no other than advocate religious liberty, it could not be progressive if it did not condemn the principles of public taxation without popular control, and it would be recreant to the best political traditions if it failed to oppose the placing of burdens upon the necessities of the people. For some while past we have experienced a time of political reaction, and we have been gradually but surely convinced of the necessity for fighting this tendency openly and avowedly. Only one way presented itself, namely, by a declaration of support to the party to which either directly or indirectly Britons owe the liberty and freedom of which, not inexcusably, they are wont to boast. Under all the circumstances the great majority of our readers will not be surprised when we state that henceforth this paper will definitely advocate a True Liberal Policy in things Political, Educational, Religious, and Municipal.[28]

So once again the secondary title of the paper was changed, to read 'The Liberal and Progressive Newspaper for Reading & District', but this time it was to stay until October 1913, when it was quietly dropped altogether.

It was at this time that the *Standard's* major rival, the Reading *Observer* (also a Liberal paper), was enjoying its most successful period

---

28 *Reading Standard*, no. 929, Saturday 18 October 1902.

and it was perhaps significant that during 1905 the *Reading Standard* moved into the field of photo-journalism in a serious way.[29]

At the very beginning of the year, the *Standard* bought a new Wharfedale Quad Royal two-feeder press and it was almost certainly the capacity of this machine to print the main text of the paper that enabled the *Standard* to produce two-page art inserts containing illustrations and advertising on their old single-cylinder machine. The first of these supplements appeared in the first issue of the *Standard* to be produced on the new press and, although initially these supplements did not appear regularly, by the end of 1905 they had become a weekly feature, raising the paper to a ten-page edition.

This increase in the size of the paper created pressure on the composing department and the *Standard* installed a new Linotype machine.[30] By the end of 1906 this typesetter was probably working to maximum capacity to cope with the setting of the paper, which was regularly produced in twelve-page form, the advertising content now occupying between 60% and 65% of the paper each week. It is difficult to make comparisons between the *Standard* and its chief rival, the *Observer*, as there are no circulation figures available for the *Standard* but it would be safe to assume that the amount of advertising would not increase unless the advertisers were assured of a good circulation. If that were the case, then the *Standard* was posing a serious threat to the *Observer* and may well have surpassed the *Observer* as the leading paper in the county.

In addition to using photographs to attract subscribers to his paper Rivers, in 1907, produced over 200 of the illustrations in a 72-page

---

29 See Chapter VII.

30 *Reading Standard*, no. 1233, Saturday 23 September 1905.

booklet, which was given away free of charge to every subscriber.[31] These illustrations had originally appeared in the paper but were thus produced in a more permanent form for subscribers to retain, the theme of the booklet being 'notable events' of 1904, 1905, and 1906.

Those who were not regular subscribers or who wanted extra copies could obtain them for 3d. each, but non-subscribers could obtain a free copy if they contracted to buy the *Standard* for one month.

Rivers was always alive to the opportunity to introduce new custom and extend the circulation of his paper, and the use of illustration was not the only method he used for doing this. In 1908 he observed that the village of Caversham, on the north bank of the Thames at Reading, was becoming the centre of a local borough boundary issue which was creating a considerable amount of local debate. Reading Borough Council wished to extend their boundaries to include Caversham, which was fast becoming a residential suburb of Reading, but which was separated from the town by the river Thames. Its situation on the north bank of the river, which was the accepted county boundary, placed Caversham in Oxfordshire; however, the residents of the village wished to retain their independence and fought gamely to remain separate from Reading's jurisdiction. Aware that Caversham was such a rapidly growing area, Rivers started a column in the *Standard* headed 'Caversham Weekly News' to cater for the Caversham people, and in addition altered the subtitle of the paper to read *The Reading Standard and Caversham Weekly News*, thus establishing a link between the paper and those who lived in the village.[32]

---

31 *Reading Standard*, no. 1375, Saturday 19 January 1907.

32 *Reading Standard*, no. 1518, Saturday 5 June 1908.

By 1913 the *Standard* had secured the position of the 'premier newspaper for the Town and County' and the 'finest pennyworth for quality and quantity of provincial journals'.[33] It claimed to have 50,000 readers and be the finest advertising medium in Berkshire. Whilst it was almost certainly the latter, it is difficult to agree that the circulation was so large. Later evidence suggests that the circulation was more likely to be around sixteen to eighteen thousand copies per week.[34] Even so, the progress of the paper under Rivers's and Cooper's management was remarkable, especially as the circulation of the *Standard* was said to be less than two thousand copies per week when they took it over.[35]

---

33 *Reading Standard*, no. 2007, Saturday 11 January 1913.

34 None of the subsequent circulation figures produced for the *Standard* approached 50,000 copies. This figure is likely to have been calculated on the basis that each copy sold was read by at least three people per household.

35 *Reading Standard*, Special Supplement, 2 June 1961.

PART TWO

CHAPTER IX

§

TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRINTING DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The developments in printing which took place during the nineteenth century represented a tremendous leap forward in technology, when compared with the virtually unchanged state of the printing trade during the 350 years before 1800. The introduction of new equipment, new processes, new chemicals and materials, combined with the implementation of motive power, had transformed printing from a basic, almost mediaeval, craft into a machine-based industry.[1] Nowhere was this change more apparent than in the area of newspaper production which, throughout the nineteenth century, had been at the forefront of this technological revolution and had exerted constant pressure for the development of quicker, cheaper, and more efficient ways of producing newspapers.

By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the technical demands made by the newspaper industry had been met, and with cheap wood-fibre paper, reel-fed rotary presses, stereotyping, linotype typesetting machines, and the means of producing photographic

---

1 See Chapter II.

illustrations, the industry had the new technology it needed to develop and expand during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Since the beginning of this century, progress in the development of printing technology has taken place in approximately two stages, and although this is true for the whole of the printing industry this survey will be concerned for the most part with those technological changes which have affected the production of newspapers.

The first of the two stages of development concerns the technological progress achieved between 1900 and 1950 and which, broadly speaking, consists of improvements, refinements, and further development to the equipment, processes and materials in use at the turn of the century. The second stage concerns the post-1950 technological advancements, many of which involve the use of electronics, and which are so radical that they are considered to be entirely new technology. It must be emphasized however that the choice of 1950 as the point of change is an arbitrary one, for many developments to pre-1950 technology continued after that date, whilst many of the revolutionary changes which have been introduced since 1950 are the results of experiments and research undertaken, in some cases, many years before 1950, but which have only come to practical fruition since that time.

Following the trend of developments which took place during the nineteenth century, it is intended to view the technological progress in four main areas: the press, paper manufacture, typesetting, and illustration, and to survey the pattern of developments in these areas in order to act as a guide when discussing the progress of Reading's newspaper press. Inevitably, technical developments in any of the areas mentioned spring from overall changes in such fields as chemistry,

physics, engineering and electronics, and consequently should never be considered in isolation. Also, improvements in any one aspect of printing technology are increasingly dependent upon cooperation between the various facets of the printing trade, to the extent that paper makers and ink and equipment manufacturers have increasingly coordinated their research in order to advance the quality of the materials and equipment they supply.

This state of affairs is particularly true of the paper-making industry, where a great deal of research has been undertaken in order to make paper easier to print on and a better medium for reproduction. The newsprint available to the newspaper printer at the end of the nineteenth century was made from mechanical woodpulp which contained many impurities, and consequently its colour was very grey-white and the impurities caused it to yellow with age. The tensile strength of the newsprint was also low and web breaks were a normal feature of a newspaper pressman's working day. Added to this, the crude nature of the paper presented a somewhat rough surface, which not only caused the rotary stereo plates to wear but made the reproduction of really fine detail illustrations very difficult, if not impossible, with the result that halftone screens on most newspapers were usually between 55 and 75 lines per inch. Despite considerable improvements in the preparation of fibres for newsprint, resulting in whiter and brighter paper with a much higher tensile strength, the letterpress printer has rarely used halftones finer than 80 lines per inch, partly because of the paper surface and partly because of the problems involved in the manufacture of stereo plates for the press.

One aspect of paper manufacture which has resulted directly from close coordination of research is that of paper developed for web-offset

production. The comparatively recent introduction by the newspaper industry of this method of printing leads most people to believe that it is a relatively new process. In fact, the first web offset press dates back to 1910. Unfortunately it was not successful then because the design of the press was far in advance of the plates, paper and inks which were used in attempts to print on this machine. The full potential of the web offset press and process were not realized until the 1960s, by which time extensive cooperative research resulted in considerably improved plates, inks and papers.

For paper to be used successfully for web offset printing, a number of conditions had to be satisfied. For example, the use of water in the lithographic process meant that paper had to be highly resistant to moisture absorption and to be as dust-free as possible. Paper dust is possibly the greatest hazard to the web offset printer, for it clings to blanket cylinders, causing blurring of image characters and the filling-in of halftone areas on illustrations, while dust which is transferred to the ink system can cause the ink to emulsify on the press and also cause considerable image wear on the printing plate. Further to this, the very high speeds attained on web offset presses demands a paper that will resist the tremendous tension of paper moving at up to 1800 feet per minute, while the surface of that paper must also resist the plucking or tearing action of the ink at such speeds. To date, research has led to the development of papers which satisfy most of the criteria mentioned and, although problems still exist, the quality of the papers now produced has allowed not only the provincial newspaper press but also the national daily press to adopt web offset printing as the means of producing newspapers.

During the nineteenth century, the use of the Fourdrinier paper-making machine, the reduction in paper taxes, and the introduction of cheap wood fibres had combined to reduce the cost of newsprint to around £10 per ton. Unfortunately, this century has witnessed a considerable rise in the cost of paper, which has increased tremendously, particularly since the Second World War. The first major increase in paper costs came as a result of the shortage of materials created by the First World War, and the price of paper rose from £10 per ton in 1914 to £43 per ton in 1920. Although the cost of paper did fall after this time, the drop was gradual, and it was 1934 before the price per ton for newsprint was again down to £10. This price rose slowly to £11 10s. 0d. per ton by the beginning of the Second World War, when a rationing system for newsprint was introduced which lasted from 1940 until 1956, during which time the price rose to just over £58 per ton.[2] The rationing system was controlled by the Newsprint Supply Company, a non profit-making organization incorporated voluntarily by the press in agreement with the government, and although rationing ceased in 1956 this company still sold newsprint to the Press until 1959, at which time the company's activities ceased.

Perhaps the greatest influence on the price of newsprint since the war has been the huge increase in the cost of oil, for between five and eight barrels of oil are needed to produce a ton of newsprint. The steep rise in the cost of oil caused paper prices to nearly treble in the years between 1959 and 1980, at which point the price per ton reached approximately £300. Such increases have made it very difficult for newspaper publishers to keep the selling price of their newspapers down to a reasonable level, and in order to do this many publishers have used paper of a much lighter substance than that used before the war. By

2 See Appendix A.

changing to a paper with a substance of 50 gm^2 as opposed to 62 gm^2, newspaper publishers have not only been able to hold down the unit cost of their papers but also to reduce the distribution costs.[3] The availability of this lighter-weight paper, which has reasonably good opacity, high tensile stength, and which meets the other criteria necessary to be run on high-speed letterpress and web-offset presses, is again a tribute to the advances made in the paper-making industry.

By the early years of the twentieth century, the majority of the national and provincial daily papers and many large-circulation weekly papers, particularly those which produced more than one edition, were printed on reel-fed rotary presses. Developments to these presses from 1900 onwards were for the most part concerned with variations in size, different arrangements for the positioning of the various elements of the press, improvements to many of the ancillary operations which were part of the press, and the introduction of new functions to the press operation.

The basis of the web-fed rotary press is the printing unit, which consists of two plate cylinders, each with its own impression cylinder and inking system, and through which the reel of paper is passed in order to be printed on both sides. Printing units were developed to accommodate up to four pages across their width and one or two pages around their circumference, and rotary presses were designed so that a number of these units could be geared together in order to pass the printed web from each unit simultaneously through the same folding unit to produce a multi-page copy of a newspaper. The number of pages in each copy could be altered from day to day or from edition to edition by using only part of a unit, or missing out a unit altogether. Press design developed in this

---

3 COI, *The British Press*, (1965), p. 29.

way and gradually a 'conventional' newspaper rotary evolved, which consisted of a number of levels or decks. The lower deck contained the paper-reel stands, and allowed the heavy and cumbersome reels to be handled without interfering with other work on the press, while the printing units were placed on the next deck in order to allow easy access for the machine printer when mounting the heavy stereo plates. The upper deck usually contained the turner bars and paper guides which direct the printed webs to the folder where they are brought together in register before being folded and cut off as individual newspapers. Some presses were designed on the two-deck principle, with the paper-reel stands on the same level as the printing units but placed at each end of the press to facilitate feeding in to a centrally positioned folder.

By the middle of the 1930s, machine manufacturers such as Goss and Hoe were constructing presses which had enclosed printing units, containing an inking system which pumped the ink onto the distribution roller while the press was running. Such an inking system became standard on newspaper presses, replacing the old laborious duct and distribution system and saving not only time but economizing on ink as well. Further improvements to the press included the introduction of automatic reel changers, or 'flying pasters' as they became known. Prior to the 1920s, every time a reel needed to be replenished the press had to be stopped and the fresh reel fed into the press. The invention of the 'flying paster' allowed the new web to be spliced onto the existing reel while the press was running at full speed, another time-saving addition to the rotary press. However, feeding paper in at one end of a press at high speed meant that printed copies were emerging from another point at equally high speed. Until 1912 these printed papers were removed from the press by hand but the American firm of Culter-Hammer designed and

built a newspaper conveyor which removed newspapers from the press and which was capable of conveying the papers to despatch points well away from the machine.

One further development to the press was that of the 'fudge box', which first came into use in about 1889.[4] The word 'fudge' means to make-do or 'bodge up' and refers to a small cylinder designed to accept a printing surface so that small amounts of additional text could be added to the already printed web, without having to make a completely fresh stereo plate. The early versions of the 'fudge box' were built to hold type or linotype slugs, but later versions designed during the 1920s and 1930s were made to hold small segments of stereo text. These fudge boxes had their own inking system and impression cylinder and allowed for late news to be printed in any column on the page. They were also used to print a seal device, which is a small block (often printed in colour) for identifying each edition, and by the late 1930s the design of the fudge boxes had reached a point when late news or seals could be added or changed while the press was running at full speed.

So far, the developments described have pertained to the letterpress rotary machine, which perhaps is not surprising when it is realized that, up to the 1960s and early 1970s letterpress was the dominant process used for newspaper production, both in America and Great Britain. All the text and illustration content for each page was made up in flat formes which were then moulded in a press using a special sheet of material known as a 'flong'. Under pressure the flong received a precise impression of all details of the forme and, after this moulding process, was removed from the surface of the form and placed in

---

4 James Moran, *Printing Presses*, (1973), p. 219.

a curved casting box, into which molten type metal was pumped to cast a curved semi-circular plate from the matrix, one plate being cast for every page of the newspaper. These plates were then taken to the press and clamped onto the surface of a plate cylinder ready for printing. This process was essential for the successful application of the rotary press for newspaper printing, but in the years prior to 1904 it was found to be unsuitable for the faithful reproduction of halftone illustrations. After considerable experimentation, the breakthrough finally came when Arkus Sapt, one of Lord Northcliffe's editors on the *Daily Mirror*, found the solution to the problem, thus making possible the substitution of photographic illustrations for drawings and creating the opportunity for the growth of photo-journalism.[5] The exact details of Sapt's discovery are not known, but in essence the following procedures needed to be undertaken:

1. Original photographs had to be carefully retouched to ensure good, clearly defined, tonal values.

2. Initially fairly coarse halftone screens had to be used with 45 lines per inch, but these were later improved to 65 lines. These blocks had to be deep etched in order to allow for the dot formation to appear clearly in the stereo matrix.

3. The original halftone plates had to have make-ready, called an interlay, placed between the plate and its mounting base, with several layers of paper placed to coincide with the solid areas of the illustration. When passed under a moulding press, the interlay caused the highlights to be bumped down,

---

5 Harold Herd, *The March of Journalism*, (1952), p. 262.

thus leaving the dark tones or solid areas of the halftone in slight relief.

4. Considerable care and attention to detail was needed during both the matrix making and the casting of the plate.

Despite the knowledge of the process in 1904, it was not until the middle 1920s when advances in deep etching, the use of a dry specially-faced flong and the introduction of direct platen moulding enabled the quality of the stereo plate to be greatly improved, and it required additional developments such as different inking rollers, new ink formulation, the use of harder packing on impression cylinders, and the introduction of smoother surfaced newsprint to ensure good halftone reproduction on the rotary press. However, neither the paper nor the stereotyping process allowed for halftone screens finer than 70 lines per inch to be used, as a general rule, for newspaper illustrations.

It is interesting to note that in Reading Walter Rivers, the owner of the *Reading Standard*, who used halftones very heavily in his paper, did not change over to a rotary press until 1923, unlike his rivals the *Observer* (which had a rotary press in 1897), and the *Chronicle* (which had one in 1907). Sales of his papers with good quality illustrations printed on a flat-bed machine continued to increase until 1923, by which time most of the problems involved in producing acceptable halftones on a rotary press had been ironed out.

Mention has already been made of the web offset process which was originally introduced in 1910, but which only recently has had such an impact on the newspaper industry. Although the lithographic printing process was introduced at the end of the eighteenth century, it did not gain a commercial foothold until this century, and then primarily in the

general commercial printing field. A number of serious drawbacks prevented its use in the field of high-speed, quick-change newspaper printing. For example, the only commercial typesetting systems were letterpress ones, which meant that all text matter had to be set in hotmetal; from the resulting forme a reproduction print had to be taken, which was then photographed in a process camera before a lithographic printing plate could be made. This process took considerably longer than making a stereo plate for a letterpress rotary press. The litho plate was also a coarse-grained one, which used a slow-working light-sensitive emulsion on its surface, and with the lack of good inks for high-speed printing the process was limited to use in slower-running magazine presses. Pre-war newsprint was also very sensitive to the moisture content of the litho process, with the result that a very high wastage rate was experienced in web offset printing.

Experiments conducted to resolve these problems resulted in solutions which tended to be costly so that, by the 1950s, good quality web offset was a reality but the paper, ink and plates used in the process were expensive, and the need to re-establish the ink/water balance every time the press was stopped and restarted continued to create a high wastage problem. Despite these problems, however, the web offset process offered a number of advantages: the ability to reproduce fine-screen halftone illustrations; the ease of building a press which would allow full process colour to be printed, with absolute register, which must inevitably attract advertisers as well as appealing to the general public; and, with the introduction of photo-typesetting, the ease of working from film without the cumbersome equipment necessary for hotmetal setting. The development of fast-working pre-sensitized lithographic printing plates also allowed for rapid plate preparation, so that production times could be

reduced, and the web offset process was gradually introduced into the newspaper world, to such effect that by 1973 there were some 300 British weeklies using the process.[6]

The field of typesetting or, to be more accurate, 'text assembly', was the one in which the most radical advances have been made since 1900, to the extent that the equipment and methods now generally used for setting text matter are referred to as 'new technology'. In newspaper production, the Linotype[7] machine was the primary means of setting the bulk of the text matter, hand setting being used only for display headlines, for any advertising display not already supplied in the form of a block, and for large display headlines being set by the hand assembly of matrices which were then cast in a Ludlow machine.

When Ottmar Mergenthaler, the inventor of the Linotype machine, died in 1899, more than six thousand of his machines were in use, having faced and overcome the tremendous opposition of the hand compositors.[8] Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, the Linotype and, after 1914, the Intertype, were progressively improved upon, so that by the beginning of World War II setting speeds of 8,000 to 20,000 ens per hour could be achieved. Machines were made which were capable of setting mixed type sizes and display typefaces but the fundamental principle of the machine remained the same, thus limiting the possibility of increasing manual setting speeds.

---

6 Allen Hutt, *The Changing Newspaper*, (1973), p. 159.

7 It should be noted that the use of the word 'Linotype' also encompasses the Intertype machine, which works on the same principle, and a number of which were also heavily used in the newspaper industry.

8 L. A. Legros & J. Grant, *Typographical Printing Surfaces*, (1916), pp. 429-30.

One development which did occur during the 1930s, which effected some improvement in the setting speed of the Linotype, was the introduction of the teletypesetter (TTS) machine. This was a means of operating a slug-casting machine by code-perforated paper tape, some 7/8" in width. The teletypesetter consisted of two principal units: a perforator, having a keyboard similar to that of a typewriter and which would punch a code of perforated holes into the paper strip in the same manner as a teleprinter tape; and an operating unit, which used this tape to operate automatically a slug-casting machine. The advantages of this TTS system are many: the keyboarding operation can be undertaken independently of the casting operation, thus allowing for a faster composition speed; the slug caster can also be operated at a greater speed from the tape, as there is no operator interference such as there would be on an ordinary Linotype machine; text can be set on the perforator but cast at a different time (or place), thus allowing for greater efficiency in the use of time during the production schedule; after news is set in one place on the perforator that text can be transmitted via radio or landline, to operate TTS machines in other newspaper offices around the country. The use of the TTS system only really came into operation after the second world war, and although output speeds could be improved from between fifty per cent to one hundred per cent over manual operation it was only the larger newspaper companies, such as *The Times* which could afford to install such a system.[9] It was also during the post-war period of the 1950s that the developments in phototypesetting and computer typesetting rapidly overtook the TTS system.

---

9 *The Times* had a TTS link from the House of Commons to their newspaper office, and the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* had a link from London to their offices in Scotland.

The principle of dispensing with hotmetal type and replacing it with photographic images of type goes back to the early days of the devlopment of photography itself. However, despite a number of interesting experimental protoypes it was not until 1948 that Dr H. J. A. de Geoij, of Overseen in the Netherlands, produced the Hadego machine which was the first phototypesetting machine to go into commercial production.

From this time, development in photo composition took two directions. On the one hand there were machines such as the Monotype 'Monophoto' and the Intertype 'Fotosetter' which adapted existing hot-metal casting machines to produce either a piece of film or sensitized paper bearing the required image. This was achieved by replacing the existing hot-metal matrices with film negative matrices which were selected by using a keyboard, the letter images then being projected onto the film or paper using a beam of light. As these were based on known technology, they were initially very popular among the early users of phototypesetting machines.

The other direction taken in the development of photocomposition was into a totally new area of computer technology, where completely new ideas and techniques were introduced. One successful outcome of this adoption of new technology was the Photon or Lumitype, which originated in France but which was developed in America by the Graphic Arts Research Foundation and manufactured and distributed by Crosfield Electronics of London.

The Photon consisted of three units: a setting console, comprising an electric typewriter keyboard; an electronic control unit to interpret the input signals; and a photographic unit, which contained a matrix disc of

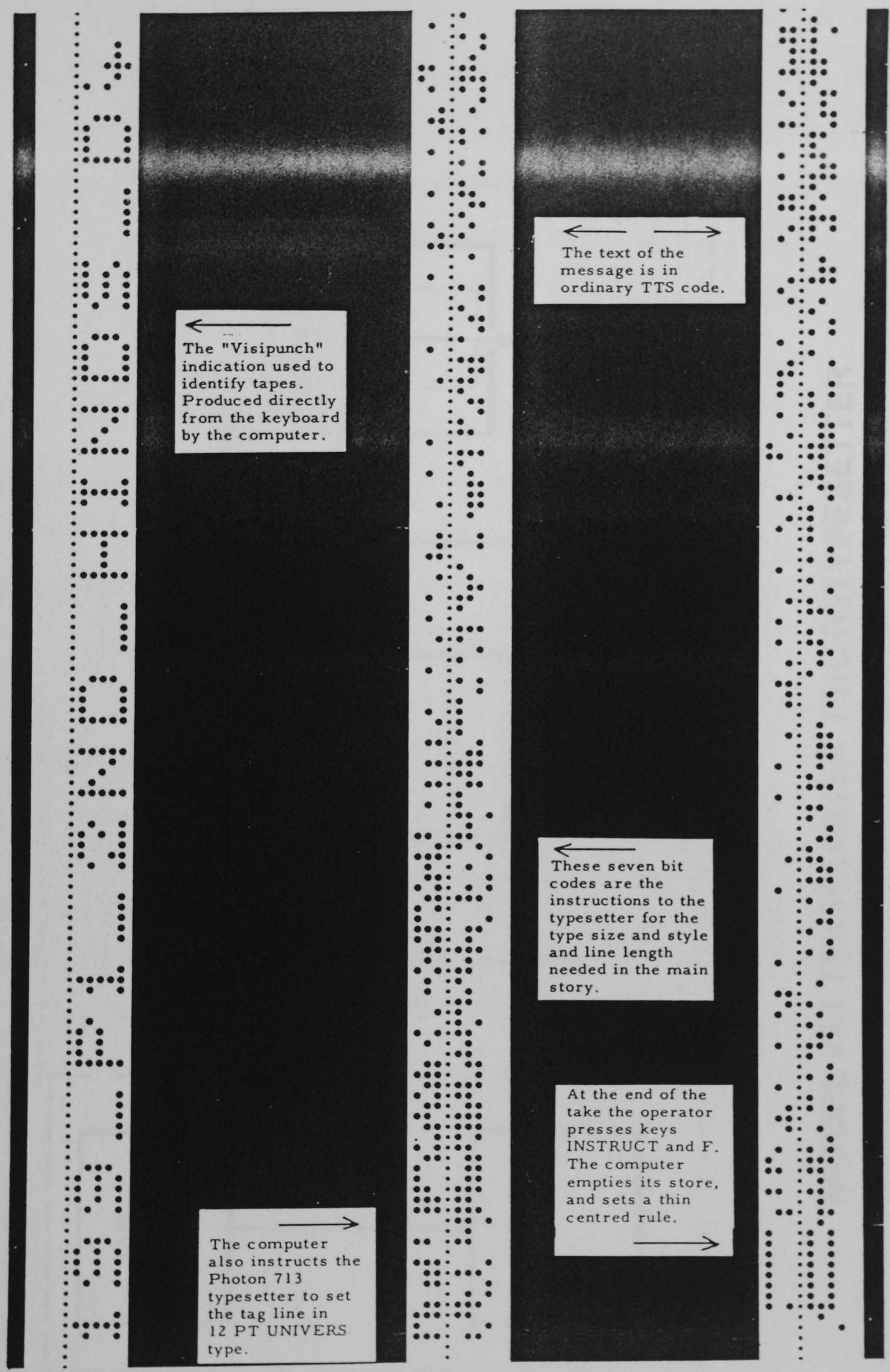
glass, some eight inches in diameter, containing two groups of eight rows of ninety characters which represented a total of sixteen different type faces. When the keyboard was operated, it produced a typed proof just like an ordinary office typewriter, but also produced a punched tape, and during the keyboarding of text matter instructions concerning typeface, size, line length, spacing and so on could be given by the use of a side console on the control unit. The results of setting would therefore be a punched tape, containing all the instructions for setting text in a particular manner, and a proof, which could be read for errors of punctuation and spelling.

When the tape was ready for setting, it was passed through the photographic unit, inside which the disc matrix was spinning at approximately ten revolutions per second.[10] As the punched tape instructions were 'translated' by the photo unit the appropriate characters were exposed by a flash from an electronic flash tube onto photographic film or paper. This film or paper was then developed and the resulting negatives or bromides could be assembled to form pages which could then be exposed to a lithographic plate or (in the case of bromides) be photographed in a process camera to form a negative which could be used to produce the printing plate. It was the Photon which was adopted for use as a phototypesetting machine by The Thomson Organisation Ltd when, in September 1965, they set up the Reading *Evening Post*, the most advanced newspaper production unit of its kind anywhere in the world at the time of its launch.[11]

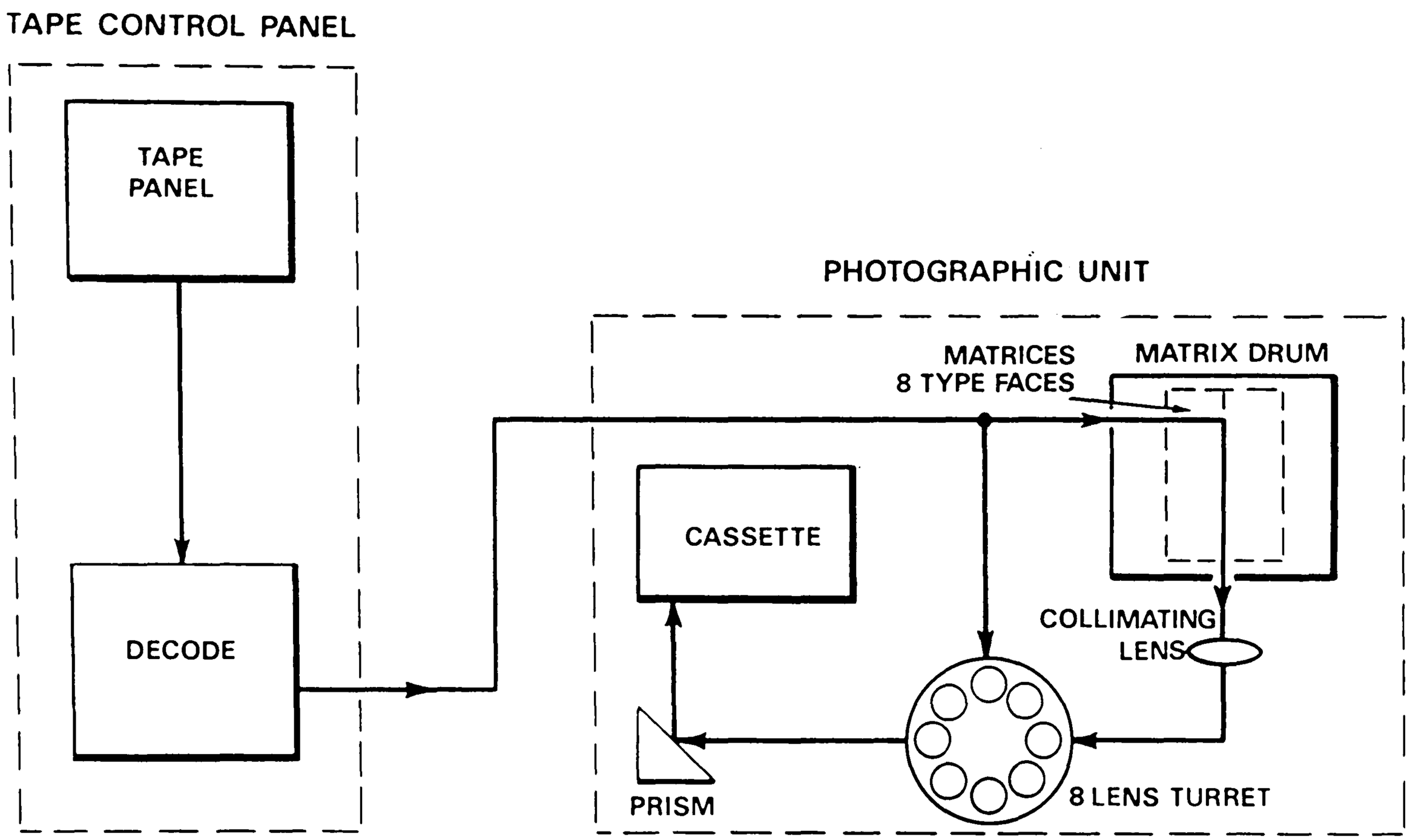
---

10 See illustrations overleaf.

11 Dr Tom Margerison, *Use of Computers in Europe*, (1965). The details of this computer typesetting system are recorded only in this article by Tom Margerison, who was responsible for the development of the system.



Coded punched tape used in the Thomson Computerset system



MODEL 713 TEXTMASTER PHOTOTYPESETTER
BLOCK DIAGRAM

The converted hotmetal phototypesetting machines did not last too long in the face of computer-controlled photosetting machines such as the Photon, and by the 1970s the photo matrix was being replaced by type faces and other image information, held in digital form in computers, and printed out using the laser beam as the converter from digital information to a photo image on bromide or film. In fact the computer itself has become the central part of the assembly not only of text matter but also of illustration, and sophisticated computers are currently available which allow for direct input of information from sources such as journalists, advertising sales people, outside correspondents, and news agencies.[12] This information may then be called up on a large page-view terminal screen by the editorial team, for assembling complete pages. When this has been completed to the editor's satisfaction, each page can be printed out on a laser printer which provides camera-ready copy, thus saving considerable time and greatly reducing costs.

It is interesting to note that Reading's *Evening Post*, which led the world with the introduction of the Photon linked to an Elliot computer, was also at the forefront of development when it installed a new Press Computer System II in August 1986. This is linked to a Linotype System 5 computer for editorial and advertising output.

From the mid-1960s up to the present time the technology used in newspaper production has therefore changed drastically, the introduction of computer-controlled text-setting systems, web offset printing and new lightweight paper enabling the newspaper industry in this country to reduce costs by improving efficiency and cutting staff, and thus being able

---

12 These machines are usually referred to as 'Front-end Systems' as all the input, from whatever source, goes directly into the computer and does not have to be subjected to several re-setting stages, as is the case with the conventional hotmetal newspaper.

to compete with other media forms. The adoption of the web offset printing process has allowed for the introduction of colour in both provincial and (more recently) national newspapers, making them more colourful and attractive to the public.

One other major change in the British newspaper press has been the tremendous increase, over the last ten to fifteen years, of the free newspaper, usually referred to as the 'free sheet'. With these free papers, the costs of production and distribution are covered by the advertising revenue. Free sheet publishers can guarantee to advertisers that their advertisements will reach every household in a given area because the paper is delivered to every household, unlike advertisements in the normally purchased newspaper which will only be seen by those who actually buy the paper. Initially many of these free sheets contained all advertising, certainly the Reading ones did, but gradually these papers have included more editorial material, articles, and sports results, and are beginning to take on the appearance of a normal weekly newspaper. This may well be a trend which will continue, to the extent that eventually provincial weeklies (and perhaps even some national newspapers) may become totally free to the public.

One feature of the recent developments in newspaper technology is the high cost of investing in new plant, machinery and equipment necessary for newspaper publishers to keep production costs down and remain competitive. For example, the recent introduction of a new computer front-end system by the Reading *Evening Post* cost the company some six hundred thousand pounds, without the costs of installation and redundancy payments which the introduction of this equipment

necessitated.[13] It is true to say that only large wealthy business organizations such as The Thomson Organisation Ltd and the Argus Press Group, the owners of the *Evening Post* and the *Reading Chronicle* respectively, are in a position to invest such huge sums of money in order to remain a competitive force in the local newspaper marketplace.

---

13 *Breakthrough*, special *Evening Post* supplement, Wednesday 6 August 1986.

CHAPTER X

§

THE READING NEWSPAPER COMPANY LTD 1914-1977 ARGUS PRESS 1977— (*READING MERCURY* AND *BERKSHIRE CHRONICLE*)

As the First World War approached, the fortunes of Reading's two longest-running newspapers, the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury*, were at a very low ebb, and both were losing ground to the comparative newcomer, the *Reading Standard*, which had only been in existence some twenty-seven years.

After a brave but somewhat over-ambitious attempt to convert the paper from a weekly to a daily, the *Chronicle* was finding that the lack of a sufficiently large circulation, coupled with the inevitable increase in pressure on its editorial, production and distribution departments, was creating a tremendous strain on its resources. It was also no doubt finding that in order to succeed the paper needed a considerable boost in its income, which could only come from advertising but that the low percentage of advertising content (23%) was insufficient. This situation inevitably led the company into a state of near bankruptcy, and at the end of 1912 a liquidator was appointed and winding-up proceedings set in motion.

At this time Reading's oldest-established paper, the *Mercury*, was also approaching something of a crisis, for the owner, Frederick Cowslade,

whose family had been associated with the paper since 1770 and owners since 1784, was in his late sixties. Suffering increasing ill health, and with no heir to succeed him, Frederick was anxious to sell the paper and by the latter half of 1913 was actively seeking to retire from running the paper. In both its appearance and the manner of its conduct, the *Mercury* was still very much a nineteenth-century paper, targeted towards county people.

Both papers, therefore, were in the market for the kind of revitalization that fresh capital and new ownership could bring, and under normal conditions both would have been of great interest to prospective purchasers. However, with the advancing prospect of war, and the inevitable shortages of both advertising and newsprint that war would bring, both papers were quite lucky to find a buyer, which they did when Henry Mortimer Hobson took over both companies during the latter part of 1913.

The Hobsons were a well-known Derbyshire family and had been involved in the provincial press in that area since 1846, when Henry's grandfather, John Hobson, had founded the *Derbyshire Advertiser* with his two sons, Robert and William. Robert departed from the paper in 1848, to become a partner in another printing business in Derbyshire, leaving the *Advertiser* in the hands of John and William.

William Hobson remained in control of the paper after his father's death in 1860, but in 1893 a private limited company was formed, with William's third son, Henry Mortimer Hobson, as the managing director. The other directors included two of William's other sons, Ernest William Hobson (later to become Sadlerian Professor of Pure Mathematics at Cambridge) and Alfred Edward Hobson, who was a well-known Derby

solicitor. The fifth member of the board was Charles Milner Atkinson, who had married William's eldest daughter, Mary, and who was a barrister and later a stipendiary magistrate at Leeds.[1]

There was another son, John, who was a writer and economist and who, as far as can be judged, had no involvement with the *Derbyshire Advertiser* but whose connection with the newspaper press stemmed from the fact that his granddaughter, Mabel, had married Edward Scott, the son of the legendary C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*.[2]

It appears that Henry Mortimer Hobson felt too restricted in this family business and wanted to have more personal control over his own destiny, and to achieve this he started to look for other newspaper interests.[3] Through Frank Randolph Mullings Phelps, a friend and business associate, Henry acquired a fifty per cent interest in the *Bucks Free Press* at some point between 1909 and 1911, and then bought the *Berkshire Chronicle* (possibly in late 1913) and the *Reading Mercury* (early in 1914).[4]

Phelps was in fact a Birmingham valuer and business agent, who specialised in buying and selling printing companies for clients and who is

---

1 Ashbourne Local History Group, 'A Portrait of Ashbourne in the Mid 19th Century', in *Early Victorian Country Towns*, (1978). *Derby Telegraph*, 19 April 1933. Also the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, Saturday 10 December 1921.

2 Personal interview with E. G. B. Atkinson, fourth editor of the *Derbyshire Advertiser* and nephew of the founder, who worked on the *Berkshire Chronicle* in 1924 and was later a shareholder in the Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd.

3 Ibid.

4 The information concerning the Bucks Free Press was given by E. G. B. Atkinson. However, the Bucks Free Press was converted to a private limited company in April 1919, at which point the original partners, John and Thomas Butler, announced that they were to retain a considerable interest in the business. It therefore seems likely that it was at this time that Hobson gained his interest in that company.

said to have made a small fortune in this particular activity.[5] His transactions to secure the *Chronicle* and *Mercury* for Hobson also included capital of his own, for he had shares in Hobson & Son Ltd, Bucks Free Press Ltd, the *Financial Times*, and Amalgamated Press (Ltd), and was later to become director of the Reading company.[6] It seems likely that Hobson and Phelps viewed the purchase of these two Reading papers as a very good business prospect and, despite the possibility of war, one worth embarking on.

As the *Chronicle* had already been referred to a receiver, it is possible that Hobson had negotiated for its purchase during 1913; certainly, when he formed the Reading Newspaper Company Ltd at the end of 1913 the registration letter was typed on *Chronicle* notepaper and signed by Frank Neale (who had been with the paper for some years and was then acting as the company secretary). In addition to this, the Memorandum of Association states that the company was formed to take over and carry on the business of printing and publishing the *Reading Mercury*, all of which suggests that Hobson was already in possession of the *Chronicle* when he negotiated for the purchase of the *Mercury*.

One amusing episode during the purchase of the *Chronicle* occurred when Hobson and his wife, Frances, came to Reading to view the company for the first time. When they entered the composing room, Hobson, who was apparently dressed in an old army greatcoat, was presumed by the *Chronicle* staff to be an applicant for the recently advertised job of cleaner. It was a little while before the error was realised, and was no

---

5 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson.

6 Phelps was listed as a director in the business returns of 1924. He was also a director, with Hobson, of the Bucks Free Press.

doubt embarrassing for Frank Neale and his staff. However, it did not deter Hobson, and he bought the *Chronicle*.[7]

The nominal capital of the company was £15,000, divided into £1 shares, of which 7,500 were to be preference shares and 7,500 ordinary shares. The directorship consisted of Henry Collins, a solicitor, and Henry M. Hobson as managing director. Both Hobson and his wife, Frances, were early shareholders of the company.

The task facing Hobson was obviously a considerable one, for he had to endeavour to lift both papers into a more stable and profitable position. Each of the printing plants was in its own purpose-built premises, with its own equipment. The *Chronicle* was the most up-to-date in terms of its equipment, having installed a new Hoe rotary press in March 1907,[8] and had better composing room facilities, which had been necessary when the paper had appeared in daily editions.

The *Mercury*, on the other hand, although living in a rather splendid building at 7 Market Place, Reading, was still printed on an old two-feeder flat-bed press which had been installed in 1874, and the composing room had almost certainly changed very little from the illustration which appeared in the *British and Colonial Printer* in 1905[9] and quite possibly still only had one Linotype machine.

However, despite its awkward, large size and its poor-quality appearance, the *Mercury* was still very popular throughout the country

---

7 Personal interview with W. G. Garner, who had been a newspaper journalist in Reading since the late 1930s and was editor of the *Berkshire Chronicle* from 1965 to 1977.

8 See illustration, Chapter VI, p. 118.

9 *The British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*, 26 October 1905. See illustration, Chapter V, p. 88.

districts around Reading. This was perhaps not surprising, for it had always endeavoured to serve the rural districts, and comprehensively covered farming and country topics such as shows, markets, and stock and wheat prices. Its reputation in this area had been established in the 18th century and it had become something of an institution, to such effect that the other Reading newspapers always found it very difficult to break its stranglehold on sales in the country districts.

Nevertheless, Hobson had to set about the task of improving the prospects of both papers, which was made an even more daunting task with the outbreak of war in August 1914, just a few months after the newspapers had passed into his control.

At the time of Hobson's takeover of the two papers, the *Chronicle* was a 16-page tabloid-style paper with a format of 20" x 13", and sold at ½d. per copy, while the *Mercury* contained ten pages and was still produced in the rather large 26" x 20¼" format, selling at 2d. per copy.

The advertising content of both papers was low, the *Mercury* having an average of 30% and the *Chronicle* down to 23% — perhaps not surprising considering the low ebb which that paper had reached during 1913.

As Hobson's home and his other newspaper interests were in Derby, it is quite likely that the day-to-day running of the two Reading papers was left to Frank Neale, and the fact that many of the early directors' meetings were held in Derby perhaps supports this theory. Neale obviously had more than just a passing interest in the venture, for his father had worked at the *Chronicle* for a considerable period before

becoming its owner in 1894,[10] and Frank Neale himself had been heavily involved with the fortunes of the *Chronicle* up to the time of its acquisition by Hobson. It is likely that Hobson considered himself lucky to have a man with Neale's background and local knowledge to run the paper for him.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 undoubtedly put a strain on the new company, as it also did on Reading's two other papers, the *Observer* and the *Reading Standard*. The local press had great difficulty in dealing with the twin problems of restrictions on the newsprint supply coupled with its rising cost, and the inevitable reduction in the amount of advertising available.

Despite having to reduce the size of its two papers when war broke out, the *Chronicle* and *Mercury* continued to produce 16-page and 10-page papers fairly frequently, but their circulation battle was made very difficult by the increasing success of the rival *Reading Standard*, which had established a good reputation with its excellent picture coverage.[11] At the onset of war, the *Standard* had immediately started to produce illustrations of the local people involved in the fighting and who had been injured or killed or who had distinguished themselves in action, and this feature had proved to be a very popular one in the Reading area.

The *Chronicle* did not include photographic illustrations until the latter part of 1915, and when it did it was really a copy of the *Standard's* approach to the war coverage. Neither the *Reading Mercury* nor the *Reading Observer* included photographs during the war period. It is likely that technical reasons prevented Neale from including them in the

---

10 See Chapter VI.

11 See Chapter VIII.

Mercury: this paper was still printed on a two-roll rotary press, which at this time must have been incapable of producing the quality of illustration required.

The rising cost of newsprint caused the price of the *Chronicle* to be increased, firstly to 1d. then, in October 1918, to 1½d., while the *Mercury* was raised to 3d. at this time, making it the most expensive of the four Reading papers.

The war period had depressed the amount of advertising available, although the *Reading Standard* had managed to maintain a high level of revenue from that source, but once the war was over the Reading Newspaper Company embarked on a campaign to attract more advertisers and gradually the percentage of advertising in the paper increased until, by 1922, the *Chronicle* contained on average 40% of advertising and the *Mercury* 50%.

Undoubtedly, the improving post-war conditions had led to this situation, but it is likely that the decline of the *Observer* in the years prior to its closure in 1924 had helped Hobson's company; indeed it may well have been the enterprise of both the *Reading Standard* and the Reading Newspaper Company which had eventually forced the *Observer* to close.[12] Another factor to affect Reading's papers was the increasing population of the town at that time. Between 1914 and 1921 the town's population had grown by approximately 17,000, a rise of some twenty-two per cent, and the figures for the surrounding districts showed a similar upward trend. This growing population inevitably increased the potential market for the local papers, and they were very aware of the need to acquire as much of it as they could.

---

12 See Chapter VII.

One probable contribution to the demise of the *Observer* was the reintroduction, in 1918, of the *Football Chronicle*, publication of which had stopped immediately the war started in 1914. This special sports paper, produced on a Saturday, had been published for three seasons prior to the war and had enjoyed considerable success, despite the competition it had faced from the *Football Observer*.[13] With the Football League back to normal after the war and with the increasing interest in sports of all kinds, this was no doubt viewed by the management as a lucrative market to tap. The *Observer* was also obviously undergoing a difficult time and although they, too, published a sports edition from 1918 until the paper's demise in 1924, it turned out to be no threat to the *Football Chronicle*. The great incentive to take the risk was the fact that, owing to increased costs of production which occurred after the war, the London evening papers had decided not to publish special football editions, thus leaving the door wide open for local papers to take the initiative.

The football paper was only published for the duration of the football season, between September and May. It was produced in the same format as the *Chronicle*, contained eight pages, and sold for 1d. There was very little advertising and the eight pages were full of articles, reports and results, not only of football but also of many other sports.

It appears that this paper was produced throughout the day, for some of the extant copies contain the results of Saturday league games printed as fudge news on the front and back pages, suggesting that it was possible to buy the paper on a Saturday probably from midday onwards.

Embarking on this venture necessitated considerable serious negotiation and organization by the Reading Newspaper Company, for not

---

13 See Chapter VII.

only was it necessary for the staff to be agreeable but the logistics of producing one weekly paper on a Friday followed by the football edition the following day necessitated the setting and make-up of two papers simultaneously ready for their respective deadlines. Fortunately the *Chronicle's* previous owners had equipped the paper to produce a daily edition, so the company was well endowed with linotype machines, a process camera, a photographic engraving department, and a comparatively new rotary press.[14]

The *Football Chronicle* survived the first year, despite running at a loss for some time.[15] At the price of 1d., the revenue was not sufficient to cover the cost of paper and ink, with the result that as the paper's popularity stimulated sales so the loss increased as well. The proprietors were thus faced with three alternatives: to cease publication of the paper; to increase the price; or to introduce more advertising. The first alternative was considered to be unthinkable, as the circulation was large enough to indicate that a heavy public demand existed. To include more advertising was thought to be unacceptable, as the editor already had considerable difficulty in finding sufficient space in the paper for all the items he had available each week. It was therefore decided to increase the price to 2d., in the hope that the public would accept the extra cost rather than have the paper crowded out with advertising which would inevitably reduce the appeal of the paper.

Unfortunately, the proprietors' decision was made in March 1920, which left very little of the season in which to judge whether the public was prepared to pay the extra price for the football paper, but in the

---

14 See Chapter VI.

15 *Football Chronicle*, no. 6065, Saturday 13 March 1920.

remaining seven weeks the indications must have been good, for the paper was again produced at the end of August 1920 and for the ensuing football season.

Henry Mortimer Hobson died in December 1921, at the comparatively young age of 61, having been involved with provincial newspapers all his working life. At the time of his death, the share capital of the company was £15,000, divided into 7,500 ordinary shares and 7,500 preference shares, of which Henry Hobson had 2,110 ordinary and 700 preference. Henry had in fact transferred 1,890 shares to his only son, Charles Mortimer Hobson, in 1920, and in his will a further 500 were transferred to Charles, giving him control of the company. The balance of the shares was transferred to his widow who, holding 1,612 ordinary shares and 700 preference shares, was the second largest shareholder in the company.

Like his father, Charles Hobson took over the editorship of the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, leaving Frank Neale to manage the Reading Newspaper Company, and also to keep an eye on the Hobsons' investment in the *Bucks Free Press.*

Charles Hobson had originally been intent on a career in law: after gaining a double first in Classics at Cambridge he had read for the Bar, taking a first-class certificate of honour and a fifty-guinea prize in the final examination, and he had intended to enter the Chambers of his uncle, C. M. Atkinson a well-known figure on the North Eastern Circuit. His father's death, however, appears to have directed his attention towards newspapers and the rest of his life was spent in that business.

By the end of the 1921-2 season, the success of the *Football Chronicle* was such that the company decided to invest in a new press in

order to reduce production times and to have the facility for using a second press for the production of the *Football Chronicle*. The machine on which the *Berkshire Chronicle* was produced each week, and on which the *Football Chronicle* had also been produced, was capable of running at 27,000 impressions per hour, but with the addition of a new press that speed could be considerably increased. Four copies per revolution of the press could now be printed, which gave a production speed of approximately 50,000 copies per hour. If necessary the new equipment could be adapted to produce a further 25,000 copies and the output could therefore be raised to 75,000 copies per hour.

With no circulation figures available, it is difficult to assess the true success of the *Football Chronicle* at this time, although the comments made by the editor in both the football paper and the weekly *Berkshire Chronicle* indicate that the company was pleased with its progress. One estimate put the circulation at 27,000 in 1924,[16] which was thought to be the best year for that paper. Certainly, reference to the accounts for the six months ending 30 June 1927 indicate that the circulation at that time had fallen to approximately 14,000.[17]

This decline continued, and by the early 1930s this sports paper appears to have reached a point where a reduced income from circulation was barely covering the costs of production. After making virtually no profit in 1933 and 1934 and a possible loss in 1935, the *Football Chronicle* was closed in December 1936, halfway through the 1936-7 season.

A number of reasons undoubtedly contributed to the paper's demise, not least of which was the ever-increasing coverage of sports

---

16 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson.

17 See Appendix E.

events by the national evening papers. Finally, the presence of the *Evening Gazette's* Saturday sports paper, *The Pink'un*, started during the 1935-6 season, was the most likely nail in the *Football Chronicle's* coffin, and the proprietors, no doubt wisely, decided to stop publication before too much money was lost in the venture.

By the middle 1920s, both the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury* had reached what appears to have been a sound financial footing, the *Mercury* proving to be the better of the two papers in terms of sales and advertising revenue. Again, there are no accurate circulation figures for these two papers, and the best estimate suggests that in 1924 the *Mercury* was selling as many as eighteen thousand copies per week and the *Chronicle* some nine thousand.[18] How accurate these figures are is difficult to judge, and certainly by 1927 the circulation figure would appear to be 9,000 for the *Mercury* and approximately 5,200 for the *Chronicle*. It must be emphasised that these figures are only estimates and take no account of any possible fluctuation in sales for the six months from July to December in each year.[19]

The advertising content of the two papers had gradually increased after the First World War, and by 1927 this was between 46% and 30%, the *Mercury* always having the slightly larger amount in its pages — perhaps a reflection of that paper's larger circulation. With a good income from sales and advertising, the company was in a sound financial position, showing something in the order of £10,000 pre-tax profit at this time, and it was decided to find new premises for the *Reading Mercury*, which was

---

18 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson (who was working on the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* at that time).

19 See Appendix E.

still in premises in Reading's Market Place, where it had been since June 1874.

The new home for the *Mercury* was 19-21 Blagrave Street which, until 1924, had housed the *Reading Observer*, and which was only thirty yards away from the *Chronicle* offices in Valpy Street. The need to move to larger premises was great, for the offices in the Market Place had been designed to accommodate only a two-feeder press and a comparatively small composing room. Now that the *Chronicle* and *Mercury* were part of the same company, it made commercial sense to be able to use common facilities for the production of the papers, and the proximity of the *Mercury* office enabled this to happen.

It seems likely that the *Mercury* had been produced on the *Chronicle* rotary press for some time; there is no reference to this happening, but the fact that halftones had been included increasingly from the early 1920s suggests the transfer of production to the *Chronicle's* offices.

Apart from the much greater use of photographic illustration and the inclusion of more typographic and illustrated advertisements, the appearance of the two papers had changed very little. The *Mercury* in particular still looked little different from its appearance in the nineteenth century and (surprisingly) had retained its large and unwieldy format, which was not altered until paper rationing in the early years of the Second World War forced the company to reduce the format to 23" x 18".

Frank Neale's guiding hand on the company was showing sound results, and in 1930 the directors decided to allot £4,207 of company profits in preference shares and awarded 125 to Frank Neale and 25 to his

wife, who acted as advertising manager for the company. This was followed in 1931 by the election of Neale to the Board of Directors, as a reward for the considerable work he had done at the helm of Reading Newspaper Company.

Frank Neale was in many ways the opposite to his local rival, Walter Rivers, the owner of the *Standard*, for he was a quiet, rather shy man, who in his youth had played in goal for Reading Football Club as an amateur. The rivalry between the two men was always keen, although rarely acrimonious. From the business point of view, despite Neale's success with the running of the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* he was never quite able to better Rivers's achievements in attracting advertisers, nor the *Standard's* reputation for superb illustrations.

There were many occasions when the two newspaper men endeavoured to outdo each other, and sometimes those efforts became almost childish. Perhaps the most celebrated instance concerned the proposed visit to Reading of the Prince of Wales (later the Duke of Windsor). The route for the royal procession included Valpy Street and a veritable battle developed between the two men. They vied with each other over floral decorations and bunting and argued with each other as to whose welcoming banner should have the top position across the road. Each paper tried to blot out the other's by constant raising and lowering of the strings, and Barry Atkinson, one of Charles Hobson's cousins (who was later to become the editor of the *Derbyshire Advertiser*) was ordered by Mrs Neale to shin up a drainpipe and endeavour to blot out the *Standard's* welcoming flag.[20] In the end it appears that the route was changed, and Valpy Street was left out of the royal visit.

---

20 *Berkshire Mercury*, vol. 253, no. 12723, Thursday 12 July 1973.

This rivalry was, to some extent, ended by the arrival of the *Evening Gazette* in 1935, for it was necessary for the two Reading newspaper companies to become allies to fight the intruder to retain both their circulation and their advertising.

There are no accounts available for the Reading Newspaper company for this period, so it is difficult to judge the effect that the presence of the new evening paper had on the weekly sales, but the one account for 1935-6 for the *Reading Standard* indicates a drop of 10% in both revenue and advertising for that paper.[21] It is reasonable to suggest that the *Chronicle* and *Mercury* suffered the same reduction, although for all three weekly papers that loss of business may have been temporary. The closure of the *Evening Gazette* in 1939 must have given both the *Reading Standard* and the *Chronicle / Mercury* some satisfaction and not a little relief.

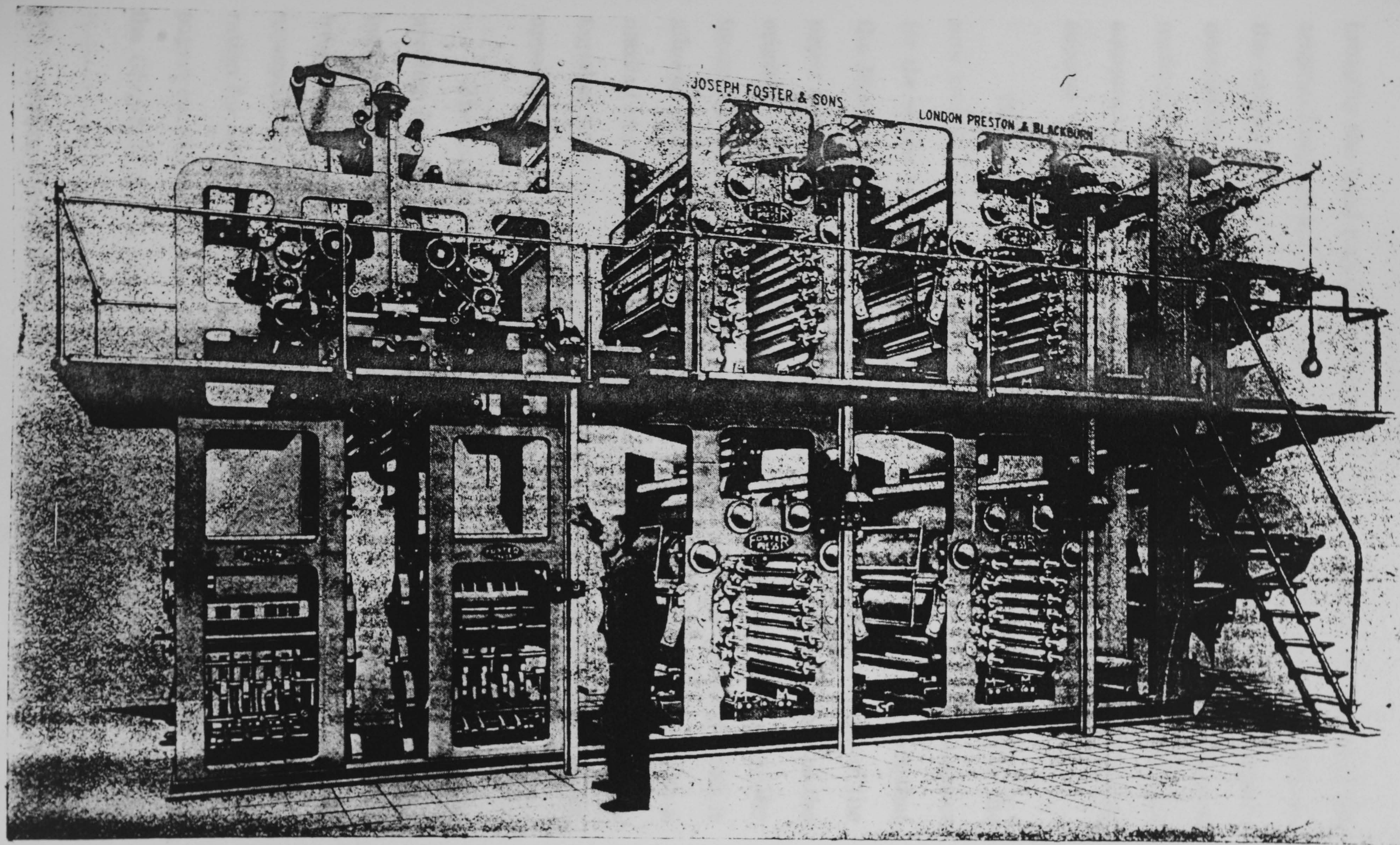
At that time, the company decided to improve the whole production unit for the *Reading Mercury* and to install a new Foster four-unit rotary press, which incorporated a special type of insetting folder to cater for various page requirements.[22] This new press was also considerably more flexible in that it allowed for any combination of pages up to a 32-page paper. Previously the old three-unit press had limited any increase in the size of the *Mercury* in that there had to be a jump from 20 pages to 24 pages, with the consequent problem of having to fill four very large pages when perhaps there was only advertising and copy enough to fill two.

At the same time as the installation of the new press, the composing room was reorganised and a new Linotype machine installed,

---

21 See Appendix H.

22 See illustration overleaf.



Foster 4 unit rotary press installed at the *Mercury* office in 1939

bringing the total number of these machines to eight. This included the original Linotype machine, which had first been used in 1897. In addition, the company decided to change the typeface to 'Times New Roman', necessitating the re-equipment of the Linotype with some 320,000 new matrices. Altogether this represented a considerable investment in new equipment and machinery but was necessary for the *Mercury's* increasing success.

The new machine also allowed the *Mercury* to be produced in the new and slightly smaller format of 23½" x 18", which was a little easier for the public to handle but not so different from the original format that the *Mercury* lost 'any of its original dignity'.[23] Reducing the width of the paper resulted in each page having seven 14-em columns instead of the original eight. One considerable improvement which resulted from the introduction of the new press was the superior quality of printing which it allowed. Better impression control and a superior inking system led to a marked improvement in the quality of the halftone illustrations and this, together with the new typeface, gave the *Mercury* a very much better appearance.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 created an immediate problem for all of Reading's newspapers, and by the end of that year they had been obliged to reduce the number of pages in their issues. In many ways, Frank Neale was in a better position to control the supply of newsprint for his company, for with two newspapers he was able to get a ration for each but was able to allocate that supply to whichever of his papers he wished. Thus, if for any reason he wanted to increase the run of the *Chronicle* at the expense of the *Mercury* he could allocate his total

---

23 *Reading Mercury*, vol. 218, no. 11229, Saturday 4 February 1939.

supply accordingly, and it appears that he may well have done this. There would be fewer problems circulating newspapers within the town of Reading than dealing with country circulation, and notices appearing in the *Mercury* persuading country buyers to place an order for their copy of the *Mercury* rather than rely on casual sales, which were to be drastically reduced, perhaps supports this. During the war, Reading's population was increased considerably by the influx of service personnel, as the districts immediately around the town were used as holding areas for a large number of troops prior to the D-Day landing.

Newsprint supply apart, the other major supply problem facing the two papers was that of the amount of advertising available, for without a respectable income from that source the inevitable rise in the cost of newsprint and the reduced sales due to the paper shortage would lead to the papers running at a considerable loss. By 1941, the advertising content of the *Chronicle* was down to 36%, and the *Mercury* had maintained a reasonable 49% — although it should be emphasised that the *Mercury* had been reduced to only 12 pages by this time and the *Chronicle*, although reduced to a 16-page newspaper, was still two-thirds of its original size of 24 pages.

The answer to the advertising problem was for them to follow the *Reading Standard's* example and reduce the column width in the paper, thus enabling them to charge advertisers more for their advertisements.[24] This they did in March 1941, the *Chronicle* moving from five 14-em columns per page to six 11½-em columns, and the *Mercury* from seven 14-em columns to eight 11½-em columns. This almost certainly had the same effect on Neale's two papers as it had on the *Standard* in that the

---

24 See Chapter XI, p. 262.

increased income from advertising was able to balance the ever-increasing price of newsprint which occurred throughout the war period.[25]

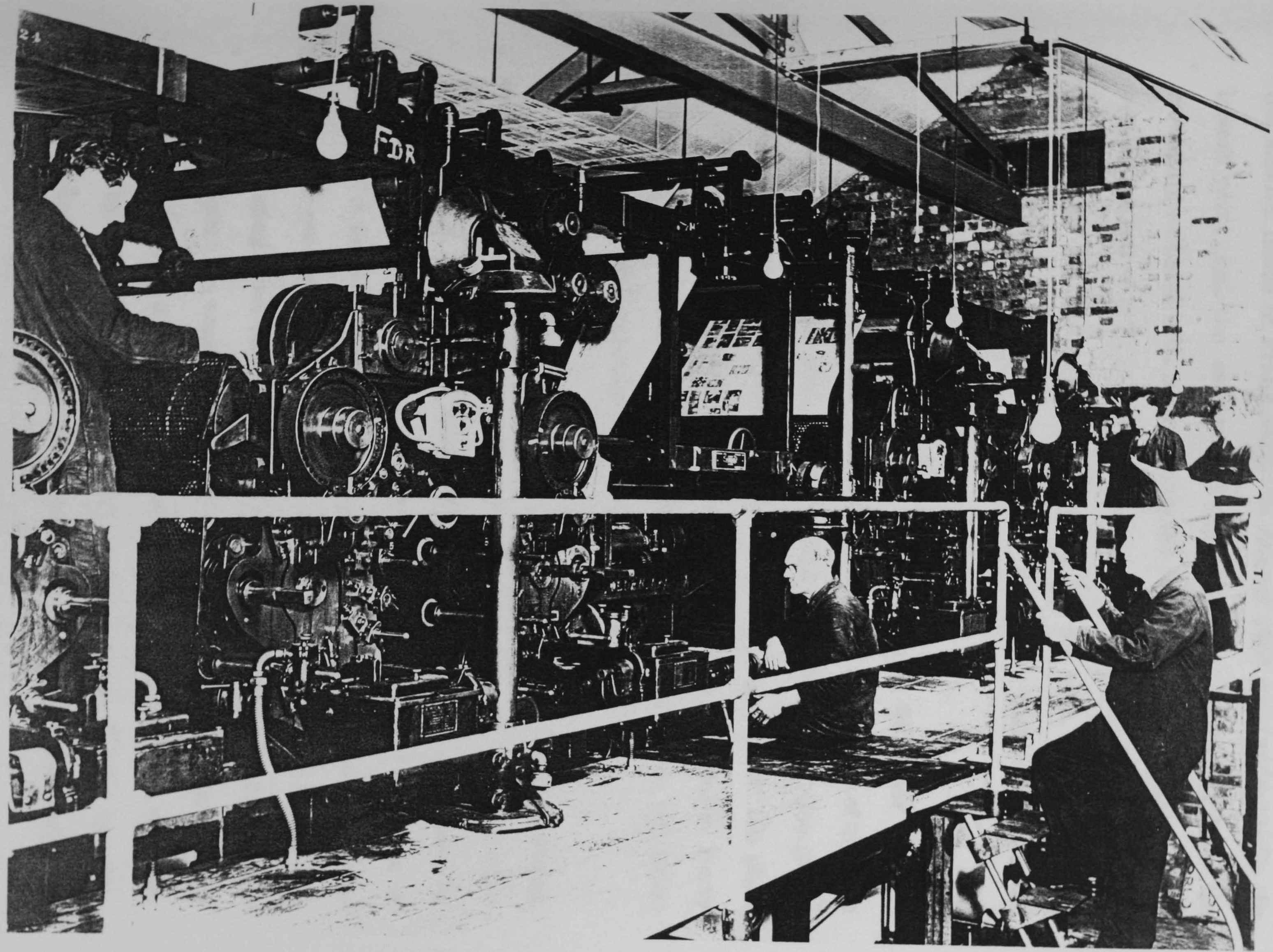
As newsprint rationing continued well after the war, the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* had to plan each weekly issue with care in order to balance the contents, and although advertising was becoming increasingly available as a source of revenue it was necessary for the price of both papers to be increased to 3d., the *Mercury* in August 1947 and the *Chronicle* in March the following year. However, it was not until 1956, following the cessation of newsprint rationing, that the two papers were once again able to increase the number of pages on a regular basis. The *Chronicle* then began producing a twenty-eight-page paper, while the *Mercury*, with its larger format, was frequently published in a twenty-page form. The advertising boom which started in the 1950s, particularly for classified advertisements, ensured a good income, both papers averaging between 40% and 50% each week and, like the *Standard*, they often had to hold copy over to the following week.

Having re-equipped the *Reading Mercury* with a new press in 1939, the company decided to do the same for the *Berkshire Chronicle* in 1955, and an ex-*Daily Express* four-unit Hoe rotary press was installed in April of that year.[26] This press had a running speed of 30,000 copies per hour and was capable of producing a 64-page tabloid-format newspaper, should it be required; thus equipped, the company was prepared for the post-war expansion which was very apparent at this time.

---

25 See Appendix A.

26 See illustration overleaf.



the ex-*Daily Express* 4 unit Hoe press installed in the *Chronicle*'s office in 1955

While the installation of the press marked a high point in the year, the sudden death of Frank Neale in August 1955 was undoubtedly the lowest point and the saddest for the company. Neale had been the managing editor of both papers since the Hobson family had taken them over at the end of 1913, and the success of the papers was in no small way due to him. He had been ably assisted by his wife, the advertising manager for the company, and between them they had engineered the success of both papers.

It was at this time that the owner, Charles Mortimer Hobson, decided to come to Reading in order to take over the reigns of the two papers, the first time that a Hobson had been directly in day-to-day control since the company had been formed forty years earlier. His place as editor of the *Derbyshire Advertiser* was taken by his cousin, Barry Atkinson, who had spent two or three years at the *Mercury* in the 1920s before going off to Cambridge University.

Hobson was 63 when he came to Reading and, although married, chose to live on his own in rooms at the top of the *Chronicle* offices in Valpy Street. He was a scholarly eccentric who was described by Mr Atkinson as being '...far too clever to be an editor of a provincial weekly'.[27] A keen swimmer, he took a daily swim during the summer in an open-air pool by the river Thames, and an array of bathing trunks and towels hanging from the top windows of the Valpy Street office was a common sight. He could speak and write Greek fluently and on one occasion addressed a Greek society meeting in Oxford, which was also attended by the Reading MP, Sir Peter Emery. When he was complimented by Sir Peter on his command of the language, he

---

27 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson.

immediately continued their conversation in Greek, which the unfortunate Sir Peter did not speak. Apparently the return journey to Reading was continued in this manner, with Sir Peter replying 'yes' or 'no' and hoping his answer was appropriate.[28]

Possibly the first noticeable change which came about after Hobson's arrival was the introduction, in April 1956, of news on the front page of the *Chronicle*.[29] Previously, the front page had been covered with columns of classified advertisements, but these were now pushed onto page two so that classified advertising occupied pages 2-7, with display advertising spread through the remainder of the paper. The masthead remained the same, however, and retained the Old English Gothic letter, which had been a feature of the *Chronicle* for many years.

Post-war Reading witnessed a considerable number of changes, not least of which was the increase in population; indeed the neighbouring towns in which the local papers circulated expanded at an astonishing rate. In 1946, the area around the village of Bracknell had been designated a 'New Town' and the pre-war population figure of under 2,000 was considerably increased by the influx of people into the area — to 5,143 in 1951, rising to 20,533 by 1961, and more than doubling again by 1981.[30] Other local towns, too, had increasing populations and the Reading papers could not ignore these potential markets. The *Reading Standard* had been the first to identify them by producing four local editions (for Wokingham and Bracknell, Henley, Newbury and Thatcham, and Woodley) and a special town edition for Reading. To some extent the

---

28 Interview with W. G. Garner.

29 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 8246, Friday 10 April 1956.

30 Official Census Reports for Berkshire.

Reading Newspaper Company had covered the same area, using the *Chronicle* primarily as the town paper and the *Reading Mercury* as the county paper which contained news and information for all the towns and villages in the area. However, unlike the *Standard*, it had not identified the individual areas nor specified that a particular edition should be directed at a particular town or area.

In 1959, Charles M. Hobson, recognizing the growth of local papers in the town around Reading, and particularly the rising trend in free classified advertisements in free sheets, estimated that the life of the *Reading Mercury* was probably no more than twenty years. Noting that the growth of Bracknell far outstripped that of the other local towns and that it would soon be large enough to warrant a local paper of its own, he formed a subsidiary company to produce a new paper, to be called the *Bracknell News*. The move was a bold one, and although the tendency for newspapers in the provinces at that time was to consolidate their positions rather than embark on new ventures, Hobson went ahead with the production of this new paper. Despite the fact that the *Wokingham Times* and a local edition of the *Standard* were already distributed in the Bracknell area, the paper proved to be a success, undoubtedly due to the fact that it was directed entirely towards the needs of the people of Bracknell.

The first edition of the weekly *Bracknell News* was published on Thursday 5 February 1959 and was set and printed in the Reading Newspaper Company's premises in Valpy Street. The company had rationalised its equipment in 1958 by scrapping the old Foster rotary press on which the *Mercury* was printed and producing the *Mercury* on the *Chronicle*'s press which had been installed in 1955. This facilitated the use of the composing room and printing equipment throughout the

week, the presses running on Wednesday night for the *Bracknell News*, Thursday night for the *Berkshire Chronicle*, and Friday night for the *Reading Mercury*.

Although rivalry existed between the Reading papers, there were often instances when they would offer help to each other, particularly times of crisis. On several occasions each company had press breakdowns at crucial times and the rival company had kindly offered the services of its press to help with production. However, during June and July 1959 the whole printing industry was victim to a national strike and no production staff were working at all. Despite this, the two companies combined to produce a joint *Reading Standard/Berkshire Chronicle* emergency edition during the six weeks of the strike. This consisted of a four-page paper with a format of 13" x 10" and sold at 1d.[31] All these editions were illustrated with halftones and the sheets were typeset and printed by the apprentices in the Reading Standard Printing Company at East Street, apprentices not being involved in the national strike.

The *Mercury* was also published at this time, but in a 13" x 9" format of 10 pages selling at 3d., and was produced on a duplicator from typed masters. The different nature of the news in the *Mercury*, together with the larger edition size, was more than the *Reading Standard* apprentices could undertake, hence its production in this way. When the strike was over, the *Chronicle* altered its masthead, dropping the old Gothic letter and introducing 60-point Bodoni bold italic for the paper title. Under this was included the words 'circulating in Reading and District', with the word 'Reading' reversed out of a solid to give it more

---

31 The emergency editions were numbered from 1 to 6, but each paper also included its own numbering sequence. The first edition was slightly smaller in format and sold for 3d., but the rest were sold at 1d.

emphasis. This was the first move towards giving the paper more identity with the town of Reading, where the *Chronicle* had the greater part of its circulation.

Hobson continued with this masthead until September 1961, when it was changed once again, this time to read *READING and BERKSHIRE CHRONICLE*, the words 'Reading' and 'Chronicle' being in 48-point bold italic and the other two words in 24 bold italic. The word 'Chronicle' was reversed out of a solid. The other change was that the masthead no longer ran across the head of page one but was placed in the top left-hand corner of the page.[32]

This change made obvious commercial sense, for the *Chronicle* was in direct competition in the town with the *Reading Standard* and needed to identify more clearly with the town itself. When the paper had first been started in 1825, the use of the county names had been ideal, as the borough of Reading had only a few thousand inhabitants and the paper would have sold many of its copies in the surrounding districts. Now that the town's population was being increased quite rapidly by people moving from other parts of the country, change was necessary. Anyone arriving in Reading and needing to buy a house, for example, would seek for one in the local Reading papers, and it would not have been immediately obvious to them that the *Berkshire Chronicle* would serve their purpose.

Hobson had made a similar alteration to the masthead of the *Reading Mercury* in November 1960, when the secondary title, of 'Oxford Gazette, Newbury Herald and Berks County Paper, GENERAL ADVERTISER FOR BUCKS, HANTS, OXON, GLOS, MIDDLESEX AND WILTS' was dropped altogether and replaced by

---

32 *Reading and Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 8529, Friday 22 September 1961.

For All the News of All BERKSHIRE South Oxon and North Hants.

Although this part of the masthead was changed, the original title was retained in its old Gothic typeface, thus maintaining a traditional link with the paper's country subscribers.

There are no circulation figures available for the *Chronicle* and *Mercury*, but it is known that despite competition from the *Reading Standard* the *Chronicle* was holding its own in the town, but that the *Mercury* was losing its circulation in the country districts.[33] Small towns around Reading were growing quite quickly, particularly those to the east of the town, which were popular with London commuters, and these towns had their own local papers, the circulations for which were increasing at the expense of papers such as the *Mercury*.

Sadly for the fortunes of the Reading Newspaper Company, Charles Mortimer Hobson died suddenly on 20 September 1963, while visiting his cousin in Derby. His death was a great loss not only to the Reading company but also to the *Derbyshire Advertiser*, for his great grandfather had founded that paper in 1845. Hobson represented the last of the family owners of Reading's newspapers but his wife, Thecla, continued on the board of the company, and the family interest was maintained through Hobson's cousin, Canon J. A. J. Atkinson, who was appointed as a director at that time. The Chairman of the board was E. L. Turner, who had joined the company originally as an office boy more than forty years previously and the company was therefore able to enjoy considerable continuity in its management.

---

33 Personal interview with D. Bowyer, a local journalist, now editor of *the Reading Chronicle*.

Hobson's position as editor was taken by W. G. Garner. He had considerable experience of Reading's newspapers, having first joined the *Reading Standard* in 1937, returning to Reading after war service, and moving to the Reading Newspaper Company in 1952 when he became the picture editor. Garner is best described as a modest, retiring man, who was very much a working editor in that he took his jacket off, rolled up his sleeves and got on with the job.[34]

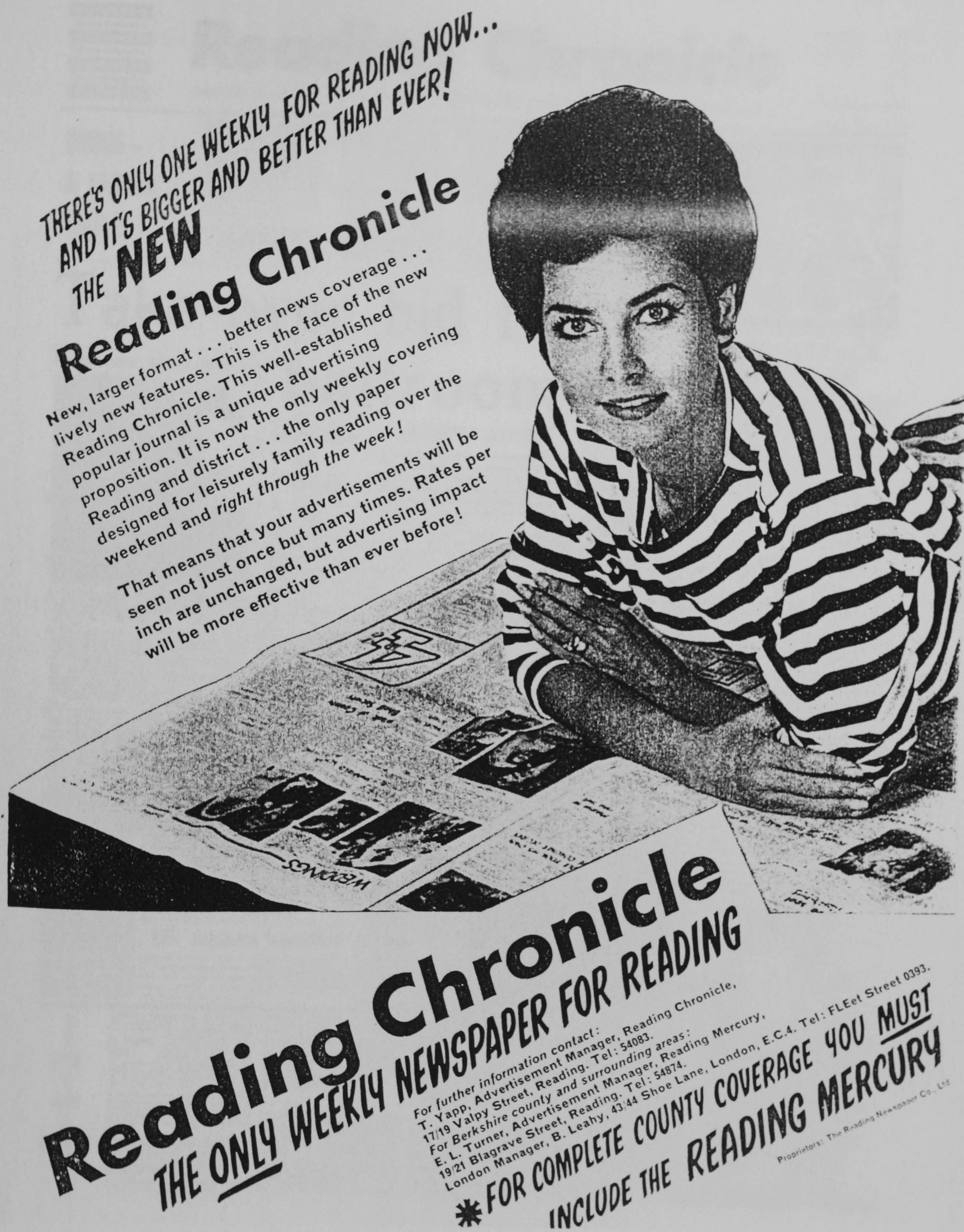
One of the first problems the new editor had to face was the likely impact of the proposed *Evening Post* which would emerge from the takeover of the *Reading Standard*. The chief concern was the effect that a daily paper would have on the advertising revenue of the two weekly papers, and that, coupled with the declining fortunes of the *Reading Mercury*, was very much at the forefront of the company's list of priorities.

To some extent the problem was solved when The Thomson Organisation decided to close down the weekly *Reading Standard* after launching the daily *Evening Post*. This move left the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* as the only two weekly papers in the area. As the *Standard* had proved to be so popular, the Reading Newspaper Company decided to produce the *Chronicle* in a similar broadsheet format, the new masthead naming the paper the '*Reading Chronicle*' in a typographic layout very similar to that of the *Standard* and with the sub-title 'THE INDEPENDENT WEEKLY VOICE'.[35]

---

34 Personal interview with D. Bower.

35 *Reading Chronicle*, no. 8732, Friday 10 September 1965. See illustrations overleaf.



Advertisement for the new *Reading Chronicle* September 1955

MILWARDS Shoe Repairs
MILWARDS Shoe Repairs
MILWARDS Shoe Repairs
MILWARDS

Reading Chronicle

FRIDAY SEPT. 10 1965 — THE INDEPENDENT WEEKLY VOICE — No. 8732. 32 PAGES 4d.

DRUGS – A FATHER WARNS

TONIGHT, in the coffee bars and meeting places of Reading, teenagers will take drugs. You, the parents, are probably thinking that this has nothing to do with you. But before you protest that drugs have nothing to do with your sons and daughters — think again. It may well be that they were among the teenagers that *Chronicle* reporter Keith Dickson has been interviewing these past weeks.

Listen to one father's story—told below in his own words. Because it could become your own.

My daughter goes to a local grammar school. She started well enough but suddenly she seemed to begin going off the rails. I admit that I have always been strict with my children—making sure that they do their homework and come in early.

But suddenly she began to come in later and later at nights and I felt sure she was mixing with the wrong company. It was then that I noticed that her school-work was deteriorating and I went to see her headmistress.

She told me that she was terribly worried about many girls at the school, and asked me point-blank if my daughter took drugs. She told me that although my daughter's class was one of the most intelligent she had ever taught, one girl had been sent away to an approved school and others, all in the same class, had been placed on probation—all for charges connected with drugs.

Drug-taking, she said, was rife in the school, and she was convinced that drugs were circulating there. I got the impression from what she said, that this was a problem facing nearly all other schools in the district.

She said that she was helpless and that although she had pleaded with parents to come and see her, she had got little, if any, co-operation. The parents, she told me, just weren't interested. Their attitude was one of indifference.

When I came back from the school I tackled my daughter, and she told me the full story.

She and a friend had gone to a bowling alley, met up there with a crowd and gone off on the backs of motor-cycles to Windsor. They stayed there all night. Many of the others took pills and she also told me that several of her school friends took them. She said that she had never taken any when they were offered to her.

I'm certain that if I hadn't found out what was going on she would have taken them in the end. The others would have egged her on.

I would like to warn parents. Don't sit back and turn a blind eye to the dangers that your children could be in.

Dickson's account of his probe into drug trafficking in Reading is on Page 13.

Take-over bid for ballroom

'ACCEPT' ADVICE

A MULTI-MILLION-POUND entertainments firm has put in a bid for Olympia (Reading) Ltd and if the offer is accepted by shareholders it hopes to modernise the ballroom in London Street. The firm, Grand (Brigg) Ltd., a subsidiary of Star Associated Holdings Ltd., Leeds, is offering 26s. for each share, which have been changing hands at between 15s. and £1.

Mr. C. Parsons, chairman of Olympia, Ltd., in a letter to shareholders, says: "In my report to the annual meeting, which was held on February 22nd, I referred to the rumours that had circulated that Olympia was to be sold.

"I promised that all inquiries would be carefully examined by your board in the best interests of the shareholders. I now have to inform you that a formal offer has been received from Grand (Brigg), Ltd., for the acquisition of all the shares in Olympia (Reading), Ltd. The price offered is 26s. per share in cash."

Directors' recommendation

Shareholders are being advised to accept the offer.

The directors, said Mr. Parsons, had carefully considered the offer and, after consultation with the company's accountants, felt that they must recommend the shareholders to accept. They proposed to accept in respect of the shares which they themselves held.

If the offer became unconditional the whole of the present board of directors would resign without compensation for loss of office.

The directors hold the following shares in the company: Mr. Parsons 1,390, Mr. R. J. Langley 440, Mr. L. Victor Smith 250, Mr. T. Vincent 290, Mr. D. A. D. Oxlade 100, Mr. N. H. Lipscombe 741.

A spokesman for Grand told the *Chronicle* this week that when the company took over premises its first object was always to spend a lot of money on improvements and modernisation.

Star Associated Holdings, a company worth several million pounds, control 130 ballrooms, cinemas and catering establishments, mainly in the North and the Midlands. It also owns the West End Cinema, in London's Leicester Square, and the Palace Theatre, Plymouth.

The takeover bid is worth more than £36,000. There are 170 shareholders—including the directors—who hold 28,151 shares.

Honeymooner missed pools win

ATTRACTIVE Barbara Orrell, PETER BOYLE, Mrs. Nadine [illegible] ... cost her a share in £8,000 pools win. Photo: Walton Adams

For while Barbara, who is 24, was honeymooning at Newquay, a new manager, Mr. Peter Boyle, took over at the British School of Motoring office where she works in Blagrave Street, Reading. He started a pools syndicate among the staff and on Wednesday they heard that their second week's entry had won £8,323 14s. on Vernons' farthing treble chance.

The 12 members won nearly £700 each for a total 37s. 6d. stake. They plan to give Barbara a consolation gift—a refrigerator.

Barbara, of Church End Lane, Tilehurst, watched her colleagues read a letter of congratulations from Vernons, and said: "I have no hard feelings about the win and I had a wonderful honeymoon. But we are saving for a home of our own and the money would have been put down on a mortgage."

Another of the winning members was Mr. "Jock" Laidlaw, a 37-year-old instructor from Edinburgh, who is getting married on October 8th. He plans to spend his share on buying furniture.

FACTORY BLAZE

IMPREGNATED fibre mouldings being heated in an oven at the Spencers Wood factory of Prestfibre, Ltd., caught fire yesterday (Thursday) evening, and the alarm was raised. Fortunately the blaze was contained within the metal oven, which was 20 feet long and nine feet wide.

"Only one or two employees were in the building, working overtime," said a factory spokesman. "They were able to get the fire under control before the brigade arrived. There was no explosion, and no-one was hurt."

ATTACKS ON BOYS: YOUTH SENTENCED

APPEARING at Abingdon Quarter Sessions on Wednesday for sentence for attacks on two boys aged seven and four, a 16-year-old Winnersh youth was sent to Borstal.

After reading reports from doctors, the Recorder, Mr. Patrick Medd, told the youth: "I am recommending that you should be sent to an establishment where they are able to assist people in your condition.

"It would be quite wrong to consider letting you loose when you might do it again."

At Bradfield and Sonning Juvenile Court the youth had been found guilty of wounding seven-year-old Barry Aulsford with intent to do him grievous bodily harm, and causing actual bodily harm to four-year-old Stephen Jennings.

Prosecuting, Mr. Leo Clarke said that the youth cut Barry's neck with a knife; a completely unprovoked assault. On another day he hit Stephen over the head and shoulders with a stick, causing bruising.

Mr. C. Oddie, defending, said that the youth could not explain why he did it. His parents were most concerned.

Firm's books lost – 'Shocking'

A HENLEY firm of solicitors, a London firm of accountants, and Post Office officials are to be ordered to attend Reading Bankruptcy Court at a resumed hearing on November 24th unless a company's books, lost in the post, have been traced.

[illegible] Thursday by the Registrar, Mr. D. T. Thorne, at the opening of bankruptcy proceedings against a building firm known as A.N. and N.P. Newberry, of Greyfriars Road, Reading.

The partners are Mr. Nigel Newberry, now of 27, Fawley Green, Henley, and Mrs. Ada Newberry, of Thirdson, Henley.

The Assistant Official Receiver, Mr. T. J. White, was told by Nigel Newberry that the books had not been lodged with his regular accountant, but with a firm of accountants recommended by his solicitors.

This London firm had agreed to take on the work of preparing the books, and were prepared to wait for their fee.

The books were posted, declared Mr. White, not back to the Official Receiver's Office, but direct to the solicitor, by ordinary parcel post.

This was in June, and they had not arrived.

Said the Registrar: "This is an unfortunate situation to have the books lost in this way. This is shocking. It must be looked into very closely."

During the hearing, it was stated that Nigel Newberry, Mrs. Newberry, and another brother who at one time was in the firm, drew sums totalling over £5,600 in 1962 when the profits were only £2,911, and nearly £7,850 in the following year when the profits were down to £92.

The Assistant Official Receiver suggested: "It was a reckless way of carrying on."

'Exceptional response'

THE secretary of the Permacem Paint Co., Ltd., of Cremyll Road, Reading, writes:

"We would refer to our advertisement in your newspaper last Friday which has been booked to be entered for a second week.

"Would you please be kind enough to withdraw this advertisement from the second week's issue as the response we have had from the first week's publication has been quite exceptional. We have had considerably more replies than we had anticipated."

The Permacem Company advertised for three men for part-time work. The advertisement cost 8s. and attracted over 40 replies. If you're seeking staff it's a weekly paper—the *Chronicle*—you need.

Oil tankers derailed

POLICE and firemen rushed to Reading West Sidings near Salisbury Road yesterday (Thursday) afternoon when two oil tankers, each carrying 22 tons of octane spirit, jumped some points on the railway and ran off the rails.

There was no danger of fire, however, and no one was injured. Workmen with heavy jacks got the tankers back on the tracks by late afternoon.

Licensees blame police chief

THE Chief Constable of Reading and the new parking restrictions came under fire from several members of the Reading and District Licensed Victuallers Association at their meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. John Knight, of The Tudor Arms, Greyfriars Road, claimed: "There are a lot of us who are going to suffer by the dictatorial attitude of the Chief Constable. He has given no lee-way whatever.

"Those of us in houses with no car parks and circled by double yellow lines—laid down by a Chief Constable who just couldn't care less—are threatened. We should be given some say in what goes on. These restrictions are going to hit us hard."

The chairman, Mr. H. Venn, said that he had to defend the Chief Constable to a certain extent. He said that statutory notices were published and consultations did take place at the time with businesses concerned.

Mr. H. Roper said the restrictions were killing the evening trade. "I honestly don't think that the police can solve the morning parking—but I would like to see concessions for evening parking."

Mr. Knight said that he felt that if all concerned [illegible] to get together something might be done.

Mr. W. Nelson, of The Crown Hotel, Caversham, proposed that the secretary should go into the matter. The question of parking was originally brought up at an earlier meeting by Mr. A. Bull, of The Blagrave Arms, Blagrave Street, who claimed that the new parking restrictions would have considerable effect on his lunch-time trade.

GANG ATTACK ON YOUTH

ATTACKED by a gang of teenagers in Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, on Monday evening, a youth received first-aid from a former London police officer before being sent to hospital.

Mr. Harry Cullen, who retired in 1951 with the rank of chief inspector, heard a shout of "get him" from the mob when he opened his front door at about 9 p.m., and found the youth, who had a badly cut face, lying on the pavement.

The police arranged for the youth to go to hospital for treatment.

Mr. Cullen told our reporter that there was a girl with the gang, who were running away by the time he reached his front gate. The youth had told him he had been struck in the face by a bottle or something similar.

Mr. Cullen said he understood the attack followed an incident the previous evening at Woodley Memorial Recreation Ground at Headley Road.

Woodley people, he added, were concerned at increasing hooliganism and vandalism in the parish. He had heard comments from a number of parishioners.

Advanced driver – by bus!

TO become a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists is difficult enough for the average car driver, but when Mr. Peter Shock, of 131, Hemdean Road, Caversham, took and passed the test in May he was driving a bus! The examiner on the test thought that Mr. Shock was probably the first person in the country to do so.

Said Mr. Shock, who has been driving for 23 years: "I wouldn't say it was any more difficult taking the test in a bus than in a car, if one is used to driving a bus. It was more a test of common-sense than anything else but it does encourage people to be more careful on the roads and to show more courtesy for other drivers."

Mr. Shock runs his own coach company and much of his work involves transporting children to and from school.

Mr. Shock does little driving out of working hours. He does not own a car and his spare time is taken up with long distance cycling and walking.

PROTECTING ROMAN WALL

SILCHESTER'S Roman wall, constructed in the third century A.D. and on land in the ownership of the Duke of Wellington, has been placed in the guardianship of the Ministry of Public Building and Works by the Duke.

The wall, which runs for one and three-quarter miles, is to be cleared of vegetation to display the masonry. The Ministry will excavate and display the arches and gatehouses of the defences, but owing to the great length and to the need for archaeological excavation this will take a number of years to complete. Nevertheless it is hoped to open individual sections to the public as they are treated.

The Ministry intends to build up a permanent staff — masons and labourers—for these works and it is hoped they will be local men.

CEILING COLLAPSES

THE manager of the King's Road branch of Avery, Ltd., Mr. S. Copperstone, narrowly escaped injury on Monday. Just a few minutes after leaving for lunch, the ceiling collapsed on to his desk and chair, where he had been working that morning.

Nobody was in the room at the time, but Mrs. Eileen Shea was filing in an adjoining room. She heard the crash, saw what had happened and posted warning notices on the doors.

After lunch workmen inspected the damage, which consisted of a hole of about 5 ft. diameter.

Mr. Copperstone told our reporter: "It was a narrow escape for me. I had only left the office a few moments earlier."

Reading Chronicle

YOUR OWN WEEKLY NEWSPAPER PRESENTS THE WEEK'S NEWS EVERY FRIDAY, 4d., IN THREE DISTINCT EDITIONS.

1. TOWN — 2. COUNTRY (Page 5)
3. WOODLEY, EARLEY, WOKINGHAM (Page 4)

This week's special features

HOROSCOPE, CROSSWORD, MOTORING, SNAPSHOT CONTEST, GARDENING — Page 17
READERS' VIEWS Page 2
JUNIOR CHRONICLE TWO SPECIAL SPORTS PAINTING CONTESTS PAGE 15.
WOMEN'S WORLD By Christine Wilson, Page 15.
BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS, PAGE 2.
CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS Pages 19—27.
EARLEY MAN'S 30 YEARS AS A CLOWN Page 12.
SPORTS NEWS & VIEWS Pages 29—31
ARE YOU SQUARED? HALF GUINEAS AS PRIZES — Page 30
TEENAGERS' FEATURES Page 16.
WOKINGHAM M.P. ON LABOUR'S FIRST YEAR Page 16.

READING CHRONICLE — PHONE READING 54082

IT'S OUR OPINION

A PAPER DIES

TODAY, a newspaper dies. For 4,841 weeks the "Reading Standard" has been a respected and responsible local journal, prudently directed and ably produced. Its sudden death while still in robust health will be genuinely regretted by many, not least by ourselves. The lively yet never acrimonious rivalry that existed was good for both of us. It kept us both on our toes and Reading got the benefit. Why has it to die?

Because it passed from independent control into the hands of a newspaper empire which seeks to establish an evening newspaper here. To help achieve this, it was thought necessary, so it seems, to acquire the "Reading Standard" and kill it.

The *Chronicle* is thus left as the only weekly newspaper exclusively devoted to Reading affairs. Consequently we present a big new *Reading Chronicle* with which we aim to provide a reliable sounding board for public opinion in the town and its immediate vicinity.

The *Reading Mercury*, our companion journal, which for 242 years has recorded events in Berkshire and the fringe areas of Oxon, Hants and Bucks, will continue to be published each Saturday as the county newspaper.

Thus readers will still be able to enjoy a choice of weekly newspapers. But the town has sustained a loss, as has the newspaper industry. The unavoidable death of an ailing journal—national daily or local weekly—is regrettable. The sacrifice of one that is thriving is to be deplored. A speculative venture into the evening newspaper field offers little compensation.

• • • • •

WAYWARD YOUTH

THE PRESENT generation of youth, finding itself in a more affluent age than any of its predecessors, has to combat greater temptations than ever before. In a world where, in a couple of decades freedom of thought and action has almost turned full circle, and discipline has become an ugly word, ever-head-strong youth certainly demands greater guidance than that given to previous generations.

In the turn of modern-day living a mother's place is no longer solely in the home. She has become a joint bread-winner, helping the head of the family to keep abreast of the Joneses. This may well be the greatest factor in making it more easy for the inquisitive young to become wayward.

The disclosures in this issue underline the growing menace of drug taking among young people. The school teachers and the police are to a large extent hamstrung. Parents, however, still can, and should, act on suspicion.

In the end they and their children will be grateful that they did.

• • • • •

WRONG TARGET

READING publicans complain bitterly about the effect that the rigid parking restrictions in the town are having on their trade. They may well be justified—but are they sure they've got the right target? It is not the Chief Constable who makes the regulations; he sees that they are enforced. The time to lambast him will be when he fails in his duty to enforce the law.

The front page of the new *Reading Chronicle* 10 September 1965

The result was astounding, for both readers and advertisers changed their allegiance to the *Chronicle* and *Mercury*, so much so that Bill Garner had an avalanche of advertising to deal with and estimated that the circulation of the papers had doubled.[36] In the week following the closure of the *Standard*, the *Chronicle* published a 'Thank you' to the public who, it reported, liked the new *Chronicle* to such an extent that circulation had risen to 56,049 copies per week. Although this was to peak at 58,082 in October,[37] according to E. G. B. Atkinson it settled down to a regular circulation of approximately 46,000 copies, and the *Mercury*'s was said to be approximately 21,000 copies.[38]

This upturn in the fortunes of Reading's two oldest surviving newspapers was almost too good to be true, but it was seized gratefully and the company capitalised on the situation, endeavouring to ensure that they captured the complete weekly paper market in the area. The advertising revenue continued to rise and the two papers regularly had between 56% and 60% of their contents filled with display and classified advertisements.

During 1968, Associated Newspapers acquired a thirty per cent share in the company, although the combined shareholdings of the Hobson family were still enough to maintain overall control of the company's fortunes. How this came about is something of a mystery but it has been suggested that Associated Newspapers had plans to move out of

---

36 Interview with W. G. Garner.

37 *Reading Chronicle*, no. 8735, Friday 1 October 1965.

38 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson.

London and set up a printing unit in the provinces.[39] Unfortunately the details of such a plan have so far not come to light.

One change which did occur in 1970 was that of the title of the *Reading Mercury*, which was altered to *Berkshire Mercury* in July of that year.[40] This was done to identify further the county nature of the paper and to reinforce the fact that it was primarily circulated in country districts. Throughout the life of the *Mercury* it had built a reputation for reliability and had become virtually an institution as far as many country readers were concerned. During the latter century of its life it had never attempted to be sensational and had always 'endeavoured to give the rural areas the facts'.[41] In this respect the paper had performed an extremely useful function in keeping the rural districts in touch with the outside world. However, that function was gradually becoming obsoluete. The growth of the medium of television, together with that of local radio, provided those living in the country with both information and entertainment, and the increase in car ownership allowed most country people to travel easily. As a result, the villages around Reading were no longer isolated and country people no longer needed the kind of news and entertainment service that the *Mercury* had always provided. This, together with an increase in free sheet advertising, was one of the major reasons for the gradual decline in the *Mercury's* circulation.

However, during the early 1970s the company was enjoying a very profitable period, despite the fact that at this time the *Evening Post* was

---

39 Interview with W. G. Garner.

40 *Berkshire Mercury*, vol. 250, no. 12266, Saturday 11 July 1970.

41 Ibid.

also increasing its circulation to over 50,000.[42] The group turnover was increasing year by year, and the company profits reached a peak of £24,355 in 1973,[43] the gross income from advertising reaching £104,000.[44]

In July 1973, the *Berkshire Mercury* celebrated its 250th Anniversary and produced a special supplement, including a facsimile copy of the first issue of the paper, to mark the event.[45] Although this had been done before, on this occasion a complete facsimile of the whole paper was included, not just the front page. Only five other newspapers in the country had been in existence for a longer period,[46] and amongst a host of congratulatory messages the paper received one from Her Majesty the Queen to mark this very special celebration.

Two years later it was the turn of the *Reading Chronicle* to celebrate, when in January 1975 it reached its 150th anniversary, and once again the Queen sent a congratulatory message to the company. It was perhaps appropriate that Reading's two oldest-established newspapers, still owned by a family company, should celebrate their anniversaries so close together.

Unfortunately the Reading Newspaper Company only enjoyed two more years as a small private business, for in 1977 they were taken over

---

42 *Evening Post*, no. 2161, Thursday 31 August 1972: circulation of 52,167.

43 See Appendix D.

44 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson.

45 *Berkshire Mercury*, 250th Anniversary Supplement, Thursday 12 July 1973.

46 Berrow's *Worcester Journal* 1690 (?); *Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury* 1695 (?); *Kentish Gazette* (originally *Kentish Post*) 1717; *Mercury & Herald* (Northampton) 1720; *Gloucester Journal* 1722.

by Argus Press PLC to become part of the much larger British Electric Traction Company PLC.

Like most other large newspaper companies, Argus Press had been seeking opportunities to buy suitable local provincial papers in order to avail themselves of the lucrative local advertising revenue which was a feature of many growing towns, particularly in the area around London. Potential towns were shortlisted by Argus and local newspapers were approached, to ascertain their willingness to sell. Many of these small local papers were profitable but unable to inject the sort of investment into their companies that would enable the full potential of the advertising market to be realised. Virtually all of them were still using hotmetal setting and letterpress printing, both of which, although simple, were invariably expensive due to the high cost of labour involved and the limitation on production speed. Hotmetal setting also required considerably more space to accommodate the equipment and machinery, and as many of these smaller papers occupied premises in the centre of towns the companies were situated in high-cost buildings.

In this, the Reading Newspaper Company Ltd and its subsidiary the Bracknell Newspaper Company Ltd were no exception and, although profitable, they suffered from considerable expenditure on staff. For example, in 1968 the group employed an average of 150 people per week, with an aggregate gross remuneration of £160,898. Set against a group turnover of £366,695, this cost of labour alone represented just over 43% of the income, and by 1976 this percentage had risen to 49%.[47] In addition, the Reading Newspaper Company occupied two premises in one of the most expensive areas of the town.

---

47 See Appendix D.

One of the Argus group executives involved in the selection of newspapers for possible takeover was J. F. Hancock, who had been the advertising manager of the *Reading Standard* prior to its takeover by The Thomson Organisation and who had also worked on the *Evening Post* as their display advertising manager before moving on to other papers. His knowledge of the local Reading press was invaluable to the Argus Press group, for he was able to approach the Reading Newspaper Company more as a friend than as an outsider.

Argus's overtures revealed two problems: one was the thirty per cent holding in the company by Associated Newspapers, and the other the resistance to selling the company by Hobson's widow, Mrs Thecla Hobson, who had maintained an active interest in the company's affairs since her husband's death.

Surprisingly, Associated Newspapers had no desire to maintain their interest in the company and were quite prepared to sell their holding to the Argus group but Mrs Hobson, as the major family shareholder, strenuously resisted the sale. However, just at the point when Argus Press might have withdrawn from negotiations, Mrs Hobson died and the way was left open for the sale of the company.

By September 1977 the Reading Newspaper Company and its subsidiary, the Bracknell Newspaper Company, were owned by the Argus Press group, who immediately started expanding the business and recapitalizing the company to support that expansion. One of the first noticeable changes was the introduction of a *Midweek Chronicle* in May 1978, distributed free to 40,000 homes in Reading, Woodley, and Earley.[48] With the same broadsheet format as the weekly *Chronicle* and consisting

---

48 *Midweek Chronicle*, no. 1, Tuesday 23 May 1978.

of twelve pages, the midweek edition had some 80-85% of its pages filled with advertising, the rest consisting of some news, formal announcements, and occasional feature articles. It was published by the *Chronicle* as a protective measure in order to have an interest in both bought papers and in the free-sheet advertising market, and was the first of its kind in Reading. The rival *Evening Post* did not enter the field of free sheet publication until the early 1980s.

At the takeover, the circulation of the *Reading Chronicle* was approximately 50,000 copies per week, indicating that after the closure of the *Standard* the resulting increase in the *Chronicle's* customers had been maintained, while the *Mercury's* circulation was well under 20,000 copies per week and declining quite rapidly.[49] Despite various attempts by the new proprietors to arrest this downward trend, the *Mercury* was eventually closed in May 1987.[50] As Charles Hobson had predicted, the changing pattern of life in the country and the increase in the population of many of the towns around Reading had led to its demise. As these towns grew, so their inhabitants sought a paper of their own which would identify completely with their town. Despite various ploys including special localised editions and, eventually, producing the *Mercury* as a small-format free sheet, the circulation dropped to below 10,000. This proved to be totally uneconomical and, sadly, the paper which had served the rural areas around Reading since 1723 was closed.

Despite the problems of the *Mercury*, the rest of the business proved to be profitable and during the next three years the Argus Press

---

49 Interview with J. F. Hancock, who was advertising manager for the *Reading Standard* until 1965, then for the *Evening Post*, later joining Argus Press and returning to Reading as one of their directors. He recently retired.

50 Last edition of the *Reading and Berkshire Mercury*, vol. 266, No. 13445, 28 May 1987.

were able to double the company's turnover. Eventually, in 1980, the *Chronicle* installed a Linotype System 5 computer typesetting system to speed up production and reduce composing room staff, although at this time still continuing to use the old letterpress machine by adapting it to accept letterpress photo-polymer plates. In January 1986, the company moved to a purpose-built factory in Portman Road, Reading, where a new Baker Perkins Gemini web offset press was installed, and Valpy Street, which since the turn of the century had been Reading's own Fleet Street, no longer resounded to the sound of newspaper presses.

CHAPTER XI

§

READING STANDARD 1914-1965

When war was declared in August 1914, the *Standard* immediately ceased publication of its midweek edition and temporarily reduced the weekly edition from ten to six pages, in order to save newsprint. Two of those six pages were in the form of a pictorial section and they were used to include photographs of the war and of many local people who had been 'called to the Colours'. This section was printed on art paper and inset into the paper after printing, and the quality of the halftones was extremely good. Each week this section had a particular theme, such as 'The Rally to the Colours', 'Your King and Country Needs You', 'Berkshire Prepares for War', and as the war progressed included 'Pictures from the Front', and a sadly regular feature 'Roll of Honour for Reading and District', which listed those local people who had lost their lives in the conflict, and included pictures of those who had distinguished themselves in battle. Periodically throughout the war period many of the photographs which had appeared in these insets each week were reproduced in book form under the title of *Berkshire and the War*. Each book contained approximately 190 photographs and cost 3d., and they were extremely popular publications judging from the fairly large numbers still in the possession of families in the district. It was this pictorial section which created such an interest amongst the local people — so much so that the

Standard's circulation actually increased, despite the wartime restrictions, and the paper was soon regularly back to ten pages.

Indeed, such was the pressure on the production department that Rivers was obliged to '...lay down an additional plant', to enable them to expedite the production of the paper on publishing day.[1] Although there is no clue as to what sort of 'plant' it was, the likelihood is that it was an additional printing machine. The Quad Royal two-feeder would produce eight of the pages, a single cylinder press would be needed to produce the two-page art inset, and another press to print the remaining two pages of a ten-page paper would greatly reduce production time.

Despite the many restrictions created by shortages of newsprint and its increasing cost, the *Standard* managed to continue producing a ten-page newspaper up to 1917 when, due to fluctuations in the paper supply, it was again forced to reduce its size to between six and eight pages. However, with the illustrated inset the *Standard* had stolen a march on its local rivals, for it was not until the latter part of 1915 that the *Chronicle* started to include illustrations in any quantity, and their quality was very poor compared with the *Standard*'s. The illustrations produced by the *Standard* were superb — sharp, clear, and well printed. Much of this was due to the efforts of the machine-room overseer, Joe Preston, whose labour of love was to spend most of each week cutting underlays and overlays for each of the blocks, in order to get the very best tonal results when printing.[2] Neither the *Reading Observer* nor the *Reading Mercury* included illustrations during the war period, and the *Standard's* success with its halftone printing was due not only to the care

---

1 *Reading Standard*, no. 2189, Saturday 21 November 1914.

2 Interview with W. G. Garner.

and attention of Joe Preston but also to the fact that the paper was still being produced on flat-bed cylinder presses. The *Chronicle*, *Mercury* and *Observer* were all printed on rotary presses and, although halftones had been used in printing from the 1880s, the quality of those produced on rotary presses was always inferior. This was partly due to the fact that no really satisfactory method of producing good-quality curved stereos had been found until 1907 when Arkus Sapt produced a method of making them, and partly because the quality of the newsprint paper used on reel-fed newspaper presses was so poor.[3] Rivers, on the other hand, was able to produce his illustrations on art paper, from fine-screen halftones, and thus the quality was very much better. The popularity of his illustrated feature was reflected in the fact that the *Standard*'s weekly circulation had risen to an astonishing 19,000 copies by the end of 1916.[4]

This high circulation drew in a considerable amount of advertising, accounting for approximately 50% of the *Standard's* contents, despite the fact that there was a war on and people were supposed to be tightening their belts. However, it was this revenue from advertising which enabled the *Standard* to maintain its price of 1d.

During the latter years of the war, the rising cost of newsprint had been so great that the *Standard's* annual paper bill had increased by over £1,000, and the paper openly admitted that advertising revenue was subsidizing the profit of the paper.[5] In 1918 the price of the *Standard* was reluctantly raised to 1½d., but even this price compared well with those of its rivals, for the *Berkshire Chronicle* also raised its price to 1½d. in

---

3 See Chapter IX.

4 *Reading Standard*, no. 2300, Saturday 30 December 1916.

5 Ibid.

October 1918, the *Mercury* cost 2d., and the *Observer*, although still only 1d., had been reduced to a rather pathetic four-page affair, with very little advertising.

The price of newsprint continued to rise even after the end of the war and by 1920 the cost of paper was double its 1914 price, forcing all the Reading papers to raise their prices yet again during the early part of that year, the *Standard*, *Chronicle* and *Observer* to 2d., and the *Mercury* to 3d.

In September 1915, Rivers bought out his business partner, John J. Cooper, and became sole proprietor of the *Reading Standard*.[6] Rivers and Cooper had worked together for sixteen years and during that period they had laid the foundation for what had become a thriving business. In Cooper, Rivers had not only a business partner but a real friend whose wise counsel and sound advice and encouragement were in no small measure responsible for the success of the *Standard* and, when no longer a partner, Cooper continued to take a very great interest in the paper until his death in 1920.[7]

After a temporary drop in circulation immediately after the war, the *Standard* was soon re-established as the dominant force in local journalism, and by the end of 1922 its circulation was claimed to be back to 20,000 copies per week.[8] This rise in circulation brought with it increasing pressure from advertisers, and by the end of 1921 approximately 71% of the paper's space was devoted to advertising. To accommodate this, and to provide space for an expansion of news coverage, the paper was enlarged in November 1921 to 20½" wide,

---

6 *Reading Standard*, Special Supplement, 5 May 1923.

7 *Reading Standard*, Special Supplement, 2 June 1961.

8 *Reading Standard*, no. 2613, Saturday 30 December 1922.

incorporating another column on each page.[9] Even this was not enough and by the early months of 1923 the *Standard* was regularly produced as a twelve-page paper, clearly the limit of the company's production resources. On a number of occasions the pressure on space in the *Standard* was such that advertising matter had to be held over to the following week to accommodate news and at one point some sixteen columns of advertising had to be left out in order to present a balanced paper.[10]

The answer to this problem was to re-equip the production department and install a new press, not only to cater for a paper of this size but also to be capable of accommodating any further expansion the *Standard* might need. A new two-reel Northern rotary press was installed during April 1923, capable of producing a sixteen-page newspaper and adaptable, when necessary, for production of a twenty-four page paper. With a running speed of twenty thousand copies an hour, this press appeared to be the panacea to the *Standard's* production problems.[11]

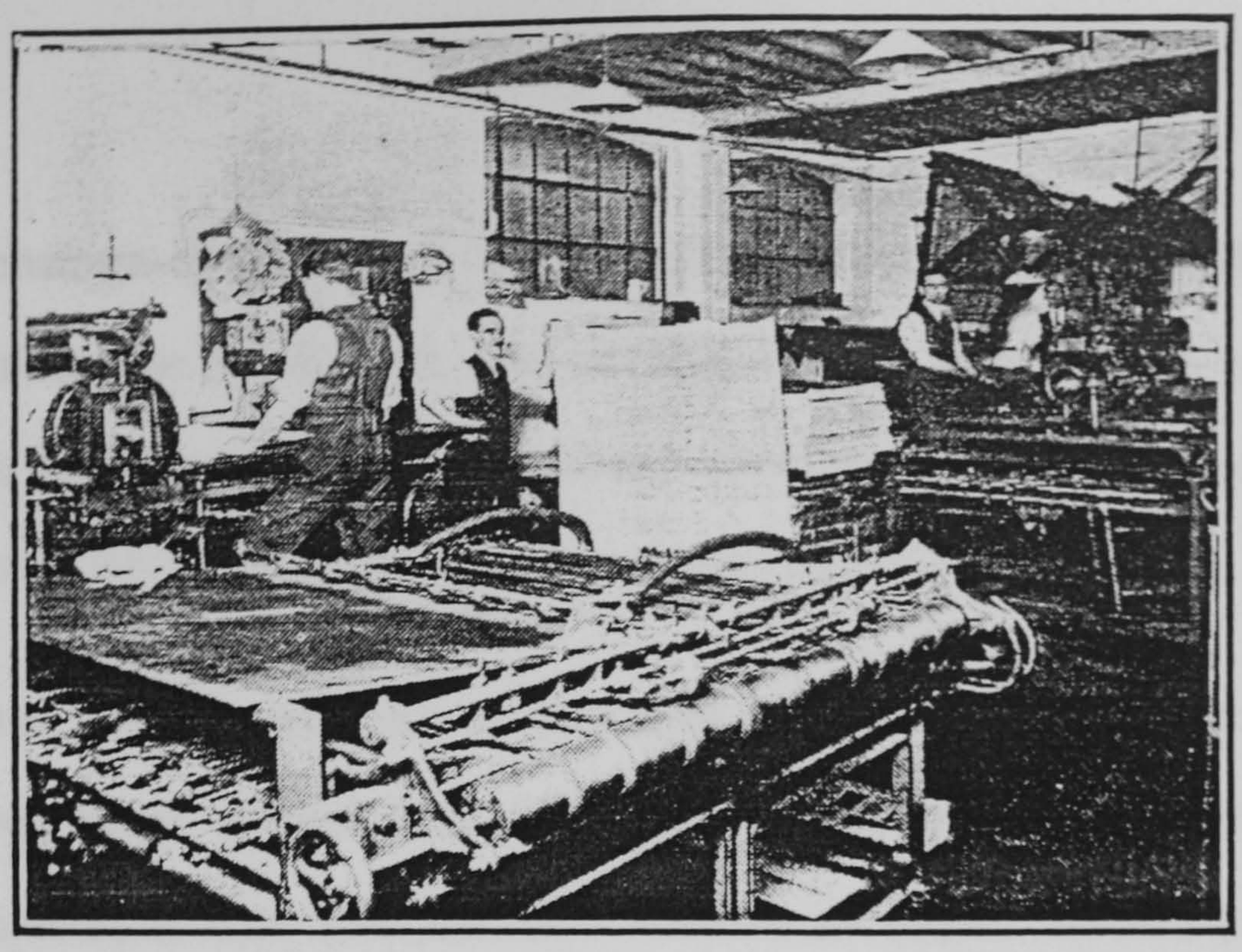
The installation of a rotary press of this size inevitably took some time, for the old machinery had to be removed and a special foundation laid to prevent vibration and to allow access to the press for reeling up and delivering newspapers at a much higher speed. Room also had to be made to accommodate a stereotyping department, for now that a rotary press was to be used all the pages had to be converted to curved plates for the press. This equipment had to be reasonably close to the press in order that heavy stereos did not have to be transported very far after being cast.

---

9 *Reading Standard*, no. 2553, Saturday 5 November 1921.

10 *Reading Standard*, no. 2626, Saturday 31 March 1923.

11 See illustration overleaf.



A corner of the old Machine Room.

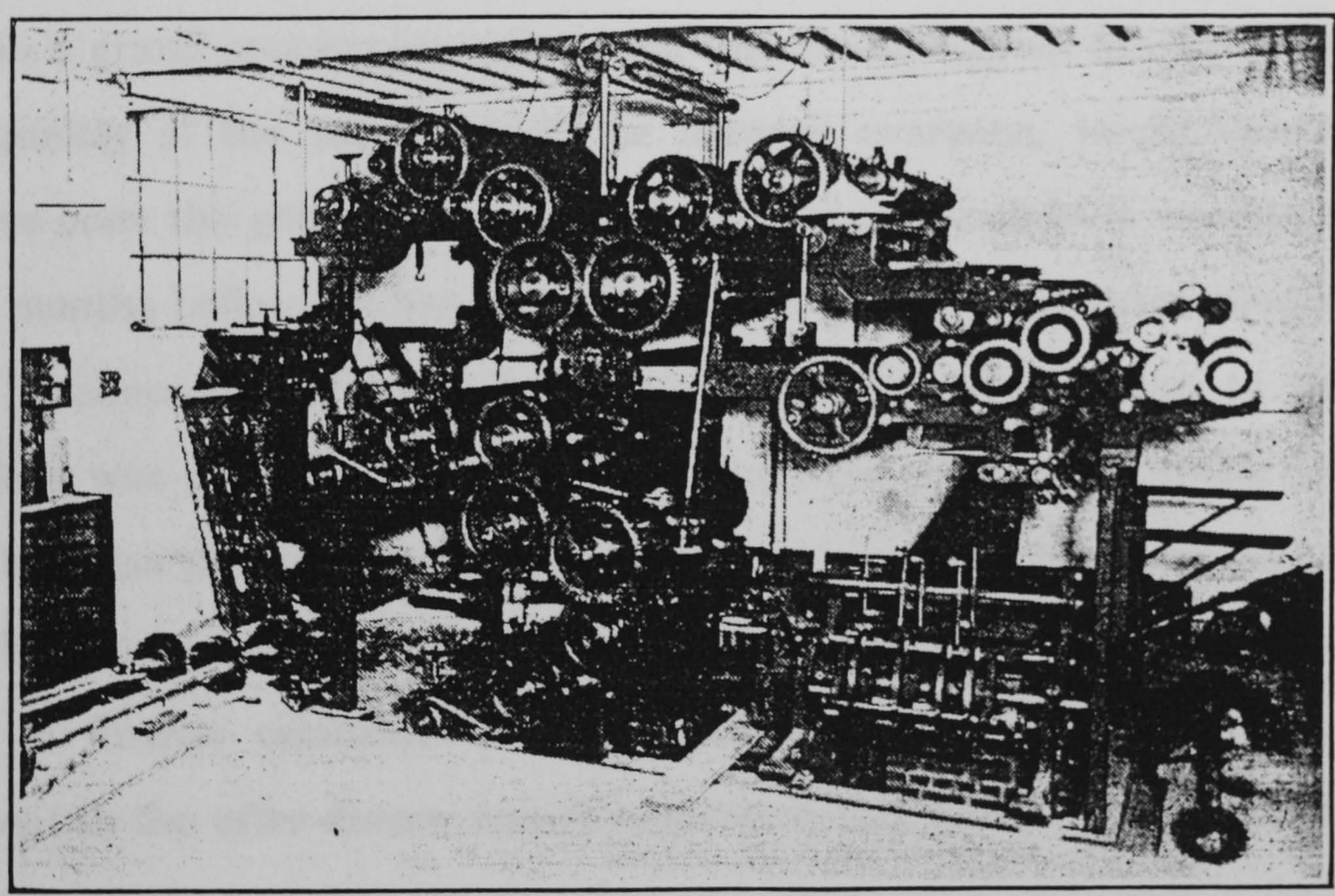
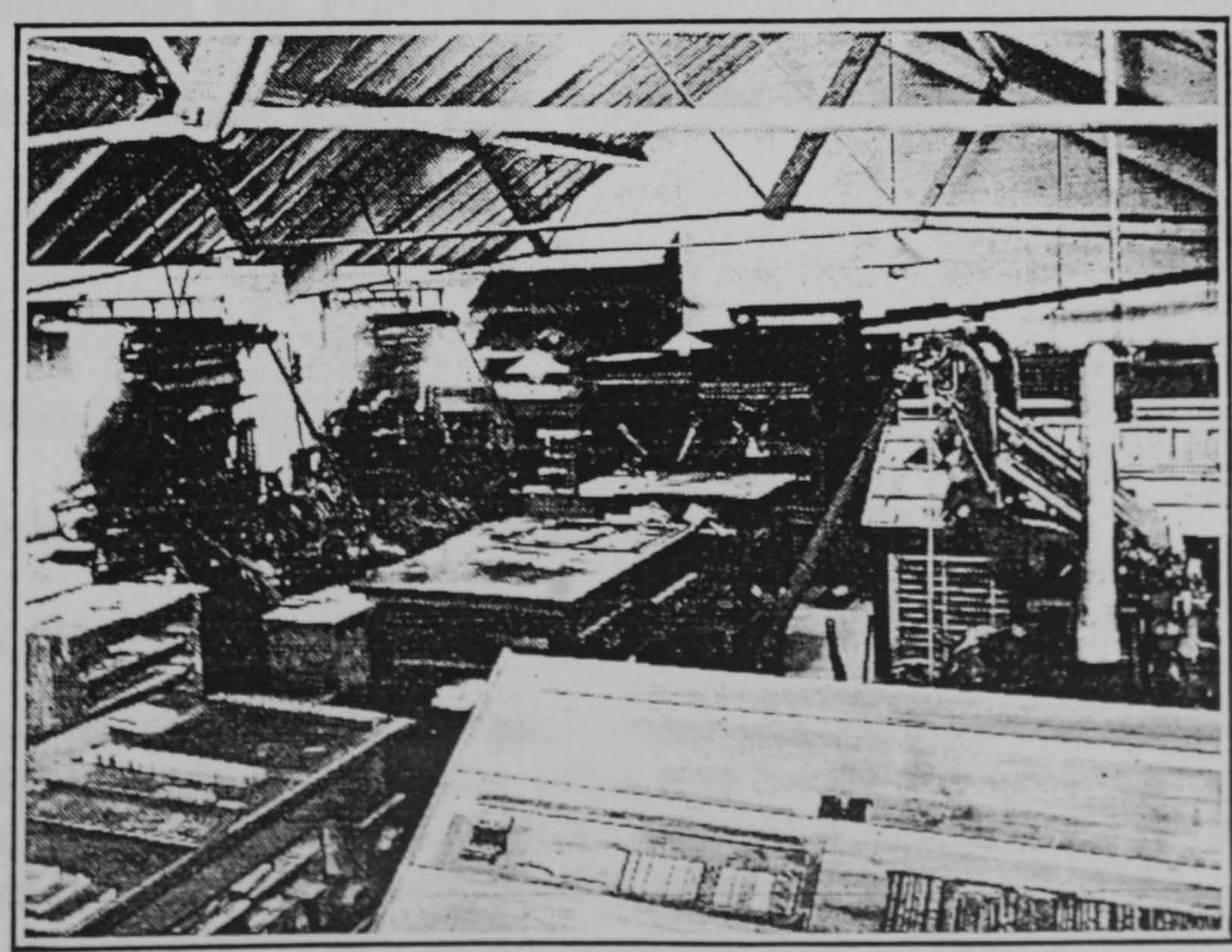


Photo of the new 2-reel Rotary Press in course of erection.



Composing Room showing Linotype Machines.

ndard's first rotary press in 1923

During the change-over period, the *Reading Observer* kindly offered its services to print the *Standard*, and as their office was almost next door this proved to be an extremely convenient arrangement, as well as being a friendly gesture which was much appreciated by Rivers.[12]

The first issue produced on the new press was for 5 May 1923. It was a sixteen-page paper but with a slightly smaller format than previously in that it was half an inch shorter in depth. Rivers presented the first copy off the press to the Mayor of Reading who had started the press in a grand opening ceremony, and then he apologized for the rather poor quality of the paper which, he assured everyone, would quickly improve once the press had settled down.[13] Unfortunately it was six or seven months before the press problems were resolved and a trouble-free paper produced.[14] A specially printed souvenir supplement to the *Standard* was produced, to celebrate not only the installation of the new press but also the twenty-fifth anniversary of Walter Rivers's association with the *Reading Standard*. A banquet was held at the Caversham Bridge Hotel to further celebrate Rivers's silver jubilee and one interesting comment in the after-dinner speeches given at this dinner was a warning by Major Cadogan to Rivers. He drew attention to the fact that a great danger to journalism was gradually appearing in the form of radio and he recommended Rivers to acquire at once the broadcasting rights for the

---

12 *Reading Standard*, no. 2626, Saturday 31 March 1923.

13 *Reading Standard*, no. 2632, Saturday 12 May 1923.

14 Personal interview with F. E. Holloway, who had been an apprentice compositor at the *Reading Standard* in the 1920s and eventually rose to composing room overseer, a position he continued to hold after the takeover of the *Reading Standard* by Lord Thomson and the formation of the *Evening Post*.

whole of Berkshire.[15] Rivers did not take his advice at that time, but action was taken by the company in 1960.[16]

As the *Standard* was now produced on a rotary press, which printed, cut and folded the paper in one operation, it was no longer practicable to inset the two-page pictorial art sheet by hand. All photographic illustrations were now produced on the rotary press using a 65-line halftone screen and, despite the change in machine principle, the quality of the illustrations remained high and certainly superior to those of its local rivals. Altogether the *Standard* seemed set up to continue its successful progress and lead the way in local journalism, a view expressed by a local poet who wrote a poem for this occasion:

> Now hail we the Standard, let no voice be mute,
> As hand is upraised in a welcome salute
> Through growth of a night it has doubled its size,
> The cynosure now of all wondering eyes.
>
> What triumphs await it, how far its light send,
> Of business and trade and all good causes friend,
> Let future days show, but hope rests on sure ground
> That worthy of Reading it e'er will be found.
>
> R. H. Hart-Davis[17]

The *Standard* did indeed continue its progress, and perhaps one of the most interesting milestones in the career of Walter Rivers was his acquisition of the *Reading Observer* in August 1924. Rivers's father, had been a co-proprietor of the *Observer* with Charles Slaughter, but on William Rivers's death Slaughter had been able to exercise the rights he had by virtue of an option to buy the shares of his late colleague, and

---

15 *Reading Standard*, no. 2632, Saturday 12 May 1923.

16 See below, p. 275.

17 *Reading Standard*, no. 2631, Saturday 5 May 1923.

became sole proprietor.[18] There are suggestions that Walter Rivers was rather upset at not being able to acquire his father's share in the *Observer*, and one report goes so far as to suggest that Rivers swore to start his own newspaper and drive the *Observer* out of business.[19] Whatever the truth of these reports, it was rather appropriate that Walter Rivers should subsequently be the new owner of the *Observer*. As the *Reading Standard* stated in its article on the takeover:

> ...perhaps we may be pardoned for suggesting that since, by the decrees of fate, the *Reading Observer* has had to change owners, there seems a peculiar appropriateness in its passing into the hands of the son of a former editor and proprietor.[20]

Rivers made no attempt to continue the *Observer* as a separate paper and immediately closed it down, taking over both the goodwill of the company and its name, which he incorporated in the *Standard's* title. With this closure, Reading was left with three weekly newspapers: the *Reading Standard*, owned by Rivers, and the *Berkshire Chronicle* and *Reading Mercury*, both run by the Reading Newspaper Company and owned by the Hobson family.[21]

With the press problems resolved, the *Reading Standard* entered a period of progressive calm, and during the next ten years not only consolidated its position in the county but slowly began to expand as well. The paper claimed a circulation of 18,000 copies at the end of 1927,[22] but this is likely to have been an isolated peak, for a more reliable source states that the circulation was always around 16,000 copies per week

---

18 See Chapter VII.

19 Hugh Turner, editor of the *Newbury Weekly News*, as quoted in K. G. Burton, *The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire*, (1954), p. 156. See also Chapter VIII.

20 *Reading Standard*, no. 2700, Saturday 30 August 1924.

21 See Chapter X.

22 *Reading Standard*, no. 2870, Saturday 3 December 1927.

between the wars.[23] The price was maintained at 2d., and the paper contained between sixteen and eighteen pages each week. However, by the end of 1928 the pressure for advertising space again caused the paper to be enlarged, and during the early months of 1929 it was increased to twenty pages per week. By 1934 the need for more space in each week's edition had frequently forced the paper up to twenty-four pages, the maximum limit of the Northern rotary press. This quantity of advertising represented a very healthy state of affairs for the *Reading Standard* and between October 1933 and January 1937 the average annual income from advertising was £14,160 and accounted for 70%-80% of the company's annual revenue.[24] By this time, too, the workload in the composing room had been relieved by the introduction of two more Linotype machines, bringing the total up to five, including a Model One machine used for setting headlines.[25]

In order to be able to reduce the pressure on his production department, and to open the way for further expansion, Rivers had to acquire another new machine and this was installed in September 1935. The new machine was a secondhand three-deck six-unit Crabtree which had previously been used to print the *Scotsman* and which was capable of producing a twenty-four page paper in the *Standard's* 23½" deep x 18" wide format, or a forty-eight page paper if a folio format were adopted; it could print, fold, inset, cut and count the paper at approximately thirty thousand copies per hour.[26]

---

23 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

24 See Appendix H.

25 Interview with F. E. Holloway

26 *Reading Standard*, no. 3280, Saturday 11 October 1935.

As always, Rivers announced the installation of the new press with considerable publicity in the columns of the *Standard*, and arranged for the new machine to be officially started by Lord Hirst of Witton, with many other national and local dignitaries in attendance. The grand opening was followed by the inevitable Luncheon, with many speeches to celebrate the new plant and to mark nearly forty years of Rivers's involvement with the press in Reading.

Rivers was extremely proud of his newspaper and had a very strong proprietary interest in furthering its success. He never missed an opportunity to publicize it, and was quick to use its columns for the promotion of local issues and for advocating the claims of any institution devoted to the needs of the community. It is estimated that through the medium of the *Standard* Rivers was instrumental in raising between thirty and forty thousand pounds for charitable organizations, most of which were situated within the circulation area of the paper. In 1918, for example, he had raised £5,000 in aid of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, in order to enable it to discharge a serious debt accrued during the war, and later he helped to raise £4,000 towards the cost of a nurses' home in the same hospital. He was one of the original governors of the Princess Alice Home for Disabled Soldiers at Slough, raising a considerable sum of money towards the cost of that Home, and later raised further large sums of money for cancer research.

Rivers expressed a keen interest in the early growth of Reading University and argued strongly for its charter, which it received in 1926, becoming the only university established in Great Britain between the two world wars.[27] He also served on the University's court of governors,

---

27 J. C. Holt, *The University of Reading*, (1977), p. 1.

and in 1927 made a generous donation of £1,040 for the purchase of books on mediaeval English history, as a memorial to his first wife.[28] This was followed by another donation of £77 10s. 0d. in 1936.[29] Encouragement and support was also given to such organizations as the local nursery movement, to which he personally donated £250 in 1935,[30] the YMCA, the Blue Coat School and the Boy Scout Movement. As a result of these and many other philanthropic endeavours Rivers was awarded the CBE in 1936, a recognition which gave him a considerable amount of satisfaction.[31]

Rivers's pride in his newspaper extended at times almost to the point of childish possessiveness. On one occasion he caught an employee giving a copy of the *Standard* to a person working in the paper merchant's next door to the printing office, and he sacked the man on the spot, saying 'no one gives my paper away'.[32] On a more personal level he had a very paternalistic view of his staff, always being very interested in the well-being of those who worked for him, and he was never happier than when taking his employees for the firm's annual outing. It is said that he knew every street paperseller by Christian name and would go out of his way to speak to them and to enquire after their health and, no doubt, encourage them to sell more copies of the *Standard* on his behalf.[33] Indeed, in the early days of Rivers's ownership of the *Standard*, he would deliver extra

---

28 J. C. Holt, *The University of Reading*, (1977), p. 40.

29 See Appendix H.

30 Ibid.

31 This is the view expressed by everyone interviewed who knew Rivers at that time.

32 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

33 Ibid.

copies of the paper to newsagents and papersellers on his way home in the evening.[34]

At some point during the latter half of 1934 or early 1935, Rivers was approached by Allied Newspapers, who wished to buy the *Reading Standard* in order to use the plant, the equipment, and the advertising custom as a basis for starting a daily evening paper in Reading. Allied Newspapers Ltd was a group owned by the Berry brothers (Lord Camrose and Lord Kemsley), who, in association with Lord Iliffe, owned a number of daily and Sunday newspapers and a profusion of periodicals published by their Amalgamated Press. The Allied group had been involved in a considerable battle with Lord Rothermere for the possession of local newspapers, a battle which ended with a final truce in 1932.[35]

Unfortunately, there is no record of the exact terms of Allied's offer, except for the fact that Rivers did not find it acceptable,[36] and the reason for his rejection was said to be that Lord Iliffe would not agree to retain all the members of the *Standard* staff.[37] Whether that was the sole reason for rejecting Allied's offer is not known, but it does seem likely, for financially the costs of setting up an entirely new newspaper from scratch would have been considerable, and therefore it could be argued that Allied would have made Rivers a good financial offer for his paper. Certainly Allied Newspapers were not short of money, for their net profits after tax for 1935 totalled £790,722, a rise of £130,000 over the previous year.[38]

---

34 Interview with W. G. Garner.

35 See Chapter XII.

36 *World's Press News*, 28 March 1935.

37 Interview with W. G. Garner.

38 *World's Press News*, 23 May 1935.

Publicly, Rivers suggested that the arrival of a daily evening paper would offer no threat to the local weekly papers and, although to some extent there was truth in this idea, the presence of Allied's new *Evening Gazette* did divert the attention of the two weekly papers away from each other and towards a common enemy. The extent of the competition is hard to assess for the *Gazette* only existed for five years, but it was certainly competing for advertising in the area. As a daily it was a different news product from the *Chronicle*, the *Mercury* and the *Standard*, but it threatened the circulation of the *Football Chronicle*, which was purely a sports paper, and which, like the special four-page Saturday edition of the *Gazette*, known as the 'Pink'n', relied heavily on selling the latest sports results.

However, one aspect of the arrival of the *Gazette* which did threaten the two Reading companies was the acquisition of staff, for quite a number of Reading's bright journalists, anxious to improve their prospects, left the weeklies to join the new daily paper, and most of them later moved on to be successful journalists in Fleet Street, or to edit daily provincial newspapers elsewhere in the county. This turnover of journalists apparently provoked Walter Rivers into saying that journalists were like passing birds of paradise,[39] a feeling that was no doubt also shared by Frank Neale of the Reading Newspaper Company, who also lost a number of his journalists to the *Gazette*.

Although Rivers refused Allied's offer, it may possibly have caused him to think more carefully about the future of his company, and also about his own financial position, for the purchase and installation of the new rotary press, including the necessary building work to accommodate

---

39 W. G. Garner, unpublished article about Reading's press, 1986.

it, had cost Rivers approximately £3,181 13s. 9d., and this was enough to turn a £1,156 7s. 9½d. profit in 1933-4 into a loss of £1,129 15s. 5d. in 1935-6.[40] Although the signs of financial recovery were apparent in the four months from October 1936 until January 1937, when the company made a profit of £897 8s. 0½d., Rivers may have felt the need for an influx of money into the business in order to expand still further, so in the latter months of 1936 he formed a private limited company, with himself as managing director and his old friend Sir Felix Pole as the chairman of the board of directors. The Reading Standard Ltd. was registered on 13 February 1937 with a nominal capital of £45,000 divided into £1 shares.

This private limited company was established in order to purchase the *Reading Standard* from Rivers for the agreed sum of £38,338 10s. 0d.; this settlement was to consist of £14,338 10s. 0d. in cash together with the allotment and issue of 24,000 fully-paid shares in the company The value of the stock in trade, loose plant and other property was put at £12,238 10s. 0d., while the goodwill of the business was valued at £21,000 and the unencumbered leasehold of the property in Valpy Street, with the fixed plant and machinery, was valued at £5,000.[41] The cash sum for the purchase of the company was raised initially from six shareholders: Rivers's elder brother, Captain William G. Rivers, a hotelier and commission agent (4,000 shares); Sir Felix J. C. Pole, who was at one time the general manager of the Great Western Railway, but who, at this time, was the chairman of Associated Electrical Industries, and a very old friend of Walter Rivers (2,500 shares); George W. Spencer Hawes, a consulting engineer and director of the Thames Valley Electrical Supply Company, and an old friend and business associate of both Rivers and

---

40 See Appendix H.

41 See Appendix G.

Sir Felix Pole (3,000 shares); John Hill, a director of Hill & Sherwin, a local advertising agency and another friend and business associate of Rivers (also 3,000 shares); William Claridge, the *Standard's* production manager (1,000 shares); and William White, the *Standard's* company secretary and general manager, (500 shares). These initial shareholders were joined a few months later by Rivers's second wife, Florence, with 1,000 shares, and by another friend of Rivers, local architect and surveyor Frederick Sainsbury, with 2,000 shares.[42]

Not only did the *Standard* set out as a newly formed company in 1937, but it also had a new editor in W. J. Pettengell, who had started as a junior reporter with the *Reading Observer* in 1920 and joined the *Standard* in 1923. He succeeded J. E. Archibald, who died, and who had been very nearly blind during his latter years with the *Standard*. His sight was so bad, in fact, that often, when he wrote out headlines or short pieces of text, his writing would run right off the page, or he would write over something already printed or written on the paper. Fortunately his memory was superb, and when asked to decipher what he had written he would be able to recall his words exactly, even after a considerable lapse of time.[43]

Archibald's salary had been twelve guineas a week, but when Jim Pettengell took up the post the editor's salary was reduced to eight guineas week, perhaps because of his lack of experience as an editor; however, he remained editor until his retirement in 1962 and during his tenure he gained considerable respect from all those involved in the press

---

42 See Appendix G.

43 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

in Reading, who recognized that this quiet, gentle man was a very astute and able editor.

Rivers unfortunately did not enjoy his newly found wealth for very long, for on 19 March 1939 he died, after a very short illness. He had been connected with journalism in Reading for more than fifty years and had been the driving force behind the *Reading Standard* for forty-two of those years. He was recognized as being one of the pioneers of pictorial illustration in the provincial press and as a shrewd businessman whose newspaper was his whole world.[44]

In his will Rivers split his shares in the company virtually in half, leaving 13,000 shares to be divided between his five brothers and a sister and 12,000 shares to be held in trust by his executors, who were to pay the income from those shares to his only son, Vernon Huntley Rivers.[45]

Vernon had worked as sports editor for a short while at the *Reading Standard*, and at the time of Walter Rivers's death he was working on a newspaper in the Channel Islands. Walter Rivers's relationship with his son was not particularly good, and he did not approve of Vernon's rather wild behaviour.[46] This may well have been the reason why Walter Rivers did not leave shares in his much-loved newspaper to his son. During the war Vernon served in the army and achieved the rank of colonel, and after demobilization became Director of Pioneer Labour in the Middle East. He was unfortunately shot dead by

---

44 *Newspaper World*, 25 March 1935.

45 The last will and testament of Walter Vernon Rivers, Somerset House, 11 May 1939.

46 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

bandits in Palestine when his car was attacked on a lonely road near Hebron.

Upon Vernon's death the shares became the property of the trustees (as had been specified in Walter Vernon's will), and as two of the four trustees were themselves shareholders in the company this ensured that control would be exercised by those intimately involved in the *Reading Standard's* affairs. The two shareholders in question were Sir Felix Pole and his son John, who between them spent some twenty-six years as company chairman, until the *Standard* was sold to The Thomson Organisation in 1963.

Of the shares left to Walter Rivers's immediate family, 5,000 were left to Rivers's sister, Florence Sarah Parry, while 7,500 of the remaining 8,000 shares were fairly equally divided between his five brothers, and 500 were bequeathed to two of Florence Parry's daughters. It was the fairly substantial holding by the Parry family which was to lead to the *Standard* eventually becoming the property of The Thomson Organisation, much to the anguish of John Pole and the staff in 1963.

On Walter Rivers's death, George Spencer Hawes became managing director of the *Standard* and had the difficult task of taking over the reigns of a new company which had lost its creator and driving force. This situation was further complicated by the declaration of war six months later, which brought the inevitable problems of paper shortage, due to the difficulty in getting raw materials, and labour shortage, resulting from staff having to serve in the armed forces. The first signs of these shortage problems came almost immediately and by the end of 1939 the *Standard* had been reduced in size from twenty pages to sixteen, and by the middle of 1940 it had come down to ten pages per issue.

Although the cost of the paper was still 2d., the reduced size meant that considerably less advertising was carried, with the result that the *Standard's* income was badly affected. To combat this problem, the *Standard's* columns were reduced in width and in June 1940 the paper went from seven 14-em columns per page to eight 12-em columns per page.[47] The same type size continued to be used in the setting of the paper and consequently advertising material occupied a greater depth in each column; as charges for advertisements are based on the column inch, this resulted in advertisers having to pay more for their advertisements to appear in the paper.

The newsprint rationing scheme, which was responsible for controlling supplies of paper to newspapers throughout the country,[48] inevitably limited the amount of newsprint which each newspaper was allowed, and it was left to the individual companies to utilize the materials as they thought fit. In the *Standard's* case the weekly paper was soon reduced to a regular eight-page issue, still selling at 2d. but containing 64% of advertising in order to sustain a reasonable income. In addition to this the number of illustrations appearing in the paper was also reduced, to maintain a better news and advertising balance and to keep the production costs down to a minimum. Despite these moves, the *Standard* was obliged to reduce its column width yet again in May 1944 when it changed to nine 10½-em columns in order to increase once more the income from advertising, which by this time had dropped to 56% of the paper's contents.[49]

---

47 *Reading Standard*, no. 3523, Friday 7 June 1940.

48 See Chapter IX.

49 *Reading Standard*, no. 3728, Friday 12 May 1944.

Keeping costs down was in fact a major problem for newspapers at this time, for newsprint prices had increased at a considerable rate through the war period and from £10 per ton in 1937 it had risen to £43 per ton by 1948.[50] In addition, printers' wages and conditions, which had been stabilized during the war period, were renegotiated after the war and resulted in a substantial wage increase which was introduced in January 1948.[51] These twin costs of labour and materials combined to force the *Standard* to increase its price to 3d. in March 1948, for the first time since similar circumstances had created a need for a price rise after the 1914-18 war.

The return to peacetime conditions did not see an immediate end to the paper shortage, and although the supply of newsprint gradually improved it was 1956 before paper rationing finally ceased. However, as paper gradually became more readily available the *Standard* was able to increase its size, returning to ten pages in 1949, twelve pages during 1951, up to fourteen pages in October 1952, and fluctuating between sixteen and eighteen pages by 1956.

This additional space was necessary to accommodate the tremendous increase in advertising which accompanied the postwar trade boom, and the *Standard* regularly contained between 56% and 60% advertisements; in fact such was the pressure on space that they frequently had to print a small notice in the paper explaining that no guarantee could be given that advertisements would appear on a specified date. Often advertising material had to be held over to the following week, much to the client's annoyance, but it had to be done in order to present a

---

50 See Appendix A.

51 A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association*, (1954), pp. 427-69.

reasonably balanced newspaper. It was in fact the classified advertisements which were creating most of the problem, at times occupying as much as 25% of the paper's total contents.

As more space became available, the paper was able to include more illustrations in its pages, and this postwar period is marked by the *Standard's* return to the use of photo-journalism, for which it had gained such a good reputation before the war. However, it was not only the inclusion of more pictures which changed the paper's appearance, for in October 1952 the whole design and layout of the *Standard* was changed and for the first time news and illustrations appeared on the front page.[52] The classified advertisements were placed at the back of the paper and the display advertisements were given more space and were spread throughout the paper, giving a much better typographic balance to the paper's content. Larger typefaces were used for captions and from this time there was a much greater use of the double-column caption and entry into a single-column story. Overnight the *Standard* had shed its nineteenth-century appearance, and in so doing had stolen a march on its two rivals, for the *Chronicle* did not have news on the front page until 1956,[53] and the *Mercury* not until 1962.[54] The person mainly responsible for this change was W. G. Garner, who at the time was acting editor of the *Standard*, in Jim Pettengell's absence through illness. It was Bill Garner who was also responsible for the same changes to the *Chronicle* and *Mercury*, when he subsequently worked for the Reading Newspaper Co.

---

52 *Reading Standard*, no. 4166, Friday 3 October 1952. See illustrations overleaf.

53 *Berkshire Chronicle*, no. 8246, Friday 10 April 1956.

54 *Reading Mercury*, no. 12446, Saturday 2 June 1962.

M. Venner & Sons
LIMITED
BACON CURERS
READING

The Reading Standard

Berkshire Times and South Oxfordshire Weekly News
With which is incorporated The Reading Observer

No. 4,165 12 PAGES POSTAGE 1½d. FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1952 Quarterly Subscription (Post Free in Advance) 3/- THREEPENCE

M. Venner & Sons
LIMITED
BACON CURERS
READING

Births, Marriages, Deaths

BIRTHS

MARRIAGES

DEATHS

IN MEMORIAM

SALES BY AUCTION

Cooksey & Walker

SALES BY AUCTION

Martin & Pole

MARTIN & POLE

SALE WEDNESDAY NEXT.

WATTS & SON,

Watts & Son

Ross & Co.

SALE TUESDAY NEXT.

MERCHANTS PLACE,
FRIAR STREET, READING.

Sale of Modern
FURNISHINGS AND EFFECTS,

MARTIN & POLE

Durster and Morton

SALES BY AUCTION

Nicholas

SALE WEDNESDAY NEXT.

SALE THURSDAY NEXT.

Durster and Morton

SALES BY AUCTION

Haslam and Son

Russell Butler & Marks

NOTICES

COUNTY BOROUGH OF READING

EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

Engineer and Surveyor's Department.

Re George Charles Frederick Salmon, Deceased.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS PURSUANT TO TRUSTEE ACT, 1925.

PERSONAL

NOTICES

UNIVERSITY OF READING.

Choral and Orchestral Societies.

PILGRIM (Contractors) Ltd.

PROPERTIES

COOKSEY & WALKER

ALEXANDER, HUGHES

PROPERTIES

BEVILLE AND WELLBELOVE

ROSS & CO.

MESSRS. NICHOLAS

RUSSELL BUTLER & MARKS

PERRIS BROS.

PROPERTIES

PATRICK F. WILLIAMS

BUCKLAND & SONS

H. E. HALL & SONS

WRIGHT BROS.

PROPERTIES

HENRY F. DUNSTER & MORTON

SIMMONS & SONS

W. E. SCOTCHBROOK

H. L. HEDGES

PROPERTIES

MARTIN J. POLE

CHARLES REX

DAVID H. J. GALLAGHER

R. EDWARD FYLE

NAWKEY & MOFFAT

Reading Standard's front page September 1952

M. Venner & Sons
LIMITED
BACON CURERS
READING

The Reading Standard

Berkshire Times and South Oxfordshire Weekly News — With which is incorporated The Reading Observer

No. 4,167 — 12 PAGES — FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1952 — THREEPENCE

M. Venner & Sons
LIMITED
BACON CURERS
READING

Socialist Councillor says

LET OUTSIDERS BUILD

Housing target for 1953 fixed

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE HIT BY HIGH COSTS

READING Corporation's 1953 housing programme, the issue of licences for private enterprise building, and the sale of Council houses to tenants, were among a number of housing topics discussed by the Council on Tuesday, when COUN. C. F. V. BAKER (Lab.) made a strong plea for large building contractors to be brought in from outside the town to help the Council's 1953 housing programme.

He declared that he was "sick, sorry and tired of the Council and the Housing Committee playing up to local builders."

ALD. T. W. KNIGHT, Housing Chairman, said his committee would do all it could to get more houses in the next two years and said his committee was considering the question of the sale of Council houses.

The Housing Committee's report on its 1953 housing programme stated that the Principal Regional Officer had said that available resources of labour and materials should make it possible for the Corporation and private enterprise together to complete a minimum number of 550 houses in 1953 and, in 1954, that figure should be exceeded by 15 per cent. The Housing Committee reported that it expected to complete 486 houses next year and the council agreed to a suggestion that firms under contract or in negotiation with the council should be urged to accelerate their building programme with a view to increasing the number of completions during 1953. The builders' representatives are also to be asked to use their influence with building firms in the towns who are not now building or negotiating with the Corporation, to persuade them to accept council house contracts. Of the 486 houses to be completed next year, 232 will be of the non-traditional type of house and flats. This proportion would not be increased.

On the issue of private licences, the report said that it was estimated that 25 private enterprise houses would be completed next year out of the total of 150 already authorised. It was impossible to give a more exact figure as about 50 per cent. of the licences issued had been returned, and about 40 per cent. of the applicants who had accepted licences had asked permission to transfer them for building outside the borough.

"These percentages are startling and raise serious issues," says the report. It was due to the fact that prospective purchasers were finding they could not afford to build their own houses and also that building land in the borough was difficult to obtain.

The Borough Architect had written to all builders asking about the issue of block building licences and their total demand was for licences for 216 houses. (In flats the committee reported that a scheme for the erection of 100 flats in seven blocks on the Bath Road Estate was to be submitted shortly.

The report also said that the erection of 12 shops on the Bath Road Estate would be included in the 1953 programme.

Consideration of the sale of council houses had been postponed until the next meeting of the Housing Committee.

Speaking on the report, Coun. R. W. KEMP said he did not consider the housing progress report of the council was a very good one although it had recently been looking up. His impression was that the poor progress was due to the fact that local builders were finding it difficult to find labour. He hoped the figure of 486 houses for the 1953 programme was a realistic one, and he thought it might be necessary for the council to get firms from outside the borough to assist the local builders.

Coun. C. F. V. BAKER said he knew that if outside building firms were brought in, there would be some feeling amongst local builders.

He felt local firms knew their capacity much better than members of the council, and had no doubt they would do all they could to help the housing programme. But council members had to be concerned about building the maximum number of houses in the quickest possible time.

"Looking at the council's commitments on the Bath Road Estate, I feel we should have invited some of the much larger builders in the country who have the capacity to produce houses in large numbers to help us," said Coun. Baker. "We have been very generous and fair to the local builders since the end of the war, and they have always had a fair 'crack of the whip.'

"In spite of that, we were told at an interview we had with Reading builders that one firm had a labour force of 90 men working outside the borough and that they could be brought back at short notice."

Coun. Baker said he wanted to know why that building force went outside the borough.

"Was it because the builder did not want to build houses for Reading Corporation, or was it because he was not competitive enough?" he asked.

If competition was wanted, the council would have to engender the spirit of competition and not just hand things out to builders on a plate.

"I have a great respect for Reading builders," Coun. Baker continued, "but I have got sick, worry and tired of this council and the Housing Committee playing up to them." It was time the council provided competition by bringing in national builders to tackle the housing programme as it should be tackled. If the council invited the large building firms to co-operate, 400-500 houses could be built by 1954.

Concluding, Coun. Baker said that while members advocated private enterprise and competition, when it came to effect them and their lives they sang a very different tune. Mr. was opposed to the council "fiddling about, handing out jobs to local builders who didn't care whether they did them or not."

Coun. E. A. BUSBY said it was most unrealistic to criticise local builders who had served the town for many years. They owed a great debt to local builders and the comments made in the Council Chamber would go a long way towards sabotaging the efforts of the Housing Committee. Coun. Busby then expressed the hope that at the next council meeting they would be able to give council tenants some concrete news about the sale of council houses.

Coun. J. S. WOODROW said he was sure that more houses could have been built during the five years since the end of the war if there had been a spirit of goodwill and co-operation. After criticising the Labour members for changing their point of view every few months and expressing support for the views of Coun. Baker, Coun. Woodrow said as far as private licences were concerned, the only thing preventing people building their own houses was the lack of money. Houses were too expensive because they were not being built quickly enough. The pace of building could be speeded up if the building industry made up its mind to build houses faster than it was doing at present. Finally, he hoped nothing would be said or done which would deter young people applying for private licences.

Coun. O. F. MANDER said he hoped the council would be discreet in what it said about the sale of council houses and not sell tenants that it would be easy for them to buy their houses. After referring to the Emmer Green estate where, he said, people could not afford to pay their rents, Coun. Mander declared that local building firms were incapable of carrying out the council's housing programme.

Winding up, Ald. T. W. KNIGHT (housing chairman) said the council did, at one time, advertise a building project and had only one reply from a firm which said it could not bring its labour force to the borough.

Ald. Knight said they were aware there were many people waiting for houses, and every member of the Housing Committee intended to get more houses. There was nothing to stop them advertising their requirements, and he would do all in his power to see they got more houses in the next two years. It was not easy because negotiations took a long time.

Private enterprise licences would be granted as soon as possible in accordance with the Government's request, but the Minister had said they should not build more than one to one.

When private builders got licences he hoped they would show they had the same spirit, to build houses so more private houses could be provided as well as council houses.

Ald. Knight said they were going into the question of the sale of council houses, but it required a lot of consideration.

"I do hope that we shall come to a satisfactory decision, but whatever we do, and if we do, we shall allow people to buy their own houses as cheaply as possible," he declared. "The best citizen is one who owns his own house."

The Housing Committee's report was then adopted.

BATH ROAD FLATS

£93,000 tender accepted

Reading Council on Tuesday accepted a tender, amounting to over £92,000, for the erection of 12 non-traditional type of flats on the Bath Road Estate. The flats will be erected in six blocks of 12 two-bedroomed dwellings, the average cost of each being £1,292.

The Ministry of Housing and Local Government has approved the tender of Francis Bros., amounting to £86,871, for the erection of 56 houses on the Bath Road Estate, but has rejected tenders submitted by two other firms for the erection of 12 and 32 houses respectively.

READING APPROVES NEW 'STANDARD'

THE new READING STANDARD has been hailed as a success by old and new readers after last week's issue, embodying many alterations, including front-page news and new and enlarged features. Was sold out and extra copies had to be printed on Friday afternoon and again on Saturday morning.

Well over 97 per cent of those who have seen the new READING STANDARD appreciate the improvements made. Messages of congratulations have poured in by letter and telephone. We give a selection:—

"Congratulations."—A. T. Flett (Councillor), Mayor of Wokingham.

"... It really seems most successful, especially as you have on the back page managed to keep all the benefit of the old page one."—J. Auld, Manager, P.A.—Reuter Features Ltd., London, E.C.4.

"Congratulations on your enterprise." — Vic Brooker Productions.

"The 'New Look' is a great improvement."—Brahams, Friar Street, Reading.

"A much better idea."—R. A. Hobbs, London Street, Reading.

"The Reading Standard really has become the Family Week-end Newspaper."—Mrs. B. J. Hardcastle, Berkeley Avenue, Reading.

"Now that the 'Standard' can present front-page news, I am sure its success will be greater than ever."—D. W. Coleman, Craven Road, Reading.

Against the alteration a solitary aged lady writes: "I do not like changes."

Everywhere the new READING STANDARD has met with general approval and good-will. We shall strive to increase that goodwill and produce a newspaper of which Reading and district can be proud.

THE EDITOR.

ST. MARY'S "ON THE AIR"

ON Sunday week the Home Service of the B.B.C. will broadcast a service from St. Mary's Church, Reading, at 9.30 a.m. in connection with Religious Education Sunday.

The address at the service will be given by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading, Mr. J. F. Wolfenden.

DIDCOT MAN DIES IN STREET

Mr. William John Christopher, aged 76, of 34a, Mersland Road, Didcot, collapsed and died in the street on Sunday evening.

A native of Gosport, he joined the Royal Berkshire Regiment at Reading when a boy of 14, and had served in the South African War and the 1914-18 war, winning the D.C.M. in the latter as a stretcher bearer. Demobilised in 1920, he worked at No. 3 M.U., R.A.F., Milton, until his retirement five years ago. A widower, he leaves one son.

King George VI Memorial Fund

Local appeal launched

HER Majesty's Lieutenant of Berkshire (Colonel W. H. A. Neale), the Mayors and Chairmen of the Borough Councils, Lieutenants and Town Clerks, Clerks of Parishes and others within the county, met at Reading on Tuesday to discuss arrangements for a meeting with the King George VI Memorial Fund which was launched on Saturday.

The nation's memorial to King George VI is to take the form of a station in central London, on a site yet to be decided—with a philanthropic scheme devoted to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of young and old people.

These plans were revealed by the Prime Minister in a broadcast on Saturday evening. Mr. Churchill said:

It would, I know, have pleased Lor King that the old as well as the young should benefit from the care dedicated to his memory. We, therefore, intend that, apart from the money set aside for the station, what you feel able to offer should be used to form a permanent foundation for the spiritual, mental and physical needs both of the young and of the old.

CALL TO COUNTY

In a letter to the READING STANDARD, Mr. H. A. Benpin writes:

SIR,—You will be aware that the Lord Mayor of London has opened the King George VI National Memorial Fund, and a national effort is being made to raise a fund which will be devoted to promoting the physical, mental and spiritual needs of young and old people. In order to raise as great a sum of money as possible, Mayors and Chairmen of District Councils are being asked to open supporting local funds, and this is being done in this county. All money raised locally will be sent to the National Memorial Fund.

His late Majesty was very attached to Berkshire, and brought up his family at the Royal Lodge, Windsor. I would, therefore, urge the people of Berkshire to give freely and generously to the fund to perpetuate the memory of our much-loved monarch.

If any member of the public does not know to which local fund to subscribe, he should forward his subscription to the Chairman, the Berkshire County Council, Shire Hall, Reading, who will see to it that it is sent to the appropriate local fund. Organisations in the county are asked to consult the Mayor or Chairman of the District Council, so the case may be, with a view to organising events which will raise money for the fund.

I call upon all Berkshire people to give the fund their full support.

MAYOR'S LETTER

In a letter to the "Reading Standard," the Mayor of Reading (Councillor F. H. Lewis) writes:

"I hope, at an early date, to be able to publish details of the methods of raising money to be adopted in Reading, but in the meantime I am confident that I shall not appeal in vain for subscriptions, large and small, to be sent to me at the Town Hall, Reading, as soon as possible. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Mayor of Reading's Fund.'"

The READING STANDARD has agreed to publish statements regarding the progress of the fund locally from time to time.

CORONATION PLANS

READING COMMITTEE FORMED

Question of Organiser

A special Coronation Entertainments Committee has been set up to co-ordinate arrangements in Reading to mark the occasion.

THIS was reported to the Town Council on Tuesday. The Committee are instructed to appoint such subcommittees as they think proper and to appoint such designed members as they think fit so as to ensure that the religious, business, cultural and social life of the borough is adequately represented, also encouraged to take part in the ceremonial and exerting long effect of the celebrations.

The Committee will also report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee as soon as possible with an estimate of the cost of the celebration.

The Town Clerk has also been asked to make enquiries regarding the services of an organiser, and the amount of his remuneration.

FOR SPASTICS

An appeal for volunteers

Volunteers are urgently wanted to help in running a week's house-to-house collection in Reading and District starting on Monday for the Reading Branch of the National Spastics Society.

At the Town Hall on Wednesday the Mayor (Coun. F. H. Lewis) presided at a meeting of the branch, attended by representatives of spastic children, at which Mr. G. Leader spoke of the aims and objects of the society.

Mr. Leader explained that spastics were people who, at birth, had sustained damage to the part of their brain controlling the movement of their muscles. They needed special schools, clinics and workshops for the 20,000 known spastics in the country, half of whom were children under 14. Only one child in ten could, at present, get proper treatment.

Women's Institute Council say

Reading shops are cleaner

Improvements call on wide front

STANDARDS of cleanliness in Reading shops have improved as a result of representations from the Berkshire Federation of Women's Institutes, delegates to the W.I.'s Autumn Council meeting in the Corn Exchange, Faringdon, were told on Saturday.

MRS. MARGARET BOULTON, Chairman of the County Executive, was reporting on the outcome of a resolution carried at the Spring meeting, which urged that shop assistants should refrain from smoking, licking their fingers and blowing into paper bags.

It was up to W.I. members to see that the improvement was maintained by reporting any cases of slackness, Mrs. Boulton added.

Welcoming delegates and visitors, the president, MRS. J. SANDERSON, who spoke of the need for old people's welfare committees in rural areas, made a suggestion for Coronation year—that there should be a visiting committee within the Institutes to help the sick and aged.

The county treasurer, MISS E. M. HAMMERTON, outlining the 1953 budget, said a deficit of £300 was expected, but it was hoped this would be made up by the proceeds of the county whist competition.

MRS. K. TURNBULL, reporting on the last meeting of the consultative council, said it was felt that "Home Acres," the Berkshire County Council's rural domestic economy centre in the grounds of Denman College, Marcham, would be a valuable asset to W.I. work.

Cookham W.I., with Cookham Dean as seconder, set up a demonstration stand to prove the point of their successful resolution calling on the Government to prohibit the use of poisonous agencies in flour. The resolution also demanded revision of existing subsidies, so that wholemeal bread might be made available at the same price as national bread.

After a good deal of discussion, accusations from the floor of "emotionalism" and a speech by MISS ELKIN, of the Howard League for Penal Reform, a resolution calling for the restoration of "The Cat" as a punishment for "cruelty and savage attacks on defenceless women," was laid on the table.

It was proposed by Wargrave and seconded by Earley, and the proposer contended that "unless we women stand up for ourselves, the sort of thing we read about in the papers every day is likely to continue."

Faringdon's resolution, seconded by Bourton, urging that names of all railway stations should be clearly announced on the arrival of every train, was carried with an amendment by Harwell and Chilton, and Placent's Hill that names, exits and entrances should be illuminated adequately after dark.

Dry Sandford and Bourton, calling for collection of refuse from houses without the dustbins being placed at the roadside, had their resolution carried with an amendment by Hurst-ridge and Ours and Basildon that this should be done only in special cases.

SOUTH TORIES TOLD

STAND DOWN

Parties comment on Liberal's booklet

THE CLAIM that in Reading South, the Conservative candidate should stand down at the next General Election so that a Liberal candidate may have a straight fight to oust a Socialist, is made by Edward Martell in "The Menace of Nationalisation—And The Only Answer" (Emblen Press) published on Tuesday.

Asked to comment on the booklet, Mr. Ian Mikardo, M.P. for Reading South, told the "Reading Standard":

"The question of whether the Conservative candidate for Reading should stand down in favour of a Liberal candidate is not, of course, my business—it is the business of the Conservatives of Reading South. It seems to me to be, in any event, a quite academic question, firstly because it is not likely to happen, and secondly because the winning candidate in Reading South at the next election will be the Labour candidate.

"I would, however, like to make one comment on Mr. Martell's pamphlet, not as an interested party, but as a student of political science. Mr. Martell's arguments appear to me to be highly superficial. Even the arithmetic on which he bases his argument is inaccurate. For example, the point at which he mentions Reading South, he works out that in order to wipe out a majority of 1,000 it would be necessary to turn over 1,426, which is manifestly nonsense. I find it hard to believe that this is the best level of political essay writing that the Liberal Party is capable of producing."

CONSERVATIVE CLAIM

Mr. F. J. Newton Clare, Agent and Secretary of the Reading South Conservative and Unionist Association, told the "Reading Standard":

"All Conservatives will readily agree with Mr. Martell's contention that the best way to oust the Socialist in Reading South is to give him a straight fight, and not to split the anti-Socialist forces by putting up both a Liberal and a Conservative candidate.

"But his claim that in order to achieve this it is the Conservative who should stand down cannot bear examination. Men and women of goodwill whether Liberal or Conservative, will surely agree that the figures show an overwhelming case for uniting behind the Conservative candidate at the next election.

"At the General Election of 1950, when a Liberal candidate last stood for Reading South, he obtained 3,225 votes and the Conservatives obtained 15,460. At the General Election a year ago, no Liberal candidate stood, and in a straight fight the Conservative reduced the Socialist majority to 1,000, and obtained over 2,000 more votes, mainly, one can assume, from Liberals. This 1,000 majority of the Socialists brings the seat within the grasp of the anti-Socialists, and it would be a tragedy if the opportunity were missed because of minor differences of opinion between Liberals and Conservatives.

"Further, the Conservative organisation has always contested Parliamentary Elections and has also consistently contested the Municipal Elections. It is about to adopt as prospective candidate a lady with a splendid record in fighting elections against formidable Socialist opposition, and who has no quarrel with the Liberal Party. In the face of this solid achievement, within the Constituency it is surely only a matter of common sense to avoid "changing horses in mid-stream." One more heave by the Anti-Socialists of both parties is all that is required, but do not let us heave in opposite directions."

Mr. Martell, the author of "The Menace of Nationalisation," was Deputy-Chairman of the Liberal Central Association in 1950, but at present he holds no official position in the party.

FATAL CRASH MYSTERY

Reading girl's evidence

Sixteen-years-old Patricia Mary Davis, of 117, Hartland Road, Whitley Estate, gave evidence at the resumed inquest on her friend, 19-years-old Kenneth John Wakefield, of Rummerhedge Farm, Wyfold, Oxon, who was killed when his motor cycle, for an unknown reason, wobbled and collided with a tree at the foot of St. Peter's Hill, Caversham. Miss Davis, who was the pillion passenger and has been detained in hospital for a fortnight with her injuries, said they were on their way to Wakefield's home where she was to spend a week's holiday.

She told the Deputy Borough Coroner (Mr. A. L. Sheppard), she could not remember anything after she got on the machine at her home until somebody was attending to her in hospital.

Miss Henrietta May Goodson, of 16, Derby Road, Caversham, said she was looking out of a window in Church Road when she saw the motor cycle. It speed seemed quite normal and it was on the correct side of the road. There was no other traffic at the time, and she could not account for the accident at all.

P.C. Ronald Haunton put forward a theory which the Coroner accepted as "very important evidence."

When he examined the machine, he said, the chain had come off the sprocket on the rear wheel and had gone inside by the spokes. Whether the chain had come off before the machine went into the bend he could not say, but the chain might have ripped out some of the spokes and caused the machine to wobble and make it difficult to control.

A chain coming off like that would cause embarrassment to any rider, and it probably did cause the machine to get out of control, said the Coroner.

The Jury returned a verdict of "Accidental Death."

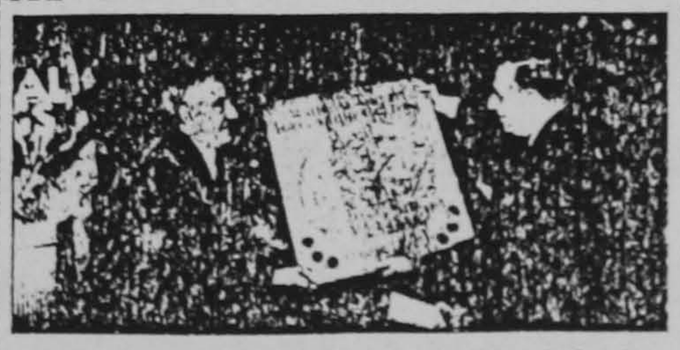
TELEPHONE TONES

For technical reasons it has been found necessary to develop a modified form of ringing tone for use when automatic exchange telephone numbers are dialled. This modification results in the "ringing" tone being of the same pitch as the engaged tone.

This new tone will ultimately be in operation at all exchanges. Meanwhile, it has been introduced on Reading telephones connected with the Sutton Tel. Exchange, including numbers in the Caversham and Kidmore Green districts.

Users not hearing numbers [illegible]

SAVINGS VICTORY PLAQUE



The Reading Savings Committee is the proud possessor of a plaque made of oak from H.M.S. Victory, in recognition of its success in obtaining the best increase in group membership in places of employment during the six months ended March this year. The competition was held in connection with the "Lend Strength to Britain" campaign, in which [illegible]

"That Casual Look"

Made-to-measure Suits, cut, fitted and finished to your own style and requirements in our workrooms.

In fine worsteds from £8.
Two-Piece Suits from £7.2.6

LANGSTONS
Langston & Sons Ltd.
CORK ST. CORNER READING

"READING STANDARD"
GUIDE TO PAGES

Junior Standard	3
Women's Realm	3
Stage and Screen	3
Mr. I. Mikardo Reports	4
Angles	4
Technical: College Stone Laying	5
Reading Magistrates' Court	6
Reading Estimates	6
Letters to Editor	6
Doctor's Chat	6
*Three Men for Trial	7
*Wokingham R.D.C.	7
*To fix from Wokingham School	7
*Wokingham Fire Sequel	7
Pictorial News	8
Sport	9
Small Advertisements 10,	11
Public Notices	12

* Wokingham and Bracknell Edition
+ Country Edition

OCTOBER 14 to 18

SPECIAL FITTING DEMONSTRATION

Birthday Fitting Expert in attendance

This longer wearing Birthday Oxford shoe is made in three fittings, for all ages between 4 and 11 years in black and brown polishing leathers.

from 24/9

This is an opportunity to satisfy yourself that your child is fitted for future comfort.

BROAD STREET, READING

Reading Standard's new-look front page October 1952

Little appears to be known about the *Standard's* progress during the war, for all the young men were away in the forces and those who were left to run the paper were for the most part older workers who are unfortunately no longer alive to recall those times. It does appear from the evidence, however, that the *Standard* survived the paper shortage and labour problems without too much difficulty, for by 1947 the company was making a profit of £6,037, after all running expenses and taxes had been paid.[55]

From the formation of the limited company in 1937, the *Standard* had been under the guiding hand of Sir Felix Pole, who at that time was also the chairman of Associated Electrical Industries and who, despite his heavy commitments to that concern, took a keen interest in the affairs of the *Standard*. The healthy financial state of the Reading paper was due in no small way to Sir Felix Pole's leadership as chairman of the board of directors, and it was under his direction that the *Standard* started to expand after the war.

When Walter Rivers had first taken over as manager of the *Reading Standard* in 1897 and embarked on his policy of using photographic illustrations, the halftone blocks were made by the John Swain Company in London who were probably the best blockmakers in the country at that time. Although arranging for blocks to be made in London was inconvenient and wasteful of time, it was not until the late 1920s or early 1930s that the *Standard* started to get its blocks from a recently formed local company called the Reading Process Engraving Company. The *Standard's* first move towards expansion came during 1948, when they bought out the Reading Process Engraving Company and

---

55 See Appendix I.

thus, for the first time in the paper's existence had complete control over the manufacture of its own illustration material. The company also supplied blocks to most of the local commercial printers in Reading, of which there were many, and it was potentially therefore an extremely lucrative business. In the first six months of trading after the takeover, the engraving company showed a profit of £400, and within six years it was showing a profit of £6,903.[56]

Acquiring their own process engraving company was to prove an extremely shrewd move by the *Standard*, for the 1950s and '60s were to witness a tremendous boom in advertising, much of which required considerable illustration, and it was essential that the paper had control over its own blockmaking.

During the latter part of 1955, Sir Felix Pole, who had been chairman of the *Reading Standard* since it had become a private company in 1937, tendered his resignation due to ill health, and in January 1956 he died, at the age of 78. He was succeeded as chairman by his son, John Pole, who had also been on the board of directors since 1937.

Under Sir Felix Pole's guidance, the *Standard* had successfully come through the war and it was his business acumen which had later set the paper on its expansion programme. His son was undoubtedly a man with the same abilities, and on becoming chairman he immediately set about maintaining the impetus which the company was generating, by setting up a commercial print company, The Reading Standard Printing Co. Ltd, to complement the newspaper business and the process engraving interest. A purpose-built factory was erected in East Street and was equipped with type frames and a number of letterpress machines, and a

---

56 See Appendix I.

few months later the goodwill, plant, and staff of a small printing company, The Gosbrook Press, was acquired, to supplement the business already established. The company was quite a reasonable size from its inception, for it employed some fifteen to twenty people, and the newspaper was able to attract considerable business for this new venture.

The increasing circulation of the *Standard* was beginning to create problems for the production staff in the Valpy Street premises, which were extremely cramped, and the ever-increasing volume of advertising obliged the *Standard* to enlarge the paper which, between 1956 and 1959 often fluctated between eighteen and thirty-two pages in order that advertising should not be turned away. The increased size was not only a problem for the press but also for the composing room, for all these additional pages had to be set and made up ready for the Thursday deadline and this was proving to be increasingly difficult.

It was therefore decided that new and larger premises should be found for the newspaper, and that a new press should be acquired which could cater for a much larger paper. At the rear of the commercial printing company's East Street premises, the *Standard* built a new two-bay workshop to house the press, and during 1959 a Goss 4 unit rotary press was installed starting production in September 1959.[57] This new press was capable of producing 32 broadsheet-sized pages (*Reading Standard* size) or 64 tabloid pages, and with its introduction the *Standard* altered its format slightly from 17" in width to 16", retaining its existing depth of 27½" and reducing the number of columns per page to eight 11-em columns.

---

57 See illustration, overleaf.

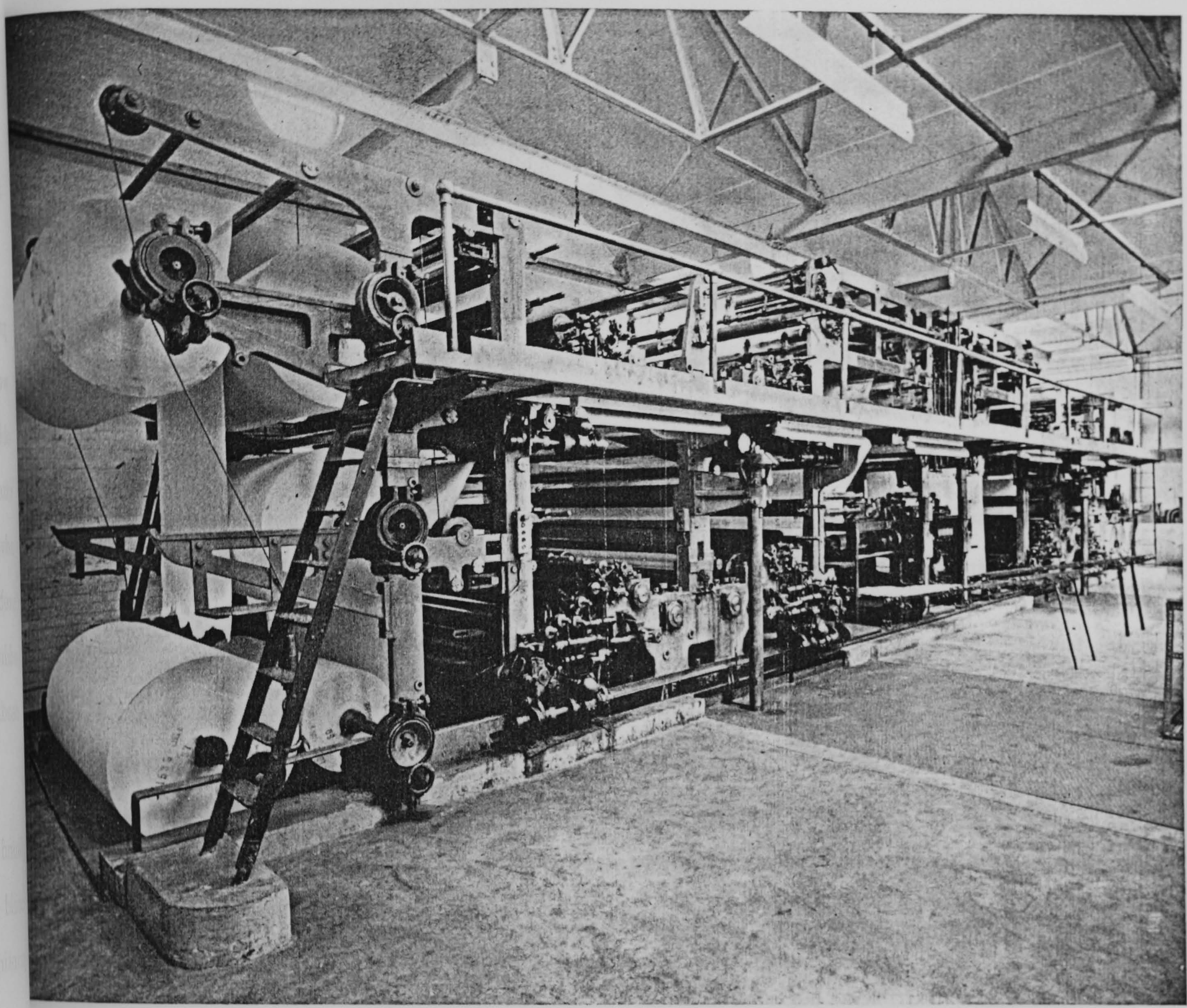


Photo by C. E. May

The Goss Newspaper Rotary 4-unit Press installed in the

East Street Extension Building which started production in September, 1959.

This machine is able to print 32 pages Broadsheet ('Reading Standard' size)

and 64 pages Tabloid

The new press considerably relieved the printing problems which had previously plagued the *Standard* but, whilst the composing room and plate-making department were still in Valpy Street, the curved stereos had to be transported to East Street in order to plate up the press. It is not surprising therefore that better premises for those departments adjacent to the press were also sought and towards the end of 1960 the *Standard* acquired the old Methodist chapel in London Street, for £25,000. This building had originally been erected, in 1843, to house the Reading Mechanics Institution and had been used as a theatre immediately prior to its acquisition by the *Standard*.[58] It backed onto the East Street buildings and therefore allowed good access for the production equipment, while giving the *Standard* a splendid and impressive frontage onto London Street.[59]

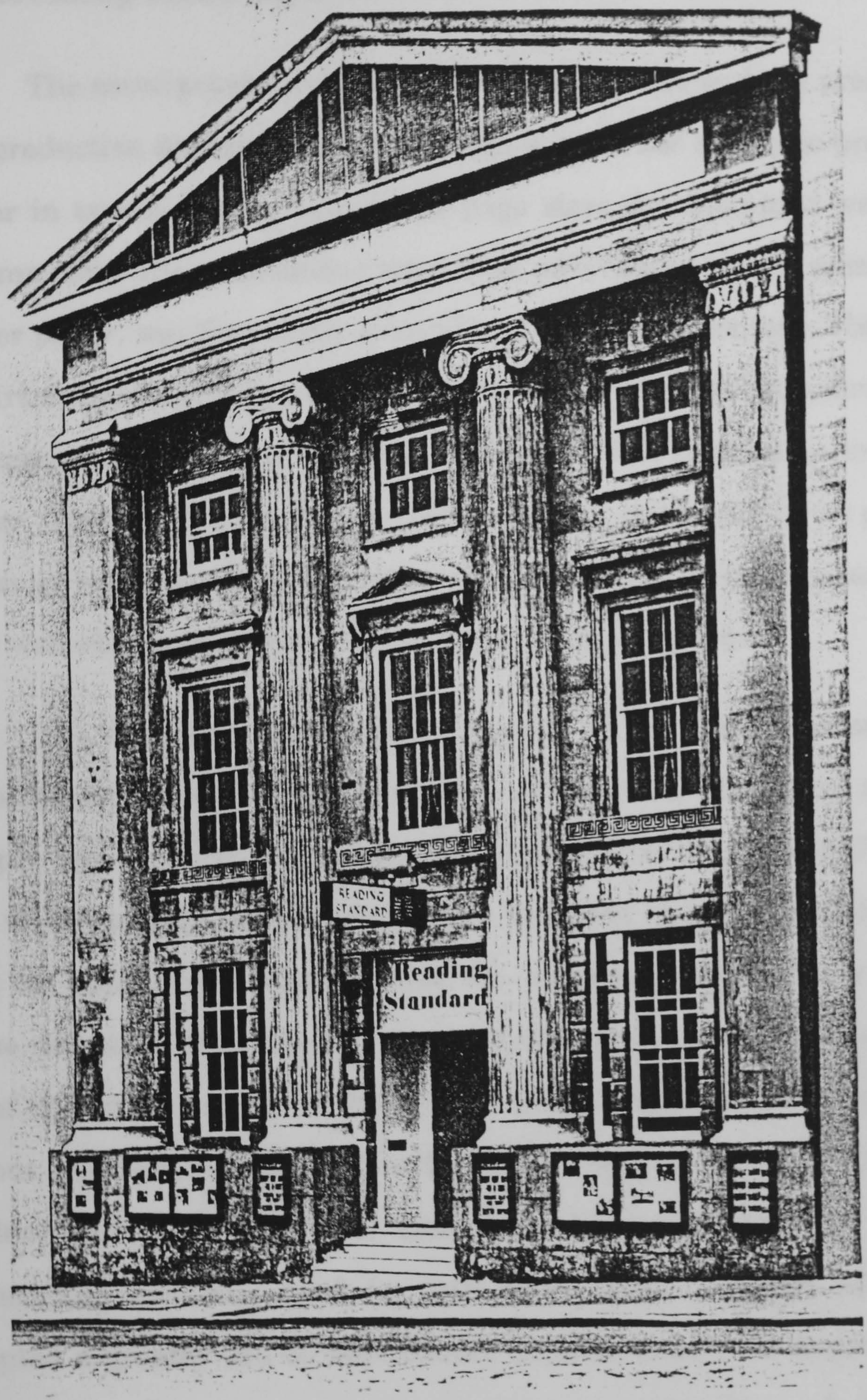
Moving the complete composing room, including eight Linotypes and a five-ton stereo moulding press, presented the company with a major problem, for it had to be undertaken in such a way that it did not disrupt the production of the paper.The London Street premises were prepared in advance to receive all the equipment, and as the last pages of the *Standard* for Friday 14 April 1961 were being made up the hotmetal pots were emptied and the Linotype machines shut down.[60] Throughout the weekend the whole staff worked with the printers' engineers and removal men to transport the complete composing room and stereo department to London Street. As each piece of equipment was delivered and put into its place, a team of electricians set about the task of wiring it up ready for

---

58 A. T. Watts, 'The Foundation and Development of the Reading Mechanics Institution 1825-1830 and 1840-1860', unpublished thesis, London University, 1976.

59 See illustration, overleaf.

60 *Reading Standard*, no. 4612, Friday 14 April 1961.



The grand London Street premises of the *Reading Standard* 1959

use, and on Monday morning the composing room was ready to start work on the coming week's paper.

The move proved to be an unqualified success and the pressures on the production department were overcome; with the ability to produce the paper in twenty-four to thirty-four page sizes the *Standard* was able to accommodate the tremendous amount of advertising which, even with the larger paper, was frequently over 60% of the paper's content. This state of affairs did not last long, however, and within a year the *Standard* found it necessary to have the press altered to enable it to produce an even larger paper. This adaptation to the Goss equipped the company to produce a paper of between thirty-six and forty pages when necessary, and it was now well able to cope with the pressures from advertising.

The *Standard* was growing rapidly at the time, not only in its physical size but also its circulation, which was increasing at around six per cent per year, rising from 26,616 copies per week in 1957 to 32,594 per week by 1962. Its popularity was due both to its journalistic content and its appearance. Having shed the old nineteenth century image to some extent in 1952, when it removed advertising from the front page, it went one stage further in 1957 when it again revamped its typographic layout and reduced its masthead to read '*Reading Standard*' in 72-point Bodoni bold upper and lower case.[61] The back page was also cleared of advertising and was used for late news items, and the whole paper adopted a greater use of two-column, three-column, and sometimes four-column headlines and captions and a greater use of illustration throughout the paper. Much of this new look was due to the efforts of

---

61 *Reading Standard*, no. 4430, Friday 25 October 1957.

Alan Sandall, who had been appointed deputy editor in 1958, and editor in 1962 after Jim Pettengell had stepped down due to illness.

Alan Sandall's efforts were not only directed to the appearance of the paper but also to its content, and the *Standard* stepped up its reporting of local issues and participated in local campaigns such as the route of the M4, one-way traffic systems, parking in the town, and many other issues in which the public had more than just a passing interest.[62] He was ably assisted in this task by a very good team of reporters who, with a good balance of youth and experience, were keen to see the paper succeed.

In advertising, too, the *Standard* was the leader of the town's papers, and the advertising team led by J. F. Hancock worked very hard to attract advertisers to the paper's columns. This was achieved by offering them good well-designed advertisements and also the opportunity to advertise in special free supplements which the *Standard* produced at certain times, each one dealing with a particular topic such as Fashion, Homes, or Holidays.

When Baylis, one of Reading's largest grocery stores, started to give Green Shield Stamps to their customers, Jim Hancock realized the opportunity for the *Reading Standard* and persuaded Baylis not only to advertise in the paper but to allow the *Standard* readers who took along a cutout of the advertisement to be given additional stamps against their purchases in the store. This resulted in an increase in the circulation of 600 copies for the first week during which the offer appeared, and the

---

62 Personal interview with A. Sandall, a Reading journalist, who was editor of the *Reading Standard* from 1962 until its closure in 1965, then remaining with The Thomson Organisation as deputy editor of the *Evening Post* until leaving the Reading area shortly afterwards.

circulation continued to rise even though the offer was not included every week.[63]

One other aspect of the newspaper circulation, which the *Standard's* sales team considered to be a stumbling block, was the matter of the sale or return of papers by the distributors in the town. For some inexplicable reason, this sale-or-return system was not employed by them, and frequent pleas by the *Standard* to adopt the system were ignored. In the end, Jim Hancock approached a number of large newsagents individually and offered to deal on a sale-or-return basis directly, and not through the local agent. Inevitably, this meant considerable additional work by the *Standard's* staff, but again it was a move which paid dividends for the paper's circulation continued to increase and between 1960 and 1964 it had risen 24.8%, from 29,253 copies to 36,509 copies per week.

The 1960s were in fact a period of considerable activity by the whole company, which was always seeking new areas of involvement. During 1960, for example, in anticipation of the report on the government's enquiry into commercial television and radio,[64] the *Standard* formed two new companies: Reading Broadcasting Co. Ltd, and Radio (Berkshire) Ltd. Although the recommendations of the Pilkington Committee in connection with radio and television were not due to be presented for another two years, the directors considered that there was a possibility of short-range commercial radio being permitted and therefore, by taking this preparatory step, hoped to enable the Standard Group '...to participate in this advertising medium if and when circumstances

---

63 Interview with J. F. Hancock.

64 *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting*, Pilkington Report, 1962, Cmnd 1753.

permitted'.[65] In order to have relevant expertise on the board of directors, the well-known commentator Raymond Glendenning was elected to the board in the same year.

Two further subsidiary companies were formed in 1962, the first of which, The Creative Press and Publishing Co. Ltd, was set up as a preparatory step to the company publishing a new national weekly paper entitled *Golf News*, which the company eventually embarked on in February 1963. The second company, called Leisure Publications Ltd, was formed in July 1962 as a move to ensure that the contract for printing a magazine for the camping trade remained with the Group. Both of these publications ensured that the new rotary press was utilized more than just once a week and, again, was an extremely farsighted business move by the company.

All this activity inevitably attracted more commercial printing, and the increase in that aspect of the company's business created considerable pressure on the East Street factory. Not only did the machinery and equipment need to be modernized but considerably more space was necessary as well. To achieve this extra space the single-storey building had a first floor added, and this was achieved whilst production continued in the factory underneath. After the building was completed, the whole production layout was reorganized and several new machines were installed to replace the fairly elderly presses which had been used up to that time.

Despite the considerable business activity in the various companies within the Standard Group, under John Pole's chairmanship the paternal outlook engendered by Walter Rivers was maintained. Working for the

---

65 See Appendix I.

Standard was like belonging to a big family, no matter in which part of the company a person worked. John Pole knew all his employees by Christian name. He was never too busy to listen to anyone with a problem and he frequently found time to wander through the workshops, talking to the staff. Pole's fellow directors and some of the management staff often jokingly suggested that his meandering round the factory was a ploy to glean the latest scuttlebut, for he was always very well informed about all that was going on in the company and often surprised his fellow directors with knowledge of events that had not yet reached their ears.[66] Pole's caring attitude was complemented by that of the managing director, R. S. Rowsell.

The considerable business activity of the *Standard* was creating problems for the Reading Newspaper Company and there is fairly general agreement by those involved in the press in Reading at this time that the *Mercury* and the *Chronicle* had a tough battle on their hands. Unfortunately, the *Standard's* success was attracting the attention of some of the larger national newspaper organizations, who were keen to expand their provincial press holdings in order to benefit from the tremendous growth of local advertising, which was a product of the postwar period.

In the early months of 1963, Sir William Carr, Chairman of the News of the World Organisation Ltd, approached the *Standard* with a view to making an offer for the company. Under normal circumstances this approach would have been refused by John Pole but at this time he found himself in an extremely vulnerable position. A considerable number of the company shares had been left to members of the Rivers-Parry

---

66 Interviews with A. Sandall and with J. F. Hancock.

family in Walter Rivers's will; many of those shareholders were non-participants in the company but one member of the family, Tom Rivers-Parry, was one of the directors of the *Standard* and had held that position since 1949. He was also involved with the Caxton Publishing Company and had suffered some financial reverses in that business, and he was therefore agreeable to selling his shares in the *Standard* in order to recoup some of those losses. John Pole, as chairman, therefore found himself unable to stop the *News of the World* from making an offer, for he could not depend on enough support to fight off a possible takeover.

The *News of the World* started an investigation into the *Standard* in order to establish its worth and to make an appropriate offer to the shareholders, but while this appraisal was being undertaken Roy Thomson heard of the situation and was extremely interested in making an offer himself. The Thomson Organisation was already in the midst of an investigation into the areas close to London, in which the potential existed for the conversion of existing weekly newspapers into daily evening papers, and that investigation had already highlighted Reading as an extremely likely area for such a venture. The somewhat drawn-out enquiry by the *News of the World* gave Thomson the opportunity he needed, and he came forward very speedily with an offer which, at the time, the staff often described as offering the shareholders buckets of money. The offer was good enough to be accepted, and the *Reading Standard* and its subsidiary companies passed into the hands of The Thomson Organisation.

John Pole felt absolutely betrayed by the sell-out by the Rivers-Parry family but, even more, felt that he had betrayed all the staff in the *Standard* organization. As soon as the deal was accepted, the staff were 'called round the stone' in the newspaper office in London Street, to be

told the news, and at that meeting Pole was ashen and very upset. The staff, too, were stunned, for it was seen as the end of a particularly enterprising and successful chapter in Reading's press history.

Due to Lord Thomson's desire to wait for the very latest technological developments in typesetting, the conversion of the *Standard* into an evening paper was delayed until September 1965. As the London Street premises were considered to be unsuitable for a daily evening paper, a new site was found near to the River Thames at Caversham. There the new computer typesetting system and web offset press were installed, in readiness for the production of the new *Evening Post*.

By early September 1965, the *Evening Post* was ready to be launched, and it was decided by The Thomson Organisation that the *Reading Standard* should then cease, its last issue on 10 September to be produced using the new technology installed ready for the evening paper.[67] Why the closure of the highly successful *Standard* was thought necessary, no one appears to know, for The Thomson Organisation could have had the best of both worlds by keeping the weekly and producing a daily evening as well. Had they done so, it is thought by many of those who worked for Reading newspapers at this time that the success of the *Standard* might have eventually forced the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* to close. As it was, the closure of the *Standard* gave a new lease of life to the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury*; in fact, the Reading Newspaper Co. advertised the 'New' *Reading Chronicle* in *World Press News* during that week and indicated, with the change in title, format, and masthead to simulate that which had been used by the *Standard*, its obvious aim to take over the business from its old rival.

---

67 See illustration overleaf.

OPEN WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY to 7.30 pm
CLOSED MONDAYS
at Wellsteeds of Reading

Reading Standard

No. 4841 LARGEST SALE IN BERKSHIRE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1965 24 PAGES 4D INLAND POSTAGE 4d

GENERAL EDITION

Civic send-off for Evening Post

LORD THOMSON, chairman of the Thomson Organisation Ltd., visits Reading again next Tuesday to start the press for the first issue of the Evening Post—the new daily paper serving the town and its surrounding areas.

The formal opening ceremony is to be followed by a luncheon in two large marquees erected on Thames-side Promenade, near Caversham Bridge, where 140 guests will be entertained by the managing director of the Evening Post, Mr R. K. Guerrie, who will be the host for the day.

They will represent one of the most distinguished gatherings of local civic dignitaries and community leaders which has ever been brought together in Reading on any one occasion.

Among the guests will be the Hon. D. J. Smith, Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire (chairman of W. H. Smith and Son Ltd., the booksellers and newsagents), the Mayor of Reading, Alderman Mrs Alice Burrows, and the Bishop of Reading, the Rt. Rev. Eric Knell.

Also at the luncheon will be:—

The Clerk to Berkshire County Council, Mr E. R. Davies, the Chief Constable of Berkshire, Mr T. C. B. Hodgson, the County Librarian, Mr V. Jennings, the South Berkshire Coroner, Mr C. Hoile, the East Berkshire Coroner, Mr M. Owen Wellbelove, the Berkshire and Reading Chief Fire Officer, Mr K. C. Bridges, the Deputy Mayor of Reading Councillor Mrs A. G. A. Sturrock, the Town Clerk, Mr G. F. Darlow, the Borough Architect, Mr W. S. Smith, the Borough Coroner, Mr J. L. Martin, the Borough Librarian, Mr S. H. Horrocks, the Borough Surveyor and Planning Officer, Mr K. H. Thorpe, the Borough Treasurer, Mr G. C. Jones, the Chief Constable, Mr A. Iverson, the Chief Education Officer, Mr W. L. Thomas, the Director of Reading Museum and Art Gallery, Mr T. L. Gwatkin, the Medical Officer of Health, Dr A. Gulherie, the MP for Reading, Mr Peter Emery, the MP for Wokingham, Mr W. R. van Straubenzee, the MP for Newbury, the Hon. John Astor, the MP for Henley, Mr J. A. Hay, and the MP for Basingstoke, Mr David Mitchell.

Lord Thomson will accompany his guests on a tour of the Evening Post's new buildings at Tessa Road on the Richfield industrial estate and will show them the modern equipment upon which the paper will be produced.

They will see the computer-assisted setting operation, the photo-filming of type and the new 90 ft long press which will produce the Evening Post by the web offset process at 30,000 copies an hour.

Lord Thomson will explain to his visitors how full colour pictures can be produced in the paper and will tell them something of the development in Reading of the latest techniques in newspaper production.

DEADLINE 4 DAYS

There are just four days to go until Evening Post day — four days left to take advantage of the special introductory offer that will bring Britain's newest, brightest evening paper through your letterbox for a month for only five shillings.

Fill and post the attached coupon right now — and save one third of the normal cost. On receipt of the coupon the circulation department will send the money-saving vouchers to you by return. You simply give them to your newsagent — and save 2s 6d.

Remember — the Evening Post begins publication on Tuesday. So fill in that coupon.

To Evening Post
Tessa Road, Reading
the Post will do the rest
Please arrange for me to receive your special home delivery offer

Name .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Newsagent: .....

.....

The Reading Standard goes daily

THIS week it is the Reading Standard that makes the big news: next Tuesday we become the new evening newspaper. From then we will appear EVERY evening.

At the Standard we have watched Reading and district grow for 90 years. This is no longer a small country town: in fact it is the fastest expanding community in the country and it deserves and demands a daily news service. We shall provide this.

Frankly, we wish we could still be called the Standard, but now that we are an evening paper in competition with the London evening papers this is not possible.

The important thing to remember is that the Reading area gains a far better newspaper service—one worthy of the region's fantastic rate of development. The service will be better because it is nightly. This must mean that there is more space in the paper for local news. That news can be reported and read on the day it happens and not a week later.

It will be better because in addition to regional news it will carry national and international news. It will carry also all the local sport.

THIS WEEKEND'S SPORT, FOR EXAMPLE, WILL APPEAR IN OUR FIRST ISSUE NEXT TUESDAY.

But that is not all. The best features of the Reading Standard—which made it the biggest selling local newspaper in Berkshire—will be retained. They will appear alongside many new features which we have introduced into the evening paper.

For us on the Reading Standard staff this is a mighty stride forward. We believe that the change will reflect the new status and importance of this region.

We are proud to play such a part in Reading's development and we are delighted that our readers have, by the orders they have already placed for the new evening paper, given it such a wonderful reception.

WE SHALL DO OUR BEST TO LIVE UP TO THIS. . . .

As with many other little girls Tuesday was a important day for five-year-old Debbie Leader. It was her first day at school. But for her it was rather different for she arrived at Wescott Road School, Wokingham, in the luxury of a taxi—paid for with the compliments of the Berkshire County Council.

Her arrival at school in a taxi marked a victory for her father Mr. Michael Leader, of East-hampstead Park, who since last Easter has refused to allow his daughter to attend school unless the education authority provided transport.

Education authority officials visited the Leaders informing them that they were breaking the law, but Mr. Leader stayed firm and Debbie stayed at home.

Finally the authority agreed to send a taxi for Debbie every morning and bring her home at night. This free service will continue until next Easter.

'UNCLE ERNIE' DIES

A Reading cinema manager — known as Uncle Ernie to hundreds of crippled children — died on Sunday.

Mr. Ernest Wyeth, aged 63, arranged Christmas shows at the Odeon Cinema for spastic children and collected toys for them.

He received many awards for film promotion work.

Mr. Wyeth lived at Lawrence Road, Tilehurst. He leaves a wife and son. He was cremated at Henley Road Crematorium, Caversham, on Wednesday.

His illness kept him in hospital for six months last year. He returned to work but went back to hospital again in May. He died there.

Mr. Wyeth was born in Basingstoke. He served in the RAF and was the manager of cinemas in Bath and Swindon before coming to Reading.

In 1958 he was one of the managerial personnel attached to the Royal enclosure and foyer when Princess Margaret attended the premiere of "They Came to Cordura," at the Odeon, Marble Arch.

WINNING TRY

Reading Rugby Football Club has agreed to a £50 reduction in the £250 rateable value of their ground in Norcot Lane. Somme, as requested by the valuation office, the local valuation court heard on Tuesday. The club's scheduled appeal was not heard because of the settlement.

Olympia Ballroom to be sold

The Olympia Ballroom in London Street, Reading, is to be sold this month to a Yorkshire firm. But it is expected that it will still be used for dancing.

The offer for the Olympia has been made by Grand Ltd. of Bradford, who run a chain of cinemas, dance halls and theatres. Mr. V. H. Lipscombe, secretary of Olympia (Reading) Ltd. said: "The ballroom will remain open after it changes hands, and existing bookings will be honoured.

"I presume they intend to continue using the Olympia as a ballroom."

Grand Ltd. offered 20s a share for the 20,000 shares in the company, a share which, with its shareholders by the Olympia chairman, Mr. C. Parsons, says that shares have been selling in the last year for between 18s and 20s.

The acceptance date for the offer is September 13, and the deal is conditional on the acceptance of at least 90 per cent of the shareholders.

At the last annual meeting of Olympia Ltd. in February, many shareholders complained about the small profit — under £2,000 — made in the previous year.

HOMES HIT BY THIEVES

Thieves made daring raids on two houses in Thatcham on Saturday night. They entered through unlocked rear doors while the occupants were in other rooms.

At 11 Beverley Close, home of Mrs. Mary Jones, a purse containing 28s was stolen. A purse, 22s in cash, and a Hotpoint kettle were stolen from the home of Mrs. Eileen Macallum at 130 Bath Road.

BE A KEY GIRL ON THE 'POST'

HOW would you like to work among the excitement of the Evening Post news room where journalists report the news as it happens every hour of the day?

The Evening Post needs two intelligent young girls with a reasonable typing speed who could adapt themselves to the pace of this vital department.

These girls will receive stories telephoned to them by reporters throughout Reading and the Evening Post circulation area. Over a specially-designed Newscript they will be receiving reports on anything from murders to marriages, from court proceedings to soccer matches.

They will work during normal office hours from Monday to Friday, and a good salary is offered to those interested in this exciting work. If you are interested telephone the News Editor (53623) for an appointment.

Blaze ends cruise

A HOLIDAY that began happily on Friday the 13th, ended disastrously for four friends last week, when their cabin cruiser mysteriously went up in flames outside a cafe in Perpignon, France.

"Everything was destroyed," said Mrs Glen Hardiman of Barkham Road, Wokingham. "My husband, Malcolm, and the others were left with just the clothes they were standing in."

Mr Hardiman was with his brother, Ray, and two friends Chris Francis of Commons Road, Emmbrook, and Colin Hatherley of Alexandra Road, Reading, in the cafe on the last day of their holiday when the fire broke out.

They looked outside when they saw a fire engine race by, and discovered their boat, parked behind their Land Rover, blazing from end to end.

"To make matters worse the fire appliance did not work properly," Mrs Hardiman said. "But with all the petrol and oil aboard it would have been impossible to save the boat."

Mr Hardiman, a 30-year-old director of a building firm, bought the American-designed cabin cruiser Seline in January.

He and the three others spent all their spare time repairing the boat, which was worth more than £1,000.

"Obviously, we were incensed," said Mrs Hardiman. "But nothing can bring back the endless hours the boys spent working on it."

The men had towed the boat to the Costa Brava in Spain, where they met their wives and girl friends who had flown out there.

When the men returned home on Saturday, Mr. Hardiman had only the steering wheel left from his once gleaming blue and white cruiser.

"But he is not giving up," Mrs Hardiman said. "One day we will get another one."

Fans are warned

Reading football supporters going to Maidenhead at Kim Park this weekend (this week about) should heed parking in Kim Park.

This follows a complaint to the police on Friday evening when an estimated 200 to 300 cars were parked on the grass.

A nearby resident complained that the grass would be turned into a bog in the winter.

EIGHTH DRIVING BAN ON YOUTH, 19

A youth said to have been disqualified from driving on seven occasions was given "this one more chance" by Henley magistrates on Tuesday.

Michael Thomas Day (18) self-employed, of Wilton Road, Reading, admitted being concerned with a person unknown in stealing a van from Henley last October. He was placed on probation for three years.

Day also pleaded guilty to driving while disqualified and to driving without insurance. He was fined £5 and disqualified for one year to commence at the end of his present disqualification.

The van, taken from the municipal car park in Station Road, Henley, was found apparently abandoned in Wembley, and traced to Day.

Dr. A. J. Harvey said Day had been disqualified on six occasions prior to October last year.

The last of these was in Reading in September 1964, when he was banned for five years. In April this year he had been sent to a detention centre for three months and disqualified for a further six months.

WIFE THANKS RESCUERS

The wife of a railwayman, Mr Cyril Lunn, who was severly burned when he touched an electric rail near Reading gas works on August 27, this week tried to see everyone at the works to thank them for saving her husband's life.

Barbara looks on as Mr. Peter Foyle and two of her colleagues read the letter from the pools firm.

Barbara weds and misses pools win

Pretty Barbara Green (24) took two weeks off from work to get married, and it cost her a share in an £8,000 pools win.

For while Barbara was honeymooning at Newquay, Cornwall, a new manager, Mr. Peter Foyle, aged 45, took over at the British School of Motoring offices where she works in Blagrave Street, Reading.

He started a pools syndicate among the instructors and office staff and on Wednesday they heard that their second entry had won £8,322 14s on Vernons farthing treble chance.

The 12 syndicate members won nearly £700 each for a total stake of 27s 6d. They plan to club together to buy Barbara a consolation gift of a refrigerator.

Dark haired Barbara married Bill Green, a fitter, at Reading two weeks ago. They live on a £4 a week furnished flat in Church End Lane, Tilehurst.

Barbara watched her colleagues read a letter of congratulation from Vernons and said, "I have no hard feelings about the win—and I had a wonderful honeymoon. But the money would have helped us to buy a home of our own."

Mr Foyle who lives at Crofters Chase, Hythe, Kent, moved to the Reading branch from Canterbury last month. "This is my first win for 15 years," he said.

The syndicate will be continuing this week but with three extra members — including Barbara.

Two other women have also been lucky on the pools this week. Mrs Annie Allen aged 47, of Swanston Road, Reading, has won £2,490 and a Mortimer woman has won over £2,400.

Wanderers

Crowthorne's reluctant wanderers, 13 year-old David Scott and his sister, Marlene, aged nine, have been reunited with their worried parents after a dropped railway ticket led them on a 450-mile adventure. The two children jumped aboard to return it.

But the train moved off. And its next stop was Edinburgh.

Jenkins praises electronics firm

A Bracknell company was described as the spearhead of Britain's export drive into America's electronics market by the Minister of Aviation, Mr. Roy Jenkins, on Tuesday.

Opening a three-day exhibition at the Kensington Palace Hotel on Tuesday, Mr. Jenkins praised Racal Electronics export success with equipment designed as a private venture rather than for this country's services.

Of its chairman, Mr. Ray Brown, he said: "I have nothing but admiration for his enterprise and achievement. He manages to combine public service with private reward."

Mr. Jenkins said that the company had contributed valuable research work to the national economy and that firms like Racal would be welcomed into the country's defence programme.

Racal can be proud of its achievements and its founder Ray Brown, said the Minister.

Mr. Brown, he said, is the mainstream of the British electronic component industry.

Cheap fares 'on ratepayers'

A £30,000 plan to give old age pensioners cheap fares on Reading buses should be subsidised by ratepayers.

This is the recommendation which the Finance Committee will put to the town council next month.

And it is the equivalent of just over a penny rate.

If the proposal is agreed, it is hoped to bring in the cheap fares almost immediately, Councillor John Still, chairman of the Transport Committee, said.

The plan is to give half fares to men over 65 and women over 60 provided they are not in full employment.

The concessions would be limited to off-peak hours — 9.30am to 3.30pm and after 6pm on Monday to Friday, after 8pm on Saturday, and all day on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Pensioners would have to apply to the council, which will issue special passes. These would be issued only to those living within the borough boundary.

Service 19, between Reading and Purley, would initially be exempt from the scheme, because it is joint operated with the Thames Valley Traction Company. But discussions about including it are being held by the company and Reading Transport Department.

Reading Council is empowered to make concessions to pensioners under an Act of Parliament passed last autumn.

■ At the same time as the fare concessions are introduced, other passengers may be paying a penny more in fares. This proposal, approved earlier this year by the council, is to be considered by the South Eastern Traffic Commissioners on September 28.

look out for Holmes new hound 'Searcher'
sniffing out bargains you'll sit up and beg for!
HOLMES THE FURNISHERS LIMITED ST MARY'S BUTTS READING

Last edition of the *Reading Standard* in September 1965

Perhaps the most appropriate obituary for the *Standard* appeared in the *Chronicle* of 10 September, for it summed up the relationship which both papers had enjoyed and the situation surrounding the *Standard*'s closure:

> Today a Newspaper dies. For 4841 weeks the *Reading Standard* has been a respected and responsible local journal, prudently directed, and ably produced. Its sudden death while still in robust health will be genuinely regretted by many, not least by ourselves. The lively yet never acrimonious rivalry that existed was good for both of us. It kept us both on our toes and Reading got the benefit. Why has it to die? Because it passed from independent control into the hands of a newspaper empire which seeks to establish an evening newspaper here. To help achieve this, it is thought necessary, so it seems, to acquire the *Reading Standard* and kill it. The *Chronicle* is thus left as the only weekly newspaper exclusively devoted to Reading affairs. Consequently we present a big new *Reading Chronicle* with which we aim to provide a reliable sounding board for public opinion in the town and its vicinity.[68]

So, sadly, the *Reading Standard* ceased publication, and its end was mourned by most of those involved in local journalism at the time. It is perhaps ironic that its passing was not the result of declining fortunes, but rather of its success. Even now, twenty-five years later, the *Standard* is talked of with considerable pride and affection by those who were associated with it.

---

68 *Reading Chronicle*, no. 8732, 10 September 1965.

CHAPTER XII

§

EVENING GAZETTE 1935-1939

Reading's proximity to London had always operated against its having a daily paper of its own, particularly with the efficient Great Western Railway line connecting the town to Paddington. By the 1920s, both daily morning and evening papers produced in London, at the centre of the newspaper industry, could be despatched quickly to the town, and the costs of competing by setting up a completely new production unit in Reading were viewed by many as being too great to be a worthwhile gamble. However, against what many had considered to be great odds, a new Reading evening paper, the *Evening Gazette*, was launched in 1935, from a completely new printing unit established by the Allied Newspaper Group, owned by the Berry brothers (Lords Camrose and Kemsley) and Lord Iliffe.

Until the advent of the *Evening Gazette*, the Reading weekly press had remained untouched by the fierce battles for provincial press ownership which were fought by the 'press barons' such as Rothermere, Beaverbrook, and the Berry brothers. These battles were fundamentally about advertising and it was the increasing revenue from this source which set many of the national newspaper owners on an almost manic path of newspaper acquisition in order to be able to offer advertisers the

chance of great coverage for their wares, both geographically and in terms of readers.

Advertising, which had led the way to the popular journalism of Lord Northcliffe in the early years of this century, had now created the environment in which newspaper ownership had become big business, offering the successful proprietors the chance to earn huge profits.

The Berry brothers had formed Allied Newspapers Ltd, with Lord Iliffe, in 1924, after they had acquired a number of the late Sir Edward Hulton's papers from Lord Rothermere, who had in fact beaten them to the original purchase.[1] These papers were subsequently sold to the newly formed public company for £7,900,000 and, with the profits from this deal, the Berry brothers turned their attention to the acquisition of provincial evening newspapers. Many of these papers were ripe for exploitation by the commercially astute press barons, for they were often small, independent papers, with little commercial awareness.

Lord Rothermere also entered the field of provincial newspapers ownership, often setting up in direct competition with Allied Newspapers, while the Westminster Press and the Inveresk Paper Company also viewed the provincial press as a potential goldmine and embarked on a programme of expansion in the provinces.

This battle for circulation supremacy and advertising revenue reached its peak in 1930-1, but was hit by the economic crisis of that period: the resulting cut in advertising revenue, combined with the increasing difficulty of raising capital on the Stock Exchange, created a situation where the two major parties, Allied Newspapers and Northcliffe

---

1 Viscount Camrose, *British Newspapers and their Controllers*, (1947), p. 65.

Newspapers, agreed to a truce; this was maintained until 1935, when the *Evening Gazette* was launched.[2]

Allied's choice of Reading to start a new evening paper was not as strange as many might have thought, for at this time the population of the town had risen to approximately one hundred thousand and it had become the centre of important manufacturing interests. In addition, from an advertising point of view its proximity to London was considered to be an advantage, for Reading's inhabitants had easy and cheap access to the capital. This view was supported by F. C. Barber, who also felt that Reading was some five to ten years overdue for a good local evening paper:

> London drapery houses and stores may not do much advertising in Bath, but they are bound to support a good local paper in Reading. It is so easy and cheap for the ladies to slip up to Oxford Street...[3]

Having carefully chosen the town for the start of a new programme of expansion, the Allied Press attempted to buy one of the local weekly papers in order to reduce the financial outlay which completely new premises and printing plant would have entailed. An offer was made to buy the *Reading Standard* from Walter Rivers, but negotiations broke down, possibly because Allied Newspapers would not guarantee to employ all of the *Standard*'s staff. Certainly Rivers's paternalistic feeling for the staff in his company was such that he probably would not have considered any alternative.[4]

Presumably the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury* were of no interest to Allied Newspapers, for there is no record or hint of any

---

2 Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, II, (1984), p. 476.

3 F. C. Barber, in *World Press News*, 2 May 1935.

4 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

offer being made to acquire the Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd.[5] Certainly the *Standard* was the leading paper in the Reading area and had the most progressive attitude at that time

With the rejection of the offer to Rivers, Allied Newspapers set about the task of finding premises for their new paper and equipping it with both machinery and staff, in order to get the *Evening Gazette* under way. The whole project was blueprinted by Hector Caird, who had previously served Allied's interests as the manager of the *Bristol Times* during the height of the provincial war with Rothermere and was well qualified to set this new venture in motion. He plotted and planned the whole project from '...a quiet London room near St. James's Square...'[6] while the rest of the newspaper world speculated on the likelihood of the *Gazette*'s success in the highly competitive area that could be reached so easily by the London evening papers.

Under Caird's enthusiastic guidance the project made excellent progress, and by the end of April 1935 the company had acquired premises in the form of the old Grand Hotel in Blagrave Street, a few doors away from the Reading weeklies and right opposite the railway station.[7] This building had to undergo considerable alteration in order to accommodate the needs of a newspaper office, not the least of which were the considerable foundations needed to support two rotary presses. One of these presses, a Goss four-reel double-width two-folder press, came from

---

5 The offer to Rivers for the *Reading Standard* was openly discussed at a meeting of the Reading Branch of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents in March 1935, at which all local newspaper proprietors were present, and the only reference to any takeover offer is that of the one to Rivers. Those working in the local press at that time have no knowledge of any offer being made by Allied Newspapers to the Reading Newspaper Company.

6 *World Press News*, Advertiser Review, 13 May 1964.

7 See map on p. xvii.

the office of the *Glasgow Record*, another of Allied's newspapers, while the other press was a new Crabtree, of similar specification[8].

Space was also organized to hold 20 Linotype machines, a process engraving and photographic department, and a wire room to receive news from the network news agencies.[9] Additionally, accommodation had to be organized for the reporting and administrative staff, and also for the advertising office: altogether a large organization, the housing of which necessitated extremely precise planning to ensure that the paper was launched smoothly.

By the beginning of May, Allied Newspapers had formed and registered a subsidiary company to print and publish the *Gazette*. Reading Press Ltd, with a nominal capital of £10,000, to print and publish the *Gazette*, had Lord Camrose, Sir Gomer Berry Bt, and Lord Iliffe on the board of directors.

The plans for setting up the new paper were by now well under way, and it was announced that the first edition would appear in August. Not only was the plant and machinery installation nearly complete, but most of the requisite staff for the paper had also been employed.

Inevitably, most of the senior positions in the paper were filled by staff from other papers within the Allied group, and with Hector Caird as general manager, L. C. Reeve as works manager, and Eric Gooseman as editor, all with successful backgrounds, Allied was endeavouring to ensure success for the *Gazette*. To this core of experience, the paper added a considerable number of local journalists, much to the surprise and disgust

---

8 *World Press News*, 25 April 1935.

9 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

of Walter Rivers and Frank Neale, who ran the Reading local weeklies. The *Standard*, for example, lost Bob Garner, Bob Jones, Henry Maule and Alan Joseph, while the *Chronicle* and *Mercury* lost Bob Lacey, Alun Lofts (who was appointed chief reporter on the *Gazette*), and J. A. M. Auld; all these men were to make their names in the field of journalism after the war.[10] This exodus of reporting staff was a setback to the two Reading papers, who were inevitably gearing themselves to resist the intrusion of the new paper and who had anticipated a battle for circulation and for advertising but not one for staff; Walter Rivers was particularly upset that his reporting staff should leave him to work on this new paper.

Reading's local papers were not the only ones preparing to do battle with the *Gazette*, for the new paper's proposed distribution area meant that other local papers would also be affected, not only in sales but, more importantly, in terms of local advertising, particularly as the new paper was to be a daily. Almost certainly, however, the papers to be faced with day-to-day competition from the *Gazette* were the three London evenings, the *Star*, the *Evening Standard*, and the *Evening News*, as all three were widely distributed each day throughout the same circulation area.

The circulation departments of all three London papers prepared to make special efforts to maintain their sales and the general assumption was that they would do so among the fairly large local population which travelled daily to the capital on business, for it was considered that these commuters would continue to buy their evening paper in London to read on the way home. On arrival in Reading it was expected that many would then buy a copy of the local *Evening Gazette* in order to keep in touch with local events day by day.

---

10 Interview with W. G. Garner.

However, the London papers faced a more difficult task at the Reading end, for the local branch of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents planned to make a special push for sales of the *Gazette*, which had agreed full Federation terms for the sale of their copies at 12 copies for 8d., or 27 copies for 1s. 6d., the same as for other Reading papers. The London evenings, however, were supplied at the rate of 26 copies for 1s. 6d., giving the local papers a slight edge.[11]

Advertising and sale rates were, of course, not the only areas of competition faced by the London papers, for the reason people buy newspapers is to get the latest news and the *Evening Gazette*, with its own wire room and printing plant right in the centre of Reading, had in theory the advantage of being able to get the news onto the local streets more quickly than London papers could, even though all three London papers had local facilities for inserting stop-press news to their papers on their arrival in Reading.[12]

As the end of August drew closer and the launch date for the *Evening Gazette* became imminent, the scene was set for a new era in Reading's press history. Instead of battling with each other, the two local weeklies joined as allies to combat the new intruder, and for the first time the newspaper press in the town became the focus and talking point of all those involved in the national and local press. Not only was there much interest in seeing the appearance of a newly designed paper, but there was considerable speculation as to the likely success of a new evening paper so close to London, which was to compete directly with the established London evening papers.

---

11 *World Press News*, 29 August 1935.

12 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

The careful planning and hard groundwork came to fruition on 29 August, when the first edition came off the presses in Blagrave Street and the public were at last able to buy the paper which had been the topic of much speculation over the preceding months.[13] The format of the *Gazette* was 23¼" x 16½" consisting of twelve pages with seven 13-em columns per page, and it was intended to produce four editions per day, the first edition coming out around midday.

One aspect which had received a considerable amount of attention was the new paper's appearance, and great efforts had been made to break away from the conventional make-up for an evening paper and present a new look to the *Gazette*. To some extent this was a difficult thing to achieve, but by using the unusual Bookprint typeface for the text and a mixture of bold italic and bold sans serif for sub-headings and headlines, a different look was achieved.

It was intended to have two pages regularly devoted to sports news and gossip; a front page given over to mainly national and international news, pictures and women's pages; and a city page, which would include the Stock Market's closing prices which London evening papers would be unable to include in their earlier editions reaching Reading.

The first edition lived up to all expectations, containing a well balanced coverage of news, reported in a straightforward and unbiased way, and, with a good number of illustrations (including one full page of halftones), it was attractive to look at. The advertising department had obviously worked very hard to capture clients, and despite the presence of the two weekly papers it had been able to acquire some good advertising,

---

13 *Evening Gazette*, no. 1, Wednesday 28 August 1935. See illustration overleaf.

Shop at Hedgcocks
GENERAL DRAPERS
BROAD STREET
READING

Radio on Page 3. *Weather: Showery.*

Evening Gazette

FINAL

VINCENTS OF READING
STATION SQUARE
FOR
NEW & USED
CARS
THE LARGEST & MOST UP TO DATE GARAGE IN READING.

THE ONLY DAILY PAPER PUBLISHED WITHIN 30 MILES OF READING

No. 1 READING, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28 1935 One Penny

20,000 MORE ITALIANS TO EMBARK

FIVE SHIPLOADS PREPARING

Italian Cabinet Meeting This Evening

ON THE BATTLE-FIELD

Momentous League Rally Next Week

MUSSOLINI'S Cabinet meeting, summoned with dramatic suddenness by the Italian Dictator, takes place this evening at Bolzano, in the mimic battle area.

It is believed that the primary purpose of the meeting is to consider the exhaustive dossier on Italy's case against Abyssinia, which is to be put before the League next week.

To-day news came from Rome that five ships recently purchased by the Italian Government are being prepared to transport 4,000 men each to East Africa. They will sail from Naples on September 10—six days after the League meeting.

MR. BALDWIN IN TOUCH

AT the momentous League assembly next week, Mr. Anthony Eden, the Minister for League of Nations Affairs, will report on the abortive tri-partite talks in Paris, and it is expected that Italy will then arraign Abyssinia before the League.

To-day it was learned that Mr. Baldwin, who is on holiday at Aix-les-Bains, will not go to Geneva.

He will, however, keep in close touch with Sir Samuel Hoare, the Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Eden, who will represent Great Britain.

BUSY FOREIGN SECRETARY.

Sir Samuel Hoare was early at work at the Foreign Office to-day, arriving there before 10 a.m. The first important caller was Mr. S. M. Bruce, High Commissioner for Australia. Sir Samuel intends to take a cure at Aix-les-Bains following the League deliberations.

Mr. Eden's plans regarding the meetings of the League Council have

August 28 1935.

OUR FIRST ISSUE.

See Page 6.

not yet been definitely settled. He will probably leave London on Monday and will travel straight through to Geneva.

All the ministers will attend Signor Mussolini's Cabinet meeting in the uniforms of the branches of the service to which they have been attached for the manœuvres, says Reuter.

Signor Mussolini, driving his new high-speed Alpha Romeo car, spent the greater part of the morning visiting numerous parts of the front.

THE PRIMATE'S APPEAL.

As a sign of sympathy with Mr. Lansbury's appeal concerning the Italo-Abyssinia war threat, the Archbishop of Canterbury has a letter in "The Times" to-day in which he says:—

"Let me say that I have for some possible simultaneously, so that the voice of a united Christendom might be heard.

"The organization of any such united action is obviously a difficult task and must take some time. But I am already taking counsel as to how far and in what way it may be achieved.

"If this proved to be possible, then Mr. Lansbury's hope of a united gathering calling from Mount Calvary for a truce of God and bidding the war-spirit rest, though (for reasons into which I need not enter) I do not see how it could be fulfilled in literal fact, might be fulfilled in spirit.

LEAGUE SUPPORT.

"It seems to me, therefore, that the immediate duty of Christian citizens is first, indeed and always, to bear witness to that spiritual power which alone can deliver mankind from the fear of war and establish peace, and secondly to take their share in upholding international justice and order.

"For this purpose the League of Nations was founded.

"Therefore in this immediate juncture Christian citizens in our and other countries are surely called to support their Governments in taking such action as will give effect to the Covenant of the League," the letter states.

FRENCH DELEGATION.

PARIS, Wednesday.

The French delegation to the special League Council meeting next Wednesday to consider the Italo-Abyssinian dispute will be:—

M. Laval, Premier and Foreign Minister, M. Herriot, Minister without portfolio, M. Paul Boncour, ex-Foreign Minister, but not in the Cabinet, M. Georges Bonnet, Minister of Commerce; M. Henry Berenger, president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, and M. Paul Bastid, president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber.

It is learned that the Council of Ministers laid down no rigid instructions for the delegation, leaving M. Laval complete freedom of action with a view to (1) averting war in Africa, (2) if possible averting Italy's departure from the League, (3) limiting the consequences of any Italo-Ethiopian war.—Reuter.

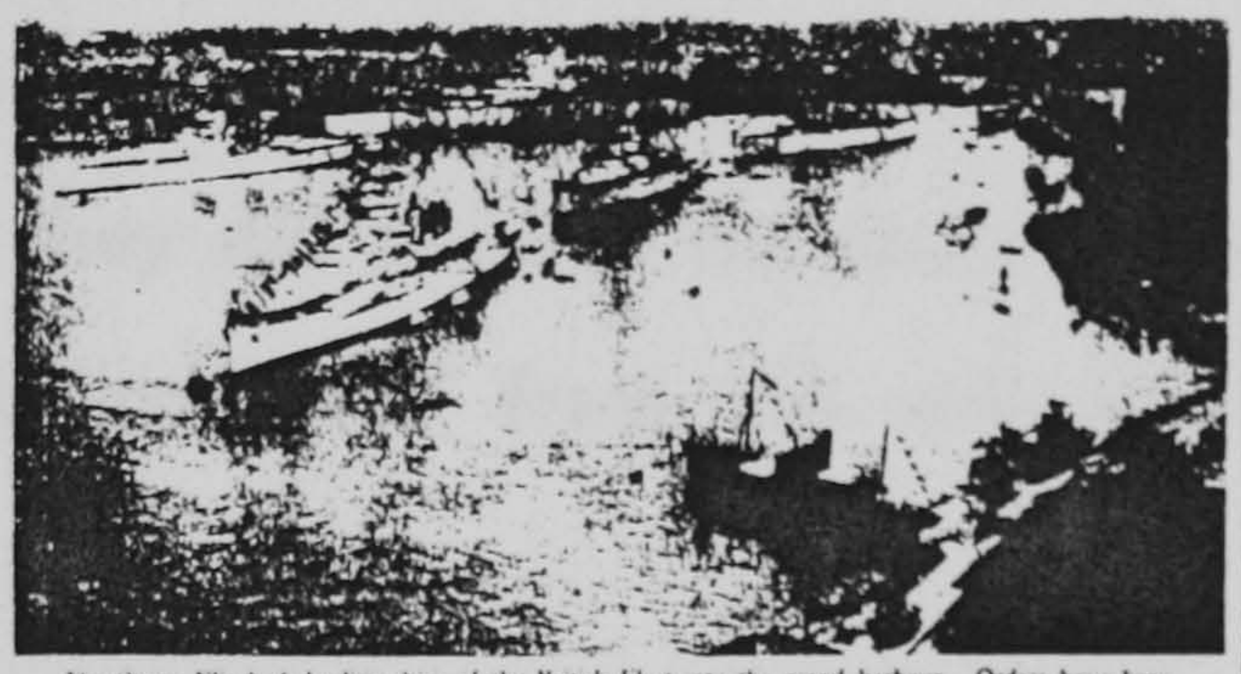
ARCTIC RESCUE

Help Comes at Last for Ice-Trapped Men

COPENHAGEN, Wednesday.

The four Danes marooned among ...

WARSHIPS ENTERING HARBOUR AT MALTA



The Queen Elizabeth leading ships of the British Fleet into the grand harbour. Orders have been given for the construction of air raid shelters for the public at Malta.

THE PRINCE AND READING

GOOD WISHES FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor of Reading (Dr. G. H. R. Holden) who is on holiday at Sutton Devon wired to the "Evening Gazette" this afternoon:

"I wish you the best of luck."

Electric Line To London?

POSSIBILITY OF NEAR FUTURE

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

LONDON, Wednesday.

THERE is a possibility that Reading will be connected with London by a fast electric train service in the near future.

The Southern Railway are considering further developments of their electrification scheme, and I understand that one of the stretches of line that may be adapted for electric trains is the Reading branch line which connects with the main London—Portsmouth line at Weybridge.

GREAT ADVANTAGE.

At the railway company's headquarters, to-day, I was informed by an official that nothing definite could be said at the present time.

"But," it was added, "the company is investigating the possibilities of several stretches of line."

The funeral took place at All Saints, Wokingham, of Mr. James George Gould, of Westcott Road. For many years he was a fish merchant in the Market Place. He was 62 years old.

AUTUMN VISIT REPORT

PROVINCIAL TOUR TO FOLLOW HOLIDAY

BUSY TIME

INQUIRIES AT PALACE

IT is reported that Reading may shortly be honoured with a visit from the Prince of Wales.

Details of the places which the Prince will visit on his return from Cannes in mid-September have not yet been decided upon, but a number of visits to provincial centres are projected, and it has been rumoured that an official visit to Reading may be included.

There can be little doubt that his Royal Highness would receive not only an enthusiastic welcome but would find much to interest him in the remarkable growth of the Borough.

Inquiries were made at St. James's Palace by the Court Correspondent of the "Evening Gazette" to-day, but in the absence of the Prince no definite information could be given.

A PRINCE INJURED

COPENHAGEN, Wednesday.

Prince George of Greece was injured by a splinter of glass when the motor-car in which he was driving came into collision with another car just outside the city to-day. He was taken to the Royal Palace outside Copenhagen.—Reuter.

Baronet Dead In Road Crash

Sir GUY CHETWYND'S TRAGIC HOLIDAY

SIR GUY CHETWYND, Bt., of Budleigh Salterton, Devon, was killed on the Exeter-Okehampton road early to-day when his car was in collision with another at Cheriton Cross.

Sir Guy, who was 61, was on his way to Okehampton, where he was to have been joined by Lady Chetwynd for a holiday.

The occupants of the other car were unhurt.

Sir Guy, who was 61, was the fifth baronet. He succeeded his father in 1917.

He had estates in Warwickshire and Staffordshire. His second wife, whom he married in that year, was Constance Winifred, daughter of Alfred Amor.

He is succeeded by his 33-year-old son, Mr. Victor James Guy Chetwynd.

Ebor Handicap Result

The big race at York to-day resulted as follows:—

1—MUSEUM - - - 100-8

2—JOHN JAMES - - 20-1

3—AUTUMN - - - 10-1

"DUE TO OVERWORK"

His Licence Three Years Overdue

Ernest Noel Skuse, of Purley Rectory, was fined £2 at Reading to-day for driving without a licence and £1 for being without a rear light.

The licence was stated to be three years overdue.

P.C. Thorpe said Skuse's car was stationary at 2.15 a.m. He had a young lady with him and said he had been to a dance.

In a letter to the magistrates Skuse said the offences were "due to overwork."

OH, LAW!

In the Vacation Court to-day Counsel used the colloquialism "pinch" instead of steal ...

ALONE IN HER GRIEF

Girl Friend of Gassed Driver

"A QUIET BOY"

Reading Witness At Inquest Held To-Night

A GRIEF-STRICKEN girl of 20 sat in her room in Grange Avenue, Reading, to-day, pondering over the strange trick which fate has played her.

She is Miss Jennie Hunter, a Yorkshire girl employed at Huntley and Palmers, Reading, and shortly after her arrival in Reading she became acquainted with a brilliant young engineer, Leonard Walter Sowney, of Lent Rise, Burnham, who was found dead at the wheel of his car in Windsor Great Park on Monday.

To-night the Bucks coroner is to hold an inquest and Miss Hunter will be an important witness.

STILL DAZED.

An "Evening Gazette" reporter who saw her before she left for the inquest to-day found her still terribly dazed by the shock of her friend's untimely death.

"So far as I know he had nothing to worry him," she said.

"He was certainly a very quiet boy," she added. "He studied a great deal and his outlook on life may have been a serious one, but I can't for a moment imagine that he was a fatalist in any way."

Miss Hunter emphasised that she and the dead boy were merely great friends.

On learning of Sowney's death, Miss Hunter immediately journeyed to his home to see his parents.

RETURNED TO DIE

Tragedy of a Former Army Officer

Enquiries are being made into the cause of the death of Mr. Herbert Edward Vincent Rosser, who collapsed and died at Marlow to-day.

Mr. Rosser packed his belongings yesterday afternoon and left his lodgings. This morning he was seen outside the gate and heard to be groaning.

A post-mortem examination is being performed to-night.

Rosser, who was aged about 50, has a wife living in Cheltenham.

It is hoped she may be able to throw some light on her husband's ... at his ...

Dr. Azaj Warqneh C. Martin, the new Abyssinian Minister in London.

OVEN BATTLE LOOMING

Reading's Baking Challenged

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

LONDON, Wednesday.

WOMEN are to challenge Reading's reputation for bakery at the forthcoming Confectioners and Bakers Exhibition.

These women bakers have been steadily increasing in number for the past five years and the present total entry of nearly 10,000 includes the largest percentage of women competitors in the history of the event.

PREFER HARD WORK.

"There has always been a sprinkling of women represented in the 'fancy' classes but this year they are concentrating on the hard work, the plain baking classes," an official of the Exhibition told the "Evening Gazette" to-day.

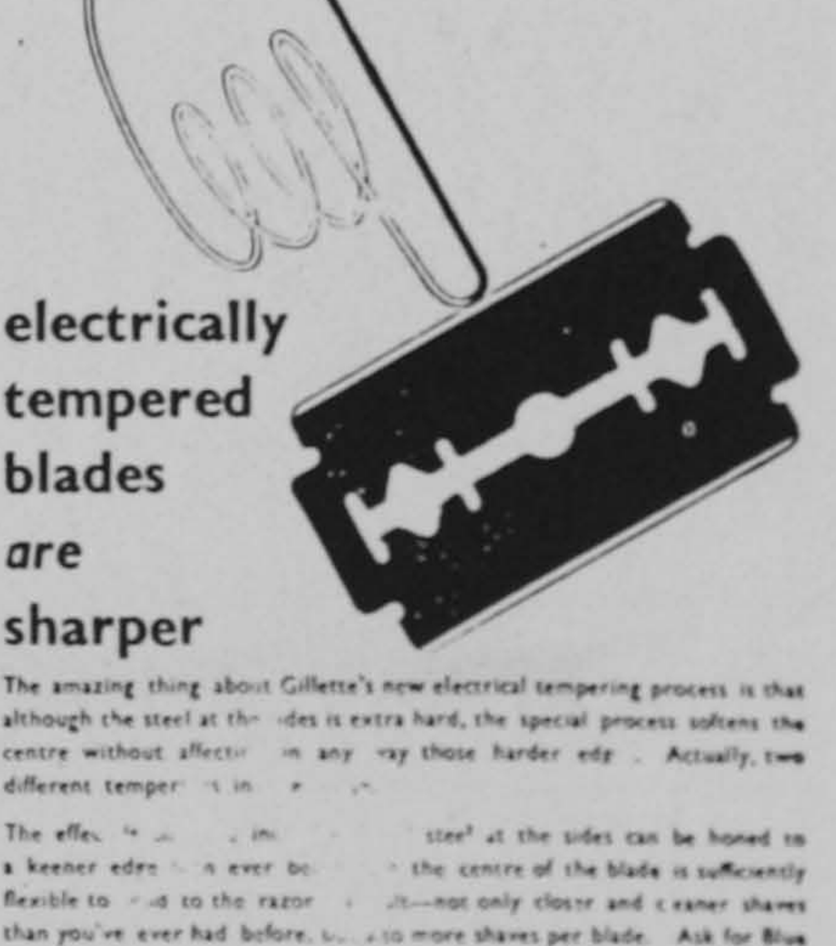
STRONG CLASSES.

These are the classes in which the Thames Valley have always been very strong.

Previously this work was considered too hard for a woman. Bread-making on a large scale demanded a very fit baker, but machinery has simplified the work, and women can now handle as large an order as the men.

Although the exhibition is not to be held until September 7, when it will run for a week at the Agricultural Hall, London, many of the exhibits are already made.

IT'S A FACT!



electrically tempered blades are sharper

The amazing thing about Gillette's new electrical tempering process is that although the steel at the sides is extra hard, the special process softens the centre without affecting in any way those harder edges. Actually, two different tempers in one blade.

The effect ... steel at the sides can be honed to a keener edge than ever before ... the centre of the blade is sufficiently flexible to ... to the razor ... —not only closer and cleaner shaves than you've ever had before, but also more shaves per blade. Ask for Blue Gillettes—they fit any Gillette razor that has ever been made.

LARGE PACKET 2/6 SMALL PACKET 1/3

Front page of the *Evening Gazette* no. 1 August 1935

to the extent that 33% of the *Gazette* contained advertisements, most of which was display.

Much to the delight of the *Gazette* staff, the paper captured a scoop on the second day of publication, when they were able to run the story of the sad death of the Queen of the Belgians in a road accident.[14] This story was in the early editions of the *Gazette* before the London papers had any inkling of it, and when they did publish the story in later editions the *Gazette* had a follow-up 'exclusive' from the only eye witness to the accident.

Despite this early promise, however, the *Gazette* was fighting an extremely difficult battle to gain a foothold in the area and was no doubt beginning to appreciate the magnitude of the task they had undertaken, for it is one thing to set up and produce a newspaper but an entirely different problem to persuade the public to buy it and to use it as a medium for advertising. On the day of its first edition, the contents bill displayed for the *Star* on newsvendors' pitches in the town read

READING

GOES ON

READING

The STAR

and to a large extent it appears to have done so, for that London evening paper had a large clientele in Reading.

If the *Gazette* were to secure a position in the area and survive as a healthy paper, it had, above all, to attract the necessary revenue from advertisers, and there is no doubt that it realized this. Within a few weeks

---

14 *Evening Gazette*, no. 2, Thursday 29 August 1935.

of the first edition being produced, the *Gazette* employed a research company to undertake a survey of the readership pattern of the paper, which they published with a view to attracting more advertising. This report, produced by Repford Ltd, suggested that

> 89.09% of all people reading an evening paper read the *Evening Gazette*.
> 86.52% of all the readership of the *Evening Gazette* is not duplicated by any other paper.
> 77.92% of all retailers taking an evening paper take the *Evening Gazette*.
> 47.85% of the readership of the *Evening Gazette* is not duplicated by any local weekly newspaper.

These statistics were used in an advertisement which appeared in *World Press News*, the journal used by advertisers associated with newspapers,[15] but it seems likely that very few readers of this report were taken in by these rather loose statistics.

The paper was obviously experiencing great difficulty in making headway on the advertising front and by the early months of 1936 the advertising content of the *Gazette* had fallen to between 20% and 13%. Even Lord Camrose was moved to comment on the situation when he addressed the annual general meeting of the Allied group in May of that year, saying that even though the sale of the *Gazette* was making steady progress,

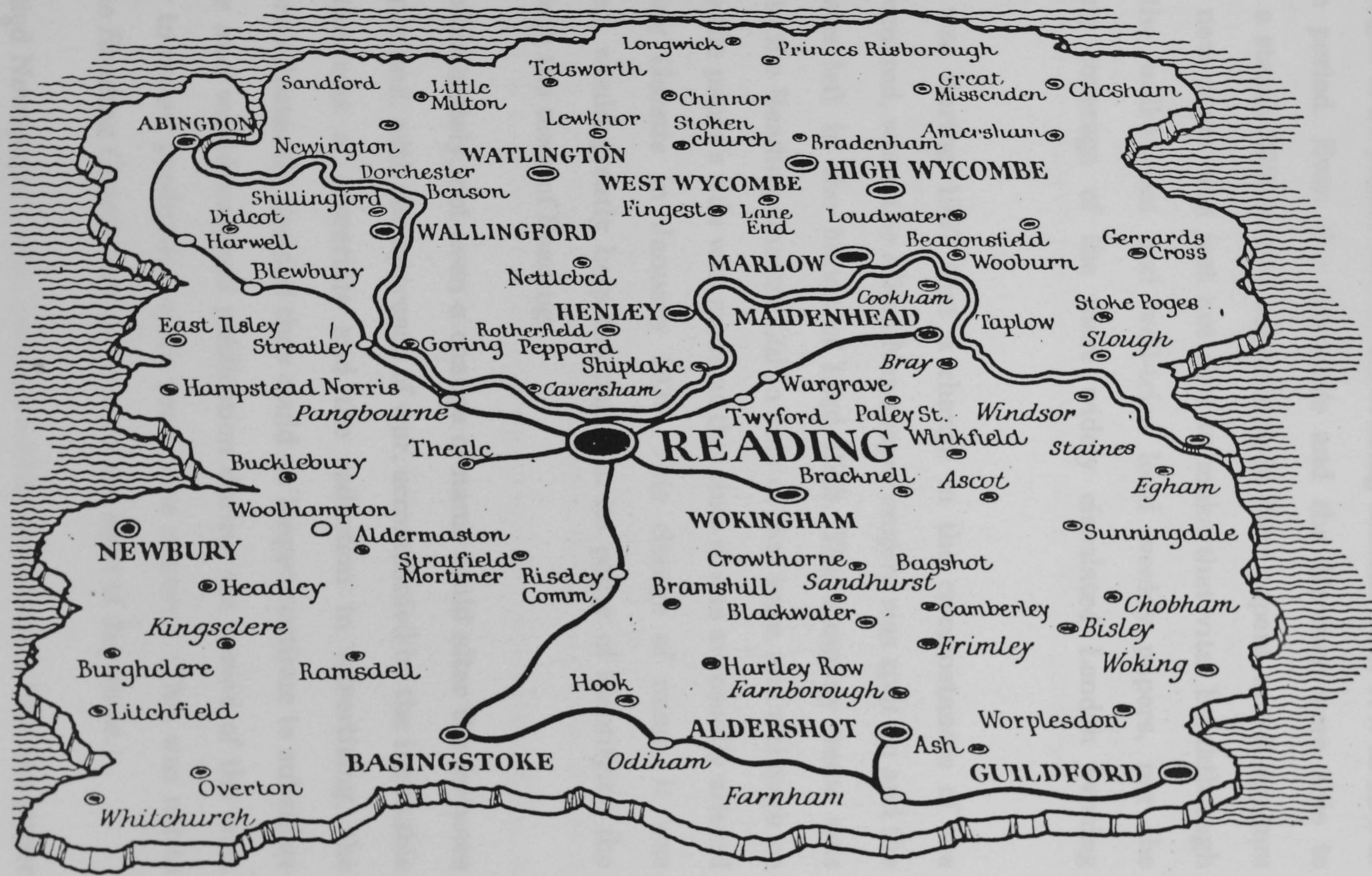
> ...as in all ventures of this kind, the local advertiser takes time to recognize the value of the opportunity offered to him.[16]

Despite these problems, the *Gazette* carried on, but it was never able to get very much more advertising on a regular basis and by March 1937 this lack of advertising, no doubt coupled with the burden of a fifteen per cent rise in the cost of newsprint, caused the proprietors to reduce the

---

15 *World Press News*, 21 November 1935. See illustration overleaf.

16 *World Press News*, 14 May 1936.



The *Evening Gazette*'s circulation area in 1935

paper to ten pages.[17] This state of affairs should be compared with the *Reading Standard*, which had, since the middle of 1935, increased its size from 20 pages to 24 pages, and its advertising content from 47% to 58% in the same period. Even the *Chronicle* and the *Mercury* were able to maintain a steady 36% to 40% advertising in their papers, and it appears as if the new paper was just not able to make that vital breakthrough against the well-known and well-tried local weekly papers, nor the advertising coverage of the more widely circulated London evening papers.

It was during 1937 that a change in the circumstances of the *Gazette* occurred, when the Allied Newspaper empire was split up and the *Gazette* was left in the hands of Lord Iliffe. The company name was changed to the Reading Gazette Ltd in July of that year, and although no change to the paper's title was made at this time it was eventually altered to *Reading Gazette* in January 1939. This change of name, it was announced, would greatly help the paper in its policy of identifying the *Gazette* with the town of Reading.

Unfortunately, not even a change of name could alter the fortunes of the paper and, with the approach of war, accompanied by the inevitable rise in the cost of materials and the reduction in advertising, the proprietors reluctantly decided they could no longer continue to subsidize the paper and would suspend publication during the period of the war, hopefully to renew production when peace was restored. (This was not to be and the *Reading Gazette* has never seen the light of day since.)

Allied Newspapers were perhaps a little unfortunate that the paper was at such a critical stage just at the point when the Second World War

---

17 See Appendix A.

erupted, for it could be argued that, if given a little more time, the paper might have been made into a profitable publication.

However, for all the expert and wealthy backing of Allied Newspapers, it was never able to break the stranglehold over local advertising held by the three local weeklies, particularly that of the *Reading Standard*. Despite all attempts to improve the quality of its pictures, it also never matched the quality of the halftones in the *Chronicle* nor the superb quality of those which Rivers produced in the *Standard*.

The early optimism of Allied Newspapers that a locally printed paper would get news onto the streets ahead of the London evenings frequently did not materialize, for the *Star*, *Evening Standard* and *Evening News* invariably were able to produce fudge news on their papers and still be on sale before the *Gazette*.[18] It was also said that the policy of the paper to provide a balanced view in its reporting resulted in the paper never really having a view about anything and that this was also a reason for its lack of circulation.[19] Whatever the reason for its demise, it was a sad loss to the newspaper industry, although the three London evening papers were no doubt glad to see it go, and the whole *Gazette* enterprise was later to be used as an example to other prospective papers planned for areas like Reading.

Perhaps the best epitaph to the paper's passing was written some twenty-five years later, on the eve of the new and exciting daily evening

---

18 Interview with F. E. Holloway.

19 This view was frequently expressed by those who had worked in the press in Reading at this time, including a number who worked on the *Gazette*, and also by some of those people who were readers of the *Gazette*.

paper, the *Evening Post*, which Lord Thomson's company started in Reading:

> When the last of the small blue gold lettered vans had dashed off with its load of *Gazettes* and contents bills that night, and the subs had gone home, and the crowd on the second floor had stopped chattering, the end of a hectic chapter in newspaper history had suddenly been reached.[20]

---

20 *World Press News*, 13 May 1964.

CHAPTER XIII

§

EVENING POST 1965-1980

On Tuesday 14 September 1965, the first copies of a new regional evening paper, the *Evening Post*, came off the press in Reading and were distributed to readers in the Thames Valley.

The arrival of this new paper had been eagerly awaited, not only by the population in the Reading area, but by the world's press, which was intrigued to see how successful the first British computer-set web offset-printed newspaper would be. For, although the *Evening Post* had been planned by the The Thomson Organisation Ltd as a 'low cost' operation, everyone with knowledge of the newspaper industry was well aware that it involved a £1 million capital investment,[1] and that it was very much a guinea pig operation. Only a newspaper with the huge financial resources behind it that The Thomson Organisation had could contemplate such a breakaway from the traditional hotmetal method of production. It was hoped to prove that increased productivity could be achieved by using the advanced techniques of computerized typesetting, and thus operate a local evening newspaper on cost scales lower than those of the conventional letterpress hotmetal setting.

---

1 Rex Gerrie, Managing Director of the *Evening Post* in 1965, in *World Press News*, Advertising Supplement, 10 September 1965.

JULIANS TAXIS CARS

EVENING POST

No. 1 TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 14 1965 4d

Get over the hump safely in... Britax safety belts

Queen sends warm good wishes

The Queen very much appreciates the kind message of loyal greetings which you have sent to Her Majesty on behalf of the staff of the EVENING POST on the first day of its publication. Please convey The Queen's thanks to them and her warm good wishes to all the readers of this new evening newspaper.

PRIVATE SECRETARY

Preparing for another demonstration of her skill on the water skis — Reading's Pam Horton, one of the blonde sisters behind the water spectaculars at Theale Gravel Pits that are now firm dates on the calendars of dozens of enthusiasts.

Pam, who with sister Jill tours the country with her aqua show, trained in the Cypress Gardens, Florida, where she led the ski-girls before returning home to form the Theale Water Ski club.

Brother, sister killed in French holiday smash

Lord Thomson reads the first copy to come off the presses. Watching him are Mr. R. K. Gerrie, Managing Director of the Evening Post, Ald. Mrs. Alice Burrows, Mayor of Reading, Mr. A. M. Burnett-Stuart, Deputy Managing Director of the Thomson Organisation Ltd., and Mr. F. J. C. Pole chairman of the Evening Post.

TWO children of a wealthy Reading businessman were killed and four of the family are today lying in hospital after a road accident in France.

The dead children were Nicholas Sarjent aged one, and Nina Margaret Sarjent, aged 18 of High Thatch, Chalk House Green, near Reading.

Their father Mr Anthony Sarjent aged 44 his wife Margaret aged 44 and two other children, Ann Marie, aged 13, and brother David, aged seven are in hospital at Chatillon-sur-Seine.

Nina died in Dijon Hospital and Nicholas was killed instantly, police report.

A spokesman for the hospital at Chatillon-sur-Seine said today that Mr Sarjent and his wife were suffering from shock, and were being detained for observation.

The two other children, David and Ann-Marie are being treated for broken bones in their hands and contusions on their bodies.

A Spanish maid with the family who were returning home by car after a three-week European tour, was also hurt when the car skidded and crashed at St. Marc-sur-Seine in Central France.

Mr. Sarjent is a director, with his two brothers, of Sarjent's the tools and hardware store in Oxford Road Reading.

The family, who have lived for the last ten years at High Thatch, have a flat in Venice, and have spent their summer holidays there for several years.

This year they had also been touring France and Switzerland in their Jaguar car.

Princess Alex - in colour

TOMORROW

Tomorrow the Evening Post brings you a four-colour Cecil Beaton portrait of Princess Alexandra and her husband, taken on the eve of their departure for Japan. On page 3 Yvonne Thomas tells the story of the gay princess and their tour.

Landscape in distress

Who are to blame for the planning blunders in South Oxfordshire? Lionel Brett (Viscount Esher), president of the RIBA, in the second extract from his controversial book examines this vital problem.

Car test

From your armchair you can go with John Fielding on a road test of the Vantage engined Aston Martin DB5. It's the hot spot of two pages of motoring news.

£52m TRADE DEFICIT

Britain's visible trade deficit in August was £52,000,000 on a seasonally adjusted basis, the Board of Trade announced today.

Exports were valued provisionally at £391 million, seasonally adjusted, imports at £500 million, and re-exports at £13 million. The crude gap was thus £94 million.

Last month the provisional figures for July were given as: Exports £417,000,000, re-exports £17 million, imports £484 million. The visible deficit for July was £1 million and the crude gap £50 million.

Exports in August, though lower than the record figure for July, were above the average for the year so far, said the Board.

WEATHER

It will be dry with sunny intervals becoming cloudy this evening with rain in places tonight and tomorrow morning. Winds light southerly increasing to moderate. Temperatures will be near normal maximum 19deg C (66deg F).

Lighting-up time 7.19pm to 6.1am.

LATEST

Lord Thomson sets Post presses rolling

The Hon. David Smith, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire.

THE birth of the Evening Post today marked Reading's coming of age, Lord Thomson of Fleet told a party of more than 100 at a luncheon in honour of the occasion.

Lord Thomson pressed the button of the Evening Post's new press at Tessa Road, Reading, just before midday. With him was Her Majesty's Lieutenant for Berkshire, the Hon. David J. Smith, the Mayor of Reading, Alderman Mrs. Alice Burrows and senior Thomson Organisation Ltd executives.

In a marquee beside the Thames at Caversham local civic dignitaries and community leaders from Berkshire and the surrounding areas heard Lord Thomson recall: "It was in Canada that I first learnt the part which a daily newspaper can play in providing a focus for community activities, and it was in Canada that I realised that a city or town could hardly be said to have come of age until it had its own daily newspaper."

Lord Thomson continued: "It is my philosophy that there comes a time when weekly newspapers are not enough, when, with the growing importance of the community, the requirement for a daily newspaper manifests itself in order that a virile and developing local economy may be continuously furnished with more up to date local news and advertising services.

"It seemed to me and my colleagues that almost more than anywhere else in Britain the area comprising Reading and its neighbouring boroughs and districts needed a newspaper of its own.

"It came as a considerable surprise to me when I first started operating in Britain to discover how many large and important towns had no daily newspaper, particularly since these areas had populations many times greater than those which in Canada are considered an adequate base for ..."

Lord Thomson revealed that development teams from Thomson Regional Newspapers who spent more than two years planning the Evening Post operation — were already at work in other areas and would be publishing results of their findings shortly.

Evening Post Managing Director Mr R. K. Gerrie welcomed Lord Thomson and the guests.

"This is a great and historic day for the whole of the newspaper industry," he told them, "and a joyous one for every member of the staff of the Evening Post.

"We have had to learn many things the hard way because there was nowhere in this country, or, for that matter, in the world where we could go and get a blueprint for this sort of operation," he continued.

"Now the Evening Post is the blueprint for Britain and the rest of the world."

Addressing Lord Thomson, Mr Gerrie concluded: "I would like to extend to you my sincere personal thanks for all your inspiration and for all that you have made possible today and to say how grateful we of the Evening Post and our guests are to you for joining us on what I know is also a very big day of fulfilment for you personally."

EVENING POST Enterprise

Make a note of these exciting events arranged by the Evening Post to launch the new evening paper.

WEDNESDAY: The local charity Holiday Homes for Old People will benefit from the gala film show at Odeon Cinema, Reading, "How to Murder Your Wife."

THURSDAY: Big names in newspapers will meet at Reading University to discuss "The role of the Press in modern society." The discussion is to be broadcast later.

FRIDAY: A large-scale Thames Side Promenade, Reading. It will be open to the public from 10.30am to 7pm every day for a week. That evening the finals will be taking place at the Excel Bowl of the Championship of Reading tenpin tournament.

SATURDAY: Here's a free day out for the family, a spectacular water carnival takes place at the promenade opening at 2.30pm. There the Evening Post's Personality Girl will be chosen.

YET TO COME: From September 27 the Evening Post will be presenting a music ...

MORE and MORE

PEOPLE ARE OPENING

6% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS

A Deposit Account with Lombard Banking provides a good rate of interest with absolute safety for your capital, leading to financial peace of mind. While on deposit, your money earns interest steadily, but can easily be withdrawn subject to the notice you arrange when the Account is opened. Further payments can be made into the Account whenever you choose, making an excellent way of making good use of your capital.

To earn 6% per annum the minimum notice of withdrawal is six months, but the first £100 can be withdrawn on demand. Write now to the General Manager for further particulars and your copy of "Deposit Account" Booklet No. 000.

LOMBARD BANKING

Head Office: LOMBARD HOUSE, CURZON ST., PARK LANE, LONDON W.1. GROSVENOR 4111 (8 LINES)
City Office: 31 LOMBARD ST., LONDON, E.C.3. MINCING LANE 4111 (7 LINES)

Local Branch Offices: Lombard House
49 High Street, Oxford · Oxford 48076 (3 lines)
296 Kings Road, Reading · Reading 61371 (6 lines)

6 days a week shopping at
HOUSEMANS
READINGS CENTRE FOR ALL BABYS NEEDS

■ See the exclusive ROYALE Baby Carriages availabe in Reading ONLY at HOUSEMANS

HOUSEMANS PRAM CLUB
Pay what you like when you like, we will store your pram and deliver by our own van when it is needed. In the event of misfortune we refund your money.

MATERNITY WEAR, BABY WEAR, COTS, NURSERY FURNITURE
TOYS for children of all ages
BABY CARRIAGES and PUSH CHAIRS, including Royals, Restmor, Pedigree, Comfifolds, Leeway, TanSad, etc.

You'll find EVERYTHING for your BABY at ...

We follow the stork

HOUSEMANS
15 OXFORD ROAD, READING
Telephone 58961
and at 36 Cheap St. Newbury. Tel 961

First edition of the *Evening Post* September 1965

The reason for so much interest in the *Evening Post* operation was that, if it succeeded, it would inevitably lead to a fundamental change in the production organisation of other newspapers, as not only The Thomson Organisation but also other proprietors would embark on the use of new technologies to cut down the high production costs of newspapers. Additionally, the advantages of web offset printing are such that they would enable companies to improve the appearance of their papers considerably, for the process results in much better reproduction of illustrations, allows for high flexibility in layout, and offers the facility to print one or more colours including four-colour process over a wide range of pages for both editorial and advertising content.

While the introduction of new technology was certainly the focus of the newspaper world's attention, it had not been the primary consideration by The Thomson Organisation when they had first embarked on the planning which ultimately led to the establishment of the *Evening Post*. That thinking had been focused very much on the use of local newspapers as vehicles for consumer advertising, and the application of new technology to produce those papers came into consideration at a later stage.

Lord Thomson of Fleet, the owner of the *Evening Post*, had made a considerable impact on the press in this country since the time when, as a newspaper owner from Canada, whose background was virtually unknown in Great Britain, he had purchased the *Scotsman* in 1953. At that time, fellow Canadian Lord Beaverbrook had described Roy Thomson as '...a little guy. Owns a lot of little newspapers.'[2] By 1965, however, Thomson had become the owner of Scottish Television, he had bought the

---

2 As quoted in Francis Williams, *The Right to Know*, (1969), p. 168.

Sunday Times in 1959, and had acquired the Kemsley group of newspapers from Lord Kemsley in the same year. He had thus progressed from the 'little guy' to the position of 'press baron' with a seat in the House of Lords in a comparatively short time, and was very much a force to be reckoned with in the world of newspaper publishing.

Thomson's success with Canadian newspapers had revolved around converting them into purveyors of local advertising. With the changing pattern of retailing in this country, coupled with the rising population and improving socio-economic standards, particularly in the Home Counties, he visualized a series of local evening papers which would form a ring around London and which would be able to capitalize on this rapidly growing need for local advertising media.

Accordingly the section of The Thomson Organisation Ltd which was concerned with regional newspapers embarked on an examination of those areas where, it was considered, an unsatisfied need existed for evening newspapers which could be coupled to an expanding advertising market.

To achieve this, four main criteria were used to assist in determining which towns would warrant detailed investigation:

1. The town should not have an existing evening paper. As no city in Britain apart from London and Glasgow could really support more than one evening paper, it was considered to be absurd to start up a new paper in direct competition with an established one.

2. The town should have a large enough population, coupled with a reasonably high hinterland population, to provide a

viable circulation, the costs of distribution working against the distribution of a regional daily paper over large distances.

3. The local trade and business conditions should be such that a considerable volume of local display and classified advertising should be available. This advertising should be sufficient to enable the paper to be an economic proposition, certainly in the long term.

4. In towns where the other three criteria obtained, an examination of the strong weekly papers which existed should be undertaken to ascertain whether at least one could be acquired for conversion into an evening paper. For, while it is possible in theory to set up a new paper from scratch, in practice it is always considerably better to use an established paper as a springboard, when launching a new paper into an area.[3]

Over a period of three years from 1961, an increasingly intensive marketing investigation was conducted, during which time a number of towns met the first three criteria and, of these, Reading was one of the leading candidates, appearing to be well above the national average, as the following table illustrates:

---

3 Harry Henry, Marketing Director of The Thomson Organisation Ltd, in *World Press News*, Advertising Supplement, 10 September 1965.

	BRITAIN	READING C B
Annual retail turnover:		
Average retail sales per head	£174	£284
Average annual retail sales per household	£547	£883
Average annual sales per retail establishment	£15,449	£27,756

	BRITAIN	EVENING POST CIRCULATION AREA
Socio-economic structure:		
AB	11.9%	25.8%
C1	18.5%	19.6%
C2	38.5%	29.6%
Percentage of population under 35 years of age:	49.2%	53.4%
Population growth 30% above national average:		
Population growth 1951-1961	7.7%	39.9%
Household growth 1951-1961	15.1%	51.0%

(Figures taken from *Census of Distribution*, 1961; and *Census of Population*, 1961)

Apart from the use of such information for assessing the potential viability of a new paper, the results of such work were obviously of great value to The Thomson Organisation as a means of defining advertising and circulation potential in any area and thus a means of determining the allocation of resources to any of the company's existing papers.

The fourth criterion was the one which presented the research team with the greatest problem, particularly as most local weekly papers, in areas which met the first three criteria, were themselves capitalizing on the growth in advertising and were consequently reluctant to sell out to another company. Those which did indicate an interest in selling inevitably asked far too high a price, thus placing them out of reach, as the conversion of a weekly paper into an evening paper in itself demands considerable material capital investment.

As circumstances turned out, the *Reading Standard*, which was the most successful local weekly paper in the Reading area and which met all the Thomson criteria, became the subject of a takeover bid by the *News of the World* during 1963. The *News of the World* moved very slowly, with the result that the availability of the *Standard* became known to other people in the newspaper world. This was just the opportunity that The Thomson Organisation was looking for, and Lord Thomson moved swiftly and decisively to outmanoeuvre his rival and acquire the *Standard* for himself, in order to introduce an evening paper into the Thames Valley area.[4]

By 1963, however, experiments with electronic computers and photographic methods of typesetting were beginning to show the likely path of future typesetting methods, and these results, together with the dawning possibilities of using web offset for newspaper production, caused Thomson to hesitate in his plans to go ahead immediately with the launching of the *Evening Post*. It was decided to wait in order to take full advantage of the latest technical developments, including a new electronic phototypesetting system, which was still in the prototype stage.

In 1960, Lord Thomson had stated publicly on several occasions that colour printing for newspapers was not a practical proposition, mainly due to the lack of presses able to undertake such accurate work but also because of the immense costs involved. However, he further stated that the colour printing of newspapers would come, and that those companies willing to spend money on the process would be the ones to forge ahead.[5] By 1963 Lord Thomson obviously felt that progress in this

---

4 See Chapter XI, p. 278.

5 Lord Thomson, in a speech to the Guild of British Newspapers, April 1960.

field had reached a point where it was worth the risk of going forward with a web offset/colour-printed newspaper, and as it was to be the first in its field it is not surprising that the world's press watched with considerable interest.

Despite the *Reading Standard*'s move into new premises during 1960, these were judged to be unsuitable for the needs of a daily paper, particularly one which required the clean environment necessary for such a sensitive electronic typesetting computer system. A suitable side-by-side warehouse building was found on a trading estate in Tessa Road, Caversham, and this was acquired for the press and for the publishing area. Next to this building, a new modern office block was added, to house the administrative and advertising offices, the editorial department, the composing room, and the plate-making department.

For those brought up in the traditional hotmetal composing room of a newspaper office, with clattering Linotype machines and the heat and dust of typesetting and stereo making, the new electronic and paste-up composing room was more akin to a clinical laboratory. Instead of twenty-four Linotype machines, which would have cost some £192,000, two new Photon photo-typesetters were installed, each capable of setting a line a second. Built in Wilmington, Massachusetts, USA, at a cost of £20,000 each, they represented a considerable saving on conventional equipment. To these was added a Scottish-built National Elliot 803 computer costing approximately £30,000, and with an additional £20,000 spent on a reserve Photon the total outlay for typesetting equipment was in the region of £90,000, representing a huge saving compared with the traditional cost.[6]

---

6 *World Press News*, 23 April 1965. Advertising material from Crosfield Electronics and Elliot Computers. Also: costs gathered from various sources by A. T. Watts during 1965.

To this was added a new six-unit Halley-Aller web offset press, capable of producing 50,000 copies an hour of a 24-page edition with spot colour (black, plus one, two, or three colours and full process colour), which cost a further £120,000, considerably less than the cost of a traditional letterpress machine.

Not only was the cost of the new equipment cheaper, but the productivity of the new typesetting system was estimated to be approximately thirty per cent more efficient than hotmetal. The fact that only twelve keyboard operators were needed to cope with all the setting necessary for a daily evening paper[7] meant that only half of the *Reading Standard*'s operators were needed, and as the correction of errors was considerably easier with the new punch-tape reader, fewer readers also were required. Finally, as the product of the new typesetter was in bromide form, each page was assembled by paste-up ready for camera, again an operation which needed fewer staff than in a conventional hotmetal composing room.

The introduction of phototypesetting and web offset meant that all the production staff needed to be retrained, for all the *Reading Standard* compositors, linotype operators, and machine minders were letterpress people. For the pressmen, this meant learning a completely new printing process, whilst the compositors had to adapt to paste-up techniques rather than the laborious and rather dirty page make-up of hotmetal. For the keyboard operators the transition was possibly the most difficult, for they had to adapt to the 'qwerty' keyboard from the somewhat complex Linotype one, but for them the move away from the clatter of matrices and the heat and smell of hotmetal was a considerable improvement. The

---

7 Dr Tom Margerison, *Use of Computers in Europe*, (1965), p. 7. See illustration overleaf.

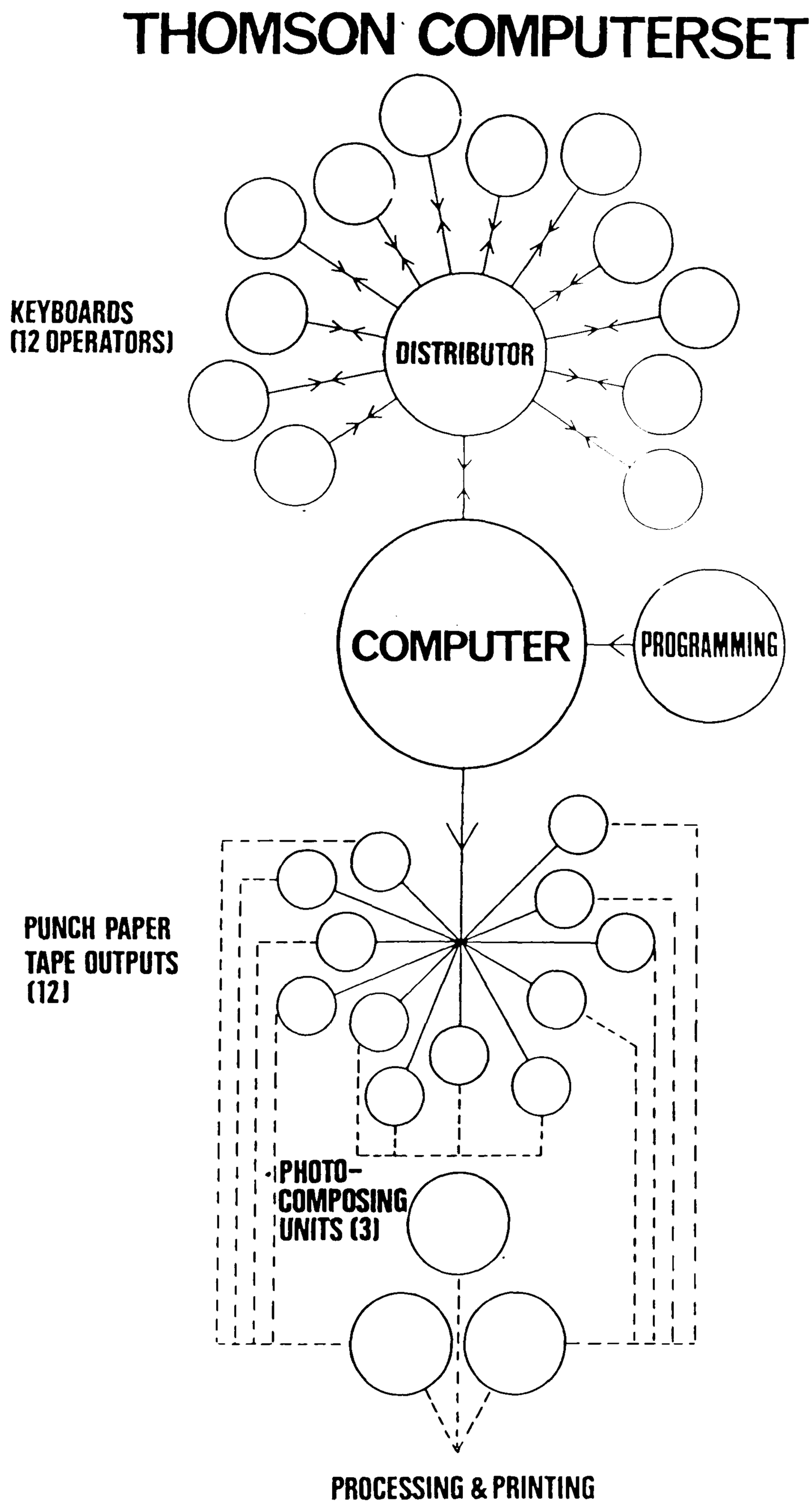


Diagram of the Thomson Computerset layout

retraining had to be fitted into the normal working schedule for the weekly *Reading Standard*, and had to ensure that all the workers were skilled enough in the new techniques to move into the production of a daily paper.

Many of the *Standard*'s production staff moved over to the *Evening Post* and assumed the same positions of responsibility they had enjoyed with the weekly paper; thus F. E. Holloway became the overseer of the new automated composing room, H. Wortley continued as the press room manager, and P. Old, who had been head of the stereo department with the *Reading Standard* assumed control of the camera and plate making section.

The *Post*'s new display advertisement manager was J. F. Hancock, who had held the same position for seven years at the *Standard*, while W. J. Pettengell, who had stepped down as editor of the *Reading Standard* in 1962, was given the task of establishing the *Post*'s own press cuttings library.

Unfortunately, A. Sandall, recently appointed editor of the *Reading Standard*, found himself once more in the position of deputy editor. The new editor was H. Greene, formerly deputy editor of The Thomson Organisation's *South Wales Echo*.

With the possibility of lower costs and higher productivity from a system like the Thomson Computerset, it is not surprising that so much interest was aroused amongst the international newspaper industry, particularly as it offered the possibility for quite small-circulation regional papers, of between 30,000 and 40,000 copies per day, to be able to reduce costs and operate at a profit. Aware of this interest, and not being one to miss an opportunity for publicity, Lord Thomson arranged for a

demonstration of the new system in March 1965, to which the Minister of Technology, was invited. The following day it was the turn of the Postmaster General, Anthony Wedgwood Benn, to see the new system, and many people from industry, publishing, and advertising were also able to see the new system over the following days. The result of this public relations demonstration by Lord Thomson was considerable publicity for the organization, and more particularly for the coming *Evening Post*, and the interest generated produced a steady stream of visitors from overseas who wished to see the new typesetting system; this stream was to increase to a flood when the *Evening Post* was in full production — so much so, that the paper had to make special arrangements in order to cope with the extraordinary interest shown by the newspaper industry.

While the installation of new equipment was going ahead, the Thomson promotion department was hard at work in a major effort to persuade the people of Reading to buy an evening paper — a particularly difficult task, as their research had shown that the readership of an evening newspaper was very low in the district. Using local weekly papers, door-to-door canvassers, posters, and through the pages of the *Reading Standard*, the promotions department attempted to persuade the public that the forthcoming paper was not just another evening paper but something entirely new and well worth buying. The poster campaign was exceptionally good, for it was presented in such a way that people's curiosity was aroused and maintained right up to the launch of the *Post*. This was achieved by taking the new *Evening Post* symbol (designed by Robert Harling) and distorting it in a visualizer; it was then presented in various forms such as posters, beer mats, lapel badges, and on buses.[8] The

---

8 See illustration overleaf.

Top – 48–sheet teaser. Middle – 16–sheet teaser, teaser beer-mat/badge/bus target and teaser bus-side. Bottom – Final phase 48–sheet.

Evening Post logo used in advertising campaign

strange black and yellow symbol appeared everywhere and engendered considerable interest. Gradually the symbol also began appearing in three subsequent phases, each containing more detail and offering clues to the identity of the product, until finally a new set of posters appeared with the full logo and sales message on it.

As a culmination to these activities, during the week immediately prior to the production of the *Post* there was a gala charity film performance, a press forum at Reading University (with the Vice-Chancellor, Woodrow Wyatt MP, Sir Linton Andrews, and Harry Henry who was then Marketing Director of The Thomson Organisation Ltd, as guest speakers), a large careers exhibition, and a carnival Saturday devoted to 'hearty English' entertainment, including fireworks, jousting on the River Thames and roasting oxen.

Just to make sure that the local people knew what to expect, 150,000 preview copies of the *Evening Post* were delivered to households throughout the circulation area and each copy was followed up by a canvassing team who sought the opinions of the recipients of the new paper.

The day before the *Evening Post* was to start, Lord Thomson announced plans for another new evening paper, the *Burnley Evening Star*, which, like the *Post*, was to use the latest printing technology. On the morning of the launch of the *Post*, Lord Thomson presided over a luncheon party held by the river Thames, adjacent to the paper's new factory and offices. About a hundred local civic dignitaries and community leaders from Berkshire and the surrounding areas attended, together with a number of people associated with the local press. In a speech to his

guests, Lord Thomson re-emphasized his own philosophy concerning the establishment of local daily papers:

> ...there comes a time when weekly newspapers are not enough; when, with the growing importance of the community, the newspaper manifests itself in order that a virile and developing local economy may be continuously furnished with more up-to-date local news and advertising services.[9]

He went on to express the conviction that the Reading area, more than almost any other in the country, needed a newspaper of its own, and his surprise that no one had attempted to embark on one before.

Just before midday, Lord Thomson, accompanied by Her Majesty's Lieutenant for Berkshire, the Hon. David Smith, the Mayor of Reading, Mrs Alice Burrows, and senior executives of The Thomson Organisation Ltd, pressed the button to start the new press and print the first edition of the *Evening Post*.[10]

At around five thousand copies[11] into the first run disaster struck and, with many members of the world's press looking on, an electrical gremlin in the press caused the machine to stop. Despite a considerable effort by the maintenance crew, the press could not be run again that day. Fortunately most of the promised local deliveries had been made, but the stoppage came as an extremely cruel blow on what was to have been Lord Thomson's great day.

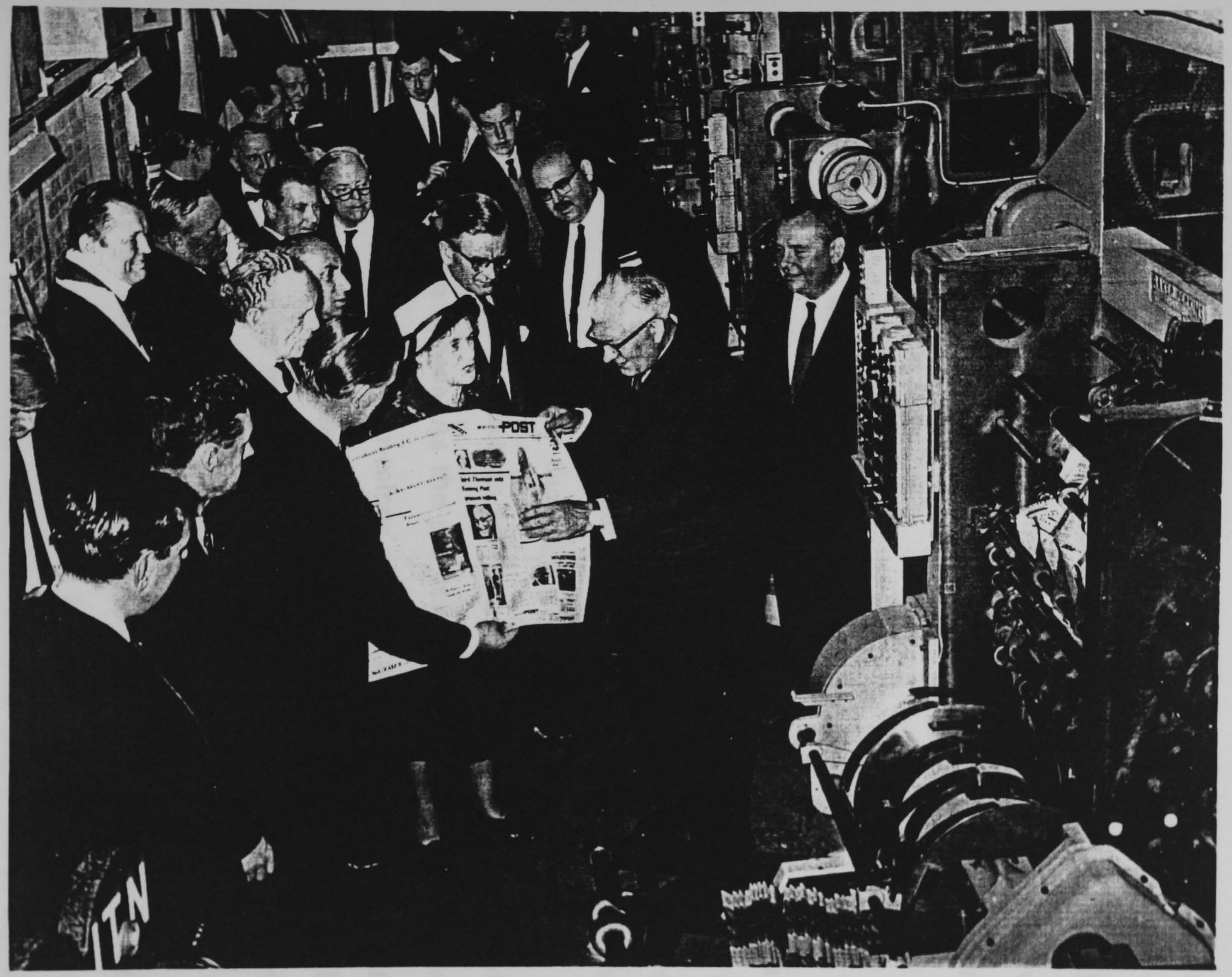
In the wake of the extravagant advance publicity, there were said to be some prospective *Post* readers who viewed the shortage of papers, caused by the breakdown, as yet another gimmick to whet people's

---

9 *Evening Post*, no. 1, Tuesday 14 September 1965.

10 See illustration overleaf.

11 Interview with A. Sandall; he was deputy editor of the *Evening Post* at that time..



Lord Thomson viewing the first edition of the *Evening Post* to come off the press. John Pole is standing behind him.

appetite for the new paper.[12] It was ironic that it was not the new and somewhat unknown technology which let the paper down, but an ordinary electrical fault in the press drive.

However, producing a daily newspaper with a completely new system was bound to be problematical when full production started. The situation in the production department during the first day is best summed up by a printed legend which appeared on the composing room wall and which said, 'Anyone who remains calm in this confusion simply does not understand the situation'.

Inevitably, with such a new and untried system, some faults did start to come to light, and the next few months were difficult ones for those involved with the production equipment. For example, it was discovered that the typesetting equipment was susceptible to surges in the electrical supply, and this had to be corrected. Perhaps the most embarrassing discovery was that the press was not suitable for the production of four-colour process printing, certainly when attempted at normal production speeds. As the pre-publication publicity had stressed the advantages of having four-colour pictures for news and advertising, it was no doubt a difficult decision to stop producing process colour work in the paper within a few months of the launch. However, the machine was capable of producing spot colour, and this was continued.

Despite all the interest shown in the new paper, the *Post* had to work hard to encourage local people to buy a daily evening paper, and after six months of publication the circulation still only stood at 16,548.[13] One of the most difficult things that the *Post* had to overcome was the

---

12 *World's Press News*, 24 September 1965.

13 *Evening Post*, no. 147, Saturday 5 March 1966.

apparent resistance by Reading people to buying a daily evening paper for local news and information. The locality had been served for years by three weeklies: the *Mercury*, which was distributed predominantly in the country districts; its sister paper, the *Reading and Berkshire Chronicle*, which sold in Reading and the local towns; and the highly successful *Reading Standard*, which also sold both in Reading and in the local areas such as Wokingham, Bracknell, Henley, and Newbury. Reeducating the local public was indeed a difficult task.

It was a task which The Thomson Organisation had made more difficult for itself when it closed the popular *Reading Standard*, for many people resented the closure and changed their allegiance to the *Chronicle*. In the week in which the *Evening Post* was launched, the Reading Newspaper Company changed the name of the *Berkshire Chronicle* to *Reading Chronicle*, altering the format, masthead, and typographic style of the paper to one similar to that of the *Reading Standard*. This move proved to be a highly successful one, and the *Chronicle's* circulation increased considerably at the time; indeed, it is thought by many that the closure of the *Standard* gave the *Chronicle* new life and allowed it to flourish.[14]

The reason for the closure of the *Standard* has never been explained; had The Thomson Organisation continued publishing it, they could have had both a daily evening and a weekly Reading paper under their control, and if the *Standard* had continued its successful growth the Reading Newspaper Company might possibly have found the competition too great and been forced out of business. The decision is even more

---

14 Interview with E. G. B. Atkinson; he was a shareholder of the Reading Newspaper Company at that time, was of this opinion, as too were many others interviewed who were involved in Reading's press during the 1960s.

difficult to understand in the light of the *Reading Standard* making a profit of £43,093[15] after tax for 1964, the first year under Thomson ownership. Stopping such a profitable enterprise as that certainly indicated the faith that The Thomson Organisation had in the success of their new daily venture.[16]

The *Post's* hard work gradually began to pay dividends, and by the end of the paper's second year the circulation had risen to over 40,000 per night, with signs that the battle for circulation was beginning to pay dividends. Advertising, too, was on the increase, particularly the classified advertisements which had increased from 179 columns per week in 1965 to 360 by September 1967, and advertising represented over 50% of the paper's content each day. Being a daily evening paper meant that each day of the week was treated differently, and a pattern emerged in which the papers produced early in the week tended to have fewer pages than those produced during the second half of the week. This changing pattern also affected the advertising, which frequently increased towards the end of the week, no doubt in an attempt to attract buyers at the end of a week when they would have not only time but also the money to buy the items advertised.

In order to gain more space for the increasing quantity of advertising, and also to have more space for news, features and sport, the *Post* spent a considerable sum on machinery during 1967 for the purpose of producing a larger format paper. This appeared in September 1967[17]

---

15 See Appendix J.

16 The *Evening Post* revived the *Reading Standard* on 20 October 1983, as an advertising free sheet with a distribution of 80,500 copies per week.

17 *Evening Post*, no. 629, Friday 22 September 1967.

and, with a format of 23½" x 16½", allowed for an additional 9¾-em column to the paper, giving nine columns per page.

Despite a considerable amount of hard work and constant attention to detail, the *Post* was finding that breaking into a profitable situation was far from easy. The circulation was increasing and by the beginning of 1968 it was up to 44,044; occasionally this figure increased to 49,000, indicating that the potential sales were there. All the paper had to do was to maintain their sales consistently at this level. Since its launch, the *Post* had been running at a loss, not helped by the expenditure on machinery during 1967 and 1968. However, the greater flexibility that this machinery allowed indicated that the expense was justified, and by 1969 the paper made a profit for the first time. Although small, and despite being offset by considerable earlier losses, this upturn was a welcome sign for those responsible for the running of the paper. Also in 1969, the name of the company was changed from Reading Standard Ltd to the more appropriate title, Thames Valley Newspapers Ltd.

By 1970, a new Baker Perkins press had been installed, side by side with the original machine, and the building extension necessary to house it had been completed. Once again the paper was able to show a post-tax profit, this time of £59,132.[18] The new machine, the fastest of its kind in the country, was capable of running at 40,000 cph, some 10,000 cph better than the old one, and was also able to produce four extra pages, up to a maximum of 28. The maximum of the old press had often proved insufficient.

The printing quality of the new press was considerably better than the earlier one, and it had the great advantage that it allowed far greater

---

18 See Appendix J.

flexibility in the production of varying formats. The *Post* could, for example, be produced in a narrower format on days when a smaller paper was deemed necessary. This led to a neater paper being produced when there was less advertising and news copy, but allowed for a wider format and greater number of pages when a fuller *Post* was produced. Due to the fluctuations in sales and advertising throughout the week, a smaller paper was published on Saturdays, Mondays, and Tuesdays with a format of 23" x 16½", and a larger format of 24" x 18" was required on the other days of the week, Thursdays and Fridays tending to contain more advertising.

At the time the new press was installed, the original typesetting system was replaced with a new pattern, much smaller than the original, but with greatly increased capacity. As the original system was such an experimental one, its ability to last so long under the severe conditions of a daily evening paper is surprising. However, the much needed new typesetting system effected great improvements in the production of the paper and of the *Post*'s other publications.

By 1972, the paper's circulation had reached 52,167[19] and for the second year in succession the company was able to carry forward a substantial retained profit, this time of £56,139.[20] Despite heavy expenditure on a further extension of the printing press and the new typesetting system during the next three years, the *Post* was able to remain in a profitable situation, but the final payments made on the equipment during 1975 pushed the company once more into a loss, after taxation, of £103,108 for that year.

---

19 *Evening Post* no. 2161, Thursday 31 August 1972.

20 See Appendix G.

In 1965, the *Post* had bought out the *Wokingham Times* (a paper that Felix Pole had considered buying in the early 1950s) and in 1969 the production of that paper had been centred on the Reading site. Additional work had also been secured in the form of contract printing for such items as the Nestlés house journal. As well as these, the *Post* often produced special advertising supplements and special feature supplements, all of which kept the production department fairly busy during the week.

With new equipment and machinery, the *Post* was able to continue pushing its sales and exploiting the advertising market in the Reading area and, by early 1979, had increased the circulation to 55,000. The post-tax profit of the company had been increased to £379,998 during 1978, but additional expenditure on plant and machinery had cut the 1979 profit to £183,773, considerably lower than the previous year.

Unfortunately, 1980 represented a considerable downturn in the fortunes of the *Post*. A printing dispute in the early months of the year had resulted in intermittent industrial action, and a subsequent two-week stoppage, which lost the company over £400,000 in revenue. This was followed by a recession that was deemed to have been 'unparalleled in its speed of decline, its depth, and duration since the 1930s'.[21] It was so great that it made any kind of recovery almost impossible, despite the best attempts of the marketing and sales departments to stop the slide. Effectively, the company was having to spend £1.10 for every £1 of income, and the result for the year was a loss of £442,000.

Not only were market conditions difficult for the *Post* in that they had lost 2,000 copies in circulation and 11,000 columns of advertising, but the production costs were beginning to mount. Wages, pension and

---

21 Annual Report to Thames Valley Newspapers Ltd employees, 1980.

National Insurance contributions accounted for 56% of the company's expenditure for 1980 and it became increasingly obvious, as the loss continued during the 1980s, that attention had to be paid to this particular problem. Indeed, in 1985, with an accumulated loss of £2,364,000, the *Post* made a concerted effort to stop the slide by installing a Press Computer System's 'Press II' front-end system. This gave typesetting control for the first time to the editorial department, thus reducing the need for extensive secondary keying of text and advertisements. It also allowed for the accounts of the company to be maintained on the same computer, thus providing many improvements in the control of the sales ledger, including itemized statements for customers and quicker responses to requests for information.

The whole installation cost approximately £400,000. It was accompanied by considerable voluntary redundancy amongst the staff, which cost the company £832,000 in severance payments, but the surgery seems to have had the desired result as the paper returned a profit of £700,000 at the end of 1988.[22]

During the early months of 1989, the *Post* installed a new Goss Visa six-unit double-width rotary offset colour press, capable of producing a 48-page broadsheet newspaper at 60,000 copies per hour. This press has two folders, which allow the production of two 24-page broadsheet newspapers to be produced simultaneously at full speed. With investment such as this the *Evening Post* obviously has considerable faith in its ability to survive the current economic recession and is celebrating its twentieth-fifth anniversary with full confidence in its future.

---

22 See Appendix G.

CONCLUSION

§

The repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Tax in June 1855 produced an immediate response in Reading, when the proprietor of the long-established *Reading Mercury* published the *Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce* within a few days of the abolition of the Act. Initially this new paper was distributed not only in Reading but also in Newbury where, despite competition from another new paper, the *Newbury Journal*, it appears to have enjoyed limited success.

In November 1855, the name of the *Berkshire Journal* was altered to *Newbury Telegraph*, no doubt in an attempt to identify more closely with the town of Newbury and thus compete directly with the *Newbury Journal*. This it did until February 1856, when the *Journal* was incorporated within the *Berkshire Guardian*, a new paper printed and published in Reading which proposed to have a much wider circulation area than that of the *Newbury Journal*.

Both the *Berkshire Guardian* and the *Newbury Telegraph* relied heavily on the railway for distribution, and the closure of both papers by July 1856 suggests that neither paper was able to command a large enough circulation to offset the costs of distribution. As the area had been well served by the *Reading Mercury*, and to a lesser extent by the *Berkshire Chronicle*, it appears that those people in the area who could

afford a newspaper already subscribed to one of the established ones, and had no desire to change their reading habits.

The repeal of the Stamp Tax in 1855 and of the Paper Tax in 1861 coincided with a period of increasing prosperity, and this, together with the possibilities of using the press as a weapon in the cause of political reform, attracted many people to invest their money in the newspaper business. Improving communications, such as the electric telegraph and, more particularly at this time, the growth of the railway network, coupled with increasing urbanization, added to the attraction of newspapers as business enterprises.

In this respect, Reading was in a unique position, for the railway criss-crossed the whole distribution area, and the local population was increasing at a great rate, doubling between 1851 and 1881 and trebling by the end of the century.[1] It is not surprising, therefore, to note the considerable newspaper activity which took place at this time, particularly betwen 1860 and 1880, when eleven new titles appeared in the town.

Most of these papers were the work of four men, all of whom were printers: John Read, who in 1860 started the *Reading Advertiser* (later to become the *Berks Telegraph),* was also a member of the syndicate which founded the *Reading Observer* in 1873; Francis Lock, who started the short-lived *Reading Times* in partnership with Henry Ford, subsequently founded the *Reading Herald* and was later involved with the *Berkshire Weekly Times* (which became the *Berkshire Weekly News* in 1872); Ford started the first *Reading Standard* after his business break-up

---

1 Reading's population: 21,456 in 1851; 43,494 in 1881; and 72,217 in 1901. See Appendix C.

with Lock; and, finally, George Smith was involved in 1872 in the *Reading Examiner* (actually produced by W. E. Baxter, the owner of the largest chain of newspapers in the county at this time). After the closure of the *Examiner*, Smith went on to produce the *Reading Express and Berkshire Independent* in 1878 and made the first attempt to produce a daily in the town when he published the short-lived *Daily Mail and Evening Post* in 1880.

Apart from the three politically independent newspapers with which George Smith was involved, all the others which came into being at this time were strongly biased towards the Liberal party, which supports the evidence that the Liberal press was the most active in the country at this time.[2] Certainly, in the Parliamentary election in 1868 the Liberal party enjoyed a much greater majority in Reading, as a result of a fifty per cent increase in the local electorate following the 1867 Reform Act.[3]

The rapidly expanding local population, together with the enlarged electorate, was probably partly responsible for the spate of Liberal papers in Reading at this time. Local Liberals might also have considered that the Liberal *Reading Mercury* had become too muted in its support for the party, and that at 4d. it was priced well beyond the reach of the ordinary inhabitant. Certainly the *Reading Observer* was quick to express that viewpoint when it was founded in 1873.

All these papers were sold for 1d., 2d. cheaper than the Conservative *Berkshire Chronicle*, and it is therefore surprising that so few of them survived for any length of time. It does suggest that the clientele of both of Reading's old established papers were too loyal to be

---

2 Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914*, (1976), pp. 294-6.

3 A. Aspinall *et al.*, *Parliament Through Seven Centuries*, (1962), p. 96.

tempted away by the cheaper press and also, perhaps, that the *Chronicle* and *Mercury* were journalistically very much better papers. Certainly both had been in the newspaper business a long time, and were therefore very experienced in presenting the public with comprehensive news coverage. Most of the subscribers for these two papers came from the middle and upper classes in and around Reading and for them, no doubt, the high cost of their papers was synonymous with quality, a view which the *Mercury*, particularly, often expounded.

The very fact that so many papers were initiated during this period suggests that the costs involved in setting up a provincial newspaper were relatively low. Read, Lock, Ford and Smith were all printers, so the costs of equipment were most likely limited to extra types and to paper, as they already possessed the necessary presses and printing skills to produce a weekly newspaper. What they probably lacked was the journalistic and news-gathering expertise and also the means of drawing in sufficient advertising to make their papers financially secure.

It is interesting to note that John Read's *Berks Telegraph* was the longest running of the papers started at this time and, being a part pre-printed paper, had much of the national news supplied by the Central Press agency, Read being responsible for only local advertising and some local news. When he attempted to produce the complete paper himself after 1871, he quickly ran into financial problems, and despite having an increase in circulation he did not receive enough revenue from advertising to cover the costs of paper and printing. The pre-printed sheets supplied by the Central Press agency were obviously produced in large numbers and, as a result, the unit cost of production would have been fairly low. Read, on the other hand, had to find the total cost of newsgathering and production for a relatively small number of papers, and soon discovered

that running a newspaper demanded very careful budgeting and financial control.

Most likely the other short-lived papers had suffered the same problems from their inception, but had persevered in the vain hope that they would eventually reach a profitable situation.

In addition to editorial and production costs, the papers needed to be distributed not only in Reading but also throughout the neighbouring towns and villages. The railway would have played an important role in effecting such deliveries, particularly after free postage for newspapers was ended in 1870, so the organization of distribution and the costs of transportation were other aspects of newspaper ownership which had to be considered.

A measure of the importance of the railway to newspaper delivery is indicated by the fact that, by the turn of the century, the town's two railway stations were a mere stone's throw from all Reading's newspapers — in Blagrave Street, the adjacent Valpy Street, and the neighbouring Market Place.[4]

The evidence suggests that during this period a weekly provincial paper could survive for some time on the financial returns from a fairly small circulation. The fact that these particular Reading proprietors were involved with a number of papers indicates that, even when a paper was unsuccessful, the losses were not too great to deter them from embarking on another newspaper venture. As they were all commercial printers, they were presumably involved in newspaper enterprises in order to make a

---

4 See map on p. xvii.

profit, although it is possible that the social status of being a newspaper proprietor might have motivated some of them.

Of the new papers started during the period up to 1880, only the *Reading Observer* enjoyed a lengthy period of existence. Established in 1873 as a continuation of the *Berks Telegraph*, the success of this paper owed much to the fact that it was the official Liberal paper in the district and had the eminent journalist, P. W. Clayden, of the *Daily News*, as its editor.

From its inception, it was run on very businesslike lines, and in addition to sound editorial content a considerable effort was focused on the acquisition of advertising. In this respect Clayden's experience of the London press was invaluable, for he was obviously aware of the importance of the income which advertising provided, and which was vital if the *Observer* was to maintain its selling price of 1d. Clayden was also instrumental in adopting display advertising, which was a common feature of London papers at this time but which hitherto had not appeared in any of Reading's newspapers.

It is also apparent that the company was acutely aware of the need to keep unit costs to a minimum. The move to new premises and the purchase of new equipment and machinery enabled the paper to be enlarged and the circulation to be increased, while keeping production speeds high and unit cost down

After Clayden had departed in 1879 it was the professional approach of both Charles Slaughter and William Rivers who, by combining good journalism with good business management, ensured its success. This momentum was continued by William Rivers' son, Walter, who was responsible for the inclusion of halftone illustration in the paper

in 1895 and who was probably instrumental in the introduction of a football edition in 1895 and a midweek edition and the installation of Reading's first rotary press in 1897.

The effect of all this competition on the *Reading Mercury* and the *Berkshire Chronicle* is difficult to assess with accuracy, due to the lack of reliable circulation figures for the period. However, in the face of the numerous short-lived penny papers, the *Mercury* and the *Chronicle* had maintained their selling prices at 4d. and 3d. respectively which suggests that they did not consider that these papers constituted a threat to their circulations.

However, in 1884 they both reduced their prices quite suddenly by 2d. At this time their main rival was the increasingly successful *Observer*, and it was very likely that a decline in sales forced the two papers into this drastic price reduction. With a circulation which had risen to 10,058 copies per week by 1884, the *Observer* had far outstripped its rivals, and at this point both the old-established papers had to face up to the financial realities of running a newspaper.

Of the two, the *Berkshire Chronicle* was the more vulnerable, particularly after 1886 when William Hall's *Reading Standard* was founded. A measure of its desperate position was the fact that between 1895 and 1914 it had three changes of ownership and considerable sums of money had been spent on equipment. A new two-feeder in 1895, a Linotype machine in 1897, a new reel-fed rotary press in 1907, an attempt to produce a football edition and, lastly, converting the paper into a daily, all failed to put the paper into a profitable situation, and by 1914 it was in the hands of the receiver for the second time. This whole episode demonstrated that investment in production equipment alone was not

enough and that to produce a successful paper and ensure a healthy circulation it was also essential to maintain a high standard of journalism, aimed at the right clientele and selling at the right price.

In 1897, Walter Rivers left the successful *Reading Observer* to take over the *Reading Standard*, a move which marked the beginning of the rise in fortunes for the *Standard*. It also marked the beginning of the end for the *Observer* and, despite two or three successful years from 1902 to 1904, the paper gradually declined. The *Observer* undoubtedly missed the talent of Walter Rivers, who very quickly demonstrated his astute business sense by improving the circulation and profitability of the *Reading Standard* at the expense of the other papers in Reading.

During the period from 1895 to 1924, there was in effect a fight for survival amongst the papers in the town, for neither Reading's population nor the quantity of local advertising was large enough to support four weekly papers. With the *Reading Mercury* enjoying a virtually unchallenged circulation around the county, the battle in Reading was really between the *Observer*, the *Chronicle* and the *Standard*.

Eventually it was the *Observer* which succumbed, in 1924, but only after the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Reading Mercury* had become part of the Reading Newspaper Company, whose owner, Henry Mortimer Hobson, was able to let the profitable *Mercury* subsidize the *Chronicle* until that paper was in a financially sound situation, a position undoubtedly made easier by the closure of the *Observer*.

Between the two world wars, the three Reading papers gradually expanded, but both companies had to invest considerable capital in new machinery and equipment in order to remain competitive, and each paper was directed at a particular market segment. For example, the *Reading*

Mercury was still the leading county paper, the bulk of its sales coming from the towns and villages around Reading. The *Reading Standard* was primarily directed at the town itself, although it, too, had focused attention on particular areas around Reading by producing special editions for Caversham, Wokingham, and Newbury. The *Chronicle* had the bulk of its sales in the town but was never able to pose a threat to the superiority of the *Reading Standard*. The Reading Newspaper Company also published a football edition during the season, and although this enjoyed a moderate success for a period in the 1920s it increasingly found that it could not compete with the much better equipped London evening papers. They were able to gather more comprehensive sports results and publish and deliver copies by train to Reading before the *Football Chronicle* could distribute its own copies. In addition the paper carried very little advertising, the production costs consequently being greater than its income, so when the *Evening Gazette* produced a sports edition in 1935, the *Football Chronicle* was closed.

Reading's proximity to London had always deterred newspaper proprietors from establishing a daily paper in the town, particularly after the abortive attempt to produce the *Berkshire Chronicle* as a daily paper. However, in 1935 Reading became the centre of the newspaper world's attention when Allied Press established the *Evening Gazette*. The primary reason for Allied's interest in the town was the quantity of lucrative local advertising which they considered would be available to them, and also the possibility of increased advertising from London companies for whom the Reading population was an easily accessible market.

After an unsuccessful attempt to buy the *Reading Standard* as a ready-made newspaper office, Allied were obliged to create a completely new newspaper office in the town. The sheer cost of this venture could

only be undertaken by an organization with considerable financial resources, not only to set the paper in motion, but to support it during the early years of its existence.

Unfortunately, Allied's investment was not a successful one, for they were never able to persuade enough advertisers to use the paper, and the beginning of the Second World War presented Lord Iliffe's company with a timely opportunity to close the *Gazette*.

The considerable increase in population and the rapid expansion of business and commerce which occurred in Reading after the war generated a tremendous growth in advertising, particularly classified advertising. The *Reading Standard* was quick to tap this lucrative market and until its closure in 1965 the company displayed considerable business acumen. So successful was the company in attracting advertising that it frequently occupied as much as two-thirds of the paper's content and advertisements often had to be held over until the following week.

The *Standard*'s directors also realized that to be a competitive weekly paper it was necessary to have an efficient printing plant, but that only a fraction of that printing capacity was used each week. They therefore endeavoured to fill the spare capacity by undertaking contract printing and the production of journals for other publishers. The company also expanded into jobbing printing and commercial plate-making and, realizing the potential of commercial radio, formed a company with a view to becoming involved in that medium as well.

The financial success of the *Reading Standard* inevitably came to the attention of some of the large newspaper empires, which were seeking to become involved in the provincial press to take financial advantage of

the post-war explosion in local newspaper advertising, and Lord Thomson made a successful bid for the company in 1963.

Prior to the takeover, The Thomson Organisation had conducted a painstakingly comprehensive survey of English towns where potentially successful local evening papers could be launched, and Reading had appeared as one of the leading contenders for such a project. The estimated cost of starting the new paper was one million pounds, a figure only available to a vast business empire such as Lord Thomson's. With such a massive investment, the paper had to run on extremely cost-effective lines, and to achieve this the company introduced new technology in the composing room and adopted web-offset printing for the production of the paper. As Lord Thomson had plans to ring London with similar evening newspapers, in order to profit from the postwar boom in local advertising, the *Evening Post* was very much a test-bed for the future use of new technology in the production of short-run, low-cost daily provincial papers.

Since its launch in 1965, the *Evening Post* has needed considerable financial back-up, both to replace and to improve its production equipment, and also to help it to establish a viable circulation and support it through periods of business recession. The line between profit and loss is an extremely fine one, and only large business empires, which can use profitable elements to subsidize less profitable ones, can afford to maintain newspapers through extremes of market fluctuations.

When the *Evening Post* was launched, The Thomson Organisation inexplicably closed down the *Reading Standard*, leaving the weekly paper market entirely to the Reading Newspaper Company. Like the *Reading Standard*, Charles Hobson had realized the need to rationalize the

company's production equipment, and from 1959 the *Chronicle, Mercury,* and *Bracknell News* were all produced on the one machine.

At this time Hobson forecast that the changing pattern of country life, the expansion in cheap free-sheet advertising, the introduction of local radio, and the increase in many new small local papers in the country districts around Reading, would eventually force the closure of the old *Reading Mercury* and in this he showed considerable foresight, for the *Mercury's* circulation gradually declined until the paper was forced to close in May 1987, after 264 years of continuous publication. However, the closure of the *Reading Standard* in 1965 gave a new lease of life to the *Chronicle*. By changing the format from tabloid to broadsheet, and adopting a masthead style virtually identical to that of its old rival the *Chronicle* not only increased its circulation in and around Reading, but gained a considerable quantity of advertising as well.

The takeover of the *Reading Standard* also left Charles Hobson's company as the only family-owned newspaper business in the town, and even after his death in 1963 the family maintained a controlling interest, despite Associated Newspapers acquiring a thirty per cent share in the company during 1968. However, the large national and international newspaper companies, anxious to expand their empires into the provincial press, maintained a constant vigil for any opportunity to purchase a local newspaper, and in 1977 the death of Hobson's widow, who held the majority of the family shares, opened the door for the Argus Press group to make a successful bid for the company.

Speaking of provincial newspapers in 1935, Lord Astor stated that 'It would be an ill day if they ceased to exist, or if they lost their

individuality and independence'.[5] With the Argus Press takeover of the *Mercury* and *Chronicle* they, like the *Reading Standard*, became part of a large business conglomerate, and their independence, together with the close personal connection between the Reading area and the proprietors of its newspapers, finally disappeared.

---

5 *Reading Standard*, No. 3280, Friday 11 October 1935.

APPENDIX A

§

NEWSPRINT PRICES 1914-1980

The home market price of newsprint manufactured in the United Kingdom, and of United Kingdom imports of mechanical wood-pulp 1914-80

Year	Newsprint per long ton £	Year	Newsprint per long ton £	Year	Newsprint per long ton £
1914	10.00	1940	22.10	1958	60.00
1920	43.00	1941	26.00	1959	58.62
1921	34.00	1942	33.15	1960	58.50
1922	22.00	1943	33.10	1961	58.50
1925	17.25	1944	30.70	1963	55.85
1926	16.25	1945	28.50	1966	55.85
1927	15.50	1946	30.00	1970	69.63
1928	14.25	1947	34.55	1971	73.08
1929	13.75	1948	42.80	1972	76.25
1930	14.00	1949	37.30	1973	88.60
1931	13.75	1950	35.65	1974	154.37
1932	12.00	1951	57.40	1975	165.19
1933	10.50	1952	60.45	1976	184.28
1934	9.75	1953	51.35	1977	229.36
1935	10.00	1954	51.49	1978	257.26
1936	10.00	1955	53.74	1979	285.16
1937	10.00	1956	58.50	1980	313.30
1938	11.50	1957	59.75		

NOTES

1. Prices quoted are per ton of 53 gsm for the years 1940-1, and of 50 gsm for the years 1942-80.
2. No figures are included for the period before 1914, as few are available, and the substance of the paper is not known.
3. The figures for the period 1914-24 are extracted from the Royal Commission on the **Press** 1947-9 Report.
4. The figures for the years 1925-61 have been extracted from the Royal Commission on the **Press** 1961-2, while those for 1962-80 have been taken from the Royal Commission on the Press 1974-7 and from *Paper*.

APPENDIX B

§

Population figures for the town of Reading between 1831 and 1901, together with figures for a selection of other towns situated between 30 and 60 miles from the capital.

Town	Distance from London	1831	1851	1861	1881	1901
Bedford	45	6,959	11,693	13,413	19,532	35,144
Cambridge	60	20,917	27,815	26,361	40,882	38,379
Guildford	30	3,916	6,740	8,020	11,593	15,938
Hertford	24	5,247	6,605	6,769	8,556	9,322
Luton	25	4,000	11,000	15,000	24,000	36,404
Maidstone	38	15,387	28,801	23,058	39,662	33,516
Northampton	68	15,351	26,657	32,813	57,553	87,021
Oxford	56	18,800	27,843	27,560	40,862	49,336
Reading	35	15,595	21,456	25,045	42,050	72,217

Notes 1. Figures for the years 1831-81 are taken from Chris Cook and Brendan Keith, *British Historical Facts 1830-1900*, (London, 1984 edition)

2. Figures for 1901 came from the Official Census for 1901.

Reading's population growth from 1901 to 1981, taken from Official Census figures.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981
Reading	72,217	86,693	92,278	97,149	114,196	127,797	139,799	132,475

APPENDIX C

§

Newspapers published in Reading between 1855 and 1980: a bibliographical listing of sources held in the British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale, and Reading Reference Library.

Note Extant copies of newspapers published in Reading during this period can be found at the British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale, London, and in the Reading Reference Library. For the purpose of listing these holdings, the titles of these libraries have been abbreviated to BL and RRL respectively. As the holdings of copies of the *Reading Mercury*, at both Colindale and Reading, cover an extensive period, it was considered unnecessary to list these holdings for years not covered by this study. Those wishing to obtain further information concerning the extant copies of Reading newspapers prior to 1855 should consult the British Library Newspaper Index, the Reading Reference Library Newspaper Holding List, the Bodleian Library Index, and K. G. Burton, *The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire (1723-1855)*, (Reading, 1954).

The Abingdon and Reading Herald [1870-83]

See *Reading Herald*

Berks Telegraph [Established 1860?]

BL: no. 483-693 16 July 1869 - 25 July 1873

RRL: Extracts in George Lovejoy's Scrapbooks from: 21 January 1864, November 1870, 9 May 1873, 16 May 1873, 13 June 1873

A continuation of the *Reading Advertiser*, subsequently continued as the *Reading Observer*.

Berkshire Chronicle Windsor Herald and General Advertiser for the Counties of Bucks, Oxon, Hants, Surrey, Middlesex and Wilts. [Established 1825] (For pre-1855 refer to BL and RRL catalogues)

BL: no. 1525-5469 6 January 1855 - 23 March 1912

continued as:
Berkshire Daily Chronicle
no. 5470-5996 25 March 1912 - 10 January 1914

continued as:
Berkshire Chronicle
no. 5997-8528 14 January 1914 - 15 September 1961

continued as:
Reading and Berkshire Chronicle
no. 8529-8731 22 September 1961 - 10 September 1965

continued as:
Reading Chronicle
no. 8732 10 September 1965—

Wanting 1897, 1898, microfilm 1910.

RRL: Has both original copies and microfilms of the weekly paper from
no. 1525 6 January 1855
including the 1897, 1898 editions.

Wanting the copies of the *Berkshire Daily Chronicle* published between 25 March 1912 and 10 January 1914

Berkshire Daily Chronicle [1912-1914]

See *Berkshire Chronicle* above

Berkshire Guardian [Established 1856]

RRL: vol. I, no. 26 27 February 1856

Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce [1855-6]

BL: no. 1-18 11 July - 7 November 1855

continued as:
Newbury Telegraph

Berkshire Weekly News and Windsor and Eton Gazette [Established 1871]

BL: no. 177
(BWN no. 3) 9 March 1872
no. 179
(BWN no. 5) 23 March 1872

a continuation of the *Berkshire Weekly Times*

Berkshire Weekly Times [Established 1871]
(No copies available)

continued as:
Berkshire Weekly News

Bracknell News [Established 1959]

BL: no. 1— 5 February 1959—

The Caversham Observer [1923-1924]

See *Reading Observer*

Daily Mail and Evening Post [Established 1880]

RRL: no. 1, 5 23, 29 March 1880

Evening Gazette [Established 1935]

BL: no. 1-1036 28 August 1935 - 31 December 1936

continued as:
Reading Gazette
no. 1037-1285 2 January - 18 October 1939
(discontinued)

RRL: As above, both as originals and on microfilm

Evening Post [Established 1965]

BL: no. 1— 14 September 1965—

RRL: As above, both as originals and on microfilm

Football Chronicle [Established 1909]

no copies extant until

BL: 16 September - 25 April 1914
30 August 1919 - 19 December 1936

discontinued: not published between 25 April 1914 and 20 August 1919

RRL: 30 August 1919 - 19 December 1936 only

Newbury Express [Established 1886]

BL: no. 1-15 11 March - 17 June 1886

continued as:
Newbury Express and Reading Standard
(also separate paper published from 1886 — see *Reading Standard)*
no. 16-329 24 June 1886 - 29 June 1892

continued as:
Newbury Express
no. 330 - 714 30 June 1892 - 28 September 1899
(discontinued)

Newbury Telegraph [Established 1855-6]

BL: See *Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce*

North Berks Standard [1906] [Special election edition of the *Reading Standard*)

BL: no. 2-6 (discontinued) 2-16 January 1906

The Reading and Abingdon Herald [Established 1868]

See *Reading Herald*

Reading Advertiser [Established 1860]

RRL: Cutting in George Lovejoy's Scrapbook for 11 October 1860

continued as:
Berks Telegraph

Reading and Berkshire Chronicle [1961-65]

See *Berkshire Chronicle*

The Reading and County Times [Established 1909]

BL: no. 1-35 (discontinued) 31 December 1909 - 20 August 1910

The Reading Examiner and Windsor and Eton Herald and Berkshire County Chronicle

BL: no. 185-316 17 February 1872 - 22 August 1874

a continuation of the *Windsor and Eton Herald, Maidenhead and Slough Journal, and Berkshire County Chronicle*

Reading Express and Berkshire Independent [Established 1878]

BL:	no. 28-651	10 April 1879 - 20 December 1884
RRL:	no. 236, 260, 521 (discontinued)	30 December 1880, 24 March 1881, 13 September 1883

The Reading (Football) Observer [Established 1921]

See *Reading Observer* Sports Edition

Reading Gazette [Established 1939]

See *Evening Gazette*

Reading Herald, Wokingham Herald, Henley Chronicle, Basingstoke News and Thatcham Mercury etc. [Established 1868]

BL: no. 4-11 5 December 1868 - 23 January 1869

continued as:
Reading Herald, Newbury Telegraph, Oxford Advertiser, Wokingham Herald etc.

subsequently amalgamated with the:
Abingdon Herald

Reading Mercury, Oxford Gazette, Newbury Herald and Berks County Paper etc. [Established 1723 as *Reading Mercury or Weekly Entertainer*] (For pre-1855 editions refer to BL, RRL and Bodleian Library catalogues)

BL: vol. 133 6 January 1855 - 12 November 1960

continued as:
Reading Mercury etc.
19 November 1960 - 4 July 1970

continued as:
Berkshire Mercury
no. 12266-13112 11 July 1970 - 24 December 1980

continued as:
The Mercury
no. 13113-13243 13 December 1980 - 30 June 1983

continued as:
Reading and Berkshire Mercury
no. 13244-13445 6 July 1983 - 28 May 1987
(discontinued)

Wanting 1901, microfilm 1898, 1991

RRL: With the exception of 1898, held only on microfilm, the Library has a complete run of originals and on microfilm

Reading Observer, Berks Telegraph and Bucks, Hants, Oxfordshire and Surrey Newspaper [Established 1873]

BL: no. 1-234 2 August 1873 - 19 January 1878

continued as:
Reading Observer
no. 235-4359 26 January 1878 - 23 August 1924
(discontinued)

Wanting 1898, 1910; microfilm 1897, 1908

RRL: As above

The Reading Observer (Football edition)

BL: 12 October 1895 - 25 April 1914

The Reading Observer (Midweek edition)

RRL: no. 2527-2630 1 January - 31 December 1903

The Reading Observer (Sports edition)

BL: 27 August - 1 October 1921

continued as:
The Reading (Football) Observer
8 October - 24 December 1921

[***Reading Observer***] ***The Caversham Observer*** (A localised edition)

BL: no. [4293]-4331 (discontinued) 18 May 1923 - 28 June 1924

Reading Record [Established 1912]

BL: vol. 1 no. 1 - vol.2 no. 12 (discontinued) 19 October 1912 - 1 October 1913

The Reading Standard [Established 1886?]

BL: no. 44-95, 624-484 17 January - 30 December 1887, 7 January 1898 - 10 September 1965

RRL: no. 252-4841 (discontinued) 2 January 1891 - 10 September 1965

Reading Standard (Bracknell, Wokingham and Twyford editions)

BL: no. 4737-4832 (discontinued) 13 September 1963 - 9 July 1965

The Reading Standard (Henley, South Oxon, Upper Thames editions)

BL: no. 4737-4532 (discontinued) 13 September 1963 - 9 July 1965

Reading Standard (Thatcham, Tadley, Theale edition)

BL: no. 4737-4532 (discontinued) 13 September 1963 - 9 July 1965

Reading Times [Established 1868]

RRL: no. 1, 6 19 September 1868, 24 October 1868

BIBLIOGRAPHY

§

Newspaper Sources

Berks Telegraph

Berkshire Chronicle

Berkshire Guardian

Berkshire Independent

Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce

Berkshire Weekly News

Berkshire Weekly Times

Bracknell News

Daily Mail and Evening Post

Evening Gazette

Evening Post

Jackson's Oxford Journal

Newbury Advertiser

Newbury Express

Newbury Weekly News

Reading Advertiser

Reading Examiner

Reading Express

Reading Herald

Reading Journal

Reading Mercury

Reading Observer

Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian

Reading Standard

Reading Times

Windsor and Eton Express

Wokingham Times

The Times

The Daily Telegraph

Special Issues of Newspapers

Reading Mercury, 150th Anniversary Issue, 1 February 1873

Reading Mercury, Bicentenary 'During Eight Reigns 1723-1923', Special Supplement, 7 July 1923

Berkshire Mercury, 250th Anniversary Issue, 12 July 1973, Special Supplement

Reading Chronicle, 150th Anniversary Issue, No. 9604, 31 January 1975

Reading Standard, Souvenir Supplement, 5 May 1923

Reading Standard, Miniature Edition, October 1928

Reading Standard, Special Supplement, 2 June 1961

Reading Standard, Printing Week Supplement, 1-5 April 1963

Reading Standard, first edition of new free sheet, No. 4842, 20 October 1983

Evening Post, Specimen Issue, Tuesday 24 August 1965

Evening Post, 'Reading 1847' Supplement, No. 2300, Monday 12 February 1973

Evening Post, 'Berkshire Old and Royal' Supplement, Saturday 9 November 1974

Evening Post, 'Caxton' Supplement, 13 October 1976

Evening Post, 'Breakthrough', Wednesday 6 August 1986

Pullman's Evening Puff, (*Evening Post*), Friday 25 March 1977

The Times, Special Issues on Printing: 10 September 1912; 13 October 1937; 15 January 1940; 4 July 1955; July 1963.

Manuscript Sources

Astor Papers, The University Library, Reading

Conservative Party Archives, Bodleian Library, Oxford

W. M. Crook Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford

Labour Party Archives, Transport House, London

National Liberal Club Archives, Bristol University Library

A. P. Wadsworth Papers, courtesy of R. G. A. Lofthouse Esq.

Official Publications

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates

Report of the Commission on Broadcasting, (Pilkington Report, 1962), Cmnd 1753

Monopolies Commission, *Wholesaling of Newspapers and Periodicals*, (HMSO London, 1975)

National Board of Prices and Incomes, *Costs and Revenue of National Daily Newspapers*, (1967), Cmnd 3435

National Board of Prices and Incomes, *Costs of Revenue of National Newspapers*, (1970), Cmnd 4277

Report of a Court of Enquiry into the Problems Caused by the Introduction of Web-offset Machines, (1967), Cmnd 3184

Royal Commission on the Press 1947-9 Report, (1949), Cmnd 7700

Royal Commission on the Press 1961-2 Report, (1962), Cmnd 1811

Royal Commission on the Press Interim Report, (1976), Cmnd 6553

Royal Commission on the Press 1974-7 Final Report, (1977), Cmnd 6810

Royal Commission on the Press Final Report Appendices, (1977), Cmnd 6810-1-6

Select Committee of the House of Commons on Newspaper Stamps, *Parliamentary Papers*, xvii, (1851)

Select Committee of the House of Commons on Electric Telegraph Bill, *Parliamentary Papers,* xi, (1868)

Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Post Office (Telegraphic Department), *Parliamentary Papers*, xiii, (1876)

Public Record Office, Kew

Registration of companies:

BT 31/158951 Reading Observer

BT 31/70389 Berkshire Chronicle Co Ltd

BT 31/106739 Reading & County Times Ltd

BT 31/113810 Chronicle Company Ltd

Department of Trade and Industry, Companies House

DTI Company Numbers

133053	Reading Newspaper Company Ltd
324239	Thames Valley Newspapers Ltd
339257	Reading Standard Ltd
202826	Argus Press PLC
239287	Argus Press Holdings PLC
1523235	The Reading Newspaper Printing Co. Ltd

Wills

Somerset House, Probate Register

Richard Welch, 1863

Mary Anne Welch, 1877

Arthur Welch, 1899

William George Rivers, 1893

William Wallace Cowslade, 1915

Henry Mortimer Hobson, 1922

Frederick William Cowslade, 1925

Walter Vernon Rivers, 1939

Charles Mortimer Hobson, 1963

Reading Reference Library

John Newbery, 1761 (photographic copy)

Dissertations

Andrews, J. D., 'The Derbyshire Newspaper Press 1720-1855', (M.A., Reading, 1954)

Bailey, R. D., 'The Parliamentary History of Reading 1750-1850', (M.A., Reading, 1952)

Blondel, J., 'The Political Structure of Reading', (Ph.D., Oxford, 1955)

Cook, Ann Francis, 'Reading 1835-1930: A Community Power Study', (Ph.D., Reading, 1970)

Jones, D. M., 'The Liberal Press and the Rise of Labour 1850-95', (Ph.D., Leeds, 1973)

Lingwood, J., 'The Impact of Local Printing on the 1826 Election Campaign', (Open University Assignment, Milton Keynes, 1976)

Nevett, T. R., 'The Development of Commercial Advertising 1800-1914', (Ph.D., London, 1979)

Strick, H., 'British Newspaper Journalism, 1900-1956', (Ph.D., London, 1957)

Watts, A. T., 'A Survey of the Newspaper Press in the Town of Reading from 1855 to 1900', (M.A., Leeds, 1977)

Watts, A. T., 'The Foundation and Development of the Reading Mechanics Institution 1825-1830 and 1840-1860', (Dip.F.Ed., London, 1976)

Printed Sources

Abrams, Mark Alexander, *Education Social Class and Newspaper Reading*, (London, 1963)

Abrams, Mark Alexander, *Education Social Class and Readership of Newspapers and Magazines 1968*, (London, 1969)

Adams, William E. A., *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, 2 vols (London, 1902)

Advertisers Annual

Allnutt, W. H., 'Notes on Printing in Reading in the 18th Century', *Reading Mercury*, 15 July 1882

Allnutt, W. H., *English Provincial Presses*, (no date)

Allnutt, W. H., *Notes on Printing in English Provincial Towns*, (London, 1879)

Altick, Richard D., *The English Common Reader*, (Chicago, 1957)

Amphlet, T., *The Newspaper Press*, (London, 1860)

Andrews, A., *History of British Journalism*, 2 vols (London, 1859)

Angell, N., *The Press and the Organisation of Society*, (London, 1922)

Anon, 'Conservative Journalism', *New Quarterly Review*, ix (1860), pp. 385-96

Anon, 'English Provincial Journalism', *Nation*, New York, 28 October 1880

Anon, 'Liberal Newspapers — Effects of the Reduction of Stamp Duty', *Tait's Magazine*, iii (1836), pp. 685-92, 799-808.

Anon, *Report on the British Press*, (Reading, 1938)

Anon, 'The Journals of the Provinces', *Colburn's*, xlviii (1836), pp. 137-49

Anon, 'The Newspaper Press', *Quarterly Review*, October 1880

Anon, 'The Newspaper Press', *Westminster Review*, x (1829), pp. 216-37

Anon, 'The Provincial Newspaper Press', *Westminster Review*, xxiii (1830), pp. 69-103

Anon, *A Newspaper History*, (London, 1935)

Anon, *The Newberys in Six Generations: Records of the House of Newbery*, (Derby and London, 1911)

Ashbourne Local History Group, 'A Portrait of Ashbourne in the Mid-19th Century', *Early Victorian Country Towns*, (Derby, 1978)

Aspden, Hartley, *Fifty Years a Journalist*, (London, no date)

Aspinall, A., 'The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early 19th Century', *Review of English Studies*, xxii (1946)

Aspinall, A., *et al.*, *Parliament Through Seven Centuries: Reading and its MPs*, (London, 1962)

Aspinall, A., *Politics and the Press c.1780-1850*, (London, 1949)

Asquith, I., 'Advertising and the Press in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: James Perry and the *Morning Chronicle*, 1790-1821', *Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), pp. 703-24

'B', 'The Conservative Provincial Press', *National Review*, v 1885, pp. 634-45

Bailey, P., *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*, (London, 1978)

Bainbridge, Cyril, *One Hundred Years of Journalism*, (London, 1984)

Baker, E. F., *Printers and Technology*, (New York, 1957)

Barker, Alfred, *The Newspaper World*, (London, 1890)

Beatty-Kingston, William, *A Journalist's Jottings*, 2 vols (London, 1890)

Belson, W., *The British Press*, (London, 1959)

The Berkshire Archaeological Journal, 'Cowslade Family', vol. 37, no. 2, Autumn 1933, pp. 93-106

Berry, W. T., and B. E. Poole, *Annals of Printing*, (London, 1966)

Bertrand, Claude-Jean, *The British Press*, (Paris, 1969)

Black, J., *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1987)

Bland, D., *The Illustration of Books*, (London, 1962)

Boon, John, *Victorians, Edwardians and Georgians*, 2 vols (London, 1927)

Bowley, A. L., and A. Burnett-Hurst, *Livelihood and Poverty*, (London, 1915)

Boyce, George, *et al.*, eds, *Newspaper History: from the 17th Century to the Present Day*, (London, 1978)

Braddon, Russell, *Roy Thomson*, (London, 1968)

Brendon, P., *The Life and Death of the Press Barons*, (London, 1982)

British & Colonial Printer and Stationer, 1878 to 1953

Brown, Lucy, 'The Treatment of News in Mid-Victorian Newspapers', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, xxvii (1977)

Brown, Lucy, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, (Oxford, 1985)

Brown, Ray, *Characteristics of Local Media Audiences*, (Farnborough, 1978)

Browne, T. B., *Advertisers ABC*, (London, 1907)

Bundock, C. J., *The National Union of Journalists: A Jubilee History, 1907-1957*, (London, 1957)

Burton, K. G., ed., *The Memorandums of John Watts Esq.*, (Reading, 1950)

Burton, K. G., *The Early Newspaper Press in Berkshire (1723-1855)*, (Reading, 1954)

Campaign, (1968—), (previously *World's Press News*)

Camrose, Viscount W. E. B., *British Newspapers and their Controllers*, (London, 1947)

Childs, W. M., *The Story of the Town of Reading*, (London, 1921)

Childs, W. M., *The Town of Reading during the Early Part of the 19th Century*, (Reading, 1967)

Clair, C., *A History of Printing in Britain*, (London, 1965)

Codding, G. A., *The Universal Postal Union*, (London, 1964)

COI, *The British Press*, (London, 1965)

Coleman, D. C., *The British Paper Industry*, (Oxford, 1958)

Collett, C. P., *History of the Taxes on Knowledge*, 2 vols (London, 1933 edition)

Coltham, S., 'The British Working Class Press in 1867', *Bulletin for the Society for the Study of Labour History*, Autumn 1967

Comparato, Frank E., *Newspaper Presses*, (California, 1979)

Cook, C., *Sources in British Political History 1900-1951*, 4 vols (London, 1975)

Cooper, J. J., *Some Worthies of Reading*, (London, 1923)

Corley, T. A. B., *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits, Huntley & Palmers of Reading, 1822-1972*, (London, 1972)

Craig, James, *Photo-typesetting: a Design Manual*, edited by Margit Malmstron, (New York and London, 1978)

Cranfield, G. A., *The Press and Society*, (London and New York, 1978)

Cummings, A. J., *The Press and a Changing Civilisation*, (London, 1936)

Curran, J., 'Capitalism and Control of the Press 1800-1975', in Curran, J., *et al.*, eds., *Mass Communication and Society*, (London, 1977)

Curran, J., and J. Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, (London, 1988 edition)

Curran, J., ed., *The British Press: A Manifesto*, (London, 1978)

Curwen, H., *Processes of Graphic Reproduction in Printing*, (London, 1947)

Darter, W. S., *Reminiscences of Reading*, (Reading, 1888)

Dawson, Payne and Elliot Ltd, 'Otley's 100 Years of Service to the Printing Industry', *Paper & Print*, no. 22, (1949)

Desmond, Robert W., *The Information Process: World News Reporting to the Twentieth Century*, (Iowa, 1978)

'Detector' (Gauntlett, H.), *Letters to the Stranger in Reading*, (London, 1810)

Dibble, E. G. B., *The Newspaper*, (London, 1913)

Dictionary of National Biography

Ditchfield, P. H., 'Printing in Berkshire', *Victoria County History of Berkshire*, i (London, 1906), pp. 400-4

Dixon, Diana, *Local Newspapers & Periodicals of the 19th Century: A Checklist of Holdings in Provincial Libraries*, 2 vols (Leicester, 1973)

Dyer, Gillian, *Advertising as Communication*, (London, 1982)

The *Economist* Intelligence Unit, *The National Newspaper Industry*, (London, 1966)

Edwards, E., *The Duties on Paper, Advertisements and Newspapers*, (London, 1849)

Edwards, F. A., 'A List of Hampshire Newspapers', *The Hampshire Antiquary and Naturalist*, i (Southampton, 1891) pp. 94 et seq.

Elliot, B. B., *A History of English Advertising*, (London, 1962)

Ellyard, E., 'Readership of the Periodical Press: Mid Victorian Britain', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), pp. 5-22

Ensor, R. C., *England 1870-1914*, (Oxford, 1952)

Escott, T. H. S., *Masters of English Journalism,* (London, 1911)

Feather, J., *A History of British Publishing*, (London, 1988)

Fisher, W. J., 'The Liberal Press and the Liberal Party', *Nineteenth Century*, lvi (1904), p. 201

Fishwick, F., *A Study of the Evolution of Concentration in the Press and General Publishing Industry in the United Kingdom*, (Brussels, 1977)

Foster, J. J., *Men-at-the-bar: a Biographical Handlist*, (London, 1883)

Fox-Bourne, H. R., *English Newspapers*, 2 vols (London, 1887)

Franklin, A. T., and S. F. Loveday, 'Current and Future Papers for Printing', *Graphic Technology*, July 1967, pp. 5-13

Garlick, V. F. M., *Newbury Scrapbook*, (Newbury, 1970)

Gaskell, P., *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, (Oxford, 1974)

Gerald, J. Edward, *The British Press under Economic Controls*, (Minneapolis, 1956)

Gibb, M. A., and F. Beckwith, *The Yorkshire Post: Two Centuries*, (Leeds, 1954)

Gibson, Peter, *Modern Trends in Letterpress Printing*, (London, 1966)

Gissing, George, *New Grub Street*, (London 1891; Penguin edition, 1968)

Glaister, G. A., *Glossary of the Book*, (London, 1960)

Glasgow, E., 'The Establishment of the *Northern Star* Newspaper', *History*, xxxix (1954)

Grant, James, *The Newspaper Press*, 3 vols (London, 1871-2)

Green, Geoffrey A., *The Official History of the F.A. Cup*, (London, 1949)

Green, Geoffrey A., *The History of the Football Association*, (London, 1953)

Greenwood, Jeremy, *Newspapers and the Post Office 1635-1834*, (Reigate, 1971)

Hambro, C. J., *Newspaper Lords in British Politics*, (London, 1958)

Hamilton, Sir Denis, *Who is to Own the British Press?*, (London, 1976)

Harris, M., and A. Lee, eds, *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, (London and Toronto, 1986)

Harrison, B., '"A World of Which we had no Conception": Liberalism and the English Temperance Press, 1830-1872', *Victorian Studies*, 13 (1969-70), pp. 125-58

Harrison, L. B., 'A Vanished Berkshire Family', *Reading Mercury*, 25 March 1933

Harrison, S., *Poor Men's Guardians: A Record of the Struggles for a Democratic Newspaper Press. 1763-1973*, (London, 1974)

Hartley, N., *et al.*, *Concentration of Ownership in the Provincial Press*, Royal Commission on the Press 1974-7, Research Series 5, (London,) 1977

Hatton, Joseph, *Journalistic London*, (London, 1882)

Herd, Harold, *The March of Journalism: The Story of the British Press from 1622 to the Present Day*, (London, 1952)

Hindle, W., *The Evening Post 1772-1937*, (London, 1937)

Hinton, J. W., *A History of the Town of Reading*, (London, 1954)

Hirsh, F., and D. Gordon, *Newspaper Money*, (London, 1975)

Hobson, H., *et al.*, *The Pearl of Days*, (London, 1972)

Hoe, R., *A Short History of the Printing Press*, (New York, 1902)

Hoe, Richard, *A Catalogue of Printing Equipment*, (New York, *c.*1880)

Hollis, Patricia, *The Pauper Press*, (Oxford, 1970)

Holt, J. C., *The University of Reading: the first fifty years*, (Reading, 1977)

Holton, Bob, *British Syndicalism 1900-1914*, (London, 1976)

Homer-Wooff, G. H. R., *The Postal History of Windsor*, (Wokingham, 1982)

Hopkin, D., 'The Local Newspapers of the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1906', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 28-29, (1974)

Hopson, Sue, *Newbury: A Photographic Record 1850-1935*, (Newbury, 1983)

Howe, E., and H. E. Waite, *The London Society of Compositors*, (London, 1948)

Howe, E., *The London Compositor*, (London, 1947)

Howe, E., *Newspaper Printing in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1943)

Hudson, D., *British Journalists and Newpapers*, (London, 1945)

Hutt, A., *Newspaper Design*, (London, 1967)

Hutt, A., *The Changing Newspaper*, (London, 1973)

Innis, H. A., *The Press: A Neglected Factor in the History of the 20th Century*, (London, 1949)

Isaacs, G. A., *The Story of the Newspaper Printing Press*, (London, 1931)

Jackson, I., *The Provincial Press and the Community*, (Manchester, 1971)

Jackson, Mason, *The Pictorial Press: Its Origins and Progress*, (London, 1885)

Jenkins, Simon, *Newspapers: The Power and the Money*, (London, 1979)

Jones, Andrews, *The Politics of Reform 1884*, (Cambridge, 1972)

Kaldor, N., and Silverman, R., *A Statistical Analysis of Advertising Expenditure and the Revenue of the Press*, (Cambridge, 1948)

Kaldor, N., *The Three Faces of Advertising*, (London, 1975)

Kellett, E. E., 'The Press', in G. M. Young, ed., *Early Victorian England*, (London, 1934)

Kieve, J. L., *The Electric Telegraph*, (Newton Abbot, 1973)

Knight Hunt, F., *The Fourth Estate*, (London, 1850)

Knight, C., *Passages of a Working Life*, 3 vols (London, 1864-5)

Knight, C., *Shades of Old Booksellers*, (London, 1865)

Knight, C., *The Newspaper Stamp*, (London, 1836)

Knight, C., *The Struggle of a Book against Excessive Taxation*, (London, 1850)

Koss, Stephen, *Fleet Street Radical: A. G. Gardiner and the Daily News*, (London, 1973)

Koss, Stephen, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, 2 vols (London, 1981 and 1984)

Labour Research Department, *The Press*, (London, 1922)

Lansbury, G., *The Miracle of Fleet Street*, (London, 1925)

Larken, H. W., *Compositor's Work in Printing*, (London, 1961)

Larsen, R., *The First with the Truth*, (London, 1968)

Lawson, J., and H. Silver, *A Social History of Education in England*, (London, 1973)

Lee, A. J., 'The Management of Victorian Local Newspapers', *Business History*, xv, (1973)

Lee, Alan J., *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914*, (London, 1976)

Lee, Alan J., 'The Radical Press', in A. J. Morris, ed., *Edwardian Radicalism 1900-14*, (London, 1974)

Legros, L. A., and J. C. Grant, *Typographical Printing Surfaces*, (London, 1916)

Linotype Users Association, Monthly Circulars 1897-1902; after 1902, *Linotype Users Circular*

Linton, D., and R. Boston, eds, *The Newspaper Press in Britain: an Annotated Bibliography*, (London, 1987)

Lucy, Sir H. W., *The Diary of a Journalist*, (London, 1920)

Lucy, Sir Henry William, *Sixty Years in the Wilderness*, (London, 1909)

Lysons, D. and S., *Magna Britannia Berkshire*, (originally printed in 1806, new edition Wakefield 1978)

Maccoby, S., 'Newspaper Politics: a footnote to 19th century history', *Politica*, (1934)

Madden, L., and D. Dixon, *The Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press in Britain*, (London and New York, 1976)

Man, J., *The Stranger in Reading*, (Reading, 1810)

Margerison, Dr Tom, *Use of Computers in Europe*, (London 1965)

Marks, Rev. T., and Rev. A. Löwry, *Memoir of Sir F. H. Goldsmid*, (London, 1882)

Marshall, A., *Changing the Word: The Printing Industry in Transition*, (London, 1983)

Mason, T., *Association Football and English Society*, 1863-1915, (Brighton, 1980)

Massingham, H. W., *The London Daily Press*, (London, 1892)

Matthew, H. C. G., ed., *Gladstone Diaries*, v-viii, (London, 1864; Oxford, 1978-82)

Mays Press Directory

McCullock, J. R., *Dictionary of Commerce and Commercial Navigation*, (London, 1854)

McKenzie, D., *Stationers Company Apprentices 1701 to 1800*, (Oxford, 1978)

McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924*, (Oxford, 1974)

Melvern, Linda, *The End of the Street*, (London,) 1986

Meynell, Wilfred, ('John Oldcastle', pseudonym), *Journals and Journalism: with a Guide for Literary Beginners*, (London, 1880)

Middleton, Tom, *Yesterday's Town: Maidenhead*, (Buckingham, 1980)

Milne, M., *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, (Newcastle, 1975)

Minney, R. J., *Viscount Southwood*, (London, 1954)

Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory

Moghdam, Dineh, *Computers in Newspaper Publishing*, (New York, 1978)

Moran, J., *A Brief Essay on the Printing Press*, (Durham, 1963)

Moran, J., *The Composition of Reading Matter*, (London, 1965)

Moran, J., *The Development of the Printing Press*, (London, 1971)

Moran, J., 'The Newspaper in Britain Today', *Penrose Annual*, 60, (London, 1967), pp. 87-105

Moran, J., *Printing Presses: History and Development from the 15th Century to the Modern Times*, (London, 1973)

Morison, S., *The English Newspaper 1622-1932*, (Cambridge, 1932)

Musson, A. E., 'Newspaper Printing in the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, x, 2nd series (1957-8)

Musson, A. E., *The Typographical Association: Origins and History up to 1949*, (Oxford, 1954)

Nevett, T. R., *Advertising in Britain: A history*, (London, 1982)

Nevinson, H. W., *Fire of Life*, (London, 1936)

Newbery, E., 'A Notable Berkshire Printer and Publisher', *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, 50 (1947), pp. 77-80

Newspaper Owner and Manager, 1898-1913 (when it became *Newspaper World*)

Newspaper Society Monthly Circular, 1902-1963

Newspaper World, 1913-1953 (originally *Newspaper Owner*)

Norris, H. C., 'The Reading Mercury', *Notes and Queries*, (1916)

Pearson, H., *Labby: the Life and Character of Henry Labouchere*, (London, 1936)

Pebody, C., *English Journalism and the Men Who Have Made It*, (London, 1882)

Penrose Annual (London)

Perkin, H. J., 'The Origins of the Popular Press', *History Today*, vii (London, 1957)

Phillips, Daphne, *The Story of Reading*, (Reading, 1980)

Pike, W. T., ed., *Berks, Bucks & Beds in the Twentieth Century*, (Brighton, 1907)

Pitt-Robbins, A. P., *Newspapers Today*, (Oxford, 1956)

Plant, M., *The English Book Trade*, (2nd edition, London 1965)

Plomer, Bushnell, and Dix, *A Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers, 1726-1775*, (London, 1932)

Printers Register, 1863-1956

Printing World, 1954—, (previously *British & Colonial Printer*)

Rainer, C., *Printers Progress: A Comparative Study of the Craft of Printing, 1851-1951*, (London, 1951)

Read, D., *The English Provinces, 1760-1960*, (Chatham, 1964)

Read, D., 'North of England Newspapers (*c.*1700-*c.*1900) and their Value to Historians', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, viii (1957)

Reading Town Directories

Reid, A., 'How a Provincial Newspaper is Managed', *Nineteenth Century*, xx (1886), pp. 391-3

Richardson, H., 'The Old English Newspaper', *English Association'*, Pamphlet LXXXVI, Dec. 1933

Righyni, S. L., 'Provincial Newspapers in Transition', in *Alphabet & Image*, no. 6

Robbins, A., *The Press*, (London, 1928)

Roberts, F. David, 'Still More Early Victorian Newspaper Editors', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, v (December, 1972), p. 14

Robinson, H., *The British Post Office*, (Princeton, 1948)

Robinson, Sir John R., *Fifty Years in Fleet Street*, (London, 1904)

Robinson, Sir John R., *The 'Daily News' Jubilee*, (London, 1896)

Rosner, C., *Printers Progress: A Comparative Study of the Craft of Printing 1851-1951*, (London, 1951)

Sampson, A., *Anatomy of Britain*, (London, 1962)

Sampson, H., *The History of Advertising from the Earliest Times*, (London, 1875)

Scott, G., *Reporters Anonymous: The Story of the Press Association*, (London, 1968)

Seymour-Ure, Colin, *The Press Politics and the Public*, (London, 1968)

Shattock, J., and M. Wolff, eds, *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, (Leicester, 1982)

Shepherdson, W., *Starting a Daily in the Provinces*, (London, 1876)

Simpson D. H., *The Commercialisation of the Regional Press*, (Aldershot, 1981)

Singleton, F., *The Tillotsons of Bolton*, (London, 1950)

Smith, A. C. H., *et al.*, *Paper Voices: The Popular Press and Social Change 1935-1965*, (London, 1975)

Smith, Anthony, ed., *The British Press since the War*, (London, 1974)

Smith, Anthony, *Goodbye Gutenberg*, (Oxford, 1980)

Smith, Anthony, *The Newspaper: An International History*, (London, 1979)

Smith, Ernest Anthony, *A History of the Press*, (London, 1970)

Southward, J., *Progress in Printing and the Graphic Arts during the Victorian Era*, (London, 1897)

Spicer, A. D., *The Paper Trade*, (London, 1907)

Steed, W., *The Press*, (London, 1938)

Steinberg, S. H., *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, (3rd edition, London, 1977)

Sterne, H., *A Catalogue of Nineteenth-Century Printing Presses*, (Ohio, 1978)

Storey, G., *Reuter's Century 1851-1951*, (London, 1951)

Stutterheim, K. von, *The Press in England*, (London, 1934)

Sutherland, J. R., *History of the Times*, (London, 1935)

Taylor, A. J. P., *English History 1914-1945*, (Harmondsworth, 1970)

Taylor, H. A., *The British Press*, (London, 1961)

Thomas, F. M., *The Recollections of Sir John Robinson*, (London, 1904)

Thomson, David, *England in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1974)

Lord Thomson of Fleet, *After I Was Sixty*, (London, 1975)

Thorold, A. L., *The Life of Henry Labouchere*, (London, 1913)

The Times Tercentenary Handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers Magazines and Reviews, (London, 1920)

The Times, Past Present Future, (London, 1985)

The Times, The History of the Times, 4 vols in 5 (London, 1935-52)

Turner, E. S., *The Shocking History of Advertising*, (London, 1952)

Turner, M., 'Tillotson's Fiction Bureau: Agreements with Authors', *Studies in the Book Trade*, (Oxford, 1975)

U.K. Press Gazette, 1965—

Vincent, John, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857-68*, (London, 1972)

Wadsworth, A. P., 'Newspaper Circulations 1800-1954', *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, iv (1955)

Wakeman, Geoffrey, *Victorian Book Illustration*, (Newton Abbot, 1973)

Wallis, L. W., *A Concise Chronology of Typesetting Developments 1886-1986*, (London 1988)

Watts, A. T., *Technical Progress in Nineteenth-Century Printing*, (Oxford, 1983)

Webb, R. K., *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848*, (London, 1955)

Webb, R. K., *A Handlist of Contributors to the Daily News by Harriet Martineau 1852-1866*, (New York, 1959)

Websters Reading Directory, (London, 1874)

Weedon, M. J. P., 'Richard Johnson and the Successors to John Newbery', *The Library*, iv (1949), pp. 25-39

Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, (Toronto, 1966—)

Welsh, C., *A Bookseller of the Last Century*, (London, 1885)

Whale, John, *The Politics of the Mass Media*, (London, 1977)

Whates, H. R. G., *The Story of the Times*, (London, 1983)

Wheatley, V., *The Life and Work of Harriet Martineau*, (London, 1957)

Whorlow, H., *The Provincial Newspaper Society 1836-1886*, (London, 1886)

Wickwar, W. H., *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press 1819-1832*, (London, 1928)

Wiener, Joel H., *Unstamped British Periodicals 1830-1836*, (London, 1970)

Wiener, Joel H., *The War of the Unstamped: The Movement to Repeal the British Newspaper Tax 1830-36*, (Cornell, 1969)

Wilkerson, Marjorie, *News and Newspapers*, (London, 1970)

William Parks Club, Publication no. 3, (Richmond, 1926)

Williams, F., *Dangerous Estate*, (London, 1957)

Williams, F., *Press Parliament and People*, (London, 1946)

Williams, F., *The Right to Know*, (London, 1969)

Williams, Keith, *The English Newspaper*, (London, 1977)

Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution*, (London, 1965)

Willings Press Guide (London)

Wilson, C., *First with the News: The History of W. H. Smith 1792-1972*, (London, 1985)

Wilson, Trevor, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935*, (London, 1966)

Wintour, Charles, *Pressures on the Press: an Editor Looks at Fleet Street*, (London, 1972)

Wintour, Charles, *The Rise and Fall of Fleet Street*, (London, 1989)

Woods, Allan, *Modern Newspaper Production*, (New York, 1963)

Wood, Anthony, *Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914*, (London, 1960)

World's Press News, 1929-1968 (then *Campaign)*

Wright, F. V., *A Hundred Years of the West Sussex Gazette 1853-1953*, (Arundel, 1953)

Wroth, L., *The Colonial Printer*, (Richmond, 1927)

Wroth, Lawrence C., *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland 1686-1776*, (Richmond, 1927)

Wykes, Alan, *Reading: A Biography*, (London, 1970)

Other Sources

Lovejoy, George, 'Scrapbooks', in Reading Reference Library

INDEX

§

Advertisement Duty, 30
Aerial post, 124
Allied Newspapers Ltd., 256, 283-95
Amalgamated Press, 210, 256
Appelbee, A. S., 123-4
Archibald, J. E., 259
Argus Press, 206, 239-42, 332
Associated Newspapers, 237, 241, 331
Atkinson, E. G. B., 209, 221, 228, 237
Ayres, William, 6

Baxter, William, 59-63, 322
Berks Telegraph, 22, 38-45, 46, 52, 82-83, 132, 140, 147-8, 321, 323, 325
Berkshire Chronicle, 11-12, 20, 23, 28, 40, 44, 46, 61, 64-5, 79, 83, 90, 95, 96-128, 130, 132, 137, 144, 149, 152, 168, 181, 207-43, 245-247, 252, 279, 284, 314, 320, 322, 326-8
Berkshire Chronicle Company Ltd, 111, 116, 123
Berkshire Daily Chronicle, 125-6
Berkshire Guardian, 22, 35-7, 320
Berkshire Independent, 12, 63-4, 150, 322
Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce (see also *Newbury Telegraph*), 35, 74-6, 320
Berkshire Mercury (see also *Reading Mercury*), 238-9
Berkshire Weekly News, 54-5, 58, 321
Berkshire Weekly Times, 54-5, 321
Berry brothers (see also Lords Camrose and Kemsley), 256, 282-3, 286
Blandy, John Jackson, 11
Bracknell News, 230-1, 330

Caird, Hector, 285-6
Camrose, Lord (see also Berry Brothers), 256, 282-283, 286, 292
Carnan, Anna Maria, 7-8
Carnan, William, 6-7
Carr, Sir William, 277
Cave, Edward, 9-10
Central News agency, 42-3
Central Press agency, 40-43, 131, 323
Chronicle Company Ltd, 123-4
Clayden, P. W., 135-43, 325
Compendiums Ltd, 164-5
Cooper, John J., 151, 180, 185, 247
Cornhill Syndicate, 164-5
Cowslade family
    Francis Peter, 10
    Frederick William, 8, 82, 90, 94, 207
    Henry Alfred, 82, 90, 94, 103
    Henry Hartley, 74, 82
    Thomas, 8
    William Wallace, 35, 74, 82, 89
Creative Press and Publishing Co, 276

Daily Mail and Evening Post, 68-69, 322
Daily News, 136, 325
Dawsons of Otley, 87, 89

Elliot Computers, 204, 304
Evening Gazette (see also *Reading Evening Gazette*), 219, 222, 257, 282-96, 328
Evening News, 287, 295
Evening Post, 201, 204-6, 234, 238, 242, 279, 296, 297-319, 330
Evening Standard, 287, 295

Ford, Henry, 49-51, 56-8, 321
Fourdrinier machine, 15-16, 191
Front-end system, 204, 319

Garner, W. G., 211, 234, 237, 264
Geoij, Dr. H. J. A., 200
Gillot, Firmin, 25, 84
Goldsmid, Sir Francis, 101-2, 129-31
Greene, H., 307

Hall, William, 22, 58, 157, 170-9, 326
Hall, William Edward, 177-8
Hancock J. F., 241-2, 274-5, 307
Hedges, William Thomas, 112, 116, 119, 121-5
Henry, David, 9-10
Hobson Family, 168, 208, 228, 237, 252
    Charles Mortimer, 217, 228-43, 330-1
    Henry Mortimer, 95, 128, 208-17, 327
    Thecla, 233, 241, 331
    William, 208

Iliffe, Lord, 256, 282-3, 286, 294, 329
Intertype, 198, 200

Kemsley, Lord (see Berry brothers), 256, 282, 300
Kinnier, David, 4, 6

Linotype, 27-8, 92-3, 111, 127, 158-9, 183, 187, 194, 198-9, 204, 211, 216, 222, 224, 243, 253, 271, 286, 304-5, 326
Lock, Francis John, 49-51, 53-8, 321-3

Margerison, Dr. T., 201
Mergenthaler, Ottmar, 27, 198
Micklewright, Charles, 7

Neale, Frank W., 115, 210-13, 217, 220-1, 224-5, 228, 257, 287
Neale, James, 108-9, 111-13, 115
Newbery, John, 6-8
Newbury Express (see also *Reading Standard*), 22, 26, 58, 170-9
Newbury Guardian, (see *Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian*)
Newbury Journal, 35-7, 320

Newbury Telegraph (see also *Berkshire Journal of Agriculture and Commerce*), 35, 52, 76, 171, 320
Newbury Times, 48

Newbury Weekly News, 132-3, 147, 171, 173
Newspaper Stamp Tax, ix, xiii, 3, 6, 12, 15, 30-3, 60, 72-80, 96, 101, 320-1
Newsprint Supply Company, 191
Northern rotary press, 248, 253

Observer (see also *Reading Observer)*, 22-3, 27-8, 45-6, 64-5, 90-1, 106, 110, 126, 129-169, 171, 176, 178, 180-3, 196, 213-5, 220, 245-8, 251-2, 259, 321-2, 325-7

Parks, William, 4-6
Pettengell, Horace, 168
Pettengell, W. J., 259, 264, 274, 307
Petty, John Paxton, 120-2
Phelps, Frank Randolph Mullings, 209-10
Photon, 200-204, 304
Phototypesetting, 197, 199, 201, 204, 303-5
Pole, John, 261, 268, 276-9
Pole, Sir Felix, 258-9, 261, 267-8, 318
Press Computer System II, 204, 319
Printing presses
- Baker Perkins web offset, 243, 316
- Cowper two-feeder press, 20-1, 23, 73, 87
- Crabtree, 253, 286
- Foster rotary press, 222-3, 230
- Goss rotary presses, 193, 269-70, 273, 285, 319
- Halley Aller press, 305
- Hoe rotary press, 19, 23, 118, 127, 155, 193, 211, 226-7
- Wharfedale flatbed cylinder, 117, 140-1, 143, 176
- Wharfedale two-feeder, 23, 109, 116, 144-5, 155, 183

Radio (Berkshire) Ltd, 275
Read, John, 39-45, 133-8, 321, 323
Reading Advertiser, 38-9, 321
Reading and Abingdon Herald, 53-4

Reading and Berkshire Chronicle (see *Berkshire Chronicle)*
Reading and County Times, 119-21
Reading Broadcasting Co. Ltd, 275
Reading Chronicle (see *Berkshire Chronicle*)
Reading Evening Gazette (see *Evening Gazette)*
Reading Examiner, 58-63, 322
Reading Express and Berkshire Independent, 63-8, 150, 322
Reading Gazette (see *Evening Gazette*)
Reading Herald, 22, 41, 46, 50-4, 321
Reading Mercury (see also *Berkshire Mercury*), xi, 3-12, 17, 20, 23, 28, 35, 40, 44, 46, 52, 61, 64-5, 68, 72-95, 102-3, 106, 109-10, 126, 128, 130, 132-3, 138, 140, 147, 149, 153, 159, 168, 171, 207-43, 245-52, 257, 264, 277, 279, 284, 287, 294, 314, 320, 322-3, 326-7, 330-2
Reading Newspaper Co. Ltd, 95, 128, 207-43, 252, 257, 264, 277, 279, 285, 314, 327-8, 330
Reading Observer, 22-3, 27-8, 45-6, 64-5, 90-1, 106, 110, 126, 129-169, 171, 176, 178, 180-3, 196, 213-5, 220, 245-52, 259, 321-7
Reading Observer Newspaper and Printing Co. Ltd, 165
Reading Press Ltd, 286
Reading Record, 69-71
Reading Standard (see also *Newbury Express*), 22-3, 28, 58, 91, 110, 144, 150, 152, 157, 159, 161, 168-85, 196, 207, 213-14, 221-2, 225, 229-34, 241, 244-81, 294-5, 303-8, 314-5, 326-32
Reading Standard and Newbury Guardian, 22, 41, 56-8, 321
Reading Standard Ltd, 258-81, 316
Rivers family
  Vernon Huntley, 260
  Walter Vernon, 150-2, 157-9, 161, 168, 178-85, 196, 221, 245-261, 267, 276, 278, 284-7, 295, 325, 327
  William George, 138-9, 143, 146, 149-51, 171, 180, 251,325
Rivers-Parry, T., 277-8

Sandall, A., 274, 307
Sapt, Arkus, 195, 246
Saunders, William, 42-3, 131
Shaw-Lefevre, George, J., 107, 129-31

Slaughter family, 162
Mrs Evelyn, 164-6
Charles, 27, 138-62, 171, 251, 325
Charles Henry, 162, 165, 169
Smith, George R., 58-9, 61, 63-4, 67-9, 71, 322-3
Stereotyping, 19-20, 23, 40, 94, 117, 153, 155, 160, 164, 187, 189, 193-7, 246, 248, 271, 304, 307

Thames Valley Newspapers Ltd, 316
The Reading Times, 22, 41, 46-50, 53, 56-7, 321
The Thomson Organisation Ltd, 201, 206, 234, 241, 261, 278-9, 297-319, 330
Thomson Computerset, 307
Thomson, Lord Roy, 278-9, 296, 299-300, 303, 307-8, 310-12, 330

Welch family, 11, 109
Arthur, 104-9
Francis Whitehall, 103-7
Herbert Whitehall, 104-5
Mary Anne, 103, 105
Richard, 11, 96-103
Wokingham Times, 230, 318

APPENDICES D TO J

ARE ON MICROFICHE

PLEASE APPLY TO UNIVERSITY