The Provincial Press and the Community: an historical perspective.

Rachel Matthews
Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies
Cardiff University

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This thesis owes its inception to the many stalwarts of the local papers with whom it has been my privilege to work during my time as a journalist. Their commitment and professionalism deserves much more recognition than they ever get and my hope is that this thesis goes some way to redressing that balance.

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Abstract.

Serving the good of the community is a professional value prized by those who work in the provincial press. It is also seen as a vital role for local newspapers by those outside the industry. A localised form of the Fourth Estate, the good of the community therefore justifies and underpins the routines and news values of those who work in regional and local news organisations. This thesis investigates the extent to which this notion serves as a functional value for the English provincial news industry; it positions it within an historical context to understand its relationship with the economic structure of the local newspaper. As such, after Foucault, it constitutes the good of the community as a discursive position which functions in different ways during different periods of development for the provincial press. The history of the provincial press is charted from its inception in the eighteenth century to the present day. This history conceptualises its development within six distinct stages; as such it seeks to demonstrate the fluidity of the notion of serving the good of the community which is presented as absolute by the industry. Interviews with current workers within the industry are used to expose the way in which the concept functions for the industry today and concomitant changes wrought by digital innovation. These demonstrate that the notion functions best at those titles which enjoy direct investment in their ability to act in a way which serves the good the community; conversely it is most under threat at those titles which are increasingly removed from their locale for reasons of profit. This thesis ends with the suggestion that preserving the ability of the provincial news industry to serve the good of the community necessitates a new approach to an assessment of its value; it suggests that alternative funding models are needed if the ability of the industry to meet this goal is to be retained.

Key words: provincial press, regional newspaper, good of the community, watchdog, newspaper history, journalism history, news, local journalism.

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Section 1: Reappraising the Provincial Press.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On 18 December 2013 the editorial team of the *Liverpool Post* set about putting together the final edition of the long-established and respected regional newspaper. The event – blogged live by the multi-media newsroom – marked the end of 158 years of continuous publication. Yet the demise of a once-significant daily title went largely unnoticed by the wider population; media commentator and former regional daily editor Steve Dyson hailed the decision as "common sense" (*Theguardian.com*, 12.10.13) citing a sale of 6,000 copies in a city with a population of 500,000. Just a handful of readers even bothered to comment on the *Post's* own blog of the landmark day (*Liverpooldailypost.co.uk,* 18.12.13). Announcing the closure of the title in its own columns, Trinity Mirror North West Managing Director, Steve Anderson Dixon said: "The *Post* is a wonderful and much-loved old lady who has simply come to the end of her natural life." (*www. liverpooldailypost.co.uk* 10.12.2013)

The closure was an especially poignant reminder of direction of travel for the industry. Just eight years ago Granada TV (which holds the commercial television franchise for the region) featured a two-part documentary about the title to mark its 150th anniversary, indicating the significance the title still enjoyed within its region. It is also one of the few regional papers to be subjected to academic scrutiny, which resulted in the seminal work, by Harvey Cox and David Morgan *City Politics and the Press* (1973). Their work highlighted the relationship between the-then titled *Liverpool Daily Post*, and the Merseyside community. The significance of the paper – and its sister title *The Liverpool Echo*, was hard to miss; at the end of the 1960s they boasted a circulation of more than 96,000 and 389,000 copies a day (ibid: 43).

The demise of the *Liverpool Post (*the Echo is still going*)* reveals the duality of the perspective from which such local papers are viewed. On the one hand they are 'rags' which can be dispensed with when no longer needed; on the other they are an integral part of the local landscape. What both sides would appear to agree on, is that these newspapers have had their day – a view formed against a backdrop of falling advertising revenues and declining sales. Typical of this is the attitude of media analysts FTI Consulting, whose 2013 report tells of an industry in terminal decline in the face of a digital media revolution. Yet in terms of other indicators, the provincial press remains successful. The website for the Newspaper Society (2013), the professional body for the industry, cites 1,100 regional and local newspapers – with 1,600 associated websites. The print products boast 31 million readers a week and as I write the business continues to yield substantial profits, albeit at a level which has been drastically reduced by the dual impact of the digital revolution and the economic recession.

There is no doubt that the provincial newspaper industry is part-way through a transformation wrought by the pushes and pulls of the digital revolution of the past 20 years or so. These changes, which have undermined the traditional business model for local news, are characterised as having "radically altered virtually every aspect of news gathering, writing and reporting" by Bob Franklin (2013:1), who has written extensively on the provincial newspaper. Change is evident everywhere and even the Newspaper Society notes that websites out-number printed products for its members. But the inability of the industry to make money from the web versions of their titles, and the subsequent precariousness of the news they provide, has created a complex pattern of reactions[1]. The discussion around the closure of the *Liverpool Post* typifies the different viewpoints on the issue. Writing his last column for the paper, editor Mark Thomas was keen to draw the significance of the paper to the city.

> "There are some politicians, and some people in public life in our own city region, who will today be celebrating the end of the road for the *Liverpool Post*. Without our scrutiny, they may be tempted to breathe

[1] These are discussed at length in Chapter 12 of this thesis.

> just a little more easily. They should not relax their guard too much. The *Liverpool Post* may not be publishing anymore, but its investigative spirit is alive and well in the Echo and in journalists who will continue to fight for your interests and to uncover the important truths that officialdom would be happier to keep under wraps." (www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk: 18.12.13)

It is this role of the local paper as a 'watchdog', which plays a key role in local communities, which lever the most impact in debates around the significance of, and the need for, the industry. These contemporary arguments, explored at length in chapter 12, are made at the highest level; Lord Justice Leveson paid tribute to the ability of the regional press to fulfil this role when ruling on statutory regulation of the press (House of Commons, 2012: 6-7). The roots of this debate are though to be found in post-war Britain in the context of the concentration of ownership of the provincial newspaper industry. The comparison between those detailed discussions now and then (see Chapter 7), enables us to appreciate the inertia that has surrounded these issues for more than 50 years. As such, this historical approach can reveal those similarities and attempt to free the arguments rehearsed from the dogma of the Liberal view of the free press which appears to mire them in inaction.

This conception of the provincial press as serving the good of the community is also a role valued by those working within the industry and which informs their day-to-day routines, including the stories they chose to cover (local councils being a prime example). In interviews carried out as part of this thesis time and again editorial staff at a selection of provincial papers in England claimed their role was to inform and reflect the concerns of their communities. These journalists see their titles as the "voice of their communities", and themselves as "watchdogs" (Interviewee 1IWE), watching out for those unable to watch out for themselves. Indeed, such is the primacy of this approach that it is embedded within both past and current training regimes for journalists in the UK and, as such, knowledge of local and national government continues to form one of five 'mandatory' subjects for the National Council for the Training of Journalists. In 2013 The Newspaper Society, the body which represents the interests of the regional and local newspaper industry, took press freedom as its theme – interpreting this for its

membership as “the importance of local newspapers' freedom to scrutinise authority and hold the powerful to account” (Newspaper Society, 2013b).

This picture of the local paper as steadfast friend to the population it serves is well documented by Ian Jackson (1971) in his study of the provincial press in the 1960s, and by Cox and Morgan (1973) in their analysis of local papers in Liverpool, all of whom draw a picture of local papers which exist with the prime aim of serving the “good of the town” (ibid: 122). In this view, changes such as moving from broadsheet to tabloid, daily to weekly or even from paper to online are all incidental to the industry’s core purpose. It is a view epitomised by Clive Joyce, Editor of the *Kidderminster Shuttle*, writing to publicise the Newspaper Society’s annual Local Newspaper Week in 2009: "We must never forget that a local newspaper stands and falls on its relationship with its community.” (Newspaper Society 2009).

This relationship is not questioned but is seen as a ‘partnership’ where paper and community have been, are, and always will be, on an equal footing. This, though, is a simplistic view, which elides the contradiction between the role of the newspaper as public servant and its role as a commercial entity. Those such as Jeremy Black (2001), who take a historical perspective on the local press, lay bare the unflinching assumptions exemplified by Clive Joyce and instead characterise the provincial press in terms of change – as opposed to continuity. This theme is continued by Martin Conboy’s *Journalism. A Critical History* (2004); although it focuses primarily on the national news media, his conception of the relationship between journalism and society provides a useful context for investigating why and how the history of the regional press can be so characterised by change.

My contention is that an historical understanding of these shifts in emphasis between the components of the provincial press – and in particular within the context of this study, its claims to serve a community – enables us to understand the medium in relation to the development of society on a macro level; it also enables us to challenge those components which are often presented as absolute and to critically engage with the ideological construction and function of those to the media. In this context, the provincial

newspaper-centric approach of this thesis is an attempt to contextualise its hegemonic claims to perform certain functions – such as acting as a community watchdog – within a historical context and in doing so to challenge them. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, history enables us to do this because "the search for descent is not the erecting of foundations; on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile, it fragments what was thought unified, it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent in itself" (Rabinow, 1984: 82).

This approach is made possible by a particular conception of what it is to practise journalism and, to be a journalist. On a superficial level journalism is primarily concerned with news so, despite the ritualisation of news-gathering practices, the main concern of journalism is constantly changing. However, Conboy takes us further into the consideration of what the practice of journalism itself is, resulting in a definition of it as a range of communicative actions which are a matter of constant negotiation between journalist and public and, significantly for this thesis, which is "commercially viable" (Conboy, 2004: 3). This is journalism as Foucauldian discourse, whose concrete forms – in this case the provincial press – are manifestations of the power relationships in society but also, and perhaps usefully, they are social objects whose very definition is a manifestation of the operation of those competing for power.

Taking this view of the provincial press, then, enables us to take a fresh look at claims which those who consider themselves to be journalists would have us take as constant principles. Instead we can examine how these claims to continuity serve the interests of the various vested interests, whether they be those of newspaper workers, newspapers owners or external stakeholders such as politicians; those claims can be repositioned within the changing role of the provincial press within society and how that has been perceived historically. In turn this can help us to assess in whose interests those discursive positions function.

> "Certainly, over time, many aspects of journalism can be regarded discursively such as the freedom of the press, the news media as

> ‘Fourth Estate’, the objectivity of journalism, the normative political functions of journalism or what journalism should and should not do and the often obscured economic imperative of journalism – its political economy.”(Conboy, 2004: 4)

Therefore, when the editor of a daily newspaper claims that his is a community paper and that “if you want to be a community newspaper you have to walk the walk” (Interviewee 6GDWGE), this approach leads us to contextualise the ideological conflict between this statement and the management position which puts his local reporters 20 miles from the area they seek to serve and to question whether this position benefits the community, or the business model of the title.

Structure of the research.

The definition of provincial press employed here draws on the contemporaneous definition employed by the industry body which represents such titles, the Newspaper Society (although this organisation favours the term “local press”). Within this remit it is those newspapers which define themselves as circulating within a defined geographical area which have been studied and whose origins have been sought. However, within this definition there is a variety of formats to be considered according to the frequency of publication and significantly the economic model, namely if a paper is distributed for free or is paid for. More recently these titles are also available online so that websites now outnumber printed products and so the key definitional relationship with place is challenged, as discussed at length in chapters 10 and 11.[2] This study has also concentrated on titles in England; this is due not only to the sheer size of the task of investigating the provincial press which makes containment a necessity, but also due to differences in

[2] The home page for the Newspaper Society claims there are 1,100 titles circulating in the UK and 1,700 “associated websites”.

governance which affect the relationship between the local and London-based national press in Scotland, Wales and Northern Island. [3]

The first section of this research reviews its theoretical and methodological context. Chapter 2 considers the question of history as an approach to understanding, and scopes the variety of sources which are open to interpretation by academics. This is followed by a consideration of how this compares with the existing body of literature in relation to the provincial press – drawing on both historical and other approaches. This is particularly pertinent for the provincial press, which is often glossed over in accounts of the press in favour of considerations of those newspapers which circulate on a national level.

This thesis seeks to address this imbalance by charting the history of the provincial press, and, in doing so, by charting a series of changes which have influenced the function of the sector. Indeed, both Conboy (2004) and Jeremy Black conclude that it is journalism's very ability to shift and react to change, whether social, political or indeed economic, such as technological innovations, which underpins its continuity. As such "each period of English newspaper history can be presented as one of transformation, shifts in content, production, distribution, and the nature of competition, and the social context." (Black, 2001:1). We can identify key historical moments in the development of the provincial press; some of these may well have had a slow-felt influence, such as move towards monopolistic ownership patterns, while others may have caused a seismic shift in practice, such as the repeal of stamp duty which paved the way for a cheap, accessible regional press.

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[3] That is not to say that the methodology employed here is not significant to the structure of the provincial press in these areas. Indeed, national boundaries are significant definers of newspapers and as such, the Scottish press may be considered fairly similar in its essential terms as the English or Welsh local press (see McNair, 2006 and Thomas, 2006 for scoping studies of the structure of the local press in Scotland and Wales). Indeed, their increasing remoteness from the London-based press suggests an increased emphasis on the provincial press in these areas and Tunstall (1996: 62) suggests that Scotland has traditionally resisted the dominance of the London press. A discussion of the extent to which the national press may also be considered to be national is also offered in the Methodology chapter.

This thesis suggests that the history of the local press may be divided into six distinct stages, each characterised by change in terms of a shift in emphasis between the key elements of state control, political economy, and significantly ownership, social influence and production techniques – typically driven by new technology. This is not the first typology of the press to be charted and similarities may be drawn between the classification offered here and that of Nerone and Barnhurst (2003), who have documented the development of the US press in relation to its form and its relationship to the wider social context. Nerone and Barnhurst also categorise the development of newspapers into six phases; they are dealing with the US press but the American geography is such that the newspaper industry has stuck more closely to a provincial model than the distinct regional/national dichotomy experienced in the UK, making theirs a useful comparison for the typography I offer here.

In brief their six stages are: firstly, the printer's paper where newspapers are produced by printers and filled with information culled from elsewhere. As papers become established and competition increases, newspapers are harnessed by political parties and embrace partisanship as a way of attracting a wider readership; as such the Editor's paper is born because one person is given the role of making sure the product speaks with a single voice and advocates a point of view. The third stage, the Publisher's paper, sees newspapers which diversify in the face of increased commercial opportunity. The Publisher's paper in turn paves the way for mass circulation as newspapers become industrialised; thus during its fourth stage newspaper content is compartmentalised along advertising lines. In the fifth stage of development Nerone and Barnhurst describe how newspapers are increasingly owned by chains and, in turn, monopoly positions develop. As a reaction to the power of such owners, the Professional Paper develops, staffed by reporters who include objectivity and independence among their values so that they can faithfully map the society they serve. And it is this model which the authors posit is under threat in the sixth and final stage of newspaper development which we find ourselves now – that of a Corporate Paper where the reporter's ability to uphold those values is threatened.

In outline my analysis posits the six phases of regional news development which are described at length in section 2 of this thesis, marked by the shift in dominance of certain characteristics. These are: firstly, the local newspaper as opportunistic, entrepreneurial creation; secondly, the characterisation of the local newspaper as Fourth Estate; thirdly, the impact of New Journalism; fourthly, the growth of chain control; fifthly, the marketisation of newspapers and, finally, the impact of digital technology. It is important to recognise that these phases are not distinct and neither are they to be seen across the whole industry at any one time; as Nerone and Barnhurst say, "historically, the different types have nestled within each other in complicated ways" (2003: 439). However, by charting this typology this thesis sets out to distinguish the contingent from the permanent in the history of provincial newspapers, characterised as it is by continuity and change, and to analyse what role is ascribed to the industry both by itself and by society and to ask what purpose this process may serve.

Chapter 4 develops the first stage which sees the creation of newspapers by non-specialists – usually printers as Nerone and Barnhurst identify – who created newspapers to make the most of the advent of news as a commodity in the eighteenth century by setting up newspapers. At this stage newspapers are largely local in terms of distribution but national and international in terms of content, which is recirculated from publication to publication. With the loosening of state control and the repeal of stamp duty and advertisement duty, the economic conditions become such that regional papers become bigger in terms of circulation, pagination and status. Industrialisation means newspaper ownership can only be accessed by those with sufficient wealth, making it a way of raising status and public profile. It is in this period, the subject of Chapter 5, approximately from 1855 to 1880, that we see the origins of the rhetoric of the liberal notion of the free press and of the press as 'Fourth Estate'.

The third stage (Chapter 6) sees the provincial press become increasingly commercialised with the impact of 'New Journalism' and the conception of reader as mass audience. This is manifest in the design of newspapers and an

increased demarcated role for journalists, who adopt and apply ideological values to justify their work, including the emphasis on the value of serving the good of the community as a localised version of the Fourth Estate. In Chapter 7, the fourth stage is examined as the rise of a new economic structure comes to the fore in the second quarter of the 20th century; rising circulations result in the elimination of competition by acquisition. While some contemporary narratives posit this as the heyday of the local press, two separate Royal Commissions express anxiety about the overt commercialism, which is broken only by the interregnum of the austerity of World War Two. The trading conditions surrounding the operation of newspapers in World War Two are so exceptional as to warrant their own exploration in Chapter 8, although it is not considered a stage of development in terms of the schema above. Significantly the industry sets aside commercial rivalry to emphasise their public service to communities as a form of war service.

Since the 1970s, this consolidation of ownership has continued virtually unchecked. The result is the fifth stage of development, the dominance of a highly-profitable, market driven business set out in Chapter 9. These profits firmly rest on advertising revenues and the impact of this – epitomised by the advent of free sheets which trade a cover price for mass circulations – have a dramatic effect on the internal dominance of newspaper departments. The financial bottom line takes prominence over editorial and the newspaper companies rationalise costs and concentrate on eliminating competition and establishing monopolistic positions within areas so that they can capitalise on advertising revenues. It is within the context of this highly-commercialised provincial press that the position of serving the good of the community is theorised and tested via a series of interviews with news workers in Chapters 10 and 11 respectively. This analysis suggests that for many it has been reduced to a functional notion which is more closely aligned to the health of the newspaper business than to a notion of public service.

Thus the stage is set for the final phase of the schema outlined above; the dramatic effect of the advent of the internet on the business model of the provincial press. That, together with the post-2008 banking crisis recession, described as a "double whammy" by one editor interviewed here (Interviewee

5GDWGE), is explored in Chapter 12. Companies have found it harder to establish a secure revenue stream in terms of either advertising or selling access to content. The industry has now become a story of plummeting circulations, in which cost-cutting strategies have resulted in fewer people, producing more, but lesser-quality, content, and accusations that the regional press is becoming so homogenised that it no longer deserves the moniker 'local'. As such it has disrupted the very basis of what it means to be a journalist working in the provincial press and has destabilised given concepts including working for the good of the community. Significantly, this thesis concludes with the suggestion that the debate around the impending demise of the provincial newspaper needs to release it from the continued emphasis on the free market; in doing so, due consideration can be given to the perceived social role of those titles and their ability to serve the communities they profess to support. This reframes the debate so that the future may lie not in a profit motive but in one of public service which, in turn, offers alternative avenues for funding which might actually deliver a sustainable future.

Chapter 2. Literature Review. Conceptions of the Provincial Press

It is perhaps unsurprising that newspapers have been widely written about given their cultural significance to modernity. When film director Ridley Scott created the futuristic world of *Blade Runner* (1982), he made the cars fly, but put the hero on the street corner reading a printed broadsheet. Sommerville (1996) comments that, in the way fish did not discover water, so we think of news as being an essential part of social consciousness and for many that is still inextricably linked with a product printed on paper, despite the expansion of digital technology. The newspaper has, therefore, become a ubiquitous part of the landscape to the extent that it is hard to envision a world without it. However, defining the newspaper as an object of study is far from straightforward. As I write, for instance, the assumptions surrounding the link between form, content and purpose are being disrupted by the impact of digital technology. Indeed, Jeff Jarvis argues that it is precisely this obsession with paper as a medium which is signalling the end of the "newspaper". For Jarvis (2007: 45), what is important is not the form, but the newspaper as an "organising principle" delivering a news service to a community[4]. Therefore, instead of considering the newspaper as an object, we can consider it as a communications institution. This thesis seeks to chart a path through this debate by considering the provincial newspaper as a communications institution in its own right. As such it considers a range of a issues associated with it including ownership, contents, its relations with audience and readership and technology and even its relationship with the mode of delivery – that is on paper or online.

[4] This position is discussed in the concluding section of this thesis.

The classification of newspapers.

Defining what constitutes a newspaper is a far from straightforward process – especially for those who seek to chart its development overtime. Cole and Harcup perhaps too glibly describe it as “a portable reading device with serendipity. You can take it anywhere and read it anywhere” (2010: 4). More useful definitions, such as that employed by Sommerville (1996), identify defining characteristics, such as periodicity and regularity to start to describe the special nature of newspaper content. In England the dominant definitions of forms of newspapers connect to three main characteristics: frequency of publication, geographical reach and business model, and this, in turn, has come to be linked to a hierarchical ranking of newspaper forms aligned with their perceived significance. Ranked first by this definition are the daily, ‘national’ newspapers – which are themselves sub-divided into ‘quality’, mid-market and tabloid. National titles are here defined as those headquartered in London but circulating across Britain[5]. At the bottom in terms of status are the local free sheets pushed through the letterbox.

This ranking, though, exposes the fragility of the most common distinction between provincial and national titles. Jeremy Tunstall (1983) points out that the notion of a ‘national’ press is largely attributable to a series of British “peculiarities” (1983: 221) which have favoured its dominance, including the conglomerate – and therefore centralised – ownership of newspapers explored in this thesis. As such, provincial titles have at times provided subsidies for London-based titles, which were nurtured for prestige and influence and “newspaper machismo” (ibid: 22); this left the provincial titles vulnerable to downturns in the advertising market and subsequent asset-stripping, which has in turn affected their prestige (ibid). MacInnes et al (2007) go further and suggest that the “national” definition preferred by titles assumes that circulations, national identities and institutions map seamlessly

[5] Even this classification is open to question. Some London ‘national’ titles take on geographical nomenclatures – such as *The Mirror* which is renamed the *Daily Record* in Scotland (MacInnes et al, 2007: 189). The London *Evening Standard* also has an ambigious position here; its origins lie alongside ‘national’ titles like *The Times*, with which it competed and its circulation has historically been higher than that of many nationals (Williams, 2010: 110).

against each other; in fact though, titles do not circulate equivalently across the UK and the competing claims of titles to serve the national interests of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland further undermine the notion of "national"; this complexity is such that it renders the "ultimate utility of the construct 'the British national press' rather doubtful" (2007: 201). The "national press" becomes the expression of a "hegemonic semantics" which privileges a "metro-centric version of British nationalism" (Rosie et al, 2006: 330). As such it is better understood as a discursive position taken by "political actors" who "may seem to reproduce a popular banal national consciousness to legitimise the state" (MacInnes, 2007: 189). Koss (1981: 21) argues that the contiguity of Parliament and the London-based titles means their voice has historically been heard clearly by politicians, despite what have at times been relatively small circulations. The significance of those titles is magnified by the country's highly centralised and dominant London-based political system, which is covered by those titles. Tunstall (1996) suggests that a process of cost-cutting in the industry outside London has further emphasised that dominance by weakening alternative coverage.

This understanding of the national press then calls for a reassessment of the relative significance of those titles which circulate outside of the capital – termed provincial. These newspapers are aligned to a geographical area by name, and, decreasingly, production[6] and circulation, with a frequency of publication which varies between daily (morning and evening), weekly and even monthly and with circulations ranging from just a few thousand to those which sell more than 90,000 a day[7]. The combined sales of these titles has at times outstripped those of the national newspaper (Franklin and Murphy 1991) but this does not stop them from being accorded a lower status by those who seek to study the newspaper. [8] The exception to this rule is Bob Franklin, who has challenged this position with an extensive canon of work

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[6] The process by which local papers are being physically removed from the locations they profess to serve is analysed in Chapter 12.
[7] Figures produced by the Audit Bureau of Circulations for August 2013 show the largest sale for a daily title to be that of the *Express & Star* (Wolverhampton) at 90,612 (*Press Gazette*, 28.8.13a). The smallest sale for a weekly title was that of the *Herne Bay Gazette* at 2,245 (*Press Gazette* 28.8.13b).
[8] The complexities of ascertaining exact circulations for regional and national titles is discussed in Chapter 12.

building on a flurry of academic studies in the 1970s. His work with David Murphy (1991) eruditely states the case for why the regional newspaper should be given full attention, and his argument remains relevant 25 years on. Others who have sought to redress the imbalance in scholarly attention to the local/regional press include Wiles, whose 1964 work on the origins of the provincial press is unrivalled in its scope and detail, Ian Jackson (1971), Cox and Morgan (1973), and more recently Andrew Walker (2006a).

In fact the development of the newspaper in England is such that it is hard to disentangle the national from the regional for much of the period under consideration in this thesis in terms of circulations, ownership and influence. Predicating the national newspaper as the dominant form fails to recognise that the origin of the press in England is regional in shape with a distinction between London and the provinces more accurate. Even so, Walker (2006a) argues that during the nineteenth century the regional press was significant enough in its own right to be seen as forming a national network. There is also evidence that the largest provincial titles were also held for national influence (Cranfield, 1978). When the London press did extend its reach beyond the capital, there remained an often-symbiotic relationship between the two forms of paper, exemplified, for instance, by the traffic in content and staff between the two in formalised and structured ways typified by career progression codified in the National Union of Journalists. The dominant businesses also failed to distinguish between the two – holding regional and national titles alongside each other for prestige and profit.

One further characteristic which dominates our understanding of the newspaper is the business model – and particularly the positioning of newspapers as paid-for or free at the point of distribution – a distinction which extends to the digital realm with the erection of paywalls and subscriptions. This dichotomy actually describes a fairly minor divergence in the reality of funding for newspapers, in that as little as 10 per cent of revenue is generated by cover price when compared with the proportion generated by advertising revenue (Royal Commission, 1974-77). However, its significance has more strictly been aligned to the status accorded to these titles in terms of content and standards. This polarisation has been thoroughly challenged by

Franklin and Murphy (1991) who concluded that although the business model for free sheets predicates revenue over quality, in many instances the production values were such that they were indistinguishable from traditional newspapers. Increasingly the free model was adopted by traditional newspaper titles for some or all of their circulation (ibid) and more recently it has extended to a regionalised national format to establish the Metro series of newspapers. More recently still, some titles have moved to a hybrid form of distribution whereby they are sold in some quarters but then distributed for free in others, often at pick-up points, in a process which is explored in Chapter 12.

Williams (2010) and Conboy (2011) offer an alternative perspective and consider the newspaper as a cultural form, which frees it from a set format – such as being printed on paper – and positions it in a process of communication with its own set of aims and practices. This is a useful approach for the historian of the newspaper, because it enables an approach which recognises it as an evolving form; for instance, Williams scopes a range of names for what may be called newspapers over time to include: "corantos, newsbooks, diurnals, gazettes, newssheets, mercuries, intelligencers, periodicals, tabloids, newspapers and journals" (ibid: 4), to which could equally be added, news websites, apps and tablet editions, in recognition of emerging digital forms of publication. Historian Jeremy Black (2001) is among those who predicate change itself as a defining characteristic of the newspaper. To understand the newspaper, it is necessary to understand how the emphasis between key components, such as content, business model and influence, shifts over time.

Perspectives on history

In charting the development of the provincial press this thesis draws on a wide variety of sources, including those who write about the provincial press from within, as well as those who take an academic perspective. As such it includes the testimony and assessments of stakeholders, such as journalists

and owners, and those who take a scholarly approach to the subject. These include the creation of grand narratives based around personalities, such as those which privilege the era of the Press Barons (Brendon 1982; Cudlipp 1980) or Eddy Shah (Goodhart and Wintour 1986), and those who see technology as a driver for change. Histories – often personal – are also written by the journalists themselves and offer accounts of their careers and their relationships with their owners (for instance, Evans 2009; Stott 2002). Another common approach is to focus on specific newspapers, often concentrating on the well-known titles. Histories of national titles include those by Chippendale and Horrie (1990) and Ayerst (1971). Those of individual provincial newspapers number the *Wolverhampton Express & Star* (Rhodes, 1992), or of the origins of *Yorkshire Post* (Gibb, MA and Beckwith, 1954*).* Histories also focus on newspapers in a locale (Penny, 2001; Milne, nd) and even newspaper companies such as Johnston Press (Riley 2006). The works by Rhodes and Gibb and Beckwith are informative accounts of the development of significant titles, but others are often uncritical and many are written as celebratory records of longevity. The Riley title reads little more than a list of acquisitions and mergers which testifies to the rapid expansion of Johnston Press in the latter part of the last century. Significantly, both this and the Rhodes tome were bespoke for the companies they relate to, which has implications for the way in which the narration of events may be interpreted[9]. Sometimes these approaches conflate as journalists offer their own history of their occupation (Marr 2004). Their approaches include discussions of personal careers, the titles themselves, their development as businesses, their owners and influence, the working practices of those engaged within them, and the development of all of these in relation to the emergence and adoption of technological innovations. As such, these works have provided both theoretical sustenance, but also empirical evidence for this thesis.

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[9] The caveat of bearing in mind authorial motivation when interpreting histories of newspapers can equally be applied to those narrations of personal histories. Thus Claud Morris (1963) gives us a fascinating insight into the stresses of running a small weekly newspaper title – including first-hand experience of the consolidation of the newspaper industry described in Chapter 7; but in common with many journalists who write of their careers, he mythologises his David and Goliath battle against the conglomerate newspaper owners within the discourse of a fight for independence.

Alongside these sources, this thesis builds on the ground work which has been laid by those who have taken an historical approach to the provincial press within distinct periods; foremost among these are Wiles (1965), Lee (1976), Cranfield (1978), Boyce et al (1978) and Black (1987 and 2001). Wiles pays sole attention to the provincial press; his preface pays testament to the mountains of physical titles which were mined for his study in the pre-digital age (ibid: viii), while the other works begin to posit the provincial press within the context of the press as a whole. Academic historians have sought to employ their rigour in investigating the significance of both London-based (metropolitan) titles and those emanating from the provinces. Much of this work has looked for origins – exemplified by Harris (1987), who focuses on the London papers, complimented by the work of Black (1987, 2001) who seeks to consider both provincial and metropolitan titles. More recently Raymond (1996) has revisited the roots of the newspaper with his work on newsbooks in the seventeenth century and Sommerville (1996) has written of the origins of news as a communicative practice. In terms of comprehensiveness, few equal Boyce et al, who set out to “survey the history of the modern British press” (1978: 13).

Black’s approach recognises the contribution of those who produced early provincial titles, who “were not simply scissors and paste men” but instead “who produced readable, interesting and in some cases, campaigning newspapers (1987: xiii). As such, Black argues, neither assessments of the political or social influence of early newspapers can be effective without consideration of these titles. He acknowledges the debt to the work of both Wiles (1965) and Cranfield, (1978), both of whom offer a detailed approach to the origins of the provincial newspaper. Wiles in particular dedicates close study to extensive archives to compile his highly detailed narration of the operation of those early titles. Cranfield though begins to offer an assessment of those titles in terms of their social function and, as such, offers a compelling argument for their close study by offering evidence to support the extent to which these newspapers wielded influence and, perhaps equally importantly, were seen to wield influence enough to get a member of parliament elected

(1978: 202-3). This approach is continued by Black[10] (2001), who suggests that such was the impact of the newspaper – including the significant provincial newspaper – that it offered a 'new world' of print.

The approaches to the press taken by historians can be roughly divided into those who consider its social impact, those who privelege its political function and those who investigate its cultural significance. These three conceptions dominate the organisation of the Boyce et al's seminal work and continue to bear influence in modern approaches. What are less obvious are analyses from the perspective of economic history – although AJ Lee, operating from a Marxist perspective – does give prominence to the issues of ownership and profit in his consideration of the origins of the popular press (1976). Therefore, for a political economic approach to newspapers (discussed at length in the section below), one must look to the social sciences where researchers have focused on the provincial press as an industry with its own set of norms and values which inform its mode of operation. Whilst not based in an historical approach, these accounts do now span a considerable amount of time (Cox and Morgan 1973, David Murphy 1974, Ian Jackson 1971, Simpson, 1981, Hetherington 1989, Franklin and Murphy 1991). Taken with archival evidence of business organisation, these studies can begin to form a longitudinal survey of the impact on the organisation of provincial news as a business on its form, content and practice. Significantly for this study, the approach of the social scientist also gives prominence to the experience of those people who work to produce newspapers[11]; combining this with a political economic approach then enables us to assess the impact of business models on those practices and associated norms. Combining that with an historical approach, which is at the core of this thesis, then enables us to chart those impacts on the industry over time. This application of history to this context is discussed at length in the following chapter.

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[10] Initially set out in 1987, Black expands and refines his position in his 2001 work.
[11] There are multiple ethnographic studies of newsworkers which offer invaluable insights into the working life of a journalist. These include, although not exclusively, Tunstall 1971, Tuchman, 1978 and Hetherington 1989, although the latter differs in that it is the perspective of a journalist looking at regional news across a range of platforms.

The journalist as 'professional'

A parallel question with that of what is a newspaper, is that of what is a journalist working within these titles and what are the routines and practices which can be described as journalism. The versions put forward in the biographic and autobiographic accounts of high profile figures from the industry have a tendency to portray the journalist as born with a 'nose for news' and to present the question of what is a journalist as unproblematic. Delano recalls L. Mencken's description of journalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century as "a craft to be mastered in four days and abandoned at the first sign of a better job." (2000: 262). Marr suggests that "'what is a journalist?' is one of those questions to which there is no answer. Journalists have a blurred social status, a foggy range of a skills, an ill-defined purpose and a ludicrously romantic haze where a professional code would normally be." (2004: 5). These approaches suggest the complexity which presents a "conceptual dilemma" for the practice of journalism (Elliott, 1978: 172); a journalist can be a force for good – as typified by the heroes of Watergate, Woodward and Bernstein – or a muckraking scoundrel who is to be despised. As such the journalist is "constructed in history somewhere between hack and hero" (Conboy, 2011: 167) and their "multiple identity" as an "individual professional, the citizen with social responsibilities, and the worker as part of a collective" (Harcup, 2002: 103), is wrought with tension.

In tandem with status, is the question as to whether journalism can be considered a profession. Andrew Marr (2004) describes his book about journalism as "*My Trade*"; this title hints at the debate about whether journalism is a skills-based occupation, akin to that of the printers with whom journalists have been so closely allied, or a defined profession with its own codes of practices and required entry knowledge. It is a debate epitomised in the tension between the trades union, the National Union of Journalists and the Institute of Journalists, which envisioned journalism as "an autonomous profession able to organise and rank its members, regulate their ethical conduct and determine certain conditions of their employment" (Delano, 2000: 271). Yet those who have measured journalism against traditional definitions of a profession have found it wanting (Sanders, 2003: 8). As Gopsill

and Neale explain, "journalism does not work in the manner of a profession as most people understand the term when they think of say, medicine, accountancy or law. These are closed shops, with high barriers to entry; they are regulated by professional associations, and, most importantly, the practitioners often control the fees they are paid… In economic terms journalists are simply hired hands, or pens. This is why they need, and 100 years ago, formed a union." (2007: 4). Consideration of the practice of journalism over time also suggests that its status has shifted and developed in sometimes non-linear ways, for instance, facing reversal due to the impact of technological innovation in the 1980s and 90s, and, more recently, with the impact of digital innovation. This is despite an increased emphasis on education and the increased visibility of journalism as an undergraduate programme. There are also the attempts from within journalism to resist professionalisation either by emphasising the individual over efforts to collectivise (Elliott, 1978: 175) or by undermining shifts in their own occupation (Conboy, 2011: 170-2). The result is that the questions which confront those working as journalists – for instance with reference to organisation, regulation and independence – are little changed in a century (Delano, 2000: 261).

Alternative views on the question of professionalism have begun to extricate journalism from this impasse. Elliott has reframed the debate to consider journalism an "occupation" from which a living can be made and links the growth of this occupation with a set of practices and an accompanying ideology (1978:172-3). For Elliott this process can also be complex and perhaps contradictory. He suggests that editors needed to be free from political interference to be independent and 'professional' but that this only came at the turn of the twentieth century when journalism became organised according to an industrial process which enabled it to be commercially successful. This 'free' journalism was in fact made up of strategic rituals dominated by the technology of the telegraph and the skill of shorthand which enabled verbatim 'objective' reports and fast news; ideologically, these journalists gave value to their work by employing the value of serving the public interest, (1978: 182-3). Conboy has deconstructed the notion of the journalist as one set of practices which can be constituted as journalism, to

suggest that it is better understood as a spectrum. He posits five types of journalist – the radical pamphleteer, the men of letters, populist scribes, hacks and the enlightened editor (2011: 166). This fluidity means the need for a precise definition has been obviated; however, this does not prevent journalism from being defined by a set of "professional imperatives" which inform what journalists do, for instance, fact checking and scrutinising information. Delano (2000: 265) also observes that journalists see themselves as professionals; for him professionalism consists of "techniques applied to the manufacturing of media product". This notion of professionalism – termed "news professionalism" by John Soliski – enables industrialised media organisations to exert control over editorial staff, while enabling the flexibility for journalists to work within the relatively unpredictable environment of the newsroom (1989: 212). For both him and Delano these values are not abstract ideological constructs, but actualised organising principles which inform the way in which journalists work. As such, they can also be employed by journalists to challenge the systems in which they work, for instance by being aware of the limitations placed by industrial structural on their ability to work in a way they would see as being 'professional', such as being able to exercise individual discretions or serving the public interest. "They worry openly about the obstacles that media structure place in the way of dealing with issues of public relevance…… They fear …. that increasing concentration of the ownership of media outlets could eventually affect the way they would prefer to carry out their work" (Delano, 2000: 265). Harcup suggests that the "quasi-professional" NUJ has attempted to ride the twin horses of representing journalists' interests and policing their conduct, via its Ethics Committee. This seems appropriate for an organisation aimed at the journalist who operates "in (at least) two worlds, working in a field that is (ostensibly) constituted by a professional commitment to ethics and truth-telling while at the same time being expendable employees expected to produce whatever stories are demanded in the market" (2002: 103). These palpable tensions between those values and the realities of working life are discussed at length in chapters 10 and 11 in relation to newsworkers in the provincial press of the 21st century.

The notion of professionalism employed in this thesis is therefore aligned with that expounded by Delano and developed by Deuze, who defines his approach as "understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newswork". Journalism is understood in terms of the dominant occupational ideology which informs how journalists see themselves and their praxis, although there may be variations in its application over time and between media (2005: 443-5). To chart the development of journalism is to chart the development of "values, strategies and formal codes characterizing professional journalism and shared most widely by its members" and which "validate and give meaning to their work" (ibid: 445-6). Key to this are those values which legitimise the occupation of journalism in society and Deuze suggests that these include: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics. However, these values are not fixed but are renegotiated and repositioned in relation to other factors and it is this which shifts us away from a "naïve" definition of a journalism as a profession. Instead "it is by studying how journalists for all walks of their professional life negotiate the core values that one can see the occupational ideology of journalism at work" (ibid: 458). The term 'professional journalist' is employed in this thesis to distinguish between those who see journalism as their paid occupation, as opposed, for instance, to 'citizen journalists' as discussed in the closing sections of this argument. However, the ideologically-informed practices of journalism carried out by those who might be considered to be professionals are contextualised by the historical context in which they are placed. This enables an approach to the notion of professionalism which, not only recognises its shifts, but also its constants and the way in which its significance is understood by the wider society. Significantly for this thesis it also enables key concepts – such as that of journalists working to serve the good of the community – to be understood in terms of their relationship to the lived experience of news workers as well as their significance for news organisations and their cultural context.

Privileging the Fourth Estate.

The overwhelming emphasis on the national press by those who research newspapers goes a long way to explain the extent to which scholars have become pre-occupied with the study of the relationship between newspapers and the process of democracy. Raymond suggests that newspaper history gained prominence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when the newspaper had become an established form (1999: 224) and early examples suggest this as a pre-occupation. He cites *The Life of Thomas Ruddiman* (1794) as tracing an association between political liberty and newspapers, a theme continued by Victorian historians of the news, including Frederick Knight Hunt who produced his version, *The Fourth Estate* (Raymond, 1999: 224). In this account the study of the history of the newspaper becomes the study of the development of a 'free press' – that is free from Government control – which Curran and Seaton in the classic *Power Without Responsibility* term the "orthodox" interpretation of the British press (2003: 3). This interpretation bestows the newspaper with the power of democratisation by information; an informed population, empowered by the burgeoning newspaper industry once the taxes on knowledge had been abolished in the mid nineteenth century, became politically literate because of the free circulation of newspapers. It is the Habermasian idea of the public sphere made concrete – refined into "politics by public discussion" by Mark Hampton (2004: 8) – and it is a notion which has such leverage to have become "mythologised" (Curran and Seaton ibid: 4) and which has been given a renewed vigour by Michael Schudson (2008) who sets out "why democracies need an unlovable press". This conception is invoked in contemporary arguments, including the discussion of state regulation of the newspaper industry, and was invoked by Lord Justice Leveson himself in the executive summary to his report.

> "I know how vital the press is – all of it – as the guardian of the interests of the public, as a critical witness to events, as the standard bearer for those who have no one else to speak up for them. Nothing in the evidence that I have heard or read has changed that. The press, operating properly and in the public interest is one of the true safeguards of our democracy. As Thomas Jefferson put it: *"Where the*

press is free and every man able to read, all is safe." As a result of this principle, which operates as one of the cornerstones of our democracy, the press is given significant and special rights in this country which I recognise and have freely supported both as barrister and judge. With these rights, however, come responsibilities to the public interest: to respect the truth, to obey the law and to uphold the rights and liberties of individuals. In short, to honour the very principles proclaimed and articulated by the industry itself. "(House of Commons 2012: 4)

Yet even this notion of 'Fourth Estate' – and the allied conception of a free press - is an area of contestation for historians. Koss, in his valuable two-volume account of the "intersections between newspapers and politics" in Britain, refines the notion of a free press into a press which is free to be partisan. He positions this conception of a press, which derived benefits of status and finance from close political allegiance, to the Victorian era post the abolition of the 'taxes on knowledge" in the mid-1800s. In a process which is related to the development of the provincial press within this thesis, these allegiances were not fixed but shifted and changed with the fortunes of those they chose to support. And it was easy for the press to shift away from them altogether to favour a form of a conservatism which appealed to the mass readership of a highly-industrialised process of newspaper production in the early years of the twentieth century (Koss, 1981: 4-5), a process termed by Koss as "substituting what may be called political dispositions for what had been formal party allegiances" (1984: 680).

Koss recognises that no metric exists by which to ascertain the exact extent to which the press held influence over the political process. However, what is significant is the extent to which both readers, writers and politicians subscribed to – and exploited - the notion that this influence existed.

"To a considerable extent, the power of the press was a conceit on the part of the journalists, naturalized citizens of the Fourth Estate, who strove vaingloriously to live up to the legend. Nevertheless, a conceit cannot be maintained in the face of overwhelming indifference…. a political press must be seen as a contrivance on the part of diverse public futures, all eager to bring pressure to bear on affairs of the sate.

> Seizing upon the press out of hope, out of desperation or simply out of habit, they sedulously fostered newspapermen's self-images." (Koss, 1984: 7).

For Mark Hampton, this process of commercialisation is at the heart of his thesis that the notion of the press as Fourth Estate is actually a later conception which gain ascendency towards the end of the nineteenth century. Significantly he posits this position as emanating from within the industry itself and, as such, unpicks its development as an organising factor – and discursive position – for that industry. For Hampton, the development of the notion comes to dominate the idea that newspapers have an 'educative function' – that is the potential to "improve" the newly emerging mass readership in the mid-1850s by "creating an arena for public discussion on the "questions of the day."" (2004: 9). However, newspapers were also seen to 'represent' their readership by reflecting their views and so "crystallizing them into a powerful form that could bring pressure to bear on Parliament" (ibid).

For the regional press, this notion has become refined into the idea of the local paper as a 'watchdog', existing to serve 'the good of the community'[12]. Although Jackson (1971) traces the origins of local news to the eighteenth century, both Walker (2006a) and Black (2001) have discussed how the provincial press of the mid-nineteenth century was aligned more to national rather than regional interests. Gliddon (2003) provides a model for a shift away from this to a more localised version, as the motivation for ownership of newspapers moves away from political influence to making money. Work by Taylor (2006) on the *Cambridge Evening News* evidences the process by which a title constructs a community and uses the interests of that community as an organising factor for news values. As such newspapers begin to construct this concept as they develop into sophisticated mass-market products, with improvements in elements including content and production. These improvements, such as organising local content together and highlighting it through better labelling (see Chapter 6), have been brought together under the auspices of New Journalism. These developments have been thoroughly

[12] For a detailed discussion of this notion and its operation see Chapter 10.

theorised by Horst Pottker (2005) and Martin Conboy (2004) and are discussed in the context of the English provincial newspaper by Donald Matheson (2000). Bromley and Hayes (2002) suggest that in the inter-war period, titles contributed to the formation of a civic identity and this notion is evidenced by those working with the newspaper industry; as such, by the time of World War Two it is firmly established as an ideological value which gives meaning to the work of journalists and is, therefore, articulated by those within the industry (Fletcher 1946; Hansard 1946; see Chapter 8).

Jackson (1971) investigates this positioning with an engaging analysis of regional newspapers and their relationship to their communities. He also sees it as defining characteristic which drives aspects of journalism practice, such as the coverage of local government, which seeks to represent local life in a positive, organised fashion. However, his approach has been criticised by those who would challenge the ability of the local newspaper to perform this watchdog role, either through lack of distance between journalist and politician (Cox and Morgan 1973), or because of the structure of local government press relations itself (Burke, 1970). As such, the concept of serving the good of the community is based more on rhetoric than reality (Murphy 1976).

Political economy.

A political economic approach to the newspaper enables the notion of the Fourth Estate and of its localised version of serving the good of the community to be challenged and re-positioned as a commercial tactic. [13] The commercial

[13] It is worth noting that this approach seems much better suited to the analysis of the press rather than broadcast journalism. The highly competitive market for newspapers remains largely unregulated and subject to a foregrounding of private above public interests, whereas in broadcasting the licence fee and cultural commitments to public service ensure a system of regulation which distances journalists from the influence of economic and political interests; and regulation is designed to do precisely that. For a detailed discussion of these policy issues in relation to newspapers see Chapter 12.

context of the newspaper has also been heavily emphasised, in the accounts of the development of the newspaper developed by Black (2001) and Sommerville (1996). While neither reduce newspapers to purely commercial institutions and recognise the way in which newspapers became highly politicised during the English Civil War, they emphasise the press as business and its contents as a commercial product. In this conception not only did this content supposedly appeal to the capitalist classes, its presentation did too – because they bought the newspapers containing it. Presenting information as a quotidian product gave it a 'shelf-life', that is, formed it into a commercial product which was on-going to produce a steady revenue stream. This information also claimed to be "true" and covered a wide geographical area. In 1624 an early editor, Thomas Gainford, noted the growing demand for "weekely Newes" (Sommerville 1996: 25)

Significantly, Black argues, the early titles were run on a commercial footing, the currency of which was the value of news as a particular form of information linked to fact (2001: 9) and the importance of this commercial role is evident in the Stamp Act in 1712 which introduced taxation on newspapers, and the later advertising duty, which levied a fee on adverts.

> "A new world of printed news had been born. Newspapers were different to other forms of printed news or commentary, such as pamphlets and prints, because they were regular and frequent. They therefore offered a predictable sequence of communication for which the only real counterpart was the weekly sermon." (ibid).

Black suggests that the biggest challenge to the business model of these official 'stamped' eighteenth century titles was taxation, which kept prices high and the titles the preserve of upper and middle-class readers (ibid: 20). The notion of the press as a Fourth Estate therefore becomes a convenient ideological position for the industry, which sought to free itself from such regulation. Boyce (1978: 21) suggests that the press created a "political myth" in which it bridged public opinion and political institutions and, therefore, enabled that opinion to act as a sanction against political "misrule" (ibid). Such was the success of the myth that Utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill "thought that the case for an independent press was so self-evident

that it need no longer be put" (Boyce, 1978: 22). Curran (1978) goes so far as to suggest that this conception of the press masks the ability of a commercial press to function as an agent of social control – more efficient than taxation which had failed to stop a radical 'unstamped' press and mass opposition to the so-called 'taxes on knowledge'. In particular, Curran argues, such a Capitalist press was seen as a key weapon in the war against the nascent trades union movement (ibid: 55) and the subsequent industrialised press "emaciated and diluted the ideology of the earlier radical press to such an extent that it acquired a new and therapeutic value for the functioning of the social system" (ibid: 71).

For Mark Hampton (2004), the irony of the conception that newspapers represented the views of their readers was that the reader is actually removed from the democratic process by a title which claims to speak on their behalf. Thus, the "Fourth Estate" positions the newspaper as the true representative of the people, rather than Parliament. Unlike MPs, who are elected only periodically, legendary editor WT Stead said he was accountable to the readers every day (ibid: 113). In this way democratisation was equated with consumerism at a time when newspapers were developing as a mass-market product and was a notion embraced by the Press Barons who dominated the industry in the first half of the 20th century. In their "market ideology" (Hampton, 2004: 132), the apotheosis of the Fourth Estate was the idea that newspapers gave readers what they wanted and "proprietors could cast themselves as the voice of democracy, in contrast to the snobbish defenders of an educational press" (ibid). From this position both defenders of the economic freedom of newspapers and the political freedom of newspapers could stand shoulder to shoulder in opposing government interference, while in reality Press Barons were not against wielding the power of their titles for personal political gain, in addition to the pursuit of profit.

Perhaps ironically, the ideological posturing of those who positioned the newspaper as a servant of democracy started to unravel when those seeking to preserve the ideal of the Fourth Estate criticised the increasingly monopolistic structure of the newspaper industry. Thus the conflict between a highly commercialised press and one with a public service remit was

embodied in the reasons for the first Royal Commission in 1947 to 1949 and has gained leverage with those who take a political economic approach to understanding the newspaper industry and foreground the structure of production in discussion of any social role. Among these is 'radical historian' Alan J. Lee, for whom the ability of the press to act as Fourth Estate is a fleeting moment of history, rather than an overriding principle. As such, the newspaper industry was able to act as the 'mind engine' of society – a contemporary term coined in the mid-nineteenth century – only until the commercial logic of a mass press took hold in the 1870s, at which point newspapers abandoned their social role and instead started to sell readers to advertisers. Lee's 1976 work, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, is ground-breaking in that his Marxist principles predicate the economic development of the newspaper industry over its social history, and as such lays the foundations for later works, including those by Simpson, which are discussed below. Therefore, for Lee, the Liberal notion of 'Fourth Estate' becomes one more of consolidation as politics and press became centralised in tandem (1976: 19). This process obscured the key question for Lee – that of who controls this industry.

For Simpson, writing in 1981, this question is clarified during a time of rapid technological change for the industry, which predicates the control of owners over that of workers due to the restructuring of employment relations which it facilitates. In this reading those who control the press do so for financial gain alone, embodied in Canadian media entrepreneur Roy Thomson who stated that his only interest in newspapers was profit. It is the pursuit of profit which, therefore, influences the structure of the industry, and degrades the notion of the Fourth Estate, because it demotes the status of editorial within the organisational structure in favour of the dominance of commercial, including advertising departments. As such, news gathering becomes regularised and organised along institutional lines by commercial managers who see it as a raw material, and a cost to be controlled like any other (Simpson 1981: 116). This structure is not determined by technological developments, such as the move to direct input, but is facilitated by them in so far as it enables owners to improve productivity for profit and, during the 1970s and 1980s, to challenge the power of the unionised workforce in the

English newspaper industry. Ideologically, the owners are assisted in this effort by the Government of the day, which introduces anti-union legislation.

Significantly, Franklin and Murphy (1991) use a political economic approach to interrogate the concept of a localised Fourth Estate by revealing the process by which the notion of the community is concomitant with a commercial audience. The community is, therefore, reduced to a functional tool – used to define sources and content in a way which is coincidental with a commercial market so that the two become, at the least, mutually supportive (1991: 58). The result of this is a form of news content which creates a symbolic local community based around news values and sources which guarantees a regularised flow of content. But this process itself is increasingly compromised by the changes in the business structure of the local newspaper industry, which has seen fewer staff, more centralised production and, as a result, "local papers which are local in name only" (Franklin, 1998: xxi).

It is discussions of the economic structure of the regional newspaper industry which dominate at present as the industry works to find a way forward in the face of changing revenue streams. Such has been the double impact of fall in circulations and the effect of the recession on regional newspaper revenues that one editor interviewed in the course of this thesis described it as "falling off a cliff" (see Chapter 11). For his title, part of an established group, income has not yet recovered to reach 50 per cent of what it was in 2007. This economic context has led many to predict the end of the local newspaper in an attitude typified by Clare Enders, who in 2009 predicted that half of all regional titles would close by 2014 (*The Guardian* 16.6.09). But as Franklin so eloquently states, "the precocious pessimism and unwarranted hyperbole of those who wish to proclaim the imminent demise of the newspaper, is clearly unsustainable" (2008: 631); the view that the days are numbered for the local paper is all too easy to adopt but it is narrow in its scope and ignores the complexity of the industry's reaction to its current situation.

Much of the discussion focuses on the search for a way forward in the current climate, in a process which is engaging both practitioners and academics. One approach has been to focus on the effects on the traditional business structure

for regional news, such as that put forward by former editor Neil Fowler (2011). More ambitious work has come from those who seek to foster alternative business models by tracing the evolution of the digital revenue stream, in an approach exemplified by the work of Francois Nel,[14] who has expanded his research beyond the confines of academia to work with those engaged in producing local news.

Research into this area has also extended to the impact of this on the working practices of journalists to add to a debate which spans time as researchers seek to identify the norms and values which identify newspaper workers as a distinct profession as discussed above. More recently this encompasses studies into the changing range of skills staff need to work in a regional newspaper in the digital age (Deuze, 2004; Thurman and Lupton 2008). A key focus of study has been the impact of multimedia working on the ability of journalists to perform traditional functions, such as gatekeeping or scrutiny. This may be attributed to the "churnalism" effect of increased workloads in the face of falling revenues, which have seen the same staff producing more work across paper and digital platforms (Davies, 2008). Critically this approach has been employed to question the extent to which journalists are still able to scrutinise those in power, and ultimately, the extent to which they are able to act in the interests of their community (Lewis et al, 2008; Jones and Salter 2012).

This disruption has also enabled a new tier of local news to emerge – classified as hyper-local – often employing digital platforms to provide news and content to areas as small as one postcode. Their emergence has prompted debate about the need for 'professional' journalists and the relationship between those with formal qualifications and who consider journalism to be their paid employment, and the new band of 'citizen' journalists, with some doubting their ability to provide a reputable service while others see them as having "the potential to provide a reliable reporting base filling the local scrutiny gap (Jones and Salter, 2012: 97). This then enables the issue of the relationship between local journalism and community to be explored from fresh perspective (Canter 2013). This includes the extent to which digital

[14] See Nel 2010 and 2013 for examples of the application of his work to regional news.

technology changes conceptions of communities, the means by which professional journalists engage with those communities (Robinson 2014) and, ultimately, whether digital technology will facilitate a relationship between audience and journalist which benefits the community (Lewis et al 2014).

It is this key relationship between journalist and community which is the motif of this study; as such it seeks to establish the path by which it becomes embodied as an ideological value, defined by a discourse of public service, which informs the working lives of those in the provincial newspaper industry; historicising this process enables this development to be weighed against the allied notion of the newspaper as Fourth Estate and its exploitation as a functional value for those seeking to make money from the industry. The variance in emphasis between these key notions in turn informs the typology of that development put forward in this thesis. As such it charts the development of the industry in these key terms in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the discursive construction of the good of the community and so reframe the debate about its significance.

Chapter 2: Methodological considerations .

The study of media history has become an established academic discipline only in recent decades (O'Malley, 2002[15]) and has been described, by eminent media historian James Curran, as the "neglected grandparent of media studies" (Scannell, 2009). However, historical approaches to the media are both varied and diffuse, which poses a challenge to the scholar who seeks to find a position among them. That is not to neglect the significant contribution of the range of histories of which do exist on aspects of the media. These include those from an academic perspective, such as Jeremy Black (1987, 1991), James Curran (2003) and more recently Martin Conboy (2004), but also works produced by those working within the industry – such as Alistair Hetherington (1989), Andrew Marr (2004), Richard Stott (2002) and Gopsill and Neale (2007). Such works are discussed at length in Chapter 3 which reviews the literature relevant to this thesis and are drawn on during the course of this. However, notwithstanding this range, a review of the literature suggests that, just as the provincial press is a neglected area for scholars who study the media in contemporary contexts, so it is often overlooked by media historians – despite the fact that the press has been overwhelmingly the topic of study for pioneers in the field (ibid: 155; see also Conboy and Steel 2014). O'Malley suggests that this neglect stems in part from the reluctance of the elitist 20th century historian to pay attention to the "the nature and significance of communications systems, particularly print and press" (ibid: 164). Therefore, when newspapers are considered it is in relation to dominant conceptions of their role as Fourth Estate – which in turn promotes a focus on "so-called 'newspapers of record' over popular or local titles" (Nicholas 2012, 381). In a similar vein, Bingham (2012: 311) argues that "entrenched stereotypes" prevent historians from paying full attention to this field of study, the popular press, which means "substantial gaps remain in our

[15] O'Malley's 2002 analysis provides a comprehensive map of the development of intellectual discipline of Media History in its own right; he draws on the work of, among others, Asa Briggs, James Curran, Hans Fredrik Dahl, Paddy Scannell, Jeremy Tunstall and Raymond Williams to attribute this development to a confluence of approaches within history, media studies and the social sciences – all of which focus on the objects of the media – to enable a conceptual approach which is underpinned by empirical historical knowledge.

understanding" of it – an argument which would seem apposite for the provincial press.

In the 1960s and 1970s O'Malley identifies a new trend in approaches to the history of the press in particular, exemplified by Boyce, Curran and Wingate whose edited collection aimed to fill a "very large gap" (1978: dust covers) with the first survey of the history of the modern press considered in relation to the "underlying social and economic forces" (ibid: 13) that have shaped it. Similarly, at the heart of this thesis then, is a desire to fill another large gap – and to re-appraise the significance of the provincial press. Therefore, in the way that EP Thompson sought to "rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan …. from the condescension of posterity" (1991: 12), this work has looked at those newspapers which are all too easily dismissed as insignificant.

To date there has been no singular study which seeks to consider the development of the provincial paper over a sustained period of time, and in doing so I recognise the ambition of this intent. [16] However, rather than cataloguing where and how individual papers began and ended, I seek to chart the development of the provincial newspaper as a specialist media form, aligned with a set of norms and practices which can be distinguished and charted over time. In doing so this study also seeks to rescue the study of the provincial newspaper industry from the "amnesia" (Bailey, 2009: xx) which besets much contemporary considerations of it by severing it from the consideration of its historic context. Following in the spirit of James Curran, this approach is driven by the contention that "history and media studies are fundamentally connected insofar as one can only really begin to understand the contemporary media landscape if one knows something about how communication technologies – and their social uses – have changed over time" (ibid). Where this study diverges from Curran (2002), is in its unashamed concentration on one media form – in direct contrast to his criticism of the "medium history" approach of most media history. Curran suggests that a

[16] Wiles covers 1700-1765, Black 1621-1861; Boyce at al do scope newspaper history from the 17th century to the present day but the chronological section is a consideration of press development as a whole rather than factions within it.

better approach is to "offer a general history of the account of the development of modern British society in which the history of the British media is inserted … to dissolve linear narratives – whether they progress or regress – in favour of complexity" (ibid: 149). This approach works best when all media are considered and so this study seeks to establish the provincial press as "an essential building block" (Curran, 2009: 20) in this landscape and to engage with it as a discursive form. In doing so we can use history to challenge and analyse those constituent parts.

This approach has much in common with the work of Martin Conboy, who has been at the forefront in the revival of historical approaches to media history. In his 2004 work, *Journalism; A Critical History*, Conboy draws on Foucault to question the value system which operates through, and is acted upon by, the practices of journalism. Significantly this posits journalism within the network of relationships sought by Curran. As Conboy explains "journalism is therefore made up of the claims and counter-claims of a variety of speakers on its behalf. What journalists say about their work, what critics and political commentators say about journalism, the perceived effects of a language of journalism on society, the patterns of popularity among readers and viewers of journalism, all take their place in defining the discourse of journalism" (ibid: 4). Conboy's approach leads him to interrogate and re-evaluate what have traditionally been seen as core values of journalism, such as its ability to function as a "Fourth Estate", its claims to "objectivity" or the way in which its "economic imperative" is often "obscured" (ibid). In a similar way, this study takes a similar approach, not to a set of practices which may be considered as journalism or news as Conboy has done, but to a set of products which may be defined as provincial newspapers, with its own associated set of practices and values.

Within this sample, this study has also sought to pay attention to all aspects of the newspaper in an attempt to understand and elucidate the relationships between key elements including: ownership, production, business model – including advertising and cover price – along with the praxis, largely of editorial staff but in some instances, also of production and commercial staff . As such it considers both the external factors which may influence it – such as

literacy levels, technological developments like the development and operation of railways or computers, or regulatory requirements including taxation and laws relating to industrial action – and the internal development of the provincial press, as explored by Ferdinand (1997) or Wiles (1965) and discussed by Black (2002: 175). To illustrate these matters, a case study approach has been employed in instances where the application of argument seemed vital to clarity. For instance, an analysis of the *Coventry Telegraph* has been used to demonstrate the relationship between the emergence of what we understand to be news writing style and the development of the title commercially (see Chapter 6). The *Coventry Telegraph* is also used as a case study for the section on the provincial press's reaction to World War II in Chapter 8, due not least to the historical significance of the city in the conflict. The case study also enables the newspaper to be contextualised in an interdisciplinary approach which recognises that the newspaper is a "multi-faceted, evolving social phenomena with wide-ranging implications" (O'Malley, 2002: 170). Therefore, both quantitative methods, such as content analysis, and qualitative methods can be appropriate approaches. Clearly there are practical reasons why the *Coventry Telegraph* was selected; not only am I based in the city by virtue of my employment, but the Coventry History Centre's[17] catalogue includes some of the few remaining physical titles of the paper. In addition the title is typical in terms of its entrepreneurial foundation and subsequent acquisition. It was also featured in Alistair Hetherington's 1989 study, *News in the Regions*, and as such its operational structure at this time is preserved and makes a valuable contribution to this study.

Thus, this thesis includes elements of several historiographical narrative perspectives – including social, technological and political; none of these is employed as an all-encompassing narrative perspective although each is emphasised to varying degrees throughout the period discussed. For instance, technology takes centre stage as computerised production impacts on the industry in the 70s and 80s. Yet at the same time the stage is also set for the

[17] Coventry's Local History Centre has been used to access resources for this study. While some of them have proved invaluable – such as the diaries of union workers at the *Coventry Telegraph* – the archive is incomplete being based on holdings and donations rather than a systematic collection.

highly-politicised move to curtail the power of the unions by the Thatcher administration. What emerges as a common theme across the range of time studied, however, is the significance of the provincial newspaper as a commercial product and the impact which the need to make money has on not only its day-to-day structure but also on the ideological values of those working in the sector, and their associated routines. This political economic approach expands the perspective so ably expounded in the work of Bob Franklin, starting with his seminal work *What News? The Market, Politics and the Local Press*, published with David Murphy in 1991 and offers a challenge to the dominant liberal narrative of the development of the newspaper as a battle for a free press. The dichotomy between the accounts which position a free press against a capitalist press have been well rehearsed, again by James Curran, whose contribution to *Power Without Responsibility* is an attempt to recognise the significance of "market forces" to the structure of the press (2003: 5). This thesis builds on this work in two significant ways: one is clearly its focus on the provincial press; the second is the application of this approach to key characteristics and norms associated with the newspaper form. Simply, if we believe that the market is the driver for the provincial press, to what extent does this influence key concepts employed by it, such as serving the interest of the community, or acting as a watchdog or even being aligned to a specific geographical area? It enables us to ask why the industry makes such claims and in whose interests those claims are made – to treat those claims as a specific discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, which "give expressions to meanings and values of institutions or practices and, in doing so, claim authority for themselves" (Conboy, 2011: 5).

Of course, a significant reason for looking back is to enable us to better understand where we are now, and to give us "a clearer context in which to explore claims concerning the inevitability of change or conservatism within journalism today" (Conboy, 2011: 6). This thesis has paid particular attention to this process in regards to the concept of existing for the good of the community, which is an established value for those working in the provincial newspaper industry. Significantly this concept has also been subject of much debate and discussion by both the industry and stakeholders in recent years. This debate has largely focused on the effect on communities of the industry's

response to falling revenues, which has largely been one of increased consolidation and centralisation and, in some cases, the closure of entire titles. This study attempts to make a contribution to this debate by charting the rise of this notion in relation to the development of the industry and mapping its relationship to the economic structure of that industry. It has also sought to understand the status of the good of the community for staff – both editorial and commercial – working in the news industry today through a series of semi-structured interviews (see Chapters 10 and 11).

Sources.

Andrew Walker (2006a, 2006b), whose scholarly research and writings about the provincial press in the nineteenth century has added much to the field, suggests that the "sheer volume of material available" is a deterrent to those approaching it (2006a: 373). This material includes not only pre-existing press histories, but also a wealth of primary material which has been considered in the course of this study. Not least among this are the physical copies of newspaper titles themselves, the use of which is discussed by Beals and Lavender (2011: 5) who recognise that they not only provide a crucial "first-hand" account of historical events, but are also a valid object of study. However, access to titles and the format of their preservation presents their own challenges to the researcher; foremost is the availability of editions or access to the physical object when traditional bound collections have been replaced by microfilm versions for the sake of storage, which reproduce poorly. This can be particularly acute when considering aspects of the newspaper such as layout and printing, which necessitates an engagement with the physical size of a title, such as in Chapter 6 of this thesis, or the weight of the paper. These issues are not alleviated by digitisation, which may result in easier access and better reproduction, but which, like the academy, has thus far focused more on national than local titles in its approach to reproduction.

The issue of availability is particularly acute for the business records for provincial newspapers. Empirical evidence may be found in reports focusing on particular issues, such as that produced by the think-tank Political and Economic Planning in 1938, or the three Royal Commissions into the press in the 20th century, each of which gathered contemporary evidence. These form an invaluable snapshot of the industry in a moment of time but again are related to a particular line of enquiry and so will present a picture of only relevant aspects of an issue. The consolidated nature of the industry means there are few extant archives relating to the economic structure of particular titles over a sustained period of time; therefore, when it comes to applying that to individual newspaper titles, the trail of evidence is hard to follow. As titles are bought and sold, archives are moved and destroyed; during the course of writing this thesis I witnessed decades of documents being removed from Coventry as the *Coventry Telegraph* relocated to smaller, decentralised offices, and the newspaper's library was dismantled under the watchful eye of the owners Trinity Mirror's archivist. Public access to records is increasingly enabled by the digitising of county libraries' historical holdings; however, while valuable, these can be largely ad hoc[18] and in England the author has located just two extensive business archive holdings, relating respectively to newspapers in Norwich and Cumbria[19], both of which offer scope for future study.

This study has also made use of evidence provided by the professional organisations related to the provincial newspaper; this include statistics drawn from bodies including the Audit Bureau of Circulations, the National Council for the Training of Journalists, publications produced by the Newspaper Society, and its forerunner the Provincial Newspaper Society, the Institute of Journalists and the National Union of Journalists which offer an account – albeit partisan – of the industry and can be used to help build up a picture of particular moments. But again - with the exception of the National

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[19] Cumbria County Council holds an extensive collection of archives relating to Cumbrian Newspapers Ltd. The independently-owned newspaper company is still extant today as the Cumbrian News Group. A substantial amount of correspondence relating to the Eastern Daily Press in Norwich between 1793 and 1957 is also held by Norfolk County Library Service.

Union of Journalists whose papers are held by the Modern Record centre at Warwick University as part of the Trades Union Congress archives – access to these publications can be more a case of luck than judgement depending on the accessibility of the holdings. For instance, the Provincial Newspaper Society's fiftieth anniversary publication (Whorlow, 1886) is available via Bristol University library as part of the archive relating to the Liberal Party[20]. The majority of the other professional publications have been accessed in this instance via The Bodleian Library at Oxford University.

A further source considered by this thesis is the testimony of journalists working in the industry, a proportion of whom have been driven to document their own experiences of working in newspapers. Perhaps unsurprisingly for those who have made a living out of writing, personal accounts of time spent on newspapers abound, as do works on varying issues such as training or production. Some offer a useful insight into the industry; Morris (1963), for example, who captures his foray into the provincial news industry in *I Bought a Newspaper,* describes in detail his battle to establish an independent title in the face of opposition from group-owned newspapers in the 1950s; Richard Stott (2002) offers an insight into newspaper training in his *Dogs and Lamposts.* However, what must be borne in mind when reading these titles is that they are often too partisan, mediated by memory and the mythology of journalism as a profession. In some instances, such as the work produced by newspaper owner Viscount Camrose (1943) in the run-up to the first Royal Commission of 1947-49, they have the direct purpose of advocacy for a cause. Thus, Morris writes from the perspective of a campaigning editor who ploughed an independent furrow to give a voice to the voiceless – so independent that his paper controversially broke the provincial newspaper stoppage of 1959. Stott, who went on to edit *The Mirror*, *Today* and *The People*, writes of his time in Buckinghamshire with nostalgia, for instance describing the chief reporter Phil Fountain as "a local newspapermen (sic) to his fingertips, who could have made Fleet Street without any bother. But he loved

[20] At time of publication, the president of the Provincial Newspaper Society was Peter Stewart Macliver – former Liberal MP for Plymouth. He was also founder of the *Western Daily Press* and the *Bristol Evening News* and a founding member and former chairman of the Press Association.

Aylesbury and he knew it inside out. Local councils and courts were meat and drink to him. Immaculate shorthand note, all the councillors and the coppers at his beck and call, the holder of 1,000 borough secrets." (2002: 90).

As such these approaches do not offer an assessment of titles or their function, but can in some cases become stitched into the fabric of the values which underpin the newspaper industry and attitudes towards it which this thesis seeks to interrogate. In a process analysed by Nerone:

> "Professions tend to construct histories as a matter of course; they provide narratives that in turn provide a sense of durable identity. Such histories usually work as horatory. Tales of the heroes of the profession give students models to emulate" (2010: 22).

Stott exemplifies the career path of the 1960s journalist who trained on his local paper before, perhaps, progressing to Fleet Street. He described his 'big break' on the *Bucks Herald* when he covered the Great Train Robbery – which happened within his newspaper's circulation area – and became the only journalist to interview the driver of the train. In doing so, his own career – and career progression – becomes immortalised, as does the status of the provincial press as a stepping stone or "lesser" newspaper form which can be left behind when the nationals beckon.

Reappraising the concept of the provincial press

It is hoped that this thesis will make a contribution to the scholarship of the provincial newspaper in three key ways. Firstly, by promoting the consideration of the provincial press as an essential building block of the media system as a whole. This may well lead to a reassessment of key concepts related to this system. For instance, Tom O'Malley (2014) is currently reconsidering the extent to which the national press was truly national during World War II, drawing on statistical data which suggests that those titles we consider to be national, circulated largely in the south east of England. The corollary to this, therefore, is a need to reassess the extent to

which regional newspapers were key players in issues surrounding censorship or morale during the conflict.

Secondly, by reappraising the significance of the provincial press we are able to contextualise a significant area of journalism practice. Mark Hampton (Hampton and Conboy 2014) argues that only by integrating the historical consideration of journalism with broader historiographies, can its distinctive qualities be appreciated. "Simply put", Hampton argues, " journalism, whether as a genre or as professional ritual, needs a location – a delivery mechanism…… the type of journalism that can be practiced is intimately intertwined with the nature of the media organization, and it's status in the wider society" (ibid: 158-9).

Thirdly, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the development of the provincial press will contribute to the way in which future historians approach the products of the industry. Bingham and Conboy argue that historians have a tendency to consider the products of the news media "without properly considering their distinctive stylistic and institutional traits" (2013: 1). Bingham also suggests that as a result of the increasing availability of newspapers to researchers due to digitisation, "in the future historians will examine press content far more extensively and with greater sophistication" (Bingham, 2012: 320). But, for the reasons discussed above, this consideration will only be effective when the context for that content is given appropriate weight.

Section 2. The Development of the Provincial Press.

Chapter 4: Printers' papers – the rise of the 'commerce of information'.

This chapter focuses on the establishment of the provincial newspaper as a specialist media form in a period which roughly equates to the eighteenth century. While accounts of the development of the provincial press are few and far between, the early roots of the genre have received attention in relation to the development of the newspaper as a media form. In addition to providing a descriptive account of this development, these various histories are worthy of review for the emphasis they place on what emerge as recurring themes for the development of the provincial press, namely; their economic development, their role in relation to the social developments and perhaps most importantly, their role as a Fourth Estate. In this period these narrations place varying emphasis on the ability of titles to make money for those who produced them, their ability to politically inform and educate readers and their ability to function in relation to state control (the battle for a 'free press").

Jeremy Black gives a particularly comprehensive review of the origins of the newspaper in England in the early modern period, thereby setting the scene for the period under review. This epoch saw a rise in availability of printed products which were able to challenge the social hierarchy by offering a "sphere in which all readers were equal" (2001: 21). The first news pamphlets in English appeared in Holland to serve the mercantile classes' interest in news of the Thirty Days War; a year later 'corantos' (newsbooks) appeared in London and these began to appear regularly and were numbered to create sequenced information. As such, the first newspapers appeared alongside other printed products, including astrological publications, which were all time-based publications. These early newspapers were not necessarily regular and linear but were repetitive and began to benefit from the authority accorded to print over handwritten media.

Sommerville (1996: 20) dates the emergence of "a constant flow of publications" from one publisher to Germany around 1600, edging across Europe – and closer to England – during the next 20 years or so. These titles relied on information suited to the mercantile classes – such as pricing, commercial information, shipping and diplomacy – rather than the lurid and fantastic content of the newsbooks. These early 'corantos' – referring to the 'current' of information – were presented in pamphlet form, with around 24 pages including a title page, in England, although their European predecessors were newssheets – a folio half-sheet printed front and back in double columns. They instilled in the reader the idea that they were "current with developments" (Sommerville, 1996) – what we might call 'up with the news' – by juxtaposing a variety of reports within a regular publication. "Discarding yesterday's newspaper" symbolised for the reader that they were factual and forward facing (ibid: 21). In this way these titles also established that information could be organised and sold – that is, could be commodified. Therefore a "commercial dominant was the driving force behind innovation and change in the production of news and it was this which attracted printers and publishers to invest in it in order to make a profit." (Conboy, 2004: 23).

These early newspapers became polarised during the Civil War and were employed for political ends; therefore, the use of titles for debate was established as an early characteristic and was a role recognised by Government which sought to control newspapers until the mid-1850s. The first titles had been controlled by the Star Chamber and after the restoration of Charles II in 1660 controls were re-introduced and limited to 20 master printers and university printers. This meant that printing as a trade was overwhelmingly limited to London and entry to the profession was controlled via entry to apprenticeships. But restrictions did not last and by the end of 1679 more papers were being published than at anytime since 1649, the year of Charles I's execution. The Licensing Act lapsed in 1695 and attempts to get legislation through Parliament to replace it failed due to lack of time.

These relaxations meant an expansion in the number of printers, some of whom moved out to the provinces in order to escape the crowded London market (Cranfield, 1978: 178) with the idea of producing a weekly digest of

London titles which could be sold in a defined area for a cheaper price. As such, there were more newspapers, produced at regular intervals such as the *Norwich Post*, thought to be the first provincial newspaper, published in 1701[21]. By the early eighteenth century, newspapers were being produced at set time intervals to serve the needs of the market. These publications were characterised by the inclusion of time-sensitive information which underpins newspaper content still, and were numbered, although not always strictly in order; Black (2001: 52) contends that numbering added to the rising status of newspapers by promoting the impression that publications organised information and could be collected.

William Parks typified the entrepreneurial spirit which underpinned the creators of England's early provincial papers. Writing in the columns of the first paper in Berkshire, the *Reading Mercury*, in 1723, he clearly sets out his aspirations for commercial success.

> "We have, however, pitch'd our Tent here, induced by the good Character this Country bears, for Pleasure and Plenty, and intend, with your Leave, to publish a Weekly News Paper under the Title of the READING Mercury, or Weekly Entertainer…And when a Scarcity of News Happens, we shall divert You with something Merry. In a few Words, we shall spare no Charge or Pains to make this Paper generally Useful and Entertaining, since we find ourselves settled in a Place, which gives all the encouraging Prospects of Success." (Wiles, 1965: 32).

Reading was not Parks' first venture into print; he had already attempted to create the *Ludlow Post-Man*, which seems to have survived for just two years from 1719 to 1721 (Wiles, 1965, appendix B). Rather than deter him, this failure seems to have spurred him to success. More than 50 of those first printers to move to the provinces had been apprenticed to the London Stationers' Company, which provides evidence of their varied backgrounds; thus these early papers were produced by the sons of blacksmiths, vicars and tradesmen, and in turn, they took on their own apprentices. In an argument

[21] Cranfield (1962: 13-15) provides a comprehensive discussion in the difficulties in ascertaining which newspaper can claim the title of the first provincial newspaper.

familiar to Journalists today, training was also used as a claim to authority (Cranfield, 1962: 48-50)

Thus, the first local newspapers to be produced in England were born of commercial opportunity, made by printers, who saw an opportunity to profit from the emerging need for news to facilitate trade which underpinned early Capitalism – the 'commerce of information' as termed by Samuel Johnson (Ferdinand, 1997: 211). As such, Cranfield suggests that the earliest "country" newspapers were related to populous areas such as Norwich and Bristol, which were then thriving commercial centres. This was particularly significant as newspapers were just one product among many for these printers, who also relied on general printing, including official documents and perhaps broadsheet reports of local trials, for income. Sometimes printers had other business interests and many produced 'quack' medicines or perhaps ran coffee houses (Cranfield, 1978: 186).

The earliest surviving regional newspaper is number one of Henry Cross-grove's *Norwich Gazette*, dated December 7, 1706 and it is apparent that printers in Exeter and Bristol were establishing papers at roughly the same time (Wiles, 1965). By 1723 there were 24 recorded regional papers in Britain (Black, 2001). One of the early publications was *Bristol Post Boy*, which was probably founded in 1702 (Penny 2001), seven years after the Licensing Act, which imposed government control over the number of printing presses in operation, had lapsed (Wiles, 1965). Just two pages long, the *Bristol Post Boy* mainly consisted of news taken from papers brought from the capital via stage coach and survived until December 1715 – possibly killed off by competition from the *Bristol Post Man*, which had been launched in August of that year by Sam Farley, the son of an Exeter printer whose family was to become a publishing dynasty.

The number of competing titles in Bristol (there was also the short-lived *Bristol Weekly Mercury*, founded in 1716, the *Oracle,* founded in 1742 in addition to two rival titles launched by Sam Farley and his brother Felix in 1748) and their varied longevity indicates that the local newspaper business was not a stable one. Printers would launch a title and fill it with news copied

largely from other publications – known as ‘cut and paste’. In addition to capitalising on the need for news, printers also used their products as advertising for their own products. Messers Raike and Dicey, publishers of the *Northampton Mercury*, describe the diverse nature of their business thus on the front of their edition for Monday November 20, 1721:

> “Of whom may be had Land Tax Receipts, Assessors Warrants, Funeral Affidavits…Likewise all manner Stationary Wares, as Shop-books, Pocket-books, Papers, Pens, Ink, Wax, etc. Likewise Dr. Bateman’s Pectoral Drops, and Radcliffe’s Purging Elixir: the first fam’d for the Colic, Pains in the Limbs and Joints, Agues, and all Ailments of the Breast and Bowels. The second is the very best of purging Medicines; witness the many Certificates we daily receive from our Readers and their Friend. These Medicines are sold at 12d the Bottle with printed Directions how to take them, and Certificates of their Cures.” (Wiles, 1965: 98).

Other diversifications included Farley’s own Bristol Toothwater and Durham mustard (Penny, 2001) and Black notes that the biggest advert in the *Leeds Mercury* of July 11 1738 was for Daffy’s Elixir – a cure-all sold by the newspaper’s printer (2001: 60-61). It is quite sensible to surmise that such synergies probably helped to keep many papers afloat financially, in what was an uncertain business.

Wiles concludes that of the 150 papers founded in 60 cities in England from 1701-60, half lasted fewer than five years (1965: 25). But uncertain as it might be, many entrepreneurs concluded that it was worth taking a risk on the burgeoning regional newspaper industry and some, such as William Parks, would see their papers fold, only to move on to the next town and try again. This entrepreneurial spirit is exemplified by Benjamin Collins – whose success in the provincial newspaper business was such that he went on to diversify into banking and property (Ferdinand, 1997). Also a successful bookseller, Ferdinand suggests that it was Collins’ diverse interests which enabled him to cross-subsidise the paper he founded, the *Salisbury Journal*, printed first in 1729 and then re-established in 1736, which is still extant today. It is also worth noting that when Collins bought the rival *Hampshire Chronicle* in 1778 he did so as part of a consortium. Such joint ownership served to spread the

risk of running a newspaper and Ferdinand goes as far to suggest that by the mid-eighteenth century group ownership was the norm rather than the exception for provincial papers (1997: 62).

At both national and local levels newspaper sales rose fast. In 1713 total annual sales of newspapers were put at 2.5 million; this had risen to 7.3 million in 1750 and 10.7million in 1756. By 1835 the same business model had taken annual circulations nationally to 31 million (Black, 2001: 73). Exact circulations of individual titles are hard to evidence but Ferdinand (1997: 125) concludes that in the early 1700s, a sale of 200 copies was considered enough to keep a paper going; by the 1760s, the most successful papers were expecting a sale of 3,000 to 4,000. In the early days of the provincial press, the papers were printed on half-sheets with just two columns. However, by the early eighteenth century, most were using bigger pages and had increased the column counts to three (Black, 2001). Drawing on research by Donald Read, Walker suggests that a weekly paper considered a circulation of 700 a week reasonable before the reduction of stamp duty in 1836 and leading provincial newspapers sold fewer than 10,000 copies in the 1840s – the *Manchester Guardian*, for instance, sold nearly 9,000 copies twice a week (Walker, 2006a: 377). However, the high price of the papers – the equivalent of £15 in today's money – meant that these papers were probably very well read and would be exchanged between people and read in communal places. Dedicated reading rooms, where people could pay to read a selection of newspapers, were also extended to the provinces and in 1839 the *Leeds Mercury* estimated that each of its copies was read by between 15 and 20 people (Walker, 2006a: 377).

As circulations improved, the Government imposed a tax on newspapers via the Stamp Act of 1712. Oats and Sadler (2002) contend that the implicit recognition of the Stamp Act, which also was followed by a levy on adverts, was that newspapers were a commercial product – just like soap which was also taxed under the same statute – and economically significant enough to be a source of revenue for a government which needed to fund the War of Spanish Succession. However, the Stamp Act can also be viewed as a move by the Government to control the information flow of newspapers (Cranfield, 1978; Curran, 1978; Milne, nd). From 1726 the Government ordered the Post

Office to buy a copy of every single newspaper and printers faced prosecution for libel if they overstepped the political mark. Among them was Philip Bishop, printer of a paper in Exeter, who was prosecuted for printing a ballad which compared George I with Nero. Lengthy legal proceedings ended in the gruesome sentence of life imprisonment, having his ears cut off and nailed to the Pillory or "being whipped at the cart's tail three several market days"; he died in prison before sentence was carried out (Cranfield, 1978: 182). Cranfield also cites the provincial press's coverage of political speeches as being of key concern to Governments; such content was forbidden in the London press until the 1760s but was reproduced in the provincial papers via newsletters. Comments on the speeches could again result in prosecutions (ibid: 183).

The Stamp Act was to be levied on "all Books and Papers commonly called Pamphlets, and for and upon all News Papers, or Papers containing publick News, Intelligence or Occurences" at the rate of 1/2d for a half sheet and 1d for a full sheet (Oats and Sadler 2002). This meant printers had to use sheets which had been pre-stamped to show that the duty had been paid. Initially this was done in London but over the course of the century official Stamp Offices were opened in Edinburgh, Manchester and Dublin to meet the needs of regional publishers. Oats and Sadler (2002) contend that at this stage newspapers were viewed as a luxury item and while commentators such as Adam Smith would condemn the tax on soap, newspapers were omitted from such debates. The tax rose incrementally until its peak in 1815 at 4d – the stimulus for a concerted campaign to overturn this 'tax on knowledge'. Gibb and Beckwith, in their comprehensive history of the *Yorkshire Post*, record how it's forerunner, the *Leeds Intelligencer*, was subject to 1.5d stamp duty in 1777, half its cover price, rising to 2d duty in 1789 and 4d by 1815 – putting the cover price up to 7d. At the same time, advertisement duty was payable at 1s, rising to 2s in 1780 and 3s 6d in 1815, regardless of how large the advert was. It is not surprising that the abolition of both taxes by 1855 was hailed as the 'emancipation of the press' by the *Intelligencer* (Gibb and Beckwith 1954). However, Wiles concludes that the effect of stamp duty on circulations was both 'slight and temporary' (1965: 22); circulations grew from 100 to 200 in the late 1720s to 2000 20 years later (Cranfield, 1978:184). One challenge

which faced all newspapers was distribution; provincial papers largely published on market days so that readers could buy papers on their weekly visits to town but also employed "newsmen" to distribute titles. They also relied on a complex network of regional agents, who may well have been built up from personal contacts of the newspaper's producer. Collins' network extended to his hometown of Faringdon near Oxford, and so beyond the accepted boundary of his paper's intended circulation area – wide as they were. For instance, the *Salisbury Journal* considered itself a competitor for the *Gloucester Journal* – nearly 60 miles away. London papers would use postal services to reach regional readers and would advertise themselves in regional papers (Wiles, 1965). These large circulation areas were also likely to be connected to advertising revenue. In 1725 the *Gloucester Journal* claimed to reach from Llandaff in the South Wales to Trowbridge in Wiltshire, Ludlow in Shropshire and Wantage in Oxfordshire (Black 2001) while other papers would signify a wider area of coverage in their titles, such as Jopson's *Coventry and Northampton Mercury* (Wiles, 1965: 25). The first titles were, therefore, also on good communication routes – connected by the post roads (Cranfield, 1962: 23).

From the earliest days of regional newspapers, publishers would face stiff competition from rival titles and of the printers who tried their hand at the provincial press, some returned to London (Cranfield, 1978). Ferdinand goes as far to suggest that the Stamp Act may even have benefited provincial papers by pricing London papers out of the local market. Rather than subscribing to one or more London papers, much better, Benjamin Collins urged his readers, to buy his paper, "which not only contains the Marrow of them all, but the Gazette News, and other Intelligence three days before any of 'em'' (Ferdinand, 1997:110). Jeremy Black suggests that regional papers would undermine their rivals in an attempt to establish a monopoly hold over their advertising market, for instance by publishing derogatory comments in their columns (2001: 13). One particularly colourful attack is documented by Wiles (1965: 29) when the publishers of the *Northampton Mercury* condemned the first issue of the *Northampton Journal* as "Bum-Fodder" and attacked the 'doating Brain' of its creator, James Pasham. The attacks may have worked; Wiles reports that the *Journal* subsequently folded.

Early newspapers – form and content.

These printer's papers, which were very similar to those cited by Nerone and Barnhurst (2003) as operating across the Atlantic in America, were not staffed by workers with the values and practices of journalists as we would recognise them; instead of originating content, theirs was largely 'cut and paste' – that is taken from other circulating publications, sometimes acknowledged and sometimes not. Checking facts was practically impossible because of the nature of communications. Copy from London papers would be incorporated in the order it arrived via the post; this meant sometimes stories within the same edition would be contradictory and may even be corrected between pages (Cranfield, 1978: 178). Cranfield suggests that these papers were neither original, or local – but that they did not need to be. Provincial readers lived in tight-knit communities where local information was still spread orally via "gossip"; this left the papers to provide information on London and trade (1962: 257) and Black (2001) contends that most readers looked to their provincial paper to provide news of the wider world, rather than a replication of the local news they would still get verbally. Content was thus linked to social structure and a market position and political posturing was seen as counter to creating as wide a market as possible (Black, 2001: 11); these titles were valued and read by an estimated 20 people per copy and provide a bridge between capital and country so that "the old barriers and isolation were being whittled down; news could now travel quickly, and the events and opinions of the capital could be rapidly community to the countryside." (Cranfield, 1962: 272).

As previously mentioned, taxation also affected how those papers were produced and the cost of doing so. Among factors influencing size – and therefore the content to fill it – was the Stamp Act of 1712 which was intended to introduce a one halfpenny stamp duty on single leaf papers. As a result some titles closed but others exploited a loophole in the legislation and instead published as a 12 or six-page pamphlet. Until the government amended the Stamp Act in 1725, no fewer than 20 provincial newspapers appeared in 12 pages, most of them with a single column each. Ten others regularly appeared with six pages, usually with two columns to the page

(Wiles, 1965: 48). This meant that sometimes printers had lots of space and not enough content to fill it – which in turn prompted innovation. Cranfield reports how one paper featured excerpts from the Old Testament to fill space (1962: 43). After that time, papers were printed on half sheets, folded to make four pages, although the lack of standardisation over page sizes of the hand-made paper used meant variation between different products. However, Wiles's extensive research into the surviving newspapers from this period leads him to conclude that in the 30 years after the loophole was closed the size of the half sheet gradually doubled to a page measuring around 16" by 22" (Wiles, 1965: 51), enabling, one assumes, printers to increase the available copy in their papers though not the cost-incurring number of pages.

The need for an efficient production process can also be seen from the shape and content of these early papers. The oldest news was found on page one and the latest on page three. This was because pages one and four were printed first, and sometimes days earlier than the last pages to be printed. Though without headlines, these papers were laid out in columns and varying, specially-designed typefaces were used in different sizes and in also in italics to add variety to products. The last news to be included was sometimes printed in even smaller type and even in the margins if the shortage of space necessitated (Wiles, 1965: 57). Illustrations were also thin on the ground, due to the difficulties posed by production. Writing of the early Bristol papers, John Penny concludes that illustrations, which were printed from carved wooden blocks, did little to boost readership; as a consequence they were reserved for titles – what we now call earpieces – on the front page, because using them slowed down production (Penny, 2001: 10).

Walker notes that the cost of machinery needed to produce a paper was relatively low (2006a: 376); however, the need to keep a stock of pre-stamped paper necessitated a considerable initial investment – especially in the provinces where stamped paper had to come from London until regional centres were established. Printing itself was also a slow and laborious process; done on a hand press, individual metal types were arranged by hand, inked, then paper was put under the press so that one side of the sheet was printed. To do the other side, the process was repeated. It was a two-man job

and working together they might have been able to produce around 250 one-sided small sheets an hour working at full output (Cranfield, 1962: 32).

Not only was most of the content of these papers not local, it is also true that these papers were not distributed locally in the sense that we now understand, but circulated in large regional areas in an effort to create a sustainable circulation. Andrew Walker suggests that local news only gained prominence in the latter decades of the eighteenth century when there were enough competing newspapers to focus circulation on more defined areas. Until then, he suggests that local papers provided "principally national news with a provincial "spin", a national news selected for a local audience" (Walker, 2006a: 376). However, some local news is in evidence from the early days of the provincial press and was a staple factor by the mid-1700s. Wiles charts local content in the *Norwich Post* in 1708 as including news of the city, such as market prices, baptisms and burials and even the story of a soldier who had escaped from the city's Castle prison (1965: 255).

It is likely that the same agents who distributed the paper, may also have contributed to the paper's columns. Ferdinand describes how these people – the original newsagents – not only got the paper to customers but also took in adverts, and were paid commission on both these roles. However, it also appears that the agents were paid for providing news. The account books of the *Hampshire Chronicle* show that agent Thomas Baker was regularly paid for sending reports to both the Winchester-based paper and its sister publication, the *Salisbury Journal*. As such this process contributed not only to the provision of 'original' content, but also supplemented the income of agents.

> "Such an income might be multiplied by as many newspapers as the enterprising journalist-agent could handle. A deliberate arrangement to collect country news from agents who were already in constant communication with the newspaper office made good sense; the proprietors were able to supplement their collection of London-derived news with the freshest local advice (which sometimes complete the circle by appearing in the London papers), while newsagents were able to supplement their incomes." (Ferdinand, 1997: 73)

What is clear from the legacy formed by the remaining papers from the eighteenth century is that publishers were keen to emphasise the freshness of their 'advices'. However, the length of time from news source to publication very much depended on the distance to be travelled – for instance Wiles estimates that it took four months for news from India to reach newspaper columns (1965: 60). This did not stop publishers boasting of their efforts to supply readers with the latest news, even going to the lengths to employ their own riders to bring in news from London, and newspaper columns attest that this system was not failsafe, perhaps because of the dependability of the horseman or because an accident – or worse – had befallen them. The very publication date of the paper would also be organised around the availability of news, with the arrival of the post a key factor in determining not only on what day, but also at what time, editions came out, with printers working through the night to meet morning sales.

A diverse content was clearly a key selling point and seen as one weapon among many – including offering free introductions and bargain gifts – to increase circulation. Favourite subjects included deaths and executions, leisure activities, such as bull baiting and cockfighting, alongside cricket and bell ringing. In addition, these papers ventured into more feature content such as songs, poems and stories and even novel serialisations including Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (Black, 2001: Wiles, 1965). Cranfield notes that a popular item in the early papers was the "London Bill of Mortality" – a list of causes of death in the capital (1978: 180). Readers' letters were also regularly included in the columns as these early newspapers developed and later developments saw sport make it into the editorial columns having originally been included as lists of results and other information in advertisements. Crime was especially popular to the extent that some papers gained a reputation for the quality of their crime reporting. The same topic also gave newspapers one of their first claims to acting for the public good by alerting would-be criminals to the penalties they would face if caught (Black, 2001: 54).

Such a diverse range of content had to be organised. Wiles suggests that the role of the printer developed into that of an editor, who selected content with a view to keeping a reader – drawing information from a diverse range of

sources (1965: 208)[22]. Thus we see the origins of the journalist as a demarcated occupation with its own set of rituals and values. These titles would increasingly take on the personality of the printer who organised them (Cranfield, 1962: 61). As discussed, these editors were not above venturing opinions, either as appendages to stories, or as stand-alone pieces but this intervention stopped short of an avowed political allegiance, which was not employed as a sales technique until the latter part of the eighteenth century in the face of unsettled political times at national level (Wiles, 1965; Walker, 2006a). Conboy also places the origin of the term 'hack' in the eighteenth century when early 'journalists', who "skills and opinions could be purchased for short-term writing job if there was money in it for them", would hail 'Hackney cabs' to travel around London.(2011: 166).

With the increase of competition in the provincial news market, it is possible that a political stance may well have helped in circulation battles – especially as distribution areas became more focused and the market more competitive with more than one paper circulating in large towns and cities. In Cambridge for instance, Benjamin Flower launched his radical *Cambridge Intelligencer* to compete with the pro-Tory *Cambridge Chronicle*, although Walker (2006a) notes that many provincial radical titles were short-lived and superseded by more moderate campaigning titles, the more successful of which were giving a voice to the newly emerging industrial middle classes. The *Leeds Intelligencer*, which was to become the *Yorkshire Post* in 1866, was one such paper which owed its fortunes to the Industrial Revolution which saw Leeds grow from a market town to an industrial city. By the early 1800s the paper had nailed its pro-Tory colours to its editorial mast during a particularly hard-fought election battle, possibly in a bid to secure the most affluent advertising market against more radical rivals, including the *Northern Star*, but the paper did not desert its campaigning stance and often stood the corner of social causes, including the need to improve Leeds' sewerage system in the face of recurrent cholera epidemics (Gibb and Beckwith, 1954). The increased politicisation of the provincial news market is explored at length in Chapter 5.

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[22] The role of the editor described here is similar to that put forward by Nerone and Barnhurst 2003: 437-8), who term papers developing from the first half of the nineteenth century as Editor's paper. For them the role is allied to political advocacy.

The role of advertising.

A key component of these newspapers from their earliest beginnings was advertising. A copy of the *Bristol Post Boy* from 1704 features an announcement for the services of John Mitchell, "Licensed Physician and Churygion" (Wiles, 1965: 151). As previously mentioned, printers wasted no time in cross-promoting their products and even sophisticated businessman Benjamin Collins was not above advertising his banking business within the columns of the *Salisbury Journal*. The commercial significance of advertising is demonstrated by the imposition of duty under the Stamp Act of 1712 which charged one shilling on every advert.

As circulations grew for the burgeoning provincial press, so the rivalry intensified as the titles vied for advertising revenue. Wiles (1965: 152) goes so far as to identify how few adverts are to be found in the few remaining copies of short-lived ventures such as Sam Farley's *Bristol Post Man* (1713-16), which suggests its precarious financial nature. The cost of inserting adverts was not uniform and publishers offered reductions for repeat runs of ads, which only needed to be set once and then could easily be reprinted. Wiles notes that in 1718 the *Plymouth Weekly Journal* charged three shillings for an advert, whereas a year later the *York Mercury* charged just two. For successful titles, by the mid 1700s up to three quarters of space was given over to adverts and announcements (Cranfield, 1978: 185). But even these newspapers were still generating a relatively small income. By identifying a few remaining copies of papers where the price paid for adverts was written on them, Cranfield suggests that 26 weeks of the *Liverpool Chronicle* in 1757 brought in £49.2s from 761 paid-for ads after deduction of advertising duty. At a similar time he calculates that the *Newcastle Journal* made about £4 a week so that a paper with a circulation of 1,000 would still only yield a profit of about £8 a week gross.

As the eighteenth century progressed it is evident that, despite taxation, advertising revenue was perceived as key to a newspaper's profitability and publishers would be flexible in how adverts could be sent into them, announcing wide-ranging drop-off points and out-of-town agents (Wiles,

1965: 166-7). By the end of the eighteenth century, adverts were appearing in relatively large numbers and were given prominence on a front page devoted to such announcements (Penny, 2001: 10). From his study of the development of the *Salisbury Journal* and *Hampshire Chronicle*, Ferdinand proffers that subscriptions – that is cover prices – covered the costs of printing and distribution but advertising was where the profit lay (1997: 74). Some publishers, including Sam Farley and his brother Felix, went to lengths to avoid advertising duty, for instance by publishing two differently titled papers each week, because duty only applied to those published at seven-day, or fewer, intervals. Some publishers specified how long adverts could be and some charged according to length. Publishers also used claims of wide circulation to justify their advertising rates and many sent copies to London coffee houses to add to their attractiveness as an advertising medium (Wiles, 1965: 168-170). In 1757 advertising duty doubled to two shillings (it was to rise to a high of three shillings in 1789) which Black argues meant fewer adverts for everyday items which had smaller profit margins than luxury goods. It is conceivable that the negative effect on profits of this move gave weight to the campaign for the repeal of stamp duty of the same year and discussed below.

Adverts also tended to be targeted at publications perceived to be in line with the products promoted, evidence that even that this stage the provincial press was seen to be differentiated according to readership; in this way cheaper papers advertised soap while the most expensive advertised property and the exclusive services of visiting doctors. Generally the quality and quantity of adverts increased with the quality and quantity of papers sold. As the volume and significance of advertising increased, regional papers were defined in three tiers, according to how many adverts they carried and this defined their regional dominance and also their ability to attract advertisers from London looking to widen their reach. Many also started to include *Advertiser* in their title (Black, 2001: 61-63).

As the number of adverts increased, so the pressure of space grew for publishers limited to a four-page product who wanted to keep some space for editorial content. This meant settings adverts in smaller type, although

typographical features were used to highlight key words as layout developed during the course of the eighteenth century, and sometimes holding adverts back so as to preserve the balance between news and commercial notices, as pointed out by William Craighton in his *Ipswich Journal* number 914 (August 7, 1756) who said "a considerable Part of a News Paper ought to be allowed for News, and also for many things which are equally agreeable to the Readers of it" (Wiles, 1965: 172). However, it is likely that readers were also entertained and informed by the scope of the adverts included in papers, which even included complex publicity strategies from such people as travelling doctors in addition to the more routine matters of make-up and cider.

Early newspapers: The *Newcastle Courant.*

Typifying the entrepreneurial spirit of these titles is the *Newcastle Courant*, which is among the earliest titles reproduced via the British Newspaper Archive. The first surviving paper for the city is the *The New-castle Gazette, or the Northern Courant* "Being an Impartial Account of Remarkable Transactions Forreign (sic) or Domestic", dated from December 23 to December 25, 1710. Although just one copy survives via the digitised archive, it is thought to have been published for around two years (Newcastle City Council 2012). At this time Newcastle was a thriving port, hosting ships which carried cargo between ports in the United Kingdom as well as further afield, often carrying coal mined in the local area for export (Ellis, 2001). It seems likely that it was fertile ground for the burgeoning newspaper industry and Wiles cites other titles founded in the eighteenth century as *The New-Castle Weekly Mercury* (1723), *The North County Journal* (1734), *The Newcastle Journal* (1739) and *The Newcastle Intelligencer* (1755) (1963: 451- 460).

The two-page *Gazette* is, perhaps, unsurprisingly, dominated by shipping news, which would have appealed to the mercantlile classes of the city. Laid out across two columns, the variety of geographical areas covered isindicated

in the italicised titles and dates which start each new item (Appendix 1). The front page is dominated by content from as far as Genoa and St Petersburg, but also includes shipping news from other ports in Britain, including Harwich, Deal, Yarmouth and Shields. These stories demonstrate the news networks which operated at this time; the story of the arrival of a ship from Genoa "yesterday' not only has value as an event in itself but also because of the information these sea-farers brought with them of the British Navy and their part in the Battle of Sargossa, fought as part of the War of Spanish Succession in August 1710, and of other shipping movements.

> "The British Fleet commanded by Sir John Norris, having taken in Necessaries at Port Mahon[23], sail'd from thence the 13th Instant, for the Streights in quest of some Ships of War that were cruising there, and had taken divers Merchant Ships. Some English Men of War which had been taken at Algiers, were return'd to Port Mahon, having renew'd Amity with the new Bay there. Two Men of War, which came from Port Mahon with the Worcester, are put into Leghorn. All the French Men of War that were fitting out at Thoulon, areput to Sea, and five of them are sruising in the Heigth of Corsica." (*New-castle Gazette*, 23.12.1710:1)

News of London is included on page two and consists of court cases, a number of Parliamentary reports and official appointments. Significantly the final column includes one labeled advertisement – for some land for sale – and a public notice placed on behalf of the city's Magistrates refuting reports that Newcastle is "infected with the Plague" (ibid: 2). The paper records that it was sold by "J. Button, bookseller on the Bridge" (ibid) and is thought to be printed by John Saywell, preserved as a failing businessman in a letter between Button and author Daniel Defoe, who lived in Gateshead for a time (Welford, 1895: 17).

More evidence survives of printer John White, who launched the tri-weekly *The Newcastle Cour*ant in 1711. The *Courant* continued as weekly until 1910.

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[23] Port Mahon is a natural harbour on the island of Menorca. It was captured by an Anglo-Dutch force in 1708 and its status as a British Protectorate was confirmed by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

White typifies the path described by Wiles; the son of a printer from York, he published not only the newspaper, but also books and sermons and a range of official documents, which he advertised through the columns of his own newspaper. A successful businessman, White inherited the publication of other titles in York in partnership with a range of people who facilitated its distribution across Yorkshire (Wiles, 1965: 511). In 1731 he was among printers who were prosecuted for reproducing the notorious 'Hague Letter', which revealed details of secret Government negotiations around foreign policy (Cranfield, 1962: 143). He also, "became sheriff of York, was for many years the leading typographer between the Ouse and the Tweed and that when he died in January, 1769, at the age of eighty. He was the older master printer in England" (Welford, 1895: 19).

The *Newcastle Courant* of Saturday August 4 to Monday August 6 1711, is a four-page publication which evidences White's prowess as a printer. Although there is no cover price printed on the paper, Cranfield suggests that it sold for one penny, roughly equivalent to £7 in today's value (1962: 41). Carrying the number 3, it is illustrated with two woodblock illustrations in the title piece (Appendix 2) – one of a ship and one of a 'post-man'. A characteristic of his newspapers is the complex woodcut which illustrates the first letter of each edition, until it ceases to be used in the month of his death. Woodcuts are also used in varying ways throughout the history of his newspaper, for instances to illustrate the title or even, occasionally, adverts, discussed below. The edition of Saturday, September 6 1712 sees the format of the *Courant* change in response to the imposition of stamp duty; Wiles notes that the Stamp Act had been introduced from August 1 and that for a few issues White's titles had borne the halfpenny stamp until he had realised a way round it (1963: 47). The amended paper was published as a 12-page pamphlet, complete with a cover sheet. Although it is not possible to ascertain exact sizes of pages from the digitised reproductions, the shift from two to single columns and increase in pagination suggests these papers were considerably smaller than their predecessors. Black suggests that these titles were printed on "a sheet-and-a-half folded into six pages" (2001: 10). By using an unstamped sheet and an unstamped half sheet the *Courant* – in common with "nearly all" provincial titles – was able to avoid stamp duty (Wiles, 1963: 48). By 1720 it had become

a weekly paper. The newspaper format was resumed in May 1725 when the Stamp Act was amended to close the loop-hole so that the duty applied to all newspapers, "whatever their length" (Harris, 1978: 85).

In common with its predecessor, the *Courant* of 1711 highlights the geographical range of its contents but its range of interest is now positioned beyond that of being merely commercially useful. This front page includes information about attempted assassinations, banishments and political intrigues; ordered in terms of the dated arrival of the information. The title realised that not only were the maritime comings and goings of the port newsworthy, they were also a potential source of news and so an appeal was put out through the paper for information sharing with the promise that contributors would be rewarded with "a Reception and Acknowledgement of their Favours, with a suitable Return and Gratification for it." Cranfield notes this as the sole discovered offer of payment for information at this time (1962: 82).

Both the title and the contents makes claims to providing "news" and pre-stamp duty, the paper was able to issue a four-page supplement on March 10 1712 containing the details of the Treaty of Utrecht. Thus those producing these titles are conscious of their role in organising and presenting information as news. The first item on the August 4, 1711 edition "from the Frontiers of Savoy" acknowledges that "this Piece of News wants Confirmation". The significance of reliability is emphasised by Wiles (1963: 85) who notes a correction in the *Courant* of October 9 1714 after a name had been incorrectly included. Shipping news has been moved to page two while page three has the latest news from London, including the stock market prices. By January 1723, Wiles notes that White was distributing the paper with others, some relatively nearby in Sunderland and Durham, and some at a more regional reach in Penrith and Appleby (1963: 453), which suggests the complex and wide distribution networks described above.

A further signifier of geographical reach is the range of advertisements included in the columns of *The Newcastle Courant*, which grew from none other than one for the printer himself to "thousands during its first half

century” (ibid: 153). In the first surviving edition of 1711, page four is largely empty carrying only adverts for the printer’s own services, including his claim to be “furnish’d with a great variety of Letters and Presses”. However, as the title develops so does the proportion and range of advertisements carried and Cranfield suggests that from its beginnings the *Courant* was “exceptional” in its ability to attract adverts (1961: 209).. Such is the increased status of adverts that page 1 began to carry notices relating to deadlines for adverts. “Advertisements are desired to be sent in on ever Thursday” proclaims the front page of Saturday, October 1728. This now-weekly title has developed into a three-column newspaper (with rules between the columns) set in a neat and clear type. As such it is likely that the paper had increased in size, again exploiting a loophole in the Stamp Act which had never put a limit on the size of the sheet (Harris, 1978: 85). The advertisements in this issue are particularly extensive and total four of the 12 columns. – placed on pages four and three (the last page printed) to enable the period of submission to be extended. These adverts not only cover the area of Newcastle but also the surrounding counties of Yorkshire, Lancaster and Durham. In addition to notices of sales of goods and lands, the adverts also relate to horse races – which can be entered by anyone who meets the criteria – as well as appeals for information following thefts of property and animals (Courant, 19.10.1728: 3).

By 1751 the range of adverts has increased to include those for products and these are given prominence via a blend of typographical labeling and editorial content. Typical is:

“*BENJAMIN SHOVE’S*

GRIPE and CHOLICK WATER.

Now truly prepared, according to the ORIGINAL, only by the eldest Grand-daughter of BENJAMIN SHOVE deceas’d

Which has, for upwards of 60 Years, never fail’d of giving immediate ease in the said Complaints, having gain’d universal Applause by all who have experience’d it” (The Newcastle Courant 16.11.1751: 3).

This edition also carries a rare illustration in its columns – a small woodcut of a doorway to accompany the sale of a lease of an estate held by the Lord Bishop of Durham (ibid: 4).

These adverts are just one facet of an increasingly complex paper which Harris describes as the "established form of the press", circulating in increasing numbers and finding commercial success in the industrialising north of England (1978: 87-8). It is packed full of various content; in addition to news received from mail drawn from across the globe there is the usual fare of domestic news, including six items labelled "Newcastle" (ibid) as well as readers' letters. Of note is a literary item – a poem – which fills the final column. The front page of the edition of *The Newcastle Courant* of February 4 1769 states that the paper is now "printed and sold by T Saint in Pilgrim-street, Newcastle upon Tyne". An obituary in the preceding week's paper had marked the passing of John White. "He was candid, affable, generous, charitable, and human, religious without ostentation, a steady disinterested friend, and an honest Man." (Newcastle Courant, 28.1.1769: 2).

The social role of the printers' paper.

That these early papers had commercial merit is without doubt and it is likely that their columns provided information which spurred on capitalist ventures by enhancing the flow of economic information vital to trade. This role was amplified by the presence of papers in coffee houses where business people, many of whom lacked formal commercial premises, would meet to discuss and do business (Black, 2001). However, their formation as a repository for a diverse source of information from a wide range of sources also gave them a social place as a new form of communication over and above the information they contained in their news and advertising columns. Analysts (Black, 2001; Nerone and Barnhurst, 2003; Conboy, 2004) go so far as to equate them with a Habermasian public sphere where public opinion is formed through the free interaction of information. For Black this social role led to the transmission of

the values of “polite society” in a space where “all readers were equal” (2001: 21).

> “The shaping of the middling orders in terms of a set of practices and opinions required their agreement, and thus entailed the striking of resonances to elicit a process of identification. An emphasis on the importance for the entire community of the values of the middling orders also helped focus attention on the press. A sense of what was appropriate, and thus respectable, was inculcated through print.” (Black, 2002: 177)

For Nerone and Barnhurst (2003) these papers created ‘virtual’ coffee houses for those unable to attend the actual social space, for instance because they were in the country or the colonies. Publishers brought together the best news from London and further afield and appended comments and letters to simulate conversation. As such, the provincial newspaper was carving out a particular discursive position for itself as a “generic hybrid between public information source, community identity and profit which constitutes journalism” (Conboy, 2004: 42). As such, Conboy argues, these newspapers were aligned with the political process, because they were part of the public sphere and Black (2002) proffers that the provincial press fostered an awareness of national politics. However, the extent to which these newspapers could perform this function on a mass scale is questionable; that a publisher was aiming for a start-up circulation of 200 clearly demonstrates that these were not mass-market products. Black also suggests that the biggest problem facing eighteenth century newspapers was the high price, which kept them largely with an upper and middle-class readers – thus these papers reached the ‘political classes’ but were marginal for the majority of the population (ibid).

These early factors were clearly mitigated by the development of the provincial press through its first 100 years, which saw it progress to a product based on larger, more focused circulations. In addition to the expensive official stamped papers, this period also saw the rise of a more radical unstamped press, which Cranfield suggests was more likely to be read by the working

classes in the pub, because they could not afford the more expensive coffee houses (1978: 193-4). Cranfield therefore accords the provincial press an influential role both socially and politically and argues that even at this stage, the ideal of the press as a Fourth Estate was beginning to take shape. Not only were the Stamp Acts a recognition that papers were potentially influential – and to be feared by the established order – but, Cranfield argues that the central monitoring of titles and prosecutions of provincial editors was also a recognition of their perceived influence (ibid: 189). During the campaign to repeal the Stamp Act in 1757 provincial papers employed this argument in support of their cause. Thus the *Reading Mercury* proclaimed, "every Englishman must be sensible that by encouraging a News Paper, he contributes to the support of the LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, to the Promotion of Trade and Business, and to the circulation of useful Knowledge, particularly the Knowledge of Publick Affairs" (ibid: 273).

This positioning by the *Reading Mercury* demonstrates that the provincial newspaper was establishing for itself a particular relationship with both readers and advertisers, justified by a discourse of the Fourth Estate to give it social legitimacy – those themes which are interrogated through the course of this thesis. Significantly at this stage of the development of the provincial newspaper the ascendancy of one element over the others is not yet evident. Thus it sets the stage for the discussion of the interplay between those elements which characterises the following chapters.

Chapter 5: News for the masses. Politics and the industrialisation of the provincial press.

> "In commencing our new careers as a daily journal we feel that responsibilities attach to it unknown to a previous generation. Within the last 30 years a change has been effected in the condition of the English Press…. Railways and the electric telegraph have established a frequency of locomotion and a circulation of idea which rob country society of all that inertness and incuriousness which were once its peculiar characteristics…..When we consider that the population of two such counties as Lancashire and Yorkshire, to say nothing of the north of England in general, draws now its political opinions quite as much from the Press of Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds as from the Press of London, we shall understand at once the wide extent of the power which, for good or evil, may be wielded by provincial journalism." (Gibb and Beckwith, 1954: 34-5).

The leader in the first daily edition of the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* in 1866 charts not only how far the provincial newspaper had come in 100 years, but also the means and methods by which that journey was accomplished. Technological and social changes had seen the rough four-sheet printer's paper transformed into an influential print product – an influence recognised by those who sought to own newspapers and those who commentated on their social role (Cranfield, 1978). This perceived power fed into the debate surrounding the taxation of the provincial press, which was eventually overturned in the battle for the 'free press'. Coupled with technological innovations in communications, this then paved the way for the industrialisation of the provincial newspaper, enabling it to develop a range of forms, targeted at a mass market. As such, this epoch of the regional press is characterised as a struggle between two discursive constructions of the provincial newspaper; "the one of a Fourth Estate, with proprietorship a form of public service and journalists a species of public philosopher; the other the press as an industry with proprietors as businessmen and journalism as trade or craft." (Lee, 1978: 118).

Changing circumstances – the end of stamp duty

By the mid-nineteenth century, the circumstances under which the regional and local press operated had altered radically. State control loosened with the eventual abolition of stamp duty in 1855 and the subsequent abolition of Advertisement Duty. This paved the way for the introduction of cheaper newspapers, mass produced and distributed using the latest industrial methods. The numbers and types of provincial papers grew from the usual weekly newspaper, typically serving a market town or borough, to include city morning papers, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, the "weekend regional miscellany paper", which often focused on sensational content, and the urban-based evening paper (Hobbs, 2009: 16-17). The number of provincial newspapers rose from about 50 in 1782, to 150 in 1830 and more than 230 by 1851. At the same time the number of London titles fell from 14 in 1790 to 10 in 1855 (Asquith, 1978: 99). The industrialisation of newspaper production was facilitated by the abolition of stamp duty, which altered the industry's cost base and paved the way for technological innovation; with no taxation, cover prices fell and circulations rose. Also, because paper was no longer stamped, it no longer had to be cut and fed into the newly-developed steam presses in sheets and instead could go in on a roll. This was soon followed by the mechanisation of composition with the introduction of the Linotype, first used in Britain by the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* in 1889 (Milne, n.d: 27). At the same time, the process of news-gathering and dissemination benefited from the communications revolution in the form of the railway and telegraph. This led to less reliance on cut and paste and correspondence and the emergence of the reporter as a distinct occupation as industrialisation itself necessitated an increasingly demarcated and professionalised workforce. These improved papers were increasingly owned and produced to exert influence; significantly, the industry legitimised its social role within the rhetoric of the 'Fourth Estate', although content suggests that these papers were in fact heavily politicised and didactic.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, ownership of the provincial press shifted from the opportunistic innovation of a jobbing printer described in Chapter 4 to a way of gaining social status. Taxation via stamp duty had

moulded the business model to one of high price, low turnover. Those who produced newspapers, therefore, had to have the means to be able to stock up on stamped paper and to pay the necessary sureties to Government against libel. As such, “the leading provincial papers were more heavily capitalised and their proprietors and editors in part members of more influential and socially more prominent circles” (Black, 1991: 119). These were men of social status who campaigned to be allowed to both own newspapers and hold public office, suggesting that newspapers ownership was seen as a means of influence, and increasingly newspapers were owned, and used for political influence (Asquith, 1978: 98). However, the repeal of both the Stamp Act and advertising duty opened the way for a new mass-production model of newspaper production to become ascendant by the time the century drew to a close. Importantly, the abolition of stamp duty also paved the way for a regional daily press. Jeremy Black (2001) charts how papers were produced with a greater frequency, and, as they were, fell in price. For instance, the *Manchester Guardian* was 7d when it first appeared in 1821; in 1836, when stamp duty was reduced, it was a bi-weekly and cost 4d and when stamp duty was abolished it became a daily newspaper in 1855 at 2d, with the price falling to 1d two years later.

Sphere of influence for the provincial press

By the mid-nineteenth century, the increasingly literate population of Britain had grown from 10.5 million in 1801 to 20.8 million (Black: 2001). However, prior to the abolition of stamp duty, the provincial press reflected and disseminated the values of the middle classes who could afford to buy them. As such “paternalism grounded in moral behaviour and religious attitudes rather than economic dominance was the justification of the social policy required for the well-ordered society that was presented by a polite, sociable sphere, just as their presence in the coffee houses and other meeting places was part of the furniture of this sphere” (Black, 2001: 106).

Black contends that these newspapers sought to be seen as a moral compass and promote the values of "polite society", as evidenced by the *Leeds Mercury* which supported factory legislation for children but not adults, opposed universal suffrage and defined reform as a way of advancing capitalism[24]. At the same time he also widened the potential market for the newspaper by expanding its content to include sport, music and illustrations (Gibb and Beckwith, 1954). This conception of the social role of provincial newspapers pre-figures the conception employed by those who would campaign for the abolition of the Taxes on Knowledge as the century progressed. For those in favour of repeal, the ideal was a free press which would act a "mind-engine" for society, according to historian Alexander Andrewes (in Lee 1976). Thus we see the increasing dominance of the liberal notion of the role of the press whereby newspapers would advance reason by disseminating information – versus the conception of taxation as an instrument of social control as discussed in Chapter 4. Stamp duty made newspapers expensive and limited the sale of titles to less than two per head (Asquith, 1978: 100); the working classes instead favoured the lurid content of almanacs and chapbooks or the cheaper radical papers of the unstamped press (Black, 2001: 106, Cranfield, 1978: 193). Therefore, those for abolition of stamp duty argued that lowering taxation would enable 'responsible' papers to thrive. The Temperance Society campaigned for the repeal on the grounds that making papers cheaper would mean working people could read them at home rather than relying on communal copies kept in pubs (Lee, 1976). The views expressed in the columns of the *Liverpool Mercury* on Friday, July 24, 1835, typify the arguments: "I ask you not to persecute those who defy the stamplaws; for holding those laws to be socially odious and injurious, I am disposed to consider all crusaders against them (although they may be prompted by no nobler motive than that of mere self-interested) to be virtual benefactors of society."

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[24] Under editor Christopher Kemplay, who took over in 1848, the Conservative-owned paper had increasingly focused on the "social question" – roughly equating to improving the lives of the working population of Leeds. So in 1849 when the city was hit by a cholera epidemic, the newspaper campaigned for better sewerage systems and housing and for the city to buy Woodhouse Moor as the 'lungs of Leeds'. He also co-founded the Society for Promoting Public Improvements in Leeds to clean up the city, which featured a 'casino', numerous beer-houses and was known as the one of the dirtiest in the country (Gibb and Beckwith, 1954).

Despite the claims for social legitimacy, it seems that economics was as much a driver for change. In 1836 there were a total of 221 stamped papers in England, Wales and Scotland, including 79 in London, 83 in the English provinces, six in Wales and 53 in Scotland, according to official Stamp Office figures. Of those provincial papers, the biggest seller was the *Leeds Mercury* with an annual sale of 270,000, closely followed by the *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury*, with a circulation of 260,000 (Whorlow 1886). Because the unstamped press was unofficial it is harder to gauge its extent. However, evidence from the Provincial Newspaper Society, formed in 1837 to represent the interests of the growing number of regional newspapers, suggests that it was a considerable presence in the newspaper market. Writing to mark 50 years of the society, Whorlow estimates that by 1830 one unnamed, unstamped paper may have had a circulation of two million copies (equivalent to one eighteenth of all stamped papers), based on a seizure of 40,000 contraband copies of the publication. It seemed the level of stamp duty only served to fuel the ingenuity of those who sought to evade taxation and "it is related that one newspaper largely circulating in a Midland town was printed by a London firm, and to escape detection, the editions were conveyed to the place of publication under cover of a coffin" (Whorlow, 1886: 12-13).

Many of these titles, which sold for just one penny, were shortlived but the most successful were "creditable" one-sheet newspapers produced in line with professional norms and which launched the careers of journalists. Wiener suggests that a circulation of 3,000 to 4,000 was needed to make an unstamped paper commercially viable but some, including the *Poor Man's Guardian*, sold nearer to 10,000. As such these papers began to pose a real competitive threat to the stamped press and it is at this time that agitation for the repeal of stamp duty grew. The most successful of these titles included a range of content, including news (taken usually from the stamped press), Parliamentary reports and reports of working class gatherings – including meetings of the Trades Union movement – and meetings. The nature of the radical content also meant that it had to be commissioned, because it was not covered elsewhere and unpaid correspondents were therefore drawn from among the participants in such events. As the sector developed, so these correspondents contributed to more than one title, such as George Edmonds,

who portrayed Parliament as a "Gang of Housebreakers" (Wiener, 1969: 169) – so creating the first working class freelance journalists (ibid: 170). In addition these titles carried adverts and correspondence to enable communication between working class organisations; as such they helped forge a degree of "working class solidarity" (ibid). However, not all of these titles were political and Wiener goes so far as to suggest that "the majority of the illegal journals that appeared were politically innocuous" (ibid: 179); some eschewed campaigning for a variety of content aimed at instruction and became known as the "useful knowledge" publications, although those that survived longest featured overwhelmingly entertaining content, while police gazettes which "fused popular radicalism with crude fiction" (ibid: 175) were also popular.

These papers also sold well in the provinces – mostly in the large industrial conurbations – and sophisticated, clandestine methods of distribution such as described above developed to meet demand. Publishers, journalists and vendors of unstamped papers faced imprisonment or confiscation of equipment should they be caught and the popularity of these papers is evidenced by the number of prosecutions. For instance, in 1835, 800 people were imprisoned following cases brought by the Stamp Office (Wiener, 1969: 195) and funds were set up to support the families of those in jail. However, the penalties did nothing to deter the industry; in addition to making money from sales, those involve claimed ideological motivation, as reports of their court cases evidence, and eventually, Wiener argues, numbers rose to the extent that the law became practically unenforceable (1969: 202). In 1849 the pressure for repeal grew with the formation of the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, which numbered among its members those who had successful campaigned for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Arguments against the duty included artificially inflating the price of papers, and so restricting them to the rich, and preventing free competition between papers, largely because a tax was levied equally on each advert whatever the newspaper's circulation, which made the duty unfairly onerous on those with small circulations (Milne, n.d).

That the provincial papers could cite their significance as part of the "mind-engine" of the press is testament to the significance attached to them. Black contends that the stamped provincial papers still did not aim to 'foster feelings of regional identity' but favoured an educative role which continued to promote an awareness of London in the regions, for instance in terms of fashion and trends, and disseminated the appropriate values by not distinguishing between fact and comment. As such they were "socially circumscribed" (Black, 2001: 108).

Andrew Hobbs has gone as far as to argue that the provincial press was a developed network by 1836; provincial papers outsold the London press, Hobbs argues, and with the advent of the daily mornings especially, their status grew so that the "provincial press was the majority newspaper press for more than a century" (2009: 17). Added to this was the centralised organisation of the provincial newspaper industry – including shared aspects such as telegraphed news and advertisements – which added to its cohesiveness. This may well account for the potential of the provincial press to exert – and to be seen to exert – political influence which was to become such a characteristic of it's existence in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the same way that politicians saw the country as a network of connecting constituencies, so they saw the provincial newspaper industry as a network of publications. The networks which bound these newspapers together were also being cemented with the expansion of the industry. Early publishers had co-operated and shared copy and agents; as the nineteenth century progressed these often informal systems were embodied in professional organisations, such as the Provincial Newspaper Society and Press Association, as well as shared access to advertisers and distribution networks. Some owners set up informal syndicates to share content including fictional works, including those by Thomas Hardy and Wilkie Collins. This meant to some people – politicians included – the provincial press was often seen as a "canal of information" disseminating knowledge out from London (Hobbs, 2009: 23).

Such was the perceived influence of the provincial press that, Cranfield cites, by 1846 the influential London-based *Reynolds* magazine printed a series of

articles on 38 newspapers – with specific reference to their influence and history (1978: 198). "Most contemporary commentators were convinced that the local newspapers were influential. The wealthier manufacturers in the provinces might well subscribe to London newspapers, but for discussion of the problems of the news society they looked to their local newspaper", Cranfield concludes (ibid: 201). In particular, the *Reynolds* magazine commented, "how many a member of Parliament has owed his seat to the exertions of the local journal" (ibid: 202-3).

Shifting business models.

Perhaps counter intuitively, among those to oppose the repeal of stamp duty was the Provincial Newspaper Society. The position taken by this professional association for the provincial newspaper was complex, based on a wish to preserve the 'quality' of those engaged in the industry because of its perceived influence. However, it also seems likely that their stance was an expression of a wish to protect the business model promoted by taxation, which inevitably limited those who could enter into the market because of the capital required. Arguments employed in support of this position drew on the ability of the provincial press to inform and thus the need for it to promote "valuable" information (Whorlow, 1886: 55). Therefore, the repeal of stamp duty became more attractive as a weapon to cull the unstamped press which posed its own threat to the 'official' titles.

Writing of the campaign to abolish the Taxes of Knowledge in 1886, Whorlow suggests that the tax had initially been a part of the State's mechanism for protecting itself against the unsavoury characters of the press. These characters were, seen "as a suspected person, one to be feared and dreaded, as ever ready to asperse the characters of innocent men, and without honour, conscience or common decency " (1886: 8). This is supported by the requirement of newspaper owners to pay a surety to government in case of

libel action[25], which, coupled with the cost of investing in stamped paper and machinery, meant that newspaper owners needed a considerable amount of capital to the enter the industry. As such, evidence suggests these men of means were keen to preserve their positions as a mark of their increasing social status.

Whorlow (1886: 51) describes how the Provincial Newspaper Society had actually attempted price fixing as stamp duty was gradually reduced to the rate of 1d in an attempt the preserve the high-price, lower-sale business model. Advocates argued that this would preserve the quality of newspapers to the benefit of owners and readers alike. Curran also notes that as stamp duty was reduced, other mechanisms were introduced to restrict entry into journalism, such as increasing the security for registering newspapers in the provinces by 50 per cent (1978: 56). In 1850 the members of the society, disagreed that the society should campaign for repeal or that the owners would benefit from repeal. Only a few said they would benefit from the repeal of advertisement duty. Instead they feared that abolition would "open the door to a host of nobodies ….. the effect of the measure would be to lower the character of the newspaper press in this country, by the competition for cheapness"(Whorlow 1886: 53-55). In 1852 a special meeting of the society resolved to call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, one Benjamin Disraeli, to repeal advertisement duty but to preserve the penny stamp. Despite this, the duty was abolished by the Liberal government two years later.

In addition to the impact of the abolition of taxation, advances in printing technology, which saw the steam press developed and adopted by some larger provincial titles in the 1820s, also impacted on ownership (Asquith, 1978: 101). Asquith suggests that syndicated ownership became more common for newspapers as the eighteenth century turned, citing a committee of 15 people owning the *Leicester Journal*. However, while possible to run a paper by

[25] A system of securities was introduced in December 1819 as part of Castlereagh's "Six Acts" introduced in the aftermath of the Peterloo riots. Supposedly to guard against seditious of blasphemous libel, every publisher had to deposit a sum with the Government as surety against conviction. The sum was £300 for London-based publishers and £200 for those in the provinces (Wiener, 1969: 4). The system ended in 1869 (Lee, 1976: 97).

committee, Asquith suggests that the most successful titles were associated with the "personality and opinions of a single proprietor" (ibid: 103). As such, provincial titles tended to remain within a family for two or three generations, with ownership often acquired via inheritance or marriage. He estimates that in the 1840s, 33 owners of provincial papers had acquired their papers in this way (ibid: 105). Gardner (2008: 57) argues that this model of ownership not only cemented the relationship between newspaper and community, due to physical proximity of owner, production and reader, but also enabled the specialisation which saw regional newspaper production develop from an adjunct to the printing business to a profession in its own right. In addition, this specialisation enabled owners to experiment with polemic as a selling point. That these papers had to make money was beyond doubt; as the commentator William Lovett remarked in 1838, "the Newspaper Press, daily and weekly, is the property of capitalists who have embarked on the enterprise upon purely commercial principles, and with the purpose of making it contribute to their own personal and pecuniary interests. It is the course which is *profitable*, therefore, and not the course which is *just* which necessarily secures their preference." (Lee, 1976: 49-50).

However, as capital costs grew with industrialisation, groups took advantage of new business laws to form 'joint-stock' companies – Whorlow's 'men of straw' – which were able to raise the necessary capital of up to £200,000 to invest in the industry. At the same time, competitors were increasingly absorbed and chain ownership was seen in a tendency which pre-configures wholesale changes to the shape of the industry in the twentieth century (Lee, 1976: 92-93). In tandem with this was an increased professionalisation of the management structure of titles, with the position of editor, office manager and treasurer appearing (Asquith, 1978: 104). There is also evidence that proprietors held shares in more than one titles by around 1820[26] (ibid). Thus we see early forms of 'chain' ownership along political, and other, lines which loosened the link between journalist and owner and so paved the way for 'neutral' papers which existed to maximise circulation and profit, rather than to support the interests of a partisan owner. Asquith cites contemporary

[26] For example, by 1835, WE Baxter owned four provincial titles in the south east of England (Asquith, 1978: 104).

sources to suggest that this shape of ownership prompted complaints about the "monopolisation" of the London press, although he argues that it was more a case of dominance of a market by one title rather than a deliberate ownership strategy (ibid: 104). Eventually, Lee argues, this increasing centralisation of production and control lead to a homogenisation of the market and economies of scale, which in turn lead to the dramatic shrinkage in the provincial press post-1918 which is explored in the next chapter (Lee, 1978).

The Provincial Newspaper Society's jubilee publication published in 1886 offers us a fascinating glimpse of those who owned the provincial newspapers during the first 50 years of its existence. Of the biographies of presidents offered, many were men of considerable standing, privately educated and involved in public life, so that for them politics was a material pastime as well as a source of content for titles. Some were the latest in a line of newspaper men. At the time of publication, the society's president was Peter Stewart Macliver – founder of the *Western Daily Press* and the *Bristol Evening News* and former Liberal MP for Plymouth. He was also a magistrate in Somerset. The president in 1882-3 was Robert Eadon Leader, the manager and editor of the *Sheffield Independent*. A fourth generation journalist, he had been educated privately in Sheffield and had gained a degree from the University of London. He also founded the Sheffield Junior Liberal Association. In 1851-2, the presidency had been held by Henry Smith, editor of the *Cambridge Independent Press* for 28 years. Educated at Bedford and Cambridge, he was a town councillor and alderman and eventually Mayor of Cambridge. Similarly the president in 1849-50, Mr Bradshaw (no Christian name included), was both the editor and owner of the *Nottingham Journal*. A solicitor by profession, he had bought into the paper in 1832, becoming sole proprietor and editor in 1841. Also a member of his town council, he also wrote pamphlets, and passed the paper to his sons in 1866 (Whorlow, 1886).

At this time, though, none were Members of Parliament and Lee suggests that the progression of the journalist (the term was used to describe newspaper owners as well as news workers) into public life was slow – dogged by accusations of bribery when journalists did secure positions of influence.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, he notes that 30 proprietors had seats in Parliament and that more MPs had holdings in newspapers to promote their own political fortunes (1976: 94). This influence was extended by legislative changes which opened up more public proceedings to the press and so strengthened its claim to respectability and to act as a Fourth Estate – a position which Lee suggests was cemented in legislation by 1888 (1976: 101). Reports of Parliament were granted privilege in 1868 and a series of legal wrangles surrounded admission to meetings of inquest and council meetings until legislation in1908 resolved the anomalies (ibid: 99-100). The existence of the successful unstamped newspaper had demonstrated that political principle and profitability were far from being mutually exclusive and Asquith suggests that the politicised radical press stimulated the politicisation of the provincial newspaper (1978: 105). Perhaps ironically, the business model which was to find its apotheosis in a mass readership, can be traced back to newspapers which were initially set up to further the aims of committed political radicals, especially working class reformers who believed newspapers to offer a source of cheap knowledge (Wiener, 1969: 118).

Early conceptions of the good of the community.

Asquith's conception of the politicisation of the provincial press in the first three decades of the nineteenth century is suggestive of the modern concept of existing for the good of the community. He notes the development of what he calls the "ministerial" provincial paper, which drew on the campaigning tradition of the radical press to influence public opinion. Significantly for this thesis, these titles saw a link between their columns and their community and were founded "not as commercial enterprises but as organs of opinion for the local community" (1978: 105). These titles were also financed by local residents: in 1801 Edward Baines bought the *Leeds Mercury* with £1,000 borrowed from 11 wool merchants; in 1810 the committee of 15 who founded the *Leicester Journal* did so to oppose the local Tory corporation, while Tory funds founded the *Westmorland Gazette* in 1818 (ibid). In turn, this stimulated

the production of, and inclusion of, original, politicised content to "guide and reflect public opinion" (ibid: 106).

O'Reilly (2012) charts the coverage of especially municipal politics in the provincial daily press at this time as a way of creating "civic consciousness". This coverage – often in the form of verbatim reports of meetings – gained prominence following the 1835 Municipal Reform Act which laid the structural foundations for modern local government. This means that papers increasingly carved out a role for themselves as a "watchdog', reporting on the plethora of public bodies which controlled urban life and the "civic elite" (ibid: 4) which controlled it. "The city had become an organic and labyrinthine structure which presented a struggle to govern. In this environment, the local press as a watchdog or Fourth Estate became more critical as did its function to help to form and shape the civic consciousness of its readers. The multiplicity of knowledge required to understand, interpret and create meaning in the urban environment grew and placed excessive demands not just on municipal representatives but also on reporters, and consequently, on readers." (ibid: 10). This process of reporting and reading in turn created not only a "community of interest" but also enabled readers to map the information against their own experience to create a "sense of civic identity or consciousness" (ibid: 12).

For Curran these titles served to create cohesion because it tended to "block out conflict, minimise difference, and encourage positive identification with the local community, its local traditions and its middle-class leadership" (1978: 71) – a process which sounds very like that described by Ian Jackson in his description of the local press in 1971 and explored at length in Section 3. This type of provincial newspaper proved "therapeutic" for the social system, unlike the radical press it grew to replace (Curran, ibid). O'Reilly points out that many of those writing these newspapers were influential in civic and business life in their own right, for instance Edward Baines was a trustee of the Leeds workhouse, and that those who owned these titles located their offices at the geographical heart of these activities (2012: 12).

Milne goes so far as to say that politics was the 'lifeblood' of these papers, exploited by politicians because they were "cheap, immediate and regular" (n.d: 13) at a time when the nation was gripped by the debate surrounding the expansion of the electoral franchise. Therefore in Leeds the creation of the *Leeds Mercury* was opposed by the traditionally Tory *Leeds Intelligencer* – the forerunner of the still extant *Yorkshire Pos*t – which was given a firm financial footing in the face of increased competition by the formation of the Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Company, which issued 5,000 shares at £10 each. The company was set up to preserve the paper as a 'daily organ of expression' for Yorkshire and wider West Riding area, to promote Conservative values (Gibb and Beckwith, 1954). Therefore, by 1860 it was possible to categorise the papers of the provincial newspaper in terms of their political allegiance[27]. Milne suggests that there were 397 Liberal newspapers (both daily and weekly) as opposed to 193 supporting the Conservative cause. To aid the cause, parties would send out material for inclusion in papers such as 'handysheets' to help editors write opinion pieces (Milne, n.d: 31) and Hobbs notes that politicians and institutions would give money to the provincial press while Gladstone was known to show favour to reporters from the Press Association rather than those of the London press. Not only was it "the provinces, not London, that chose the overwhelming majority of MPs" (Hobbs, 2009: 23), but as previously explored, the provincial press as a whole formed an interconnected network, capable of disseminating information and influence.

Thus the newspaper market was being segmented along political as well as financial lines – although these two facets were inextricably linked. Though they may have been founded for political ends, these papers were expected to be viable financial products and indeed the political stance itself was used as a selling point in an increasingly crowded market place. Typical of this pattern of ownership was that of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, owned by Joseph Cowen, who followed his father into Parliament as the Radical MP for Newcastle. A rather eccentric character, who dressed similarly to the miners he employed – even when in the House of Commons – Cowen turned the *Chronicle* into a

[27] AJ Lee categorises provincial dailies according to their politics and maps their distribution across England (1976: 282-287).

mass-appeal paper, which gave a voice to the working people, but which also boasted the biggest sports reporting team of its time. It was a winning formula. By 1873 the *Chronicle* claimed a daily print run of more than 45,000 copies a day, compared with the *Manchester Guardian's* 30,000 and *The Times* of London's 60,000 (Milne, n.d: 65). This was sustained by an ambitious staff, which focused on news both local and national. An infamous criminal was hanged at 8am – the story hit the streets in a special edition timed at 10am; in 1870 a reporter went to Canada to follow the exploits of some Tyne oarsmen; in 1873 they set up a London office with a special telegraph link to Newcastle to make sure they got the news they wanted. In 1874, when Cowen was elected as MP, he would send a daily letter to his readers informing them about Parliament. His position helped expand the realm of influence the paper enjoyed but also ensured the financial survival of the *Chronicle* where others fell. In his survey of papers of the North East, Milne charts how 25 newspapers were founded in Northumberland and Durham between 1855 and 1868; by 1868, nine had closed and by the turn of the century there were only eight.

Industrialisation and the demarcation of journalism.

As the provincial press industrialised, so its business model altered from a low-sale, high-priced product, to a mass-produced, high-volume product. This was to have a further effect on the content and presentation of the newspapers which became aimed at a mass market. By the 1880s, the link between the provincial press and politics was weakening as mass circulation meant a compromise in content and so a weakening of political allegiance (Lee, 1976:162). Lee (1976: 83) suggests that industrialisation increased the costs of setting up papers hugely. In the 1850s it was estimated to cost between £10,000 and £20,000 to set up a London daily; 20 years later this was put at £100,000. In 1881, Robert Spence Watson, the Liberal political manager of Newcastle, reckoned £30,000 to establish a northern daily. However, at the

same time, the potential profits[28] and prestige of ownership were large enough to attract new entrants. Between 1839 and 1844 the *Manchester Guardian* made an average profit of £6,777. In 1855 that had risen to £12,000 and between 1862 and 1865, £20,000. But it was not a business without risk and Lee notes that between 1867 and 1871 – 15 newspaper proprietors went bust (Lee,1976: 90).

In tandem with industrialisation was the increasing segmentation of the provincial newspaper industry into demarcated roles as "the task of gathering information outpaced the occupational structure." (Nerone and Barnhurst, 2003: 437). In the early 1800s, Lee (1976) portrays the occupation of journalist as a lowly one, commanding poor salaries and little respect, largely due to the precarious nature of the business, and so the working life. Salaries were low when compared with other professions with an editor's salary similar to a clerk's (ibid: 109). In the provinces a reporter earned less than a bricklayer (ibid: 112) although they would have enjoyed a higher social status. It was this uncertainty which, Lee suggests, led many a journalist to drink. Black (2001) argues that the move to mass production also necessitated a more sophisticated organisation, which led to increasingly specialised roles.

> "Employed by particular papers, the reporters helped to give them a distinctive character. They also encouraged a focus on scoops…..In addition, reporters developed their own specialisations, principally City, foreign and Parliamentary. As a parallel move, there was a process of increasing specificity in the production organisation, with sub-editors developing particular skills and tasks." (Black, 2001: 187)

Elliott, who charts one exemplar of an occupation's shift to a profession, as being the ability of employees to make a living from it alone, posits that at the beginning of the nineteenth century only a few high profile editors could make a living from their newspaper work ; the work of the journalist varied greatly

[28] Income was still secured from a combination of adverts and sales. Lee suggests that some papers, including the *West Sussex Gazette* founded in 1853, relied wholly on advertising revenue and built up a circulation based on free distribution. However, this was the exception rather than the norm, and regional newspapers usually expected to generate around 50 per cent of their costs through advertising (Lee, 1976: 86).

in pay until the end of the century. However, the 'gentleman of the press' – were able to draw on the prestige of the ideological position of the Fourth Estate – to seek status through their occupation, although some would still sacrifice their principles for money and be bribed to keep information out print. The more poorly paid journalists of the provincial press could also enhance their earnings through "linage", selling stories on to the London based newspapers, oftenly secretly to escape the approbation of proprietors (Elliott 1978: 172-4). This increase in status was exemplified with the creation of professional bodies including, as previously discussed, the Provincial Newspaper Society in 1836; the National Association of Journalists in 1886, which gained a charter and became the Institute of Journalists in 1890; and the National Union of Journalists in 1907. The Institute controlled entry to the journalism and specified training, for instance shorthand.

The status of the provincial press rose further with the technological innovation which meant papers could get news more quickly and could, in turn, get that news to their readers as fast as possible. By 1855, the major cities of Birmingham, Liverpool and Sheffield, as well as Manchester, had daily papers, which changed the market in which all regional newspapers operated by changing the value of their 'unique selling point' – news – for those titles which were published less often. Among those in the vanguard of daily publishing were the Manchester-based *Daily War Telegraph*, which traded on a thirst for news of the Crimean War, the *Manchester Daily Times* and the *Northern Daily Times* (Liverpool), none of which were very long lived (Milne, n.d: 21). However, the total number of provincial dailies continued to rise rapidly between 1868 to 1910 from 43 to 121 (the peak was 1900 with 172 but some were closed by competition or amalgamated). During the 1880s the morning dailies were met with competition from the nascent daily evening press which became dominant by the middle of the decade (Lee, 1976).

The printing process had been steam driven since 1814, which sped up production to 2,500 copies an hour – fast enough to print a weekly paper's entire circulation in under two hours (Lee, 1976). However, this was still limited to those papers such as the London-based *Times*, which might have aspired to a national circulation. As previously mentioned, the real

breakthrough in print speed came in the wake of the abolition of stamp duty with the introduction of the rotary press, which made use of paper on a roll rather than individually stamped sheets and this technique was widely used by newspapers by the 1870s. By the 1880s paper itself was largely made of wood pulp (rather than the cotton which was previously used) which made it much cheaper and so made the newspapers produced with it more profitable. The provincial press was also in the vanguard of those using machines to improve composition – probably because these papers were not heavily unionised and so mechanisation was not met with opposition. This was to pave the way for the highly-successful Linotype machines which were universally used by newspapers by the end of the century (Lee, 1976). Not only were these newspapers printing more copies, faster and more cheaply, they were also filling them with content gathered as quickly as possible. Lee contends that industrialisation made speed an obsession for the Victorians, and newspaper proprietors were no different and that it was this aspect of production which made a mass press possible (1976: 59). The expansion of the railway network also eased the transportation of news between the capital and the provinces, but it also eased the transportation of those London-based newspapers to the far reaches of the country and by the 1870s special services were laid on so the London press arrived in outlying areas by the afternoon. This may have been a driver for the advent of the morning daily press in the provinces, as those copies had to hit the streets first in order to maintain their market share.

By 1870s the newspaper wholesaler had arrived – including the still extant WH Smith. These may have made distribution efficient, but Lee argues that they also had the potential to limit reader choice, for instance by their refusing to distribute halfpenny papers because newsagents thought the profit margin too slim. For this reason provincial newspapers also organised their own distribution methods, relying largely on cheap child labour – often the eponymous 'newsboy'. Copies reached rural areas via train then milk cart and cheaper papers were delivered to shops or sold by street sellers. To seal their competitive edge, the provincial newspaper industry exploited the advent of the newly-nationalised telegraph and joined forces under the auspices of the Provincial Newspaper Society to create the Press Association in 1868 to

ensure they received vital news – such as reports of Parliamentary proceedings – as soon as possible, an innovation the society credited for sealing the industry's position in terms of growth and influence. Therefore we can also chart the development of a rhetorical conceptualisation of the role of the journalist as working in the public interest in a process by which the newspaper constituted itself as a "civic institution" complete with flagship buildings which "doubled as functional loci of production and as inescapable promotions" (ibid: 438).

> "The change which has been wrought in the status of the provincial press during the seventeen years which have elapsed since the machinery of the Press Association was first set in motion must rank as a matter of national importance. By the multiplication of local newspapers and the perfection of the system whereby they are kept informed, hour by hour, of what is transpiring in the political and social world in every corner of the kingdom and all over the globe, the dwellers in provincial towns and rural districts are now in as close touch with current events as are the inhabitants of the metropolis." (Whorlow, 1886: 84-85).

Before the advent of the Press Association, only London and maybe two leading provincials carried full reports of Parliament, while the remainder carried summaries supplied by the pre-Post Office-owned telegraph companies themselves. In contrast, from the outset the Press Association sent out sent out a full report of each sitting to up to 60 papers. This meant the reader of the local paper had a better service than those of the London papers, Whorlow contended, for "in addition to strictly local intelligence – which is denied to readers of the metropolitan 'dailies' – (he) finds a copious supply of every description of news which has been telegraphed during the previous 12 hours from all quarters of the globe" (1886: 103).

As the press shifted to a mass-produced, mass-readership product, so its content changed to accommodate the interests of a wider population. The usual fare of reports of local bodies, including councils and churches, was augmented by more titillating content, initially pioneered by the Sunday press, but gradually becoming the norm for many papers, including the cheaper halfpenny press. The *Shields Daily News*, founded in 1864 in North Shields, had

an affirmed focus on local news – but it also included national and foreign coverage and focused on the bizarre and often gruesome aspects of news (Black, 1986: 6). Describing the development of the US newspaper, Nerone and Barnhurst have described this type of paper as adopting the "master metaphor of the department store" which "invited readers to browse through content organized in to departments - pages, then sections" (2003: 438). By the 1870s Lee also suggests that proprietors were targeting readers for advertising purposes, introducing features such as situations vacant. In an effort to maximise circulations they were also attempting to make themselves as popular as possible by making innovations such as experimenting with formats and typefaces and carrying news on the front page (Black, 1986: 7). Studies of the *Preston Herald*, a bi-weekly newspaper serving North and North-East Lancashire, put local content – when defined as news of the town from which the paper is named – at around 25 per cent of total content. However, there could be as much as 35 per cent coverage of the surrounding area with non-local content amounting to between 10 and 38 per cent. Even this non-local content may well have originated from other provincial newspapers via the network of provincial reporters who supplied their copy to other newspapers and news agencies. Henry Lucy, for instance, became chief reporter of the *Shrewsbury Chronicl*e in 1864 and was also the Shrewsbury correspondent for daily papers in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds. Similarly, features would also move from paper to paper: thus, "a woman's letter to women" by Phillis Browne, found its way from the *Liverpool Weekly Mercury* to the *South Wales Weekly.* Where one person owned more than paper, ready-made pages might also be shared, as in the case of William Saunders who owned papers in Plymouth, Hull and Newcastle and to whom he would distribute ready-made "stereotyped" leaders (Hobbs, 2009: 25-30).

The process of industrialisation, then, led to a more segmented and specialist provincial press as the weeklies focused on targeted geographical areas, compared with the more regional reach of the dailies and more lurid content of the Sundays. Black suggests this segmentation enabled the weekly papers to become "more truly local newspapers" in response to the regional dailies, who developed a wider reach. In turn this enabled them to invest in technology and

staff "and mirror the internal organisation and developments of the London daily press. This facilitated the movement of individuals between the two." (Black, 2001: 192).

The mythology of influence.

The half-century following the abolition of stamp duty marked the heyday of the provincial newspaper as an organ of political influence. The market paved the way for a rise in the number of newspapers, which were increasingly exploited for political gain. Although the connection between politics and paper was to weaken in the face of the commercial tactics of 'new journalism' at the turn of the century, this period did cement the position of the press as a part of the democratic machinery to the extent that this position still forms part of the journalist's identity today.

As already cited, those who had campaigned for the abolition of stamp duty did so in part because of the belief in the educative power of the newspaper, although it seems likely that the campaign did not receive widespread support until the unstamped press posed a commercial threat to the established order. However, as the provincial press became increasingly politicised, so this role of "education" was reformulated into one of "representation". Hampton has theorised this shift as one in which the newspaper increasingly takes up the role of Fourth Estate, laying claim to its ability to reflect public opinion and represent the people. The educational ideal had become increasingly problematic and was itself a contested notion, with the radical press arguing for a consciousness-raising education for the working classes, versus the "useful knowledge" of the stamped papers (Hampton, 2004: 108). Instead the newspapers laid claim to reflect public opinion, drawing on an intellectual tradition established in the seventeenth century. Therefore, this move in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was enabled by the ideological basis for the press as the Fourth Estate (Lee, 1976: Hampton, 2004), which had been well-established since the battle for freedom from Government control, as embodied in the sentiment of Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644), which argued for a

free press. Thus in the nineteenth century the idea pertained despite the extension of the franchise, which meant more people could vote and therefore be directly represented by Parliament (Hampton, 2004: 108), and the challenges of the limitations of literacy[29] and of the tastes of the newspaper buying public; just because they could read, it did not guarantee that they would read newspapers or that they were valued as products – for instance Lee reports that the cheap evening papers were left littering commuter trains in the nineteenth century as they are today. But the idea of newspaper as influential organ carried weight. Contemporary commentators JM Ludlow and L Jones (in their *Progress of the Working Class, 1832-1867*) wrote:

> "..the cheap newspaper and periodical cannot perhaps be defined strictly as educators. Yet, for good or evil, and probably on the whole for good, they are very powerful ones….Notwithstanding the many sins and shortcomings of the newspaper press, the working man of today, with this broadsheet for a penny is by its aid a man of fuller information, better judgement and wider sympathies than the workman of thirty years back who had to content himself with gossip and rumour, and whose source of information as to public events was the well-thumbed weekly newspaper in the public house." (Lee, 1976: 27)

Lee contends that as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the extension of the franchise by the 1884 Reform Act, after which two in three men could vote, papers were increasingly reflecting the views of voters rather than educating those who had no direct stake in the democratic purpose. And while many politicians may have backed their belief in the power of the press as a political influencer with financial investment, both Lee (1976: 184) and Milne (n.d: 212) contend that it is difficult to establish a correlation between content and political success, as measured by electoral results.

[29] It seems evident that the level of literacy among the working population was high enough to support the possibility of a mass circulation press. Lee finds evidence to predate the accepted view that mass literacy followed the 1870 Education Act which expanded elementary education, instead arguing that the legislation built on existing provision. For instance, in 1835 research suggests that only one in 20 people in Bristol could not read, while in 1860 the founder of the *Driffield Times* cited 'almost universal' literacy as a good reason for setting up his newspaper (1976: 30). Lee concludes that within a generation in early Victorian times there was a quick growth in literacy, especially among urban males – who had most to gain from being able to read.

As the costs of newspaper production rose with the development of mass industrial processes, so the commercial imperative ascended with the development of 'neutral' industrialised papers, rather than one led by a partisan owner. In turn, this lead to accusations that journalists had left their position of influence behind and that the "older, pluralist, political view of the newspaper had become untenable in a situation at the end of the century when separate voices were diminishing in number, even if circulations were rising" (Lee, 1978: 128). But no matter, for the "political myth" of the role of the press as Fourth Estate had been firmly established and the newspaper positioned as a politically-independent entity (Boyce, 1978: 27). Such was its power that it concealed the inherent contradictions between the newspaper's varying roles – its "three heads" of news, advertising and deliberations so that "you will find, say, a quack advertisement in the advertising columns, the account of a quack's conviction in the news department, and a diatribe against quackery in the deliberative branch" (ibid). The power of this myth to endure was to reach its zenith as the newspaper shifted to a mass-produced product, in a process which is explored in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: New Journalism and the emergence of 'news'.

This chapter focuses on a period in which the provincial press shifts from a product focused on political information, to one in which content and presentation is increasingly refined for a local audience. Understood within the context of "New Journalism" [30], it charts innovation in the range of editorial content, along side the development of the presentation of news. These titles are developing into sophisticated commercial products as the political subsidies described in the preceding chapter are withdrawn (Lee, 1976: 214).

The process of stylistic development has been theorised as the emergence of the 'news paradigm' by Hoyer and Pottker (2005), who focus on the development of the norms which govern how news is produced in order to track changes in those norms. Therefore, they can track values which underpin those norms to interrogate the cultural position of journalism. The decisions journalists employ when they produce news are governed by this paradigm, which itself consists of five elements: the event, news values, the news interview, the narrative structure of the inverted pyramid and journalistic objectivity. The adoption of these practices varies as these occupational norms are 'diffused' between practitioners in different contexts (ibid: 14-15). It is no coincidence that New Journalism originated in the two countries where the press industrialised fastest (Chalaby, 1996: 304). Therefore, the provincial newspaper described here is in the process of change, in terms of its relationship with the reader, and reasons for, and shape of, ownership, as it develops into a form in which the business of selling newspapers comes to the fore.

[30] New Journalism here is the "neutral description of social and political conflicts" as "Journalistic routine", which is made possible by political and economic conditions in the US from the 1860s. As such it changes the position of newspapers and journalists in society (Horst and Pottker, 2005: 9), by shifting the emphasis on content from that aimed at education or political influence as described in Chapter 5 to that focused on sales.

This period sees a surge in the number of provincial evening newspapers, with titles competing within the same town not only with morning papers but also with other evening titles (see table 6:1). As such these titles operate in a competitive environment with a reliance on advertising for profit to the extent that most titles had a London office to facilitate advertising business. Writing of this structure, Walter Wellsman (1893; the pamphlet has no page numbers), London manager of the Middlesborough-based *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, said: "The necessity for advertising is now so obvious that to expatiate upon its advantages would be pure waste of time…..The Proprietors of successful Newspapers which are of the utmost use to advertisers are the most businesslike of men; they maintain their circulations and the importance of their Newspapers by the exercise of constant care and forethought." These titles could yield substantial revenues, for instance the *Liverpool Daily Post* reported a profit of more than £40,000 a year between 1900 and 1905 (Lee, 1976: 174).

Table: 6.1 Concentration of English Provincial Dailies 1868-1910.

	Number of towns having mornings						Number of towns having evenings				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5
1868	3	5	6	-	1	-	7	-	-	-	-
1880	12	9	5	2	-	1	20	11	5	1	-
1885	8	6	8	1	2	-	23	14	6	1	-
1886	7	8	7	1	2	-	25	16	4	3	-
1892	14	9	4	1	1	-	28	14	4	-	1
1895	20	8	4	1	1	-	29	19	2	-	1
1900	25	11	2	3	1	-	36	21	6	-	1
1906	25	7	5	1	1	-	41	21	1	1	-
1910	14	5	4	1	1	-	32	19	-	1	-

Source: Lee, 1976: 288.

This increasingly commercial context marks a watershed in terms of the emergence of key conventions associated with journalism practice including objectivity – or perhaps more accurately of the associated notions of impartiality and fairness – and the inverted pyramid which has come to define, and normalise, the practice of the journalist (although in its own turn it is now changing with the online development of more open and long form narratives for telling stories). These values inform and influence other aspects of journalism practice, such as presentation and content, to produce the style of newspaper which becomes known as 'New Journalism'. This chapter maps the emergence of these conventions which persist within the industry today against its development as a highly-industrialised product.

The rise of the techniques of New Journalism in America have been attributed variously to technological reasons (the telegraph), social (the increased need for speedy, telegraphed news caused by the American Civil War in the 1860s), and economic (the need to sell more papers). These differing hypotheses are contested and debated in detail in Hoyer and Pottker's *The Diffusion of the News Paradigm, 1850-2000.* Pottker (2003) argues that the timing of the emergence of the convention of the news pyramid in the New York press makes it too late to be wholly influenced by technology and, significantly, more likely to be as a result of journalists working to improve the communicative quality of their work. What seems certain was that the impact of New Journalism in America was widespread and significant as increasingly competitive newspapers focused on speed, news and scoops in their fight for domination in what Wiener as described as a "creative frenzy" of newspaper development (1994: 63). Additional defining characteristics of the new form of newspaper writing included the interview and human interest story, adding up to a "democracy of print" which signaled a broadening of culture as well as information (Wiener, 1994: 62). Though it is hard to chart exactly the shift of influence from one side of the Atlantic to the other, Wiener does find evidence of a journalistic "brain-drain" which saw US journalists move to Britain as well

as UK-based journalists spending time abroad in order to brush up on modern techniques (1994: 70)[31].

Therefore, its adoption by the provincial press in England is a gradual process as journalists in different environments adopt these techniques as they become 'the norm'. When JA Spender described a working day on the *Eastern Morning News* in Hull, which he joined fresh from Oxbridge in 1885, his job was focused on handling vast verbatim tracts of Parliamentary speeches. The trade of a journalist was to either supply the speeches on thin chemically treated sheets of tissue paper – the 'flimsy' – which were interleaved with carbon sheets to enable reproduction – or to handle them at the newspaper end, editing and emphasising accordingly (Bainbridge, 1984: 37). As newspapers developed the stenographer is replaced by professionalised and 'impartial' journalist, writing sensationalised 'eye-witness' accounts of events in order to attract as many readers as possible. In line with this, both the content and design of newspapers changed; features, such as gardening, gossip and 'ladies' pages, were introduced as were larger, bolder headlines and illustrations to replace the 'tombstone' layout of monotonous column inches.

The development of news presentation as a sales technique.

These changes are contextualised by the prioritisation of norms – including the shape of ownership – which favour the industrialised process of newspaper production. Paul Gliddon charts the decline of the ownership of newspapers for political purposes in his study of the Rowntrees and the Liberal Press (2003: 28-33)[32]. Packer also argues that although the primary

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[31] See the account of the development of the *Wolverhampton Express & Star* below for a detailed example of this.

[32] At their zenith in 1921 the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust and fellow Liberal newspaper group Starmer owned more than 20, which were to form the basis for the Westminster Press,[32] created in 1921. The subsidies were considerable. Having paid £5,000 for the Darlington-based *Northern Echo* Gliddon notes that the trust subsidised the title to the tune of around £66,000 between 1904 and 1939 – most of which was

aim of the Starmer Group was to support the Liberal cause via the instrument of the provincial newspaper, equally important was that these papers "paid their way'' (Packer, 2006) in a process which has also been charted in the previous chapter. For Pottker (2005) this commercial context is a key driver in the development of the use of the Inverted Pyramid as a norm for the presentation of information in newspapers. His compelling contention is that the Inverted Pyramid[33] developed as a journalistic technique employed by an increasingly specialist staff to improve the ability of papers to reach readers – and so increase sales. He argues that its emergence is based on a convention, whereby journalists prioritise what they see as the most important information, which became prevalent in US journalism from 1875 and was established practice 20 years later. Concomitant with the rise of the Inverted Pyramid were other changes in newspapers; these included more but shorter stories; the use of headlines and illustrations and the clearer organisation of news into defined sections. These techniques improved the 'communicative' power of the news story and enhanced the commercial position of the newspaper. At the same time, the production values enabled newspapers to be produced more quickly and efficiently, enhancing their ability to be timely – and the capacity for increased sales (Pottker, 2005: 61).

Donald Matheson (2000) takes the emergence of New Journalism as a watershed in the development of journalism; both commercial and linguistic characteristics are analysed in what he sees as the shift between the pre-modern and modern newspaper characterised by the emergence of a definable 'news discourse'. News is reported as fact, rather than as attributed to a third party, and in an identifiable newspaper style – characterised by the inverted pyramid – which structures news content. Matheson charts this process over a 50-year period from 1880 (with the birth of the halfpenny evening papers in London), but argues that it forms a cohesive historical

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spent before 1918, despite a rise in circulation from 30,000 to 80,000 during the course of World War One. The group paid its first dividend to shareholders in 1935 (Gliddon, 2003: 28-33).

[33] The Inverted Pyramid is a narrative structure, usually for the hard news story, whereby the key information (the five Ws) is included at the top. Pottker argues that this makes it easier to read – and to sub-edit – as the least important information can simply be cut from the bottom.

period for newspapers not only because of technological and economic changes, but also because of discursive developments.

Journalists frame information within the context of the newspaper story by editing, summarising and contextualising – and thereby creating the modern news story as information in itself rather than the representation of information disseminated by a third party. The newspaper develops from a mere transmitter of information to become a "communicative event". Typical of this shift is the collection of connected events into one story – as exemplified by the reporting of the drowning of 400 people in a night of storms in 1895. The *Yorkshire Post* brought together disparate paragraphs on the events into one story, rather than leaving it to readers to make links (Matheson, 2000: 565-8). Matheson does not explicitly chart the link between the emergence of news discourse with the evolution of the mass circulation newspaper, but it is appropriate that this new way of writing is deemed "egalitarian", abandoning as it does social convention associated with reporting the words of those in authority. This paves the way for the provincial newspaper to move from reflecting the values of the middle classes to being a mass-circulation product; "they could not have developed in this way without a new form of writing that was self-sufficient both in social terms and in terms of the meaning of its words." (Matheson 2000: 571).

The inverted pyramid also presents information as 'factual' and, therefore, and more contentiously, 'objective'. Chalaby notes that as early as 1858, British journalists prized "accuracy" above all else in relation to the information they published (Chalaby, 1996: 305). However, the notion of objectivity, although strongly connected with the emergence of New Journalism in America, is especially problematic in relation to the English provincial press. While objectivity has been prized by US journalists, and has formed part of their professional codes, in Britain, we might more usefully look at connected terms such as "fairness" and impartiality" and Hampton (2008) argues that UK journalists are happy to present "the facts" from a partisan point of view. Mackie emphasises the mechanics and routines of the job when he discusses the importance of shorthand and praises the life of a district reporter, who covers councils, courts and church, as the best training

ground; but, above all, Mackie states, he is expected to be "always, and above everything, strictly loyal to fact and fair play." (Mackie, 1894: 11)

For Schudson it is this self-articulation of the importance of these values which cements their normative influence on journalism. He posits that objectivity is not established as a professional norm in US journalism until the 1920s[34]. For objectivity to have the status of moral obligation on journalism it is necessary that there is more than just news which appears to be presented in an objective way; what is needed to cement that status is both a moral imperative saying you will produce objective news – and the accompanying condemnation when you do not measure up to that professional standard. So, while the profession began to champion "fact-based" reporting from the 1870s – typified by interviews and the inverted pyramid – it was not until after the First World War that it began to debate and adopt the notion of objectivity, including it in codes and textbooks (Schudson, 2005: 29).

The localised Fourth Estate as an editorial strategy

For Hampton, while the national press in Britain may not have adopted objectivity as a professional norm, it did adopt the value of editorial independence, which would enable it to favour a political party without being beholden to it and that it was this stance which enabled it to promote the claim to the "Fourth Estate" (2008: 483). Chalaby (1996: 304) argues that it is the industrialisation of the press which enables this position to be taken up by giving it financial independence from politics. This "watchdog" position for the provincial press, the origins of which are discussed at length in this thesis, can be seen in an increased tendency for papers to favour the well-being of its readership over any particular political party. Taylor's analysis of the regional press (2006) sees this particular branch of journalism constituting its

[34] Schudson's contention is that conventional accounts of the development of the professional journalist in America have tended to put this earlier at the end of the nineteenth century because of an over-reliance on the impact of the telegraph on the presentation of news (2005: 26)

readership as a “community” on whose behalf it should campaign and whose interests it should promote, in a continuation of the process noted previously. Therefore, we can also see the emergence of a distinct norm for the provincial press here – that of functioning for the good of the community; this same relationship has a discursive prominence by the time of resurgent interest in the provincial press in the 1960s and 1970s, as exemplified by works by Jackson (1971) and Cox and Morgan (1973). These provincial newspaper workers are eschewing their role as political campaigner and take an increasingly a-political or ‘independent’ stance, replacing the politically didactic with the role of community champion. This move is not only precipitated by, but facilitated by, the commercial imperative of the new news style of New Journalism, which brings with it a range of professional possibilities to the provincial press (Taylor, 2006: 404).

For Taylor, this process is exemplified by the stance taken by the *Cambridge Daily News* in its coverage of the “Spinning House Case” a battle between the University authorities and the town about who should police prostitution, which Taylor cites as a defining moment in the paper’s move towards New Journalism (Taylor, 2006: 403). The *Cambridge Daily News* [35] was designed to attract both “Town” and “Gown” but its allegiance was unequivocal when it came to the Spinning House Case, which had seen a townswoman imprisoned by the university under an arcane law which give it jurisdiction over the streets of Cambridge after dark in order to curb prostitution. The paper campaigned to overthrow the law (ibid: 406) and was rewarded with letters of support from the community, which it published in its columns; as such it defined itself as the champion of local causes by its ability to give a voice to those citizens. Taylor constitutes the editorial stance of local champion in line with that of serving the good of the community; as such it is an editorial stance which will exploit the interests and issues facing its local community for popular support, so that those interests and issues come to define what the newspaper sees as ‘news’. Not only does the newspaper construct a “community” to represent, but it also uses that community as a constituent of

[35] The title was founded in 1888 as a Liberal-leaning paper by businessman William Farrow Taylor from Bury St Edmunds.

what it defines as news – that is as the source of a news value (Taylor, 2006: 412)

The influence of New Journalism on newspaper content and production.

Alfred Harmsworth is widely credited with modernising the newspaper with his innovative approach to both owning and editing the *Daily Mail*. Both Chalaby, (2000) and Conboy (2004) argue that Harmsworth's journalism became less partisan and more anodyne in a bid to attract as many readers as possible. Thus "New Journalism" was a product of the commercial logic, manifest in a new-look newspaper both in terms of content, such as an increased emphasis on human interest stories, sport, crime and entertainment, and layout with the inclusion of headlines and illustrations (Conboy, 2004: 172). However, Baylen (1972) argues that the roots of New Journalism can be found in the regional press with the campaigning style of W T Stead, then editor of the *Northern Echo;* Stead, who trained Harmsworth, honed this style as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, most controversially with his "Maiden Tribute" campaign against child prostitution, doing so in an "indisputably sensational and often prurient manner" (Lee, 1976: 125). His legacy, argues Lee, was not a moral one but a style which was a commercial success "when free of the political mill-stones with which Stead had sought to encumber it" (1976: 119).

Conboy defines the characteristics of New Journalism as including: changing layout, such as using crossheads, shorter paragraphs, larger headlines and more illustrations; news on the front page, encouraged by evening papers which were hawked on the street and on news stands and so needed a visible 'sell'; changing content, such as stop press and parliamentary sketches which replaced the lengthy verbatim reports; and more emphasis on news, as opposed to comment, often presented in short snippets and not contextualised by explanation (2004: 121). These pioneers also included sport and sensation and more 'entertaining' content which brought the paper closer to a magazine, written in straightforward and refreshing style (ibid: 125-129)

and shifted the relationship between reader and newspaper to one of a "market character"(Conboy, 2004: 121). Ornebring (2006: 858) argues that Stead's innovation was to bring these attributes – which were already present in the popular press – to the 'respectable' *Pall Mall Gazette*. He analyses the articles in terms of their sensationalist style and hyperbole – attributes which have come to typify popular journalism[36].

Among those to attack Stead's approach was Matthew Arnold, who is said to have coined the term "New Journalism" in an article criticising Stead in 1887 (Marzolf, 1984: 530*)*. Despite this, it seems likely that the adoption of New Journalism by national titles would have presented challenges for the regional press and probably encouraged them to adopt the emerging characteristics of the popular press. Andrew Walker suggests that it had the effect of slowing the growth of the provincial press in terms of circulations as the new popular national titles presented themselves as economic rivals, aided by improved communications which could bring the London daily press to the provincial news-stands. For example, between 1877 and 1907, the number of provincial newspaper titles increased by 43 per cent from 938 to 1,338 titles; but in the previous 30 years the regional press had seen a growth rate of 308 per cent (2006: 384).

As a result, these provincial titles adopted not only new ways of presenting information, but also a much wider range of content, including sport, crime and human interest stories, to preserve their market share. I would also suggest that constructing a special relationship with the reader as community member would provide a unique selling point for the provincial press when set against a national rival and this process is charted in the case study of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* presented below. Benson notes that the provinces were also a competitive market in themselves and were home to 1,365 newspapers, compared with 386 in the capital. These papers were

[36] Ornebring (2006: 858) notes the use of voyeuristic crossheads such as "The Violation of Virgins", which draw in the reader. Interviews of up to 1,000 words each feature 'eye-witness' accounts from those involved in prostitution, including brothel keepers, procurers and prostitutes. Ornebring notes interviewing was a highly-controversial practice at the time especially for a paper like the *Pall Mall Gazette* which assumed an educated readership (ibid: 863).

establishing an appetite for sensationalist content via their coverage of high-profile cases such as Jack the Ripper and were widening their content into the realms of sport and what we would now see as 'feature' content (2009: 838).

Among those pioneering the techniques of New Journalism in the regions were those behind the Wolverhampton-based *Express & Star* newspaper. Benson (2009) identifies strategies associated with New Journalism in the coverage of the coverage of the trial of a well-known local businessman for the murder of his mistress and uses this example to challenge the proposition that only national papers were exploiting these techniques[37]. Benson classifies the *Express & Star* as a 'typical' local daily paper; by the advent of the twentieth century it had a daily circulation of more than 40,000 and focused on local affairs, including crime and court reports in which their local citizens featured. However, what Benson finds a-typical – or at least surprising – is the extent to which the *Express & Star* deployed the discursive strategies of New Journalism. His analysis of the court reports concerning Edward Lawrence, draws out the 'human interest' angle and it is clear that flamboyant reporting of personal details were a key feature of the coverage. It also moved away from a verbatim report of the court proceedings and included eye-witness details, such that the defendant was "attired in a smart brown costume, with a chic picture hat of the same shade" (*Express & Star*, 2.1.07). As such the court case humanised the characters within it, portraying them as "individuals in whom their readers would be interested"(Benson, 2009: 839).

The story of the origins of the *Express & Star* is a familiar one from the preceding chapter – rooted, as it was, in political partisanship. It was founded by Scots-born Thomas Graham[38] with financial backing from the industrial

[37] Wolverhampton was typical of England's industrial centres, having grown to a population of more than 90,000 by the end of the century. Its newspaper market consisted of two dailies, the Liberal *Express & Star* (established in 1874) and the Conservative *Midland Evening News* (1884); and three weeklies, the ''independent'' *Wolverhampton Chronicle* (1789), the Liberal *Midland Counties Express* (1861) and the Conservative *Midland Weekly News* (1884). Three of these, the *Express & Star*, the *Midland Counties Express* and the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, were owned by the Midland News Association and shared copy (Benson 2009).

[38] Graham had made his money curing bacon and was active in civic life, holding the posts of magistrate and town councilor. He and Carnegie created the Midland News Association with shareholders to raise funds and in 1884 bought the Conservative-

multi-millionaire Andrew Carnegie, who wanted to create a string of Liberal papers in England. However, by the turn of the century the company was losing money and Carnegie pulled out, leaving Graham to take a less radical road in order to promote sales (Rhodes, 1992). In particular, Graham strived to be first with the sports news, for instance by employing carrier pigeons to bring results and booking a phone line for the results of the 1908 FA Cup between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Newcastle United played at Crystal Palace. By 1910 the paper was probably selling around 60,000 copies a day – despite competition from papers in Birmingham and beyond (ibid: 47). This philosophy of giving readers what they wanted was honed by Thomas's son, Malcolm, who joined the business and learned on the job; part of his newspaper education was to spend nearly four years in Canada, including a stint on the *Montreal Daily Star*. Malcolm Graham introduced pictures – even becoming a photographer himself – and a library and by March 1927 the staff included 25 editorial staff out of a total of 121. The year of 1927 was also the year of the paper's first verified sale – a nod to the importance of circulation to attracting advertising – which was put at 75,000 (ibid: 59).

The coverage of sport was key to the development of the provincial press, used to promote 'localness', and so differentiate from the the popular national press. It was also a marketing strategy with the development of specialist sporting supplements. Not unsurprisingly, sport was most widely covered in urban areas where established teams thrived, especially in the area of football, which saw gates of up to 20,000 a week. Typical of this was the approach by the *Sheffield Telegraph*; with two teams, Sheffield Wednesday and Sheffield United, in the league from 1895, the paper's coverage was ranged from match reports to expert comments, photographs, cartoons and features. By 1907 the significance of sport was recognised with the specialist sporting newspaper, the *Green 'Un*, which boasted a circulation of up to 120,000 (Jackson, 2009: 73). Walker notes that sports coverage also grew, albeit on a smaller scale in rural papers between 1870 to 1914; his analysis of newspapers in Lincolnshire shows how sports coverage focused on the local and grew from items in the news columns to a dedicated section of publications. In this way it

leaning *Evening Express* for £20,000; the two titles were merged by July. (Rhodes, 1992: 21).

not only reflected the increased leisure time of newspaper readers, and the growth in amateur sports, especially football, but it also served to promote local pride and, ultimately, a sense of local community (Walker, 2006b: 458-9). Lee (1976) also cites contemporary reports from the turn of the twentieth century which proclaimed the sporting press to be the reading matter of choice for the working classes in Lancashire.

Organisation and wages

By the time John Mackie comes to describe the working life of the journalist in his 1894 handbook, he is describing an occupation not dissimilar to the one experienced by reporters on local papers in the pre-internet days. Thus, alongside the discursive construction of news, we also see the discursive construction of the reporter, complete with a set of values and standards which inform their work. Mackie describes a recognisable newspaper organisation, including a chief reporter who runs the newsroom diary, sub-editors and an editor who has oversight of the organisation. The wages for a beginner district reporter – a 'learner' – would be £1 a week. In comparison, in 1910 a clerk (a similar non-manual profession) could expect to earn £150 a year (Hampton, 2005: 148). A reporter on a good weekly would expect £2 a week, while a junior reporter on provincial daily could receive £120-£130 a year, rising to £400 for the chief reporter. A similar wage range for sub-editors would see a junior sub (usually a reporter) on £150 a year rising to an annual salary of £500 for the chief sub. Provincial editors could expect up to £1,000 a year (Mackie, 1894). The first attempt to organise journalism as a profession came with the foundation of the National Association of Journalists in 1884. It was inaugurated into the Institute of Journalists in 1889 for the "elevation and protection" of journalism (ibid) with the main aim of achieving "professional status for journalists by promoting the interests of journalists, raising their status and qualifications, supervising their professional duties and testing qualifications for membership" (Elliott 1978: 175). Among its innovations were entrance exams and a campaign to improve the legal status of journalism instance by guaranteeing access to certain meetings.

However, unlike the professions of law or medicine, the Institute of Journalists did not seek to form a "closed" profession where examinations were the gatekeepers; this was a world where talent and hard work would win professional recognition. Hampton's review of contemporary material at the end of the nineteenth century, builds a picture of the journalist as a tough character, who needed tenacity and a strong constitution to withstand the rigours of the profession (2005: 147-8). He does not distinguish between journalists working at a national or local level, but many of his sources are contemporary accounts of those working in provincial papers and are drawn from a wide variety of social and political backgrounds. They are united in a rhetoric which seeks to establish a professional identity by the commentary they themselves provide of their working lives. Discursively, this claim to openness supported claims by journalists to be committed to the public sphere – a "politics by public discussion" (Hampton, 2005: 144). A journalist was now a content producer, as opposed to a newspaper owner, who was 'born' to it and may well have fallen into courtesy of talent and opportunity. Among those who came to journalism in a round-about way are WT Stead and Wemyss Reid, who both felt they were following a vocation (Hampton, 2005: 142) and who felt it was impossible to train to be a journalist, although shorthand was increasingly recognised as a useful skill. Although education was deemed to be useful, it does seem that educational background was related to newspaper – so Oxbridge graduates worked on the 'quality' titles like the *Pall Mall Gazette*, while 'ordinary' journalists were more likely to be found at titles accorded lesser status.

It is at this time that "the role of the journalist was crystallizing around modern practices of professional communication techniques which had jettisoned older conventions of advocacy", collating information from authoritative sources and presenting it in an entertaining way. As such the role of the journalist is based on a duality, which problematises its definition as a profession (Conboy, 2011: 168). The journalist is supposedly free and impartial to practice their occupation – and thus exhibiting the individualism key to any definition of professionalism – but is actually dictated to by the regime of the industrial process. A result of this duality is the formation of

National Union of Journalists in 1907 to represent the employment interests of journalists, which Elliott suggests were the main concern for those working in the provincial press, who were the lowest-paid part of the sector (1978: 176). The members of the NUJ were more likely to be "male, working-class, and had left school aged thirteen to fifteen, They shared much in common with the printers with whom they worked closely", separated only by a "celluloid collar and tie" which conferred a degree of respectability on the journalist (Gopsill and Neale 2007: 5). This compared with the membership of the IOJ, dominated by the aims of the owners who were included in their membership (Conboy, 2011: 169)..

The rigours of the journalism, in that practitioners were expected to work long hours for low wages, were cited as the reasons for the formation of both the Institute of Journalists and the National Union of Journalists[39]. While life on a provincial paper was "varied and exciting", there was also "little rest" (Hampton, 2005: 145). The speed of work required also meant it was stressful and the requirements to be first with the news put a constant pressure on the worker, who might have to work 24 hours a day when necessary. Brown (1985: 86) suggests that falling production costs, especially in relation to the price of paper, enabled an expansion of editorial and opened the path to the creation of specialist reporters. At the same time, the role of the editor was demarcated from that of the proprietor, as readers became 'consumers' who could be targeted for commercial purposes, rather than potential 'voters' who could be reached by papers manipulated for political gain (Baldasty, 1992: 145). These claims to rigour not only contributed to the journalists' claims to occupational status, but also meant that journalism became categorised as an occupation more suited to men – and often unmarried ones at that. However, the changes characterised as New Journalism also brought a closer attention to the diurnal concerns of women, and so brought women into the journalism workforce, albeit segregated in terms of producing content for women (Hampton, 2005: 150). The Institute of Journalists also did not admit female

[39] The former sought to represent management and non-management, while the NUJ specifically sought to exclude managers from its membership (Gopsill 2007: 16).

members, although women were included in the formation of the National Union of Journalists.

Case Study: New Journalism and the Midland Daily Telegraph[40].

An analysis of the content of the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, the forerunner to the still extant *Coventry Telegraph*, enables us to chart the emergence of New Journalism in a significant – but typical – provincial newspaper in England. By analysing the textual presentation of news stories in terms of the extent to which they adhere to the inverted pyramid we are able to see that the techniques of New Journalism gained prominence within this newspaper within the comparatively defined period of 1895 to 1905. Contextualising this process within a wider analysis of the development of newspaper content and layout (including advertising, inclusion of features and sport, and organisation and labeling of that content) we are able to give better focus to those factors which may influence, and be influenced by this process – including ownership, competition and commercialisation, and the values which underpin the working practices of those producing these newspapers.

The *Midland Daily Telegraph* was founded by William Issac Iliffe, and Henry Sturmey (of bicycle brake fame) in 1885 in Coventry[41]. In 1879 Iliffe bought the weekly *Coventry Times* and in 1891 he expanded into daily newspapers, launching the *Midland Daily Telegraph* with £2,500. With a population of around 52,000, Coventry was already served by five papers[42]; Iliffe launched his dedicated evening paper the *Midland Daily Telegraph* on February 9, 1891 according to 'independent Liberal principles' (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*,

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[40] An extended version of this case study appears in the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 15.2 2014.

[41] Iliffe was the son of a bookseller and printer, based in Hertford Street – the home of the paper until World War Two. In 1879 he launched *The Cyclist* at a time when Coventry was at the heart of the cycling industry and bought in 1885 of *Bicycling News*, which was edited by a then 21-year-old Alfred Harmsworth

[42] These were the Coventry *Standard*, the *Coventry Herald*, *Coventry Reporter*, the *Coventry Times* and the daily *Birmingham Evening Mail* which circulated in Coventry.

1991) and by 1905 (the first year for which figures are available), circulation was put at 10,000 (Rhodes, 1981).

Between 1895 and 1905, by which time the paper is established enough to be considered secure, the development of modern news techniques can be seen. To focus more clearly on these developments, the papers in the first week of February were subjected to close reading. February was selected not only because it is the month in which the paper was founded, but also because of its unexceptionalness in the news calendar – uninterrupted by such events as annual holidays. The majority of newspapers examined were the final edition of the four-edition newspaper, timed at 6.45pm, as these are the ones available via microfiche at the Local History Centre in Coventry. Throughout the period studied, the *Midland Daily Telegraph* is a four-page, broadsheet paper. For most of it, it is set across seven columns until a new press in 1904 enables it to be set across eight columns.[43] Significantly the *Midland Daily Telegraph* is priced at one halfpenny for the entire period of the study, which puts it firmly in the camp of the 'popular', mass market evening papers. As such sport is a significant factor in the newspaper, which launched a 'pink' sports paper in July 1891 and produced an extra 8pm Sports Edition on Saturdays (Rhodes, 1981). This edition is provided in addition to the last edition in the Coventry History Centre.

The newspaper of February 1, 1885 is subject to a detailed analysis as this marks the point against which changes are charted in this study. The newspaper carries a full page of display adverts on page 1 (see Appendix 3) and more than four columns of adverts on page two. Page four also carries a display advert in addition to around three columns of classified adverts and announcements. Non-advertising content first appears on the fifth column of page two under the heading as laid out below:

[43] By studying the few still extant copies of the paper at the Coventry History Centre it has been possible to ascertain that the paper was first 20 inches by 24 inches, with each of the seven columns measuring 2.5 inches (MDT 2.1.1899). At some point, the paper then increased in size slightly to 22 inches by 26 and ¼ inches (MDT 7.5.1910).

THE

Midland Daily Telegraph

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

The North Warwickshire Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST, 1885.

It is the editorial content on the matters of the day – in this instance of the Queen's Speech on the occasion of the opening of Parliament. In the edition of February 1, 1895 there are no illustrations – although typography is sometimes used to simple illustrative effect.

Page three is the main news page. Columns one and seven are labeled "Latest News". And "This Day's News" respectively. Column one concerns national and international news; column seven includes some local news. All the stories are short (one paragraph) and have a separate headline and many concern crime and court reports. It is probable to suppose that the source of these was the telegraphed news service and in places the source is attributed as a telegram. As such these stories are presented in a more recognisable "news" style and it has been suggested that telegraphed news was the reason why such a style became widespread, although criticised (see Hoyer and Pottker 2005).

The top story on column two – which might be considered the equivalent of a modern front page lead – concerns an update on a shipwreck which was first featured in the previous day's paper. The second lead is the weather (there was widespread snow) but again the angle is national (a death in London) rather than Coventry and the death itself is not mentioned until the fifth paragraph (*MDT*, 1.2.1895: 3). However, page three does have a good array of content including social news (a ball at Warwick Castle), local news (headed District news) and sport – including preview of the next day's Saturday fixtures. Thus we see key elements of the a newspaper aimed at a mass audience; the range of content presented is wide, including national and local politics and news including court reports, both criminal and inquest, police reports, fires, international, national and local sport, serialisations, agricultural market prices and local share prices, comment, and a wide array of display and classified adverts.

Prominence is given on page two of the February 1 edition to a married man who ran away with a teenage servant, via the emphasis of a four-deck headline.

THE ALLEGED BEDWORTH

ELOPEMENT.

A CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY.

PRISONERS BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES.

> "A young man and women left Bedworth about a month ago under circumstances which created a good deal of stir in the little mining town. There was considerable interest taken in the case when the couple were brought before the county magistrates sitting at Coventry this morning." (*MDT*, 1.2.95: 2)

After setting the scene in the introduction above, the story continues as chronological report of the court hearing, rather than ordering the events according to the inverted pyramid. This contrasts markedly with the succinct writing style of the "Latest News' and "This Day's News" columns on page three, such as the story headed "Daring Theft at Glasgow: A Bag Containing £300 Seized" reads:

> "A most daring theft of a bag containing over £300 took place at Queen Street Station, Glasgow, at ten o'clock this morning. The bag was in the charge of an elderly cashier, who was going to pay the wages of his employer's workman. He was followed by a man who snatched the bag from him, and disappeared in the crowded station. The thief is still at large." (*MDT,* 1.21895: 3)

We see, therefore, a divergence between the writing styles of those who are producing copy for the *Midland Daily Telegraph* and those whose copy is bought in. We can also see evidence of journalists who are self-consciously aware of the process of reporting which is subject to some limited narration in the columns of the newspaper. For instance, not yet presenting all information as bare fact, they justify why they should be reporting the Bedworth

elopement (it caused “considerable interest”) and cite the source, such as a “Dalziel [44]telegram” (Desperate Fight with a Lion, *MDT* 1.2.1895: 3).

Page four of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* of 1.2.1895 includes an extended interview, self-consciously referenced as from the *Essex Telegraph* (*MDT* 1.2.1895: 4). In fact, the interview is a testimonial for a commercial product, Dr Williams’ Pink Pills, and a year later the advert is a display advert, complete with illustrations. The interview is not yet seen as a full-blown journalistic method, but as a way, perhaps, of distancing the paper from testimonials for products by attributing them to someone else. This is even more marked when contrasted with the paper’s willingness to employ a first-person stance, as seen in this extract from its editorial columns, although the use of inverted commas around ‘interview’ suggests it is still a term for comment.

> “Tramps seem to me becoming more numerous on the Queen’s highway. Whatever doubts I may have had on the point were dispelled in the course of an accidental “interview” I had the other day with “one o’the’reg’lare perfession” as he admitted himself to be.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1895: 2)

The interview with Miss Fenner indicates that the paper is also not yet clearly demarcating between editorial and paid-for content. In addition to the testimonial for Pink Pills, we see snippets of copy in support of commercial products as in the line on Venus Soap at the bottom of news columns “Venus Soap washes white and pure, all fabrics, Venus soap saves rubbing.” (*MDT*, 1.2.1895: 3).

By February 1, 1897 the paper is increasingly organising and labeling its news and increasingly focusing on local content. This includes the advent of the readers’ letters on page two and a higher frequency of the word “Coventry” in headlines. On page three – still the main news page – the headlines are bigger and there is an increased use of white space. The seven columns include section headings: latest news, national and international news, local news,

[44] Dalziel’s was an international news agency specialising in the reporting of sensational news and, as such, was a proponent of America’s New Journalism. It rivaled Reuters by undercutting them in price (Boyd-Barrett, 1978: 195).

football, sport, commercial news and district news. The final column also includes clearly-labeled late adverts. This time the longest story in column inches is a lengthy report of a domestic tragedy at Foleshill (a district of Coventry). The headline has five decks and the story is split with dramatic sub decks including "Enveloped in Flames" and "His Wife Arrested". But the style is still largely chronological.

> "A sensational affair took place late on Saturday night at Ball Green, near Coventry, resulting in serious injuries to a man named Joseph Moore, a miner. It appears that Moore and his wife had been to witness a football match during the afternoon, and afterwards the woman is said to have indulged rather freely in intoxicants." (*MDT*, 1.2.1897: 3)

On page four, Dr Williams' Pink Pills are now promoted via a display advert. Another innovation is half a column of news on page four. Sport is also rising in prominence so that in Friday's edition of the paper (*MDT*, 5.2.1897) the serialisation gives way to previews of the next day's sport and in the final edition of Saturday's paper all of page three is given over to sporting news.

Twelve months later and the significance of sport is even more evident. Page two includes a total of 5.5 columns of adverts, one of which is entirely given over to a promotion for the football edition of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* itself, promoting the paper as the foremost paper for local and national sporting news. It also seems likely that the paper has started to sponsor a local football league with the promotion of the "Telegraph Cup Ties" (*MDT*, 1.2.1898: 2). Other promotional content includes a coupon for readers to have their photographs taken in the form of *Midland Daily Telegraph* 'craotint' portraits (*MDT* 1.2.1898: 2). It is no surprise that page three of the 7.30pm Telegraph Football edition is almost entirely given over to sport – apart from one column of local news (column seven) and half a column of national shorts (column one) (*MDT*, 1.2.1898: 3). The presentation of news is also being increasingly refined; on page three of the edition of February 1, 1898, column one is now headed "Latest News" in bold type. Increasingly there is a reference to the agency which has provided the news. The local focus on stories which lead each column is maintained on page three of the fourth

edition and there is a visible commitment to timeliness in the form of “Latest”, “Today’s Sporting News” and “Meeting Today” in the headlines.

By the paper of February 1, 1899, even the “Latest News’ lead story on page three concerns a Coventry story – a local man found dead in Northampton. Innovatively this paper also includes the advent of a ‘late news’ space in the fourth column, “reserved for news received after going to press” – in this instance carrying one sole football result (*MDT*, 1.2.1899: 3). We also see a willingness to experiment with the size and place of display adverts and also a gardening column.

During this time though it also worth remembering what has remained constant; the pagination, the cover price and the key variation in news writing styles between local and national reports. However, by February 1900 Britain is engaged in the Boer War, which began in October the preceding year. The conflict receives extensive coverage in the *Midland Daily Telegraph*; although the coverage is physically grouped together in the same columns, there is little evidence of the information being brought together and joined into one unifying narrative.[45] Change in news presentation moves apace from 1901 when a key event – the death of Queen Victoria – received extensive coverage in the *Midland Daily Telegraph*. The death of the monarch was actually reported in the papers of Tuesday, January 22 and Wednesday, January 23 in editions featuring the traditional black gutters as a mark of respect. However, more interesting for the purpose of emerging reporting styles is the edition of February 1901, which featured extensive reports of the funeral itself drawn from national and local sources which are written in similar styles.

[45] There is evidence of coverage from a local angle – the role of the cycle, as built in Coventry, in the war effort (*MDT*, 1.2.1900: 2). This is complemented by what might be termed ‘human interest’ stories, for instance how General Joubert’s wife follows him everywhere so she can make sure he is well fed (*MDT*, 1.2.1900: 3) as well as the occasional illustration in the form of an engraving of military luminaries (*MDT*, 1.2.1900: 3).

Thus we have:

> “A cold grey morning, with fine rain and threatening a continuance, was the depressing state of the weather at Portsmouth this mourning, as the day of the funeral of the beloved Queen Victoria dawned.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1901: 3)

There is no indication of the source of this information so we cannot determine if this was as written by an agency or by a member of staff but a report of scenes in London is in a similar tone:

> “The City of the Empire wore a weird aspect this morning at a time when the whole of another busy day is usually inaugurated.
> “Of business life there was no sign. Shops that usually drove a thriving trade before breakfast remained firmly closed. The early wagons and market carts were conspicuously absent.” (*MDT*, 2.2.1901: 3)

Turn then to reports of events in Coventry – which, one supposes, could only have been provided by staff reporters:

> “The day in Coventry was indeed of a gloomy character. Following a light fall of snow during the early morning covering the face of the city with a white pall the aspect changed, with falling sleet, giving a muddy, somber appearance to the streets. The closing of the business houses and factories was general. Flags were at half-mast upon the churches and public buildings, while the mourning boards of the shopkeepers and drawn blinds at private houses testified to the local share in the national grief.”

The similarities are apparent, evidencing in the frame of one unifying event the increasing convergence of journalistic technique between national and provincial reporters. And this convergence can be seen in other local stories in the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, such as the story of a mother who saved her two sons from a burning house. “A noble act of heroism was performed at Coventry during the early hours of Sunday morning ” (*MDT*, 4.2.1901: 3) is a news introduction which recognisably exhibits the characteristics of the inverted pyramid; this contrasts with the reports in the preceding columns of a soldier rewarded for bravery, indicating that news presentation is in a period of transition.

> "We have received the following interesting letter from Trooper Harding, one of the Colonial Scouts, who, writing under date of January 7th-17th Brigade, 18th Division – says: "No doubt you will be interested to hear of the 77th Battery Royal Field Artillery, who I have reason to believe, were stationed in your town before the outbreak of hostilities." (*MDT*, 4.2.1901: 3)

In tandem with this is the consolidation of advances in other areas of the newspaper previously noted, including increasing localisation of content, including sport and a more sophisticated use of illustrations largely for commercial purposes (see Appendix 4. Bile Beans advert, *MDT* 7.2.1901: 4). We also see the increased encroachment of adverts into page three.

By 1902 we see examples of news being increasingly organised along thematic lines. As previously cited, Matheson (2000: 565-8) has noted how just one provincial paper grouped together reports of storms in which 400 people were drowned in 1895 and we have already noted this practice in presenting news about the Boer War in the *Midland Daily Telegraph*. It is therefore notable that reports of fires are not only physically grouped, but are unified with one headline "Serious Fires" and introduction," Several serious fires are reported from various parts of the county." (*MDT,* 3.2.1902: 3). This development is extending to non-news content; in the next day's edition we see how international reports of sport (in this case cricket) are now brought together with other sports reports – rather than in the columns dedicated to telegraphed news as was previously the custom (*MDT*, 4.2.1902: 3)

Also notable at this time is the increased space given to adverts; page one is still entirely adverts and they also appear on page two and page three as in previous years. However, page four is now almost entirely given over to adverts, with fewer than two columns devoted to editorial content. Page four had appeared to function as a 'feature' page, carrying a serialisation and regular columns such as 'gossip' and 'gardening". In the edition of February 5, 1902, the 'gossip' column remains and takes up nearly 50 per cent of that space devoted to editorial; the remainder consists of news. But it is the advertising content which dominates, including a striking advert for Veno's Lightening Cough Cure and a large display advert set across four columns for

Ogden's cigarettes. Other adverts include local traders, as well as classified adverts covering "wanted", "situations vacant and wanted", "lodgings and apartments", "cycles for sale", "miscellaneous" and "musical instruments for sale or exchange". Significantly we also see the newspaper promoting not only itself, but also the other newspapers in the company as advertising mediums, suggesting an increasing specialisation in commercial practice as well as news presentation.

> "No other paper can possibly offer the same facilities to advertisers as The *Midland Daily Telegraph*, the only daily newspaper published within a radius of eighteen miles and thousands search the Advertising Columns daily. Please cut out and keep for future reference." (*MDT*, 5.2.1902)

The cross-promotion also continues with pricing; so that 16 words in three editions of the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, costs 1/3 (one shilling and three pence) – and advertisers also get one insertion in each of the weekly papers as part of the package. By 1903 the internal organisation of the employees in terms of commercial and editorial divisions is also evident in the columns of the paper itself, under the heading "Notice to Correspondents" – which is given due prominence inserted immediately above the "Topics of the Day" on page two.

> "Letters regarding news and coming events should be addressed to the Editor. Letters containing, or having reference to advertisements should be forwarded to the Manager.
> "In order that attention be given to forthcoming meetings and that this journal may be represented by a reporter, it is essential that early intimation of these should be sent to our office.
> "To avoid delay, letters being upon news or other matter for the paper, should not be addressed to individual members of the staff." (*MDT*, 2.2.1903: 2)

This announcement implies that the volume of correspondence from the public is large enough to warrant a system to deal with it.

A year later the *Midland Daily Telegraph* has introduced a display advert to promote its own worth as an advertising medium because it "prints more paid

want ads than all the other Coventry newspapers combined". (*MDT*, 2.2.1904: 4). It has also invested in production methods; as boasted by its customary heading and it is noticeable via the copies available via the History Centre in Coventry that the clarity of the print is improved.

THE
Midland Daily Telegraph
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
The North Warwickshire Times
THIS PAPER IS SET UP BY LINOTYPE MACHINES AND IS PRINTED, FOLDED, CUT AND COUNTED AT THE RATE OF 24,000 COPIES PER HOUR BY ELECTRIC POWER. (MDT, 1.2.1904: 2)

By 1905 we see a newspaper which has matured into an established commercial advertising medium. Now set across eight columns but still priced one halfpenny, page one continues to carry adverts – including 'ear pieces' (those slots either side of the masthead) which advertise the paper's own worth as an advertising medium. The edition of Friday, February 3, 1905 also has a single column carrying the serialisation.

Page two is also nearly 50 per cent adverts (editorial begins in the bottom quarter of the fourth column) and adverts also take up two thirds of the final column on page three and all but one column of page four. Of four pages in total, comprising 32 columns, approximately 13.5 are devoted to editorial; a stark rise in advertising content from the paper of Friday, February 1,1895, when approximately 14 out of a possible 28 columns were devoted to editorial content[46]. The editorial which is in the 1905 paper is highlighted using small but clearer headlines set in a new sans serif font. "This Day's News" has moved to page two and local news and sport is given prominence on page three, which leads on a murder trial in the city, which is given nearly two columns of space. Court reporting was, and is, a highly conventionalised

[46] To ascertain these proportions the newspaper editions studied were printed out as A3 from the British Newspaper Archive. Those years from the sample which were available were: 1895, 1896, 1899, 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1903. The amount of each category of content was then physically measured and recorded as a proportion.

form of newspaper content. However, in a sensational story – headlined "The Binley Tragedy" – we see the matters of legal routines enlivened with scene-setting colour – including details of the crowd which packed the court to witness proceedings (*MDT* 3.2.05: 3). The other regular content, including commercial and market news, is also still included. With such a pressure on editorial space, it is perhaps not surprising that the news that there is, is presented in a brief and succinct way, as evidenced by the top story under the "Coventry and District" heading, in a style which mirrors that of the telegraphed national news.

> "The Rev. George Smith Tyack, has been nominated as senior curate of St. Michael's Coventry, by the Vicar, the Rev. Canon Atkinson. Mr Tyack will come into residence on March 1st. He has been curate of St. Mary's Stafford since 1903." (*MDT*, 3.2.1905: 3)

This close reading of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* between 1895 and 1905 has enabled us to note the developing style of its columns in terms of range, organisation and presentation. By 1905 the content is increasingly diverse, and presented in line with the style of the "Inverted Pyramid" which has come to define news discourse. In parallel we can also see a development in the amount of space devoted to advertising and the increasing self-definition of the paper as an advertising medium. This reading would seem to suggest that this period marks an important period of commercial development for the *Midland Daily Telegraph*; we see an increasing amount of space devoted to advertisements and more imaginative ways devoted to advertising content. We also see an increased amount of self-promotion by the paper as an advertising medium. Coupled with this are indications that the paper has organised its staff along the division of advertising and editorial and has invested in improved production methods. At the same time this period has been a stable one for the cover price (one halfpenny) indicating that advertising revenues have played a key role in funding investment in the product.

Commercial success as an organising factor

Following the path of the emergence and impact of New Journalism on the provincial press in Britain enables us to chart the emergence of two key elements of journalism practice which have become conventions of the provincial press and which have lasted until the beginnings of the twenty-first century: the emergence and dominance of the presentation of information as 'news', organised according to the conventions of the Inverted Pyramid, and the increasing characterisation of the audience as a 'community' against which the paper itself is defined as a supportive champion. In doing so, we are charting the development of an industry from one often promoted and subsidised for political gain to one geared around commercial efficacy.

Within the context of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* we can chart the emergence of the dominance of the 'inverted pyramid' in parallel with the rise in the percentage of space given to adverts. This suggests a strong commercial imperative for the dominance of this presentation of news both in terms of making the paper more attractive to readers in line with Pottker's hypothesis, and it seems reasonable to suggest that the techniques of New Journalism were not only adopted because of a transmission of practice between external sources of news and home-based reporting, as suggested by the coverage of the funeral of Queen Victoria, but also because of the physical constraints on space which demanded a succinct presentation of news.

In this context, the commercial imperative becomes the driver for innovation, as evidenced by the organisation of staff, the use of illustrations (over-whelmingly applied to adverts) and even the use of new fonts to save editorial space when column inches are at a premium. Yet at the same time the paper is still willing to devote space to adverts for its own worth as a promotional medium – indicating the clear significance of advertising revenue to the newspaper. This is the emergence of a mass-produced newspaper, on an industrial scale for a mass readership – produced by a demarcated workforce which is finding new ways of balancing its commercial and social functions. As Marzolf surmises: "... the modern general interest newspaper noted for its independence, its journalistic enterprise and entertaining reading matter had

attained its precarious balance between commercialism and social responsibility, and there it would remain" (1984: 691). These 'new' newspapers presented an increasingly wide range of content, often specialised, such as in sporting coverage, made accessible to a wide audience by its manner of presentation. At the same time those people working to produce these titles were negotiating their roles as 'professionals' in a process played out through the establishment of the two competing organisations to represent their interests, the IOJ and the NUJ, which both used claims to professionalism to justify their actions. Thus these journalists would lay claim to political independence and an allegiance to the truth – typified by CP Snow's "facts are sacred" epithet – as the ideological value in their work while adhering to the skills necessitated by the industrialised large-scale process and undergoing a training which emphasised craft skills acquired 'on the job' (Elliott 1978: 176-188). Through their practice, provincial journalists organised their presentation of content to define and establish both an audience – the 'community' of readers – and a role for themselves – as community champion. So while they may not have attained the unquestioned status of 'professional', they did succeed in sowing the seeds of the ideological value of serving the good of the community – and so formulated one of the 'justificatory ideologies' which has become a feature of journalism (ibid: 189). This organisational structure makes possible the circulation battles and company consolidations typical of the immediate future of a mass circulation newspaper industry which is explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: The growth of chain control:

The period from 1914 to 1976 is most usefully understood as one in which the ownership of provincial newspaper ownership by companies whose ambition is to serve the interests of their shareholders, is consolidated[47]. Outside of London this period is characterised by the growing domination of the provincial newspaper market by a few, huge commercial enterprises (Williams, 2010: 168) in a relentless process which is interrupted only by World War Two and which is explored at length in Chapter 8. This consolidation is accompanied by a shift in the pattern of availability of newspaper titles in favour of an increasingly monopolistic presence within circulation areas, and is characterised by the anxiety expressed by those within and without the industry about the effect of these changes on the role of the press as a Fourth Estate (Royal Commission on the Press, 1947-49). Concomitant with this shift is the rise of an increasingly unionised workforce which is often in conflict with the newly-ensconced and remote corporate owners.

This study has already charted the way in which provincial papers developed into sophisticated commercial products with the discussion of New Journalism in Chapter 6. This process of commercialisation and consolidation continued in the face of increased competition from the London-based press and rising production costs wrought by advances in newspaper production. The early stage of this process in particular heralded fearsome circulation wars which necessitated large capital funds to subsidise national titles for the duration of the battle (Murdock and Golding, 1978: 130). The first 30 years of the twentieth century also saw the rise to ascendancy of the mass circulation

[47] At a national level this period is often characterised as an epoch in which the Press Barons rule over newspapers at a national level as personal fiefdom, although in reality Curran argues that they epitomised the path to commercialisation with a fierce approach to mass circulations which intensified competition between titles (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 38). For a discussion of these changes on a national level see Curran and Seaton (2003) and Conboy (2004). Murdock and Golding's 1978 analysis remains a key explanation of these changes. Much of the evidence of this process in relation to the provincial press has been drawn from contemporary evidence of the 1938 PEP report and the 1947-49 Royal Commission into press ownership.

regional daily evening newspaper and between 1900 and 1935 this sophisticated product yielded substantial profits from a combination of sale and advertising revenues (PEP, 1938).

Thus, this period marks a change in the English newspaper market as a whole in terms of both circulations as well as the number of individual titles and owners. Murdock and Golding cite this as the era in which 'national' papers as they are understood today become established, with the result that the provincial press contracted in the face of the dominance of those London-based titles (1978: 130)[48]. These titles were was able to make incursions into the regions by virtue of improved communications (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 33). New 'liner' trains had been introduced in the 1890s to ensure that national papers could be transported to the regions overnight and these papers also began printing regional editions in places such as Birmingham and Manchester (Packer, 2006). Among those in the vanguard of improving distribution was the *Daily Mail*; launched in May 1896; by 1899 it was selling more than 700,000 copies a day. The sale was aided by its ability to distribute across Britain by breakfast – enabled by simultaneous printing in London and Manchester, which facilitated the distribution of papers in Scotland. This practice was established by the *Daily Mirror* with a successful Birmingham-based edition in 1926, and by some major provincial titles too, including the Leeds-based *Yorkshire Evening Post* and *Yorkshire Evening News*, both of which which published a South Yorkshire edition in Doncaster from 1925 (Herd, 1927).

During the period of 1914 to1976, circulations – and profits – for newspapers grew almost without faltering. However, although total circulations remained buoyant, the number of titles in the provincial press fell. By 1900 there were 196 local daily papers and an estimated 2,072 weekly papers (Curran et al, 2003: 33). But as newspapers became increasingly reliant on high circulations and high advertising revenues to break even, by 1920 this number had fallen to 169. In 1921 there were 41 morning provincial titles and 89 evenings; by 1937 these had dropped again to 28 and 75 respectively. This fall resulted in a

[48] See page 23 for a discussion of the national/provincial dichotomy.

loss of choice for many as towns lost one of two competing titles (in 1921, 33 of 65 towns had two titles but this had dropped to 20 by 1947 and of those 12 were owned by the same company) and local monopoly became the order of the day (Murdock and Golding, 1978: 132). However, despite more competition and fewer titles, between 1937 and 1976 circulations for the provincial papers increased by 50 per cent – from 4.4 million to 6.3 million and 8.6 million to 12.3 million respectively. Concurrently, the industrialisation of newspaper production – necessary to produce high-circulation titles within a short space of time – restricted entry into the industry due to the capital required. The potential gains from advertising revenues were also substantial. A by-product of these rising costs, and potential profits, was a process of consolidation of ownership, often within companies for which newspapers were just one revenue stream among many.

In tandem with consolidation was an increased division between the unionised workers and the 'millionaire owners'. The factions within the industry increasingly positioned themselves within formal organisations – the Newspaper Proprietors Association and the Newspaper Society for the owners, versus the Institute of Journalists and the National Union of Journalists and the printers' unions for the workers – which lobbied to promote their views (Elliott: 1978, 178; Gopsill and Neale, 2007: 233). Consolidation sparked concern among those employed within the provincial newspaper industry, expressed at Parliamentary level, with reference to the implications for the ability of the press to function as a part of the democratic process (ibid). This concern resulted in three Royal Commissions into aspects of the newspaper industry in fewer than 30 years (1947, 1961-62 and 1974-77). These inquiries highlight the tension between the press as a Fourth Estate[49] and the view of newspapers as a purely commercial product. In the latter conception, put forward by the owners themselves, newspapers were owned to make money alongside ventures in mining or oil. As such leading industrial figures – epitomised by Viscount Camrose, a Berry brother and owner of the *Daily Telegraph* and a former partner in the Allied Newspapers Ltd provincial newspaper group – defended the giants of the industry

[49] The significance of this conception to those producing newspapers, as evidenced by the NUJ's campaign for the Royal Commission of 1947-9 discussed below.

(Camrose, 1947). This strife ended only after the industrial disputes which surrounded the introduction of new technology into the industry in the 1980s (discussed in Chapter 9). This dominance of the commercial ideal has led Lee (1976: 77) to characterise this period as a shift away from the philanthropic ideology underpinning the operation of the Victorian press so that newspapers focus on what readers want – rather than what they should want. The result of this is the foundation of a popular press which is highly contested by contemporary commentators who characterise its products as either displaying improved production values made possible via the investment from chain ownership, (Camrose 1947: 8-9) or 'dumbed down', to satisfy the needs of shareholders and advertisers – to the detriment of journalists and readers alike (See, for example, Mr Derek Walker Smith, *Hansard* Oct 1946: cc543).

In addition to the rise of the dominance of the evening press, significantly this period also sees the emergence of a new class of newspapers – the 'freesheet' or free weekly, which challenges the traditional role of 'purchaser' and 'buyer' by selling readers to advertisers, rather than content to readers in order to secure advertisers (Franklin, 2006b: 151). Initially dismissed as a transient form, these papers are thought to pose no threat to the established industry, which fails to foresee a rate of expansion in the 1980s and 1990s which challenges the status quo. This re-shaping of the provincial newspaper industry was the result of a combination of factors: firstly, the impact of industrialisation on the economic structure of the newspaper industry, which promoted the process of consolidation of ownership by making large capital sums necessary to enter the market: secondly, changes to business law which made it easier and more common to form partnerships to fund such capital investment; thirdly, an unwillingness – and increasingly an inability – by owners to subsidise those more costly newspaper businesses for political gain; fourthly, high potential returns in the form of advertising revenue, which made owning newspapers worthwhile, and fifthly, increased competition from the metropolitan (London) press, which prompted co-operative agreements between companies to create monopolistic circulation areas.

The consolidation of ownership: pattern.

Chain ownership of provincial newspapers, both weekly and daily, which was to gather pace at the turn of the 20th century, was not a new trend (Williams, 2010: 168); this thesis has already charted how the 'early adopters' of the printed newspaper often had an entrepreneurial attitude to their business, including starting more than one title, as well as owning both a newspaper and associated businesses. As previously noted, Ferdinand even suggests that by the mid-eighteenth century group ownership was the norm rather than the exception for provincial papers (1997: 62). Roberts suggests that, as important sources of revenue, provincial weekly newspapers in the early Victorian era were held alongside other interests. He records that, of 216 newspapers listed in Charles Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory in 1847, 115 of them had accompanying business interests, the most popular combination being "Bookseller, Stationery and Patent Medicine Vendor" (1972: 15). This pattern of ownership extended to the daily newspaper market and was typified by Andrew Carnegie – who came to control eight dailies, including for a time the *Wolverhampton Express & Sta*r, and ten weeklies (Curran et al 2003: 39), motivated by the desire to establish a chain of Liberal daily newspapers (Rhodes, 1992).

However, consolidation had become easier following legislative changes in the nineteenth century, including the abolition of stamp duty, discussed in Chapter 5. In addition, reforms to business law in the latter half of the nineteenth century extended the concept of limited liability to shareholders – and effectively enabled the limited company. This meant shareholders were only liable for the debts incurred by a company to the value of the shares held, which effectively broke the link between business failure and personal ruin (Lee, 1978: 125; Loftus, 2002: 94). Telegraphy was also nationalised under the auspices of the Post Office and promised a fixed rate for 20-word messages despite the distance travelled. The service ran at a loss, described as a "subsidy" to the newspapers who took advantage of it (Briggs and Burke,

2002: 140). During and just after the World War One[50], consolidation intensified – especially with reference to the provincial evening newspaper – with the rise of four principal newspaper groups: Northcliffe Newspapers, Kemsley Newspapers, Provincial Newspapers and the Westminster Press. These groups would dominate the industry for 50 years (Duncum, 1952) and their influence persists today. Unionisation also impacted on wages with print staff in particular become the best-paid artisan occupation in the country (Political Economic Planning, 1938: 138).

For the provincial newspaper industry, the period of consolidation of ownership was most rapid between 1921 and 1929; by the time of the breakout of World War Two, the main groups in the newspaper industry had been formed as a result of mergers and acquisitions. By 1948 nearly 43 per cent of all newspaper titles were in the hands of the top five chains in the country (see table 7.1). However, these figures then remain fairly stable to 1974, as tables 7:1 and 7: 2 demonstrate. Between 1921 and 1974 there was also a marked change in the number of titles in existence and the dominance of newspaper forms. Hartley et al (1977:7) chart the fall in the number of provincial mornings in Britain as a whole from 44 to 19 during this period. Most of this decrease took place before 1937 by which time 13 of the 19 titles cited had closed. The effect of this was to reduce most towns to just a single morning title which enjoyed a monopoly circulation and enhanced advertising revenues. In the same period 16 evening titles closed, again mostly between 1921 and 1931, reducing further the number of towns with a choice of evening titles from 26 to eight. Seven of these evening papers which faced competition from another in the same town, were owned by the same company and it seem likely that the closures were a bid to create one paper which could charge a substantial price for advertising, rather than a bid to capture the circulation of the other. In most cases between 30 and 50 per cent of the closed title's circulation was lost. However, in all but one case the closed title also had the highest advertising rate, implying that the company strategy was one of preserving market share of advertising rather than building sales

[50] During World War One the costs of publishing increased "dramatically" (Silberstein-Loeb, 2009: 786) because of rises in newsprint and plant costs, and of building and sustaining circulations. This process is considered in Chapter 8.

numbers (Hartley et al, 1977: 61). Hartley et al (ibid: 7) also conclude that healthy advertising revenues were also a key factor in the launch of new titles and while a further nine titles closed between 1971 and 1974, 11 new papers were created, seven of which were in the commuter-rich south east of England. Most unaffected was the number of Sunday provincial papers, which decreased by just one between 1921 and 1974.

Table 7.1: Chain ownership of newspapers 1921-1948

Newspaper group	**Total titles 1921**	**Total titles 1923**	**Total titles 1929**	**Total titles 1937**	**Total titles 1939**	**Total titles 1948**
Berry: Kemsley	2	2	26	22	20	22
Northcliffe; Associated.	9	14	14	14	11	11
Westminster	9	11	13	14	14	14
United: Provincial	3	3	9	4	4	4
Harmsworth	2	2	4	4	4	4
Total in 5 chains	25	32	66	58	53	55
Total in the country	167	158	149	136	130	128
Total controlled by chains as percentage of total	14.95	20.24	44.29	42.65	40.76	42.96

Source: Royal Commission on the Press 1947-1949. Appendix IV. Newspapers types counted include national mornings, London evenings, Provincial mornings, Provincial evenings, Sundays.

Table 7.2. The National Chain Publishers shares of provincial morning, evening and weekly newspaper circulations in Great Britain in 1937, 1947, 1961 and 1974.

		Associated NewspapersGroup	Iliffe Family interests	Thomson Regional Newspapers/	United Newspapers/	Westminster Press	Total National chains
Provincial mornings	1937 1947 1961 1974	1.7 1.8 3.6 3.6	n.i n.i 4.1 3.1	50.8 49.9 25.8 20.0	– – – 8.0	12.9 10.9 5.5 5.7	65.4 62.6 39.0 40.
Provincial Evenings	1937 1947 1961 1974	13.7 9.7 13.3 14.8	n.i n.i 8.7 8.6	22.3 20.2 14.3 14.3	6.6 6.7 6.6 10.0	7.5 7.7 5.4 9.0	50.1 44.3 48.3 56.7
Provincial Weeklies	1937 1947 1961 1974	1.4 2.2 2.6 4.4	n.i n.i 1.3 1.8	0.6 0.9 1.6 3.3	1.0 1.3 2.0 3.2	4.3 3.6 5.2 11.7	7.4 7.9 12.7 24.4

Sources: 1937, 1947 – Royal Commission on the Press 1947-49, report, Appendix VI, Table 2. 1961, 1974 – Royal Commission on the Press 1974-77 (Hartley et al, 1977: 44) Notes: n.i = not included

Less easy to quantify is the effect on weekly titles during this period – largely due to the difficulties of defining individual titles, some of which may only be an edition of a main paper. Hartley et al (1977:9) compare different ways of calculating the number of titles (including using the Newspaper Press Directory and previous Royal Commissions) and conclude that the numbers follow a similar pattern to those for daily newspapers; the biggest loss in titles occurred between 1921 and 1937 with a period of stability to 1948 during World War Two, followed by a steady decline. Significantly, when compared with the shape of ownership of weekly titles, the 1977 analysis also notes a change in organisation of weekly titles, with closures, mergers and amalgamations all accounting for the change in numbers. This may in some part be accounted for by the rise of chain ownership of these types of

newspapers and their subsequent subjugation into more generalised publishing centres.

Another factor affecting the weekly newspaper market in England was the rise of the freesheet, a class of newspaper which had reached a circulation of 9.4 million in September 1974, at a time when bought weekly newspapers had a circulation of 11.2 million. Although a few free titles could be traced back to the early 1900s, most of these had been launched in the first half of the 1960s. By the 1970s there were around 150 in existence, forming a significant industry, but one which was cyclical in nature because of its vulnerability to economic factors affecting advertising spends on classified and recruitment advertising. Among owners of these titles were, perhaps predictably, the large corporate owners; Westminster Press owned the most – but owners also included local printers or independent entrepreneurs, many of whom had papers with circulations of fewer than 40,000. This was not a newspaper form to be easily dismissed and their growth was to accelerate in the 1980s to a peak circulation of 42 million in 1989, enabling them to "effectively undermine the local advertising monopolies enjoyed by the traditional press" (Franklin, 2006b: 153) in a process which is examined at length in Chapter 9.

The consolidation of ownership: process.

Murdock and Golding (1978) highlight the death of Alfred Harmsworth – Lord Northcliffe – in 1922 as speeding the shift to chain ownership, possibly because a small group of newspaper magnates were vying for the position of top owner. To this end, the history of consolidation includes instances where newspaper groups are bought – only to be sold on to another member in the top five and it is not until the post-World War Two period that new players in the game – including Rupert Murdoch – begin to the challenge the status quo. Writing in 1952, Herd adds the unwillingness of people to continue to subsidise papers for political ends as further contributing to consolidation and he credits the chains with saving the fortunes of many evening papers which would otherwise have disappeared (Herd, 1952: 272). Millionaire industrialist

Andrew Carnegie was not willing to endlessly subsidise a loss-making venture (Rhodes, 1992: discussed in Chapter 6): the same is true of the Starmer Group[51] which combined its political cause, again in support of the Liberal Party, with sound business practice. As previously noted, the group which formed the basis of the Westminster Press newspaper group, only started to make money when it finally closed the loss-making *Westminster Gazette* (Packer, 2006).

Packer describes the Starmer Group's strategy for establishing a newspaper in its market as one of dropping the cover price, investing in modern machinery to lower costs and modernising the design of the product (2006: 418). Thus the opposition would have been priced out of the market; however, the new paper would also have become dependent on high circulations to justify the capital investment and so the product had to improve. Indeed, Packer suggests that even among the politically-motivated, there was not always room for principle in business; until 1910 the Rowntree Social Service Trust forbade the inclusion of betting tips in the *Northern Echo*, until the ban was revoked because it was costing readers – and profits (Packer, 2006: 418). When the Starmer Group took over the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* in 1914 it did not turn it into a Liberal paper and instead proclaimed its neutrality – in contrast to the proclamation to make the *Northern Echo* a "vehicle for the promulgations of Liberal ideas" (*Northern Echo*, 19 April 1904 in Packer, 2006: 421) – and even covered the activities of the local Conservatives. However, the group did invest in its new title, installing new printing machinery and redesigning the format and the organisation of content, which included the use of syndicated material such as features and serials shared by other papers in the group. Packer concludes that the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* was bought solely for financial purposes and, as such, its purchase was a "harbinger of the commercial, rather than the political, future that lay before provincial newspaper groups (Packer, 2006: 423-4). This approach was also a recognition of the inherent irony of the propagandist newspaper – that its core appeal lay with the converted and its challenge was in not alienating

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[51] The Starmer Group was a partnership made up of Arnold Rowntree (Joseph's nephew), John Bowes Morrell (his business partner) and newspaperman Charles Starmer (Packer, 2006).

those opposed to its views (Dawson, 1998: 215).

A similar story is told by the changing ownership of the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph*, founded by self-made businessman Sir George Doughty, Mayor and then Liberal MP, for political influence. The first edition of the *Evening Telegraph* went on sale for a halfpenny on March 3, 1897, featuring a sensational main story about a murdered baby whose body was found on a train. Investment was also made in production with the installation of a Multipress printer, which could produce 6,000 copies an hour, and three Linotype machines. By 1903 the circulation stood at around 3,000 a night, but the paper failed to flourish and by 1930 it had passed into the hands of Lord Rothermere (Chapman, 1997). Walker (2006a) posits that this ownership-from-a-distance was thought by some at least to weaken the link between a paper and its home territory – a view aired by the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* when it attacked its new rival the *Lincolnshire Echo* for being owned by "some Liverpool people" (Walker 2006a: 384). Consolidation was, therefore, a commercial decision. For instance, Michael Dawson notes that one of the most prominent papers of Devon and Cornwall, the *Western Daily Mercury*, had never made a profit. It was bought for £69,000 by Sir Leicester Harmsworth, who purchased its competitor the *Western Morning News* for £120,000, amalgamated them and by 1920 had a profitable paper which made up to £50,000 a year with its evening sister. Harmsworth's consolidation in the South West continued when he fought, and then bought, the *Torbay Express*, which was competing with his evening title, the *Western Evening Herald* and by 1925 he owned all but two of the daily papers in the South West (Dawson, 1998: 217).

The path to mass newspaper ownership was not a smooth one and the first Lord Rothermere himself floundered when the Great Depression knocked the bottom out of the advertising revenue stream which he had expected to fund his proposal to create a nationwide chain of *Evening World* newspapers (Herd, 1952). Herd suggests that Northcliffe Newspapers Ltd survived because of Rothermere's ability to persuade his rivals to 'carve up' the newspaper market. He signed a truce with Allied Newspapers, which became Kemsley Newspapers, agreeing not to intrude on their markets in Cardiff, Sheffield and

Aberdeen (Herd, 1952). The Political and Economic Planning (hereafter PEP) report of 1938 into the business of newspaper publishing suggests that such co-operative working arrangements were well established by newspaper groups, both in terms of practices – for instance agreeing not to publish on Christmas Day and Good Friday and maintaining stop-press times – but also for negotiations with the workforce via established organisations. Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising that when faced with the increasing costs of circulation wars, companies agreed a truce and delimited the areas in which they operated. The PEP report goes so far as to suggest that the evening press in particular did not need ever-increasing circulations to maintain profitability – enabling such limits to be set. Instead, the paper's profitability depended on the advertising rate it could charge in relation to its circulation. If that rate were significant enough to produce a good revenue stream then there was little need to invest in increasing sales (PEP, 1938: 85).

Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory of 1938, referenced by the PEP report of the same year, shows that there were 24 morning papers in the English provinces, 70 evening, five Sunday titles and 896 weekly papers. Together they sold more than 7.5 million copies a day (5.2 million of which was made up of provincial evening titles). The impact of the London press was evident in the geographical spread of these titles; just three towns within 100 miles of London – Brighton, Ipswich and Leamington Spa – had a provincial daily paper and these were all morning titles which may have retained a time advantage over their London rivals (PEP, 1938: 48). At that time, in most cities titles were in monopoly positions with just Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle and Nottingham having two morning papers and only Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham and Shields have more than one evening paper. However, certain morning titles were seen to wield great influence, especially the *Birmingham Post*, the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Manchester Guardian*, the latter of which was seen as the Liberal foil to *The Times* (PEP 1938: 48). By 1977 the monopoly situation had increased with just Sandwell seeing competition between two evening titles (The Wolverhampton *Express & Star* and Birmingham *Evening Mail*). However following the advent of radio and television, Hartley et al disagreed that the existence of just one title in a class of provincial paper formed a true

monopoly. The survey also considered competition to include the free sheets, "some of which included a significant proportion of editorial content" (Hartley et al, 1977: 32).

Between 1921 and 1937, the top five companies – Beaverbrook Newspapers, Associated Newspapers, Daily Mirror Group (later Reed International), News of the World (later News International), Kemsley Newspapers and Odhams Press – increased holdings in terms of percentage of all titles (both national and provincial) owned, from 15 per cent to 43 per cent. This was done, Murdock and Golding suggest, by "weeding out" (1978: 135) the weaker titles, which left them with a larger share of remaining circulations and so reinforced their market dominance. Although these figures remained fairly stable until the 1960s – largely because of the continuity in the number of titles – the market share in terms of percentage of circulations actually rose from 43 per cent in 1948 to 63 per cent in 1974, because of the fall in overall circulations for the top three groups (Murdock and Golding, 1978:135)[52]. However, by looking at both national and provincial ownership together, Murdock and Golding disguise shifts in the relative dominance of the provincial newspaper ownership alone (see tables 7.3 and 7.4 below). This is particularly marked in the field of weekly newspaper ownership. The top two groups (Westminster Press and Associated Newspaper Group) remained dominant in terms of the percentage of circulations of titles owned between 1961 and 1974; we also see the rise of significant newcomers including F Johnston and Company (to become Johnston Press) which accomplished its expansion largely by the acquisition of weekly titles (Riley, 2006: 26). With the exception of the Iliffe family, each of the national chains more than doubled their share of the weekly newspaper market between 1937 and 1974, with the biggest rate of change between 1961 and 1974 (Hartley et al, 1977: 43). The weekly newspaper may have been the "medieval fiefdom" of "minor press barons" (Riley, 2006: 26), but they were also likely to be fairly uneconomical to produce because of the combination of high first print costs

[52] Overall circulations fell, in part at least due to rises in cover prices which saw the price of national titles double between 1960 and 1970 and again by 1975.

typical of the newspaper industry and smaller circulations[53]. As such, the re-organisation of the industry into consolidated publishing centres probably improved profitability. Even so, in 1977, statistics produced for the Royal Commission show that weekly newspapers were still considerably more expensive to produce than evening papers, with a total average cost by copy of 22.5p, compared with 9.6p for an evening (Hartley et al, 1977: 23).

Table 7.3: The largest 10 publishers of provincial evening newspapers in 1974 and their share of the total circulation of provincial evening newspapers in the United Kingdom in 1961 and 1974.

	1974			1961		
	Rank	Number of titles	Total circulation ('000)	Rank	Number of titles	Total circulation ('000)
Thomson Regional Newspapers	1	11.5*	1,069	1	8	1,156
Associated Newspapers Group	2	12	922	2	13	894
United Newspapers	3	6	625	5	4	445
Westminster Press	4	10.5*	559	7	8	363
Iliffe family interests	5	3	533	4	4	586
The Guardian and Manchester Evening News Ltd	6	1	376	3	2	604
The Midland News Association	7	2	314	11	1	209
Liverpool Daily Post and Echo Ltd	8	1	307	6	1	412
Scottish and Universal Investments/George Outram and Company	9	2	253	8=	1	234
Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers	10	3	218	10	3	225

Source: Royal Commission on the Press 1974-77 (Hartley et al: 1977: 40). * half the circulation of the Slough Evening Mail, launched jointly between Thomson Regional Newspapers and Westminster Press in 1969 has been allocated to each of them in 1974.

[53] The trials and tribulations of running a small weekly paper are described by Claude Morris in *I Bought a Newspaper* (1963). His operation in South Wales, is outside of the scope of this study but he offers an insight into what was a competitive market place for newspapers and the opposition he faced from established rivals.

Table 7.4: the largest 10 publishers of provincial weekly newspapers in 1974 and their share of the total circulation of provincial weekly newspapers in the United Kingdom in 1961 and 1974.

	1974			1961		
	Rank	Number of titles	Total circulation ('000)	Rank	Number of titles	Total circulation ('000)
Westminster Press	1	94	1,234	1	50	603
Associated Newspapers Group	2	33	467	2	19	298
Thomson Regional Newspapers	3	39	383	4	27	227
United Newspapers	4	31	333	3	19	228
Scottish and Universal Investments/George Outram and Company	5	20	323	27	3	73
News International/News of the World Organisations	6	33	297	15	15	95
Home Counties Newspapers	7	14	252	7	11	145
British Electric Traction Company	8	28	215	8	114	111
F Johnston and Company	9	20	214	67	13	39
East Midland Allied Press	10	13	214	5	16	202

Source: Royal Commission on the Press 1974-77 (Hartley et al: 1977: 42).

Newspaper costs as a driver for consolidation.

The raw materials of paper and ink formed a substantial proportion of a newspaper's costs – set at over one third by a newspaper funding model drawn up by the PEP (1938). At the same time, printing equipment had developed technologically, and the Linotype and monotype machine had become ubiquitous as the method of typesetting. Developments were also made in the area of graphics. In 1906 the *Glasgow Evening News* was produced on 17 Linotype machines, and printed at a rate of 123,000 copies in 81 minutes on five three-deck Goss straight-line printing presses (Carlaw, 1906).

This meant a sharp increase in the costs of setting up papers[54]; by the time Conservatives in Cornwall wanted to set up a local paper to promote their cause in 1922, they thought the cost prohibitive at £50,000 (Dawson, 1998: 210). By 1976, it was thought that £2 million would be needed to found a title from scratch, including the purchase of land and buildings; this explained why most new daily titles were founded by existing newspaper companies who not only enjoyed economies of scale in terms of production, but who also had the capital necessary to support the investment needed to establish a title (Hartley et al, 1977: 64).

The continued rise in the costs of labour and materials created an economic context which was to be a driver for innovations in new technology in the 1980s. Between 1920 and 1977 the costs of paper rose from £11 to nearly £230 a tonne (Royal Commission on the Press 1977-49: 57), with the British newspaper industry reliant on imports from Scandinavia. Yet the British were avid consumers of newspapers; in 1936 the nation had has the largest estimated consumption of newsprint per head at 59.38lbs, compared with 57.5lbs for Australasia, 57 for the US and only 18.1 for France. The newsprint industry was therefore significant and the owners of newspaper companies also held interests in newsprint production (PEP 1938: 62). In contrast, the relative costs of the elements of newspaper production as a proportion of the overall costs remained fairly stable. Both the PEP report of 1938 and Hartley's investigation for the Royal Commission in 1977 offer a picture of the various elements involved in newspaper production and distribution. While based on a differing methodology[55], comparable figures are presented below.

[54] Drawing on a national example, James Curran states that Northcliffe estimated £0.5 million to establish the *Daily Mail* in 1896, compared with start-up costs of £20,000 in 1855 and £50,000 in the 1870s. Yet in 1837 the *Northern Star* had been founded with just £690 (Curran et al, 2003: 27-28).

[55] The PEP model was based on a fictional 1d daily newspaper, whereas the Royal Commission surveyed actual newspapers to come up with its findings.

Table 7.5: Distribution of costs of newspaper production 1938 compared with 1974-77.

	Daily Newspaper 1938 (percentage)	Daily Newspaper 1974-77 (percentage)
Newsprint and ink	34.6	31.1
Editorial	23.1	24.7
Production	23.1	33.6
Circulation and distribution	15.4	11.8

Source: Political and Economic Planning 1938: 71; Hartley, 1977: 21.

To balance the risk, the newspaper companies branched out not only into allied industries, including magazine and book publishing, film and paper companies, but also further afield. Writing in 1947 in a pre-emptive strike against the Royal Commission of the same year, Viscount Camrose described how, in addition to its core newspaper business, Associated Newspapers owned £1 million in Government securities, the Empire Paper Mills and more than 900,000 shares in the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co Ltd, whose interests included mining (1947: 56). By the 1960s this eclectic pattern of company interests was in ascendancy in a position embodied in Lord Thomson who told the 1961 Royal Commission: “My purpose is to run newspapers as a business …to make money. That is what you do business for.” (Murdock and Golding, 1978:142).

By the time of the Royal Commission Report of 1977 it was evident that this strategy had given commercial benefit to the top chains, who had managed to preserve trading profits – or at least experienced a smaller decline – in the face of a harsh economic climate caused by an eight per cent fall in advertising revenues (Hartley et al, 1977: 25). By this point the organisation of the chains was no longer led by the titles owned, but instead by the publishing centres from which they were produced. For the Royal Commission of 1974-1977 this new unit formed the focus of study, because it was simply too difficult to disentangle aggregated costs such as management from shared centres of publication; this marked a change from the surveys carried out 15 years previously (Hartley et al: 1977: 21). By 1974 the top ten newspaper groups

controlled nearly 81 per cent of total evening newspaper circulations (up from 74 per cent in 1961) (Hartley et al, 1977: 39). In most cases they owned the only title in a town and these monopolies were grouped along geographical lines so that particular newspaper companies formed contiguous monopolies[56]. Such organisation enabled businesses to share costs in management, production, editorial and advertising sales and between 1961 and 1975, 35 of the 67 printing centres owned by the national chains were closed (although two new ones were created on green field sites). However, it also meant that groups could probably afford to pay over the odds for existing titles because of the potential savings, as well as profits, which may have accounted for the large decrease in independent ownership of profit-making titles (Hartley, 1977:85).

Consolidation of ownership: Royal Commissions

A continual theme of this period is the obsession with the effect of the consolidation of ownership on a newspaper's ability to act as a democratic organ. Three Royal Commissions form extensive testaments to this, but though full of facts and figures, they offer few concrete conclusions. Read in tandem, though, the three government-sponsored reports can be seen as narrating a long road to realising the full impact of the dominance of big business on newspaper ownership. The first Royal Commission of 1947-49, while admitting that the provincial press had been most affected by changes in ownership, still maintained that consolidated ownership had had little impact. As early as 1938 the left-wing think tank PEP report had concluded that while a limit was advisable, consolidation in itself, was not detrimental to

[56] In 1977 The Associated Newspaper group had extensive holdings in the South West, publishing five evening, two morning and weekly newspapers in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Gloucestershire
. The lliffe family concentrated its efforts in the West Midlands and Cambridgeshire and in 1977 owned nearly every newspaper sold in the Birmingham conurbations, including the evening and morning titles and the weekly papers. United Newspapers also pursued a policy of regional consolidation, selling off its weekly papers in Warwickshire to concentrate on titles in Yorkshire, Humberside and the North West (Hartley et al, 1977: 53-4).

newspaper freedom. In fact, the report concluded, it could offer a way to harness capital for the benefit of the Labour movement, as with the *Daily Herald* newspaper (PEP, 1938: 104). The PEP report had though got to the core of the question which was to test the industry for nearly half a decade; when should a limit be put on group ownership of newspapers and how should that limit be imposed? What all seemed to agree on was that the newspaper industry was special.

> "The Press, however, cannot and does not exist on a purely commercial footing. Almost every newspaper to some extent consciously performs a social function, although its performance is moulded by its proprietor's and its editor's views of what the public wants, their ideas of what is ethically, socially and politically desirable, and its resources of ability and technical equipment." (PEP, 1938: 256-7).

The debate polarised the two factions, which were increasingly aligned along party political lines with the election of the post-war Labour government. As previously cited, the owners, embodied in Viscount Camrose and Thomson, proclaimed that they owned newspapers for their business potential only – and not to wield undue influence over the readers. Opposing them were those who produced newspapers – an increasingly unionised workforce which criticised the power exerted over them by capital. The result was an 'us and them' relationship between those who owned the papers and those who produced them, as epitomised in the cartoon at Figure 7.1. Published in the NUJ paper *Journalist* in March 1974 it characterises the dichotomy of owners, represented as the Newspaper Proprietors Association, and the working reporter, which underpins this contentious period of provincial newspaper history.

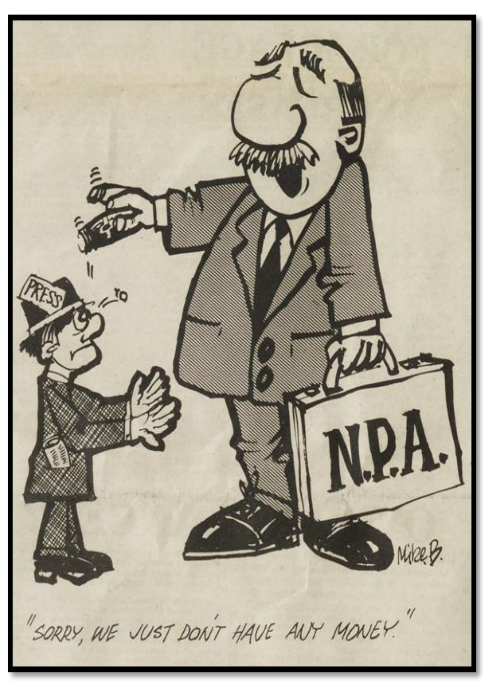

Figure 7.1:

At the same time as the motivation for newspaper ownership narrowed, so the operation of those newspapers became increasingly demarcated, continuing the process described in the preceeding section. With increased demands on both speed and standard of production, roles within newspapers were increasingly specialised. These changes formed the backdrop to the anxiety which is manifest in the motion of the National Union of Journalists in calling for the Royal Commission, and in the motion before the House of Commons calling for the commission itself (Gopsill and Neale 2007: 233: Hansard, 1946). This increasing professionalisation of newspaper production also meant that owners and workers were increasingly demarcated with each section represented by its specific union. While the owners were represented by the Institute of Journalists, the National Union of Journalists explicitly excluded proprietors (Lee, 1978: 127). By the census of 1931 of 9,000 journalists and photographers employed in newspapers, some 6,600 were members of the NUJ and a further 2,700 were members of the Institute of Journalists (PEP, 1938: 12-13).

Print shops, employing 29,000 men, were nearly totally unionised, usually via membership of the London Society of Compositors of the National Society of

Operative Printers and Assistants (Natsopa), which was affiliated to the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation (PEP, 1938: 15-16). These organisations campaigned for improved pay and conditions for their members and it is worthy of note that newspaper sellers, who remained outside of the Labour movement, continued to be the worst paid sector of the newspaper industry. In contrast a 1935 survey by Ministry of Labour showed that printing was one of the best-paid artisan occupations in the UK. A total of 24,000 men earned 110s 9d a week, compared with textile workers' wages of 36s 4d, 53s 2d for those in the metal industries and 61s 10d for the chemical industry workers. The popularity of the printing trade, therefore, meant it was a hard one to enter with friends and relations taking priority among new entrants (PEP, 1938:138-145).

Journalists' wages had also increased. Having been considered a poorly paid profession[57], by 1921 an agreement between the Newspaper Proprietors' Association and the NUJ agreed that provincial minima would range from £5 5s for journalists on daily newspapers in large towns to £4 7s 6d for those on weekly newspapers in small towns, payable at the age of 24 after four years' experience (PEP, 1938: 138). London journalists were assured nine guineas a week – a wage structure which reflected, and reinforced, the relationship of the provincial press as the starting point and training ground for London-based workers. Therefore the industry also gave rise to organisations which represented the interests of the employers with the creation of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association (later to become the Newspaper Publishers Association) in London in 1908, the continuation of the Newspaper Society for provincial owners and editors, and the formation of the Joint Industrial Council to negotiate with the unions. It was also recognised that the printers' unions were in a very strong position, because of their ability to paralyse production (PEP, 1938: 16); this may explain employers' willingness to support high wages.

[57] An NUJ survey in 1911 showed that average wage of a reporter in the provinces was 33s a week and for sub-editors, 35s a week (PEP, 1938: 138).

Evidence from the National Executive Committee[58] of the NUJ suggests that an increased concentration of ownership – in particular of provincial newspapers – was cause for concern. The PEP report (1938: 239) also evidences that provincial newspapers were the dominant form of newspaper, the further one was from London and it was a resolution passed by the NUJ which led to the Royal Commission on the Press 1947-49. The minutes couch the argument in terms of the need to preserve the freedom of the press and concentrate on the reputation and operation of journalism[59]. The minute books also document instances where reporters were asked to act against the values they associated with their practice as journalists – for instance by being told to trail celebrities of the day having been specifically asked not to by their targets – in the pursuit of newspaper sales (NUJ, 1947: 182).

Therefore, alongside the anxiety about the effect of consolidation on the role of the press a Fourth Estate, it is also likely that there was a party political aspect to this debate. The unionised press workers feared that capitalist-owned newspapers would not support the post-war Labour Government. This stance is backed by a report by the Labour Research Department (hereafter LRD), which was commissioned by the NUJ, into "the ramifications and profits of newspapers" (NUJ, 1946: 125). The substantive argument of the report, was clear from its title, *The Millionaire Press*, (1946); "These tendencies [of chain ownership], dangerous at any time, are of particular concern to the Labour movement today. The Labour Government, elected with a clear mandate, stands confronted with, in the main, a bitterly hostile Press …which reflects not the interest and the aspirations of the British people or of any considerable section of it, but purely those of large-scale capitalism" (LRD, 1946: 3). The pamphlet concentrated on unpicking the complex ownership of the national and provincial press in Britain. Adding weight to calls for a Royal Commission, it argued that the industry was so complex that only a commission could "go behind" the complexities of ownership and advertising

[58] The minute books examined here are within the holdings of the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick.
[59] In the run-up to the calls for the Royal Commission the organisation was also involved in setting training standards by working with the Newspaper Society on creating a 'national council' for training; the need for training itself is also justified by the need for journalists to uphold press freedom and to protect against 'unsavoury' journalism (NUJ, 1947).

pressures facing newspapers (LRD, 1946: 17). In calling for a government-led inquiry, a deputation from the NUJ laid out its arguments in a resolution before the Lord President of the Council. Significantly the resolution was supported by key provincial NUJ chapels – including those in the Kemsley Federated Group Chapel, Withy Grove (Thomson) Chapel and the Manchester Trade and Periodical branches – and explicitly drew on the discursive position of the press as a Fourth Estate to legitimise their position. "The freedom of press we claim from the Government of the day must not be choked by the concentration of the country's newspapers in the hands of two or three powerful commercial groups. Control of any commodity necessary to the community by a few persons who may succeed in cornering it is bad, but such a control of our commodity is particularly deleterious because we are concerned with the mental and cultural needs of the people." (NUJ, 1947: 63). The arguments then transferred to Parliament via the MPs – whose number included members of the NUJ – who moved the motion in the House of Commons to convene the inquiry in 1946.

The debate into the need for the Royal Commission, as recorded in the official Parliamentary record of Hansard, draws directly on the NUJ's call for an inquiry. The motion was introduced by NUJ member and MP Haydn Davies who clearly states the perceived incompatibility of profit and community interest. The Liberal MP also expressed the concern felt by journalists about the erosion of their integrity by the pursuit of profit as "combines come in, buying up and killing independent journals, and we have seen the honourable profession of journalism degraded by high finance and big business….that is why we are anxious to see freedom once more restored to the Press" (Hansard 1946, vol 428 cc452456). This trend in newspaper closures was cited by Parliamentarians as necessitating an inquiry into the shape of newspaper ownership in the aftermath of World War Two. Mr Davies (St Pancras, South West) encapsulated the arguments when he told his fellow MPs:

> "What is wrong is not so much the private ownership of the Press, but the use that is being made of that private ownership in order to pile up dividends. It is claimed, for example, that these big, powerful combines do not influence local opinions—that they are free. But what kind of

> freedom is it? There were four papers in Sheffield; they buy four and kill two. There were four in Cardiff; they buy four and kill two. I wonder whether the killing of these papers was really done in the interest of the freedom of the Press, in the interest of the people of those towns, or in the interest of that blessed word "efficiency," which means dividends." (Hansard 1946 vol 428 c457)

However, these arguments failed to win over the Royal Commission convened as a consequence. Preceding the commission by nine years, the PEP report of 1938 had suggested that alternative business models, such as co-operatives, would add variety to the newspaper market and even went as far to suggest that a newspaper works should be publicly owned to make production affordable to alternatively-funded publications. The Royal Commission of 1947 though concluded that the free market was the best preserver of the free press. It remarked that consolidation was unlikely to continue at the pace already seen and that, at its current level, it was "not so great as to prejudice the free expression of opinion or the accurate presentation of news or to be contrary to the best interests of the public" (1947: 176)[60]. The next Royal Commission, while echoing this tacit support for consolidated ownership, recognised that competition between newspapers had become fiercer and entry costs more prohibitive. It also acknowledged that one of the perils of chain ownership was the loss of a local paper's local character (1962: 116). The commission did suggest the creation of a Press Amalgamation Court to consider the effect of future mergers and from 1965 significant mergers were referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The final Royal Commission report (Vol 1 1977: 231) would go on to recommend that the circulation at which mergers were considered should be dropped from 500,000 to 200,000.

[60] It did recommend that a Press Council be created to "safeguard the freedom of the Press; to encourage the growth of the sense of public responsibility and public service amongst all engaged in the profession of journalism" (ibid: 177), and this resulted in the first manifestation of press self-regulation, the General Council, in 1953.

Commercial practice and the good of the community.

Writing of the regional press in the inter-war years, Bromley and Hayes suggest that the commercial context described at length above acted as a liberating force for journalism, creating a "democracy of print". Thus the inter-war years coincided with a "golden age" for local government and enabled regional papers to offer "*the ubiquitous civic voice*: vital yet distanced from partisanship" (Bromley and Hayes, 2002: 197). The consolidated titles my have created – and exploited urban markets – for advertising revenues, but this commercial position did not preclude an editorial stance which influenced the creation of civic identity. Following Bromley and Hayes, journalists working in the commercialised press were able to act independently of political partisanship. Thus we see a journalism which proclaims and fiercely protects its role in the democratic process, scrutinising and holding to account those in power, while simultaneously negotiating the working conditions of an increasingly consolidated industry. At the same time these unionised workers campaign for improved training and better working conditions. The National Council for the Training of Journalists was formed in 1951 following long debates over training standards (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2011), which put in a place a training scheme which codified the practice of journalists learning their trade in the regional press before progressing on to Fleet Street.

For the regional press, this training also codified the principle of journalists acting for the 'good of the community'; which was embodied in journalism practice, as handed down in newsrooms across the country. Thus, when a former editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Richard Stott, recalls his early days as a reporter at the *Bucks Herald* in Aylesbury in the early 1960s, it is this key relationship between journalist, reader and local decision-makers which is brought to the fore.

> "The reporters were led by Phil Fountain, a local newspaperman (sic) to his fingertips, who could have made Fleet Street without any bother. But he loved Aylesbury and he knew it inside out. Local councils and courts were meat and drink to him. Immaculate shorthand note, all the

councillors and the coppers at his beck and call, the holder of 1,000 borough secrets." (Stott, 2002: 90)

Writing of the provincial press some five decades later than Bromley and Hayes, Jackson also argues that this relationship between newspaper producer and reader is framed by the commercial structure of the provincial press described above. He concludes that the local press has four functions; the most important of which is the "promotion of a sense of community, identity and cohesion", followed by the provision and analysis of information (1971: 279) which "enable the provincial newspaper to project itself as a community conscience, idealist, standard bearer of local pride and recorder" (ibid: 273). This positioning can be understood as a reaction to the incursion of a national press into the provincial market, whereby papers – and in particular the highly successful evening papers – position themselves geographically with a content and commercial strategy of reaching as many people as possible in an area – thereby creating targeted readership to "sell" to advertisers. These papers specialised in a varied 'diet' of local content which enabled them to attract large volumes of advertising and so run at a healthy profit. As such they presented "a strategic obstacle to the comprehensive dominance of the London morning press" (Bromley and Hayes, 2002: 198) and so a kind of truce was reached whereby households would take a national and local evening paper and companies were also happy to own both. Simultaneously, these corporatised local papers proclaimed themselves to be a local 'watchdog', even though their local "licence" had been weakened by this structure (Bromley and Hayes, 2002: 199).

Counter views challenge this view of the tempering effects of the ideology of community champion on the business imperative and even Bromley and Hayes' optimistic evaluation of the commercialised evening press recognises that the notion of community is diverse and that not all interests will be equally promoted (2002: 204). Franklin and Murphy (1991) go so far as to reduce the ideological stance of promoting the community to a functional tool which aligns the interests and definition of the community with the interests

of commercial success[61]. In this they chime with AJ Lee, for whom this consolidation was the beginning of a process whereby the provincial press lost its distinctive character (1978: 128) as the ideological values of editorial staff were increasingly tested by the commercial context. As the period draws to a close the scene was set for a pitched battle to defeat collective bargaining – followed by a period of homogenisation of the regional press where companies stripped out editorial resources, to maintain shareholder profits, and, in doing so, disempowered journalists.

[61] In this instance the circulation area of the newspaper is equivalent to the 'community' or the two are at least mutually supportive. In addition, for the newspaper the community is largely defined by those institutions at its heart and it is those institutions which are privileged by journalistic, routines embodied in source strategies and news values (1991: 58). This position is explored at length in section 3.

Chapter 8: The Provincial press in war time.

The period of 1914 to 1976 is characterised by the unremitting move to patterns of consolidated ownership for the provincial newspaper industry, interrupted only by two world wars, both of which had their own impact on this process. In particular, World War Two was to have such a profound effect on the commercial structure of the British newspaper industry that commentators declared its structure through this period to be "abnormal" (Royal Commission, 1949: 5). During the conflict, demand for provincial newspapers rose to unprecedented levels, both for the local population and as material to send abroad (Royal Commission, 1949: 80). Because newsprint was rationed, the size of publications and the number of copies which could be printed, were restricted; this prompted commercial rivalries to be put aside and competing titles co-operated to ensure that print runs were maintained. In effect this meant that the normal rules of competitive practice were suspended for an industry where demand for sales and advertising space outstripped supply. This situation lasted beyond the end of the war due, in turn, to continued shortages of firstly the raw materials to make paper, and secondly the national wealth to afford imports. Its effect was to prolong the life of poorly-performing publications, which might have otherwise folded, and also to restrict new entries into the market, because of scant resources.

The BBC has been credited with being the lynchpin of morale for the British civilian population during the World War Two (Curran et al, 2003) and this period is one in which the broadcast industry in the form of the BBC gained ascendancy over newspapers as a form of mass communication (Williams 2010: 173). However, at the same time we see the provincial newspaper industry position itself as being key to the war effort and as being recognised as vital in keeping the information channels open by the Ministry of Information (McClaine 1979: 134). The industry claimed to prioritise its role of serving beleaguered communities, in line with the discursive position whose establishment has been traced through this thesis. This chapter explores the way this position was manifest in the columns of titles and

questions the extent to which it served the interests of the industry over the people. In particular it features a close reading of the *Midland Daily Telegraph's* coverage of the Coventry blitz to demonstrate how the provincial newspaper industry prioritised the value of serving the local community.

In the Coventry title we see a paper reporting events according to the discursive conventions of the "blitz spirit" – established in the national press reporting of attacks on London. Contextualising that stance within the provincial newspaper industry enables us to see those claims to serve the good of the community, by preserving and bolstering morale, as the product of an industry, acting according to an established set of norms. These extended to maintaining the profitability of what was a highly industrialised business, even though the normal rules of competitive practice had been disrupted. Therefore, the provincial newspaper industry's claim to serve the good of the community has to be understood alongside its strategy to ensure the financial health of the business. The provincial newspaper industry may have claimed to serve the good of the community, but the contention is that its motivation was as much a product of the newspaper as a business, as that of a newspaper dedicated to the war effort.

The provincial press and the community in World War One.

A comparison may be drawn between the role of the provincial press during World War Two and its role during the Great War. This relationship between the provincial press and communities during World War One has not been subject to extensive academic study, despite the fact that for many the provincial press was the sole source of news (Finn, 2002: 27) and that aggregate readership of the local press equalled that of the national press (Gregory, 2004: 16). As examined in Chapter 6, the period immediately preceding World War One marked a drop in the number of provincial titles, largely due to the rising status of the London press, courtesy of improved communications and transport (Williams, 2010: 135-6). These papers had also capitalised on previous conflicts, especially the Boer War, to establish

themselves as mass circulation titles (ibid: 137). As such World War One is the time of a newspaper industry on the cusp of change, from one comprised of "old-fashioned" political organs to one made up of fresh-faced mass circulation newspapers (ibid: 138). Significantly it is at this time that provincial newspapers are beginning to capitalise on their own 'localness' and construct a content directed towards a specialist, provincial audience – which in turn informs their approach to war news.

Finn (2002) suggests that the significance of the provincial press increased for its readership during World War One – largely due to the recruitment of forces around local regiments. At the outbreak of war, the provincial press was largely neutral in its stance (Gregory, 2004: 20), in contrast to the national papers which aligned themselves to the cause of war in line with their established political leanings (ibid: 19). However, as the conflict progressed, provincial titles brought together official sources of information with unofficial sources, including material drawn from letters sent home from the front, to create a complex picture of the conflict from a specialist community-based focus. As such they were "the only conduit that could provide a locally-focused, community-oriented narrative of what the war represented" (Finn, 2002: 27). Both national and provincial papers published extensive casualty lists, although Bourne (1989) argues that the numbers of deaths were such that they ceased to be news. In the provincial press, however, papers continued to report deaths of local men and carried obituaries and even pictures. Uncompromising reports of battles involving local regiments were also included, because of the papers' ability to retain links with their local men on active service.

> ""I have lost my right leg", Private W Hartness told readers of the *Barnsley Chronicle* on 15 July 1916. "It is something awful…I am very sorry to say that the Barnsley lads have caught it. It was like hell let loose, and I never thought I should get through it alive."" (ibid: 206)

Finn argues that in order to fulfil the role of serving the community, these titles had to find alternative sources of information to the anonymised reports put out by the Press Bureau. To this end, titles appealed to their readers to fill the gaps, promising to keep details of the regiment and position in the field

secret (Finn, 2002: 27). When the Press Bureau clamped down on the publication of soldiers' letters, the papers turned to interviewing eye-witnesses back from the front. As such they were able to provide a "warts and all" account of the conflict. (ibid: 30).

A close reading of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* includes extensive use of soldiers' letters and testimony of relatives as a mechanism for supplying news of local men, alongside prominent reports of official information from the Press Bureau. Typical is a story on September 1, 1914 in which a "Coventry Soldier" recounts his experience on the front line, having been sent back to England, injured.

> "We were in the thick of it Monday night, all Tuesday night, and Wednesday. It was raining heaven's hard. I got wounded on Wednesday morning. I crawled about 8 miles before I got picked up and I was in great pain. Just before I advanced to the firing line on Wednesday I could see a lot of chaps falling down so I made my will out to you….Why we have lost so heavily is because there are too many Germans for us to tackle. If we shot one down there were a dozen to take their place." (*MDT* 1.9.1914: 5)

This soldier reports how many of his comrades – "Coventry and Leamington chaps" (from Leamington Spa, nearby), many of whom would have been members of the local Royal Warwickshire Regiment, were killed but he "cannot remember their names". The report is graphic: this man was injured as the man beside him died: he reported seeing dead women and children and villages burned. But in common with most of the reports, this man is not disheartened by his experience. "I am ready to have another pot at them [the enemy forces] if they send us out again," he continues, "and I hope and please God I only get off wounded again." (ibid). Focusing on the experience of the 'Royal Warwicks', a report on September 5 describes how the regiment was among 3,000 men caught in the Battle of Mons. The paper reports a "conversation" with one of the men who said: "we found ourselves in a slaughterhouse…we were so overwhelmed by the German forces that we were ordered by our officers to look after ourselves. I don't know how I got away from it" (*MDT* 5.9.1914: 5).

In 1914 the paper was published as between six and eight broadsheet pages; special Sunday editions also appeared on August 30, 1914 and on three Sundays in September. The paper, which cost one halfpenny, was keen to cover as much war news as possible, and drew on a variety of angles, many of them particular to its circulation area. These included appeals for information about soldiers who were missing in action, obituaries – complete with photos – and reports of the effect of the war locally, such as recruitment to local regiments. However, as the conflict progressed, so the newspaper's ability to continue this service was restricted. Research suggests that the reasons for this are two-fold: a gradual improvement in the supply of "official" news, which lessened the need for unofficial sources, but perhaps more critically, the severe restrictions placed on the title by the shortage of newsprint[62]. Thus, by April 1916 the edition of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* was physically smaller and sometimes just two or three pages, dominated by official war reports. When, in April 1917, a "Coventry Corporal's Story" was included, it was as a result of his being "interviewed by a Press representative now with the British Army in Northern France" (*MDT* 5.4.1917: 2). This story is alongside content relating to the domestic experience of war; lighting up time, military tribunals and hearings under the Defence of the Realm Act are all included. The paper was reduced in size again in 1918, [63] while the cover price is increased to one penny.

The reliance on official war information by the provincial daily paper, as exemplified by the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, and its tandem predicament of continuing with reduced stocks of newsprint does limit Finn's argument that these papers strove to include alternative sources to service the information

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[62] Preparation for the restriction on paper usage had been introduced in 1916 in an attempt to limit imports from Sweden and Norway. By 1918 imports stood at just one third of the pre-war figures (Cabinet Paper GT 3783: 239). Such was the impact that it was described as "a serious crisis" by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association (Cabinet Paper GT373, 28.2.1918: 239).

[63] By examining the few extant physical copies of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* in the Coventry History Centre it is possible to ascertain the change in size. The copy of July 6, 1916 measures 26 inches by 22 inches; by October 18, 1917 it has been reduced slightly to 25" 8' to 16" 5' wide. By July 15 1915 the paper was smaller again, measuring 22" by 13" 1' and the title was smallest by November 11 1918 when it measured just 21" 9' by 13". By June 28 1919 the size had increased again to 26" 2' by 19" 7'.

needs of their communities. In a similar way, the weekly press were supplied with a supplement of content by the War Aims committee which claimed to reach a million (Cabinet Paper GT4354, April 1918: 174). Both would limit the journalist's ability to constitute a narration of the conflict as it involved local people. However, the inclusion of such stories as "A Coventry Corporal's Story" cited above suggests that titles would fulfil this role as and when they were able, in line with the norm of prioritising local stories.

The Government and the press in World War One

The status of the provincial press at this time is recognised by its inclusion in Government attempts to control press output in the run-up to the conflict. Lovelace (1978) documents how the Newspaper Society was included in negotiations over press security in the run-up to World War One. As a founding member of the Joint Standing Committee (Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee), the Newspaper Society pledged its own membership to abide by decisions over censorship as issued by the committee and this voluntary collusion ensured that the British Expeditionary Force was in France before news of its departure was published (ibid: 309). The provincial newspapers were also among those who welcomed the institution of the Official Press Bureau in August 1914 to maintain a flow of information in the wake of Government control of war correspondents and telegraph sources (Lovelace, 1978: 311). When it was up and running, the Press Bureau[64] also provided facilities for newsmen from both London and regional newspapers as well as news (Cook, 1920: 47). Embargoed information was also released to

[64] The bureau operated according to the requirements of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in order to "prevent the leakage of militarily useful information to the enemy"; this act also made it an offence to "spread false reports, spread reports likely to case disaffection to His Majesty or prejudice relations with foreign powers, prejudice recruiting or undermine public confidence in banks or the currency" (Gregory, 2004: 22). Around 700 instructions were issued to guide editors on what content should be submitted for censorship. Its operation was heavily criticised by contemporaries and Haste suggests that it served to conceal from the public the full horror of the conflict in its first year (1977: 31)

the provincial press well in advance via post so that it could meet the same publications times as the London press (ibid: 50).

Lovelace suggests that despite the apparent draconican nature of the press regulations imposed during the First World War, papers retained their rights to express opinions and criticise and that the system of censorship itself relied upon co-operation, rather than force (ibid: 317). This was probably eased by the close ties between newspaper proprietors and the political class (Gregory, 2004: 19). However, others have suggested that in the early part of the war, the relationship between Government and press was deemed so bad as to be characterised by itself, a "state of war" (Sanders and Taylor, 1982: 26). The system itself had no foundation in law until April 1916 (ibid: 23), and this institutionalisation of information management sowed the seeds for the professionalisation of Government communications and the eventual founding of the Ministry of Information (Haste, 1977: 44). By February 1917 the system of information control had been centralised under a Department for Information (ibid: 63) and this organisation was refined again to form the Ministry of Information in March 1918, which was to take centre stage in World War Two (ibid: 78).

Publishing in the face of the adversity of World War Two: censorship

The provincial newspaper industry faced major challenges to its ability to function, including: censorship of content, reduced staffing levels, the destruction of offices and plant in bombing raids and the rationing of newsprint, which limited the typical daily paper to just four pages (Williams 2010: 174). The latter disrupted the advertising revenue stream by limiting the space available. However, as demand outstripped supply, profitability was retained as discussed below. However, the way in which the industry itself

and Government [65]planned to overcome these obstacles is testament to the importance ascribed to the provincial press as part of the war effort.

In 1939 there were 25 morning papers in England, Wales and Scotland, 77 evening papers, six Sunday titles and more than 1,300 weekly papers. These figures remain stable from 1937 through the duration of the Royal Commission (Gerald, 1957: 21). Between 1937 and 1947 circulations of all newspapers also increased substantially, although this rise was halted between 1940 and 1946, reflecting newsprint restrictions. However, between 1937 and 1947 the circulations of the national morning papers had increased by 55.9 per cent, from 9.9 million to 15.4 million, the provincial morning circulations had risen by about 70 per cent for the same period and the provincial evening circulations by nearly 53 per cent (Royal Commission, 1947-49: 80). Sir Walter Layton, chairman of the Rationing Committee of the Newsprint Supply Company, ascribed the increased demand for newspapers to "the stirring events of the war and the dispersal of family units to the Forces or to munition factories" (Layton, 1946: 12).

The outbreak of World War Two signalled an attempt by Government to directly intervene in newspaper content through censorship. That the provincial press was significant in these arrangements is testament to the value placed on them by the Government, which also used titles to carry public information advertisements. The Ministry of Information had been created on the outbreak of war in 1939[66] and its advisory board numbered representatives from the provincial newspaper industry including Lord Iliffe, owner of the *Midland Daily Telegraph*, Lady Denman, of Westminster Press, and WH Bailey, then chairman of the Newspaper Society (Larson, 1941: 417). The Ministry came to be under the leadership of Lord Camrose, owner of the *Daily Telegraph* and co-founder of Allied Newspapers.

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[65] Clampin (2014: 64)) suggests that this Government saw the press as "crucial" to sustaining morale – which is one of the reasons why advertising was continually encouraged as a sign of "normality".

[66] Building largely on the principles established during World War One, the Ministry of Information had been planned before the outbreak of war itself in order to ensure popular support for the conflict by explaining and revealing material to those who were "unlikely to read Parliamentary debates of government White Papers" (Ogilvy-Webb, 1965: 57).

British citizens were forbidden from publishing information which might be useful to the enemy; it was also an offence to publicise military matters. This meant the Ministry scrutinised all copy and photos which had the potential to be militarily sensitive and failure to comply could give cause for the publication to be closed (Williams 2010: 175). Both national and provincial titles were subject to censorship and the organisation of the system took account of the regions via a series of offices in Bristol, Cardiff, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds and Belfast specifically to serve the needs of the provincial press (Fletcher, 1946: 13). In all, around 1,700 volunteers in the regions supported the official machinery; despite this the participation of the press remained largely voluntary (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 63) although submission of material to the censors ensured that editors were safe from potential prosecution should something be published which breached security rules (Fife Clark, 1970: 30). Provincial editors were also invited to monthly meetings in London and these events formed the basis for the formation of the Guild of Newspaper Editors (Pratt Boorman 1961: 16). This voluntary collaboration was revealed to the readership by the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* once war was over as it revealed the secrets of the 'shadow factories'[67] which had been hidden in the city (Fletcher, 1946: 14). "For nearly six years the British Press has held a tremendous responsibility. Many of the most vital secrets of the war have been placed in its keeping, and those secrets have been as safe as if they had been locked in the Chancellor's despatch box"(*CET* 31.5.1945: 3). The Ministry of Information was disbanded in 1946 but such was the recognition for the role of information services that its legacy was the Central Office of Information (Franklin, 1994: 76).

James Curran (Curran and Seaton 2003: 56) argues that the most significant power was Regulation 2D which gave the Home Secretary the power to ban anti-war publications. Although opposition from within and without Parliament was successful in tempering the tenor of the regulation, the

[67] Some 40,000 workers had been employed at the former Coventry car manufacturers making Spitfires and Lancasters. The city produced nearly 19,000 aircraft – or 15.8 per cent of the country's total wartime output (*CET* 11.5.45: 2). As such, the factories can hardly have been secret from a large number of the paper's readership.

Communist *Daily Worker*, which had campaigned about a lack of appropriate air raid shelters, and the *Week* were closed on January 21, 1941. This was despite the small circulation of the *Daily Worker*, which stood at less than one per cent of the total circulation for all daily newspapers, a sale attributed to its sports coverage – including a successful horse race tipster (Williams, 2010: 175). The *Daily Worker* was allowed to re-open 18 months later (Curran and Seaton 2003: 57-62) and Williams (ibid) argues that its closure was part of a wider campaign to curtail the press[68]. The *Daily Mirror* was also subject to widespread pressure, because of its criticism of the Government (Curran and Seaton 2003; Williams, 2010), and Williams argues that censorship did shape war coverage – for instance by glossing over the extent to which the Allied forces were defeated at Dunkirk (Williams 2010: 176). The material effect of censorship was to delay news about the weather and to anonymise reports of attacks on regional towns; thus the Nuneaton-based *Midland Daily Tribune* could not name its own town in reports of a raid which killed 100 people and damaged more than 10,000 buildings (Fletcher, 1946: 48).

The Government professed the value of the provincial press as a conduit for communicating with people. Advertising placed in the regional press grew to promote the work of no fewer than 24 departments, including the Ministry of Food. Among these, Food Facts (see Appendix 5). served an information purpose but were also designed to boost morale by "showing that a besieged nation could feed itself adequately and sometimes even pleasantly" (Ogilvy-Webb, 1965: 59). The Newspaper Society quotes a survey that showed that 91 per cent of readers read the Food Facts and that 27 per cent of readers actually cut out and kept them (Fletcher, 1946: 13). The Editorial Director of the National Savings Committee said in 1941 of provincial papers "they go into every home. They are read by every member of the family. They are, in an enormous number of cases, afterwards posted to relatives or friends in all parts of the country, of the Empire and of the world. They are sent to our

[68] New research carried out as part of the AHRC-funded project into newspapers and World War Two at the University of Aberystwyth suggests that the national press did not support the *Daily Worker* at this time (Nicholas, 2014). The title had though been highly critical of those London-based papers it saw as colluding with Government and not telling the truth about war.

soldiers, sailors, and airman. They play a vital part in the civic, religious, industrial and social life of the nation." (Fletcher, 1946: 13).

Publishing in the face of the adversity of World War Two: staffing.

During the course of the conflict there was a near 80 per cent fall in the 90,000 people employed in the newspaper industry, due partly to titles shrinking their operations to preserve resources, but also equally to losing staff to the war effort. The Provincial Newspaper Society notes that one larger provincial title lost more than 400 members of staff to the services (Fletcher, 1946: 10). As previously mentioned, these wartime papers were also being produced by staff whose number was depleted by the call–up. One editor in charge of three weekly papers recalls how his total staff of 23 had joined the Armed Forces. He was producing the papers with "outside help" including three formerly retired members of staff, two of whom were aged 70 and one 83. Another weekly editor catalogued how he had lost his entire dispatch department, his advertising and circulation managers and a third of his printing workforce – when he used to have a staff of 50.

> " …The rotary press, which trade union regulations stipulate shall be manned by four men, is now in the charge of one man, and he aged 67. He is assisted by a C3 van driver and a man drawn from the retired ranks of labour and who sweeps the floors during the greater part of the week. This rotary printer has also sees to the stereotyping and plate casting, and to help him out we borrow a stereotype from an associated office on publishing day because their day of publication is different from ours.
> "This borrowed man works all day and half the night on his own paper, goes home to wash and rest for about two hours, travels 50 miles and works from 9am to 10pm on our publication day.
> "The type setting department consists of two men approaching 70 years of age, one operator with an artificial leg, one just recovering from an operation, one gassed in the last war, one apprentice with cardiac trouble, one other adult.
> "There is an apprentice approaching 18 whom we expect to lose in two months' time" (Fletcher, 1946: 10-11)

New machinery and spares were impossible to come by, so that the newspapers practised the make-do-and-mend philosophy they preached (Fletcher, 1946: 11) while contributing to the "will to win" by supporting war charities such as fighter funds or "comforts" for the forces (Fletcher, 1946: 16). Not least among preparations were the arrangements made between rival papers to co-operate should one be put out of action. These were foremost in risk areas, including the port cities of Hull, Liverpool and Tyneside, and were enacted so that papers were able to continue publishing. Following raids on Plymouth, the *Western Morning News* and *Western Evening Herald* were printed in Exeter until replacement premises were created on Dartmoor. When the Exeter paper suffered a similar attack, it moved to the tennis courts at the Earl of Devon's seat at Powderham Park, seven miles away. Such were the demands of the press that special power lines had to be installed (Fletcher, 1946: 19-20). The *Newcastle Journal* and *North Mail* had a second production centre in the pithead of a former coal mine at Heddon, eight miles from their primary city base (Fletcher, 1946: 67). Among the worst hit was Southern Newspapers Ltd, which lost its *Southern Daily Echo* offices in Southampton in 1940 and those of its sister paper the *Dorset Daily Echo* in Weymouth two years later; for 13 months three papers were produced from the company's remaining offices in Bournemouth. Co-operation was also evident between competing companies; in Bristol the *Evening Post* and *Evening World* shared offices and even an edition during raids on the city (Fletcher, 1946: 28).

The effect on morale of a press which was voluntarily supporting the war effort was also recognised (Curran and Seaton 2003: 63) and similar to World War One, this "system of nods and winks" between ministers and newspaper proprietors who shared a cultural background was to be characterised as "the British way of censorship" (Williams, 2010: 173). For the provincial press, a key contributor to the morale of the population was seen to be its ability to publish in the face of adverse conditions and the Newspaper Society's commentary on the role of the provincial press during World War Two emphasised each paper's worth to its community. Speaking in October 1939, Sir William Bailey, President of the Newspaper Society, which represents publishers of provincial newspapers, said:

> "It is now a matter for each and everyone of us to see that, unless circumstances make it impossible, our papers come out for the continued information of our readers and the sustaining of their morale in what may prove to be a long struggle." (Fletcher 1946: 5)

Publishing in the face of the adversity of World War Two: newsprint

Government control of newsprint had been imposed incrementally from 1939 and lasted until 1956, firstly as a result of the enemy attacks on merchant shipping, and, latterly, due to the country's need to balance its economic deficit. Before the war, the British were the largest consumers of a newsprint per head (Layton, 1946: 5) but because of the industry's reliance on imported paper – or imported woodpulp from which to make the paper – the industry was crippled by the war which put a near-stop to the international trade. Before the outbreak of war, 2.5 million tons of paper and pulp were imported each year; this fell to a low of 0.5 million tons in 1943 and were only gradually increased in 1946. Its effect was to dramatically cut the availability of paper to all newspapers. In 1938 the average pagination of a provincial daily and evening paper was 13; by 1946 this figure stood at four broadsheet pages (Layton, 1946: 8).

In 1940 members of the provincial newspaper industry joined with their national counterparts to form the Newsprint Supply Company to introduce a rationing system; the initial membership included Associated Newspapers (publishers of the *Daily Mail, Evening News, Sunday Dispatch*), *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial Ltd*, the Westminster Press (publishers of the *Birmingham Gazette* and *Bradford Argus*), Southern Newspapers Ltd, London Express Newspapers Ltd, *Manchester Guardian*, News of the World Ltd, The Daily News Ltd (*News Chronicle* and *Star*) The *Yorkshire Post*, the *Birmingham Post* and the *Bristol Evening Post* (Layton: 1946: 9). This organisation gained Government consent to oversee imports of newsprint, introduced a single price for the product and shared it out relative to circulations of each paper, which had the

effect of “pegging” [69]circulations at a set amount. Newspaper pages also became smaller and lighter in weight and titles supplied numbers of copies according to the numbers ordered in an effort to stop wastage through “sale or return”. This limited choice for the reader, who could only buy a paper if it had been previously reserved.

Table 8.1: Changes in weekly newsprint consumption during World War Two

	Pre-war		**May 1946**		
	Tons	% of total	Tons	% of total	% of pre-war
London papers					
Penny mornings	8,913	42.5	1,796	31.5	20
Penny evenings	1,548	7.25	404	7	26
All others	4,392	20.75	1,246	22	28.5
TOTAL	**14,853**	**70.5**	**3,446**	**60.5**	**23.25**
English Prov, Scottish and NI papers					
Penny mornings	1,118	5.25	344	6	30.75
Penny evenings	2,923	14	966	17	33
All others (chiefly weeklies)	2,152	10.25	946	16.5	44
Total	**6,193**	**29.5**	**2,256**	**39.5**	**36.5**
Total for all papers	**21,046**	**100**	**5,702**	**100**	**27**

Source: Layton, 1946: 11

An examination of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* enables us to chart the impact of these restrictions on a typical provincial daily paper. For the purposes of the study, the first copy of May from 1938 to 1947 was examined: On Monday May 2 1938 the one-penny paper was a 10-page broadsheet newspaper. Page one featured news and adverts. Page two was an “entertainments” page, with a full two columns dedicated to advertisements for the various cinemas in the paper’s circulation area. This page also included radio listings. Page four had one column of classifieds (births, marriages and deaths), plus the paper’s

[69] Because the ration levels were based on circulations in 1940 and 1941 some argued that they were anomalous because the sale of provincial evening papers had been particularly badly hit by the blackout and sales in coastal towns had been further reduced by evacuations (Layton,1946 :15). These “pegged” circulation levels persisted beyond the end of the war.

opinion column, letters and a diary section. Page five was news; page six was dedicated to "women" and included a children's corner. Page seven was sport, page eight was filled with classified adverts (apart from one column of sport), page nine was classified adverts and page 10 was news. All editorial pages included pictures and illustrations. Even the paper's own heading is extensive, listing district offices, and various phone numbers for the paper (*MDT*, 2.5.39).

The paper for Monday May 1 1939 followed a similar pattern but extended to 12 pages. The additional pages were filled with news. By this era the design of the paper had become more sophisticated, including the addition of "cut-out" pictures (*MDT*, 2.5.39). This indicates that this was a time of plenty for the title in terms of resources and one edition in this week of May extends to 16 pages, including one full-page advertisement for the Co-op and another advert fillling two thirds of a page for city store Owen Owen (*MDT*, 4.5.39).

By May 1940, however, the newspaper reduced to a 12-page tabloid in a move designed to save paper. The change, which included the use of a new font, was so dramatic as to warrant a comment in the paper's own opinion section, which explained how newsprint supplies had been limited to 30 per cent of their pre-war levels (*MDT*, 6.5.40: 6).

> ""*The Midland Daily Telegraph*" appears to-day in a new form, made necessary by the drastic rationing of newsprint consequent upon the desirability of conserving British Shipping, further aggravated by the German attack upon Norway…..Smaller newspapers are thus the general order of the day, and must be accepted by publishers and readers alike as one of the lesser inconveniences of the war.
> "In order to meet this position, "*The Midland Daily Telegraph*" is being produced in a form which makes the maximum use of every inch of paper passed through the machines. Slightly smaller type of the most modern design has been introduced, photographs will be smaller, and advertisements restricted. We shall make every endeavour to maintain popular features in modified form, but these must of necessity take a secondary place to the full service of war news, which must remain the chief function and responsibility of newspapers in war time. We hope to maintain that responsibility to the full." (ibid)

The most marked reduction was in the number of classified adverts. While pictures were used, they were limited to a column width only. Even the newspaper's own heading was reduced to list the head office only (ibid). As the war progressed, the paper again reduced in size via a cut in pagination to eight pages, a size which lasted beyond the end of the war; victims of the cuts were the women's page and children's corner and reduction in the amount of sport coverage (*MDT*, 1.5.41). By May 1942 the paper had also increased in price to three half pence, although the price reduced temporarily to one penny in November of that year when the paper is re-named the *Coventry Evening Telegraph (CET)*, in recognition of the growth of the city from one with a population of 50,000 in 1891 to 250,000 in 1941 (*CET* 17.11.1941: 1)

Advertising in World War Two

Advertisers were particularly hard hit by the restriction on space available to them. As papers were smaller in real terms there was just eight per cent of the pre-war space available (Layton 1946: 16). Fletcher describes how provincial editors shared out advertising space between national and local sources (Fletcher, 1946:11). At the same time papers were also under pressure to find space for Government advertisements. Demand for space for classified adverts also increased "out of all proportion to pre-war usage of this newspaper feature" (Fletcher, 1946:11) as readers scoured the 'smalls' to access goods which had become scarce during war time and traders denied space for display advertising also turned to the classified columns. In Spring 1940 the Newspaper Proprietors' Association had recommended a 25 per cent increase in advertising rates. Clampin suggests that the most draconian controls came under the Control of Paper (No 48) Order of March 1942 which set ratios between advertising and editorial; this limited advertising in morning and Sunday titles to 40 per cent, to 45 per cent for evening and to 55 per cent of total space in weeklies (2014: 64) in titles which were already smaller due to the restrictions described above. The move was intended by Government to maintain the 'readability' of titles rather than to allow them to be swamped with commercial content (ibid).

Newspaper production then became a balancing act as titles struggled to maintain a façade of normality within the context of reduced resources. The pre-war *Portsmouth Evening News*, for instance, had been a 12-page penny newspaper which still carried adverts on its front page. Owners Southern Newspapers were among the founder members of the Newspaper Supply Company and by September 1939 had modernised to include news on page one. When pagination was reduced to six pages, the title still squeezed in a wide variety of content. The edition of September 1, 1940 included public notices, letters, radio listings and the opinion column on page two. Page three was more than half-filled with display adverts while page four – the favoured place for the prominent Food Facts advert – carried sport, news and numerous cinema adverts. Page five was totally given over to classifieds (so a sixth of the total space available) and page six carried news, some adverts and the stop press column. Two years later again, in the wake of the Control of Paper Order (No 48) cited above, the paper was redesigned and turned into and eight-page, reduced size paper set across six columns, rather than seven as before. It is likely that this gave the impression of more news – now carried across pages one, three, four, five and eight – although in reality the proportion would have been fairly stable. Similarly two pages of the revised format were given over to classified adverts. What was significant in these papers was the pattern of content; there may have been fewer features and sport but this content still appeared on a regular basis – alongside adverts for leisure pursuits and goods – to give the impression of some sense of normality.

The result of these restrictions on the industry was that income for advertising dropped from around 60 to 30 per cent of total, even as rates rose (Williams 2010: 176). Profit margins were maintained by an increase in cover price – such as that exhibited by the *Midland Daily Telegraph* – so that advertising revenue as a proportion of total revenue dropped for the same period from 58 per cent to 43 per cent for the provincial evening newspaper market (Royal Commission 1949: 82).

This made wartime a highly prosperous period for the newspaper industry and the Royal Commission report of 1949 notes that profits had doubled

between 1937 and 1946. There were also fewer individual titles running at a loss when the same two years were compared (18 per cent of all titles compared with three per cent in the post-war period) because less popular titles were able to retain a healthy share of advertising (ibid: 81). [70]

Relaxation of these restrictions began in September 1946 when a short period of 'free sales' – unsullied by strategies to boost circulations – was aimed at letting 'natural circulations' re-establish themselves. This return to normality had to be controlled due to a lack of supplies and a lack of foreign currency with which to pay for them; at the same time a three-fold increase in price of newsprint, from £10 to £30 a ton, brought about by the shortage, meant that papers could only have got much bigger if cover prices had increased (Layton: 1946: 15). Thus the austerity newspaper lasted beyond the conflict itself and the producers of those newspapers perfected the art of publishing in shortened formats by learning the "art of compression" (Layton, 1946: 19) The ending of these restrictions was also painful for some titles which disappeared altogether in the face of the resumption of competition both from other newspapers but also in the face of competition from the burgeoning commercial television industry whose advertising revenue grew from zero in its founding year of 1955 to outstrip all that spent in national newspapers by 1958 (Williams 2010: 174). In all there were 11 fewer newspaper titles in 1961 than in 1948 – with the biggest fall in numbers among the provincial morning class of newspapers, as the table below demonstrates.

[70] At a national level, Williams (2101: 74) argues that this resulted in more news in the popular press because there was less need for it to chase readers). Curran argues that this economic structure enabled a more radical press to flourish and resulted in a re-politicised press which supported post-war social reforms (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 64).

Table 8.2. Number of daily and Sunday newspapers published in the UK in 1948 and 1961

	At December 31 1948	At December 31 1961
National morning	10	11
National Sunday	10	8
London evening	3	2
Total	**23**	**21**
Provincial morning		
England	18	12
Wales/ Monmouthshire	1	1
Scotland	6	5
Northern Ireland	3	3
Total	**28**	**21**
Provincial evening		
England	63	63
Wales/ Monmouthshire	3	3
Scotland	9	8
Northern Ireland	2	1
Total	**77**	**75**
Provincial Sunday		
England	4	3
Wales/ Monmouthshire	-	-
Scotland	2	2
Northern Ireland	-	-
Total	**6**	**5**

Source: Royal Commission on the Press 1961-1962 Report`: 171

The *Midland Daily Telegraph* and the Coventry Blitz.

The offices of the evening paper in Coventry were destroyed during the widespread destruction of the city on the night of November 14 1940. By sending staff initially to Birmingham, and then to Nuneaton, the paper continued to publish (Fletcher, 1946: 43). [71] Based in Hertford Street in the

[71] The blitz on Coventry on the night of November 14, 1940, was so widespread as to have given rise to the verb "to coventrate" – to destroy by indiscriminate bombing.

city centre, the offices of the paper were hit and the presses and library were destroyed. The editorial and commercial departments were also flooded and put out of action. However, the title prided itself (and indeed still does) on its ability to continue to serve its community by publishing even in the face of such wholesale destruction.

The paper had in place an emergency agreement with the *Birmingham Gazette,* 18 miles away, to shift production should the Coventry centre be put out of action. This had already been in used in the days leading up to the night of November 14 – 15 when smaller raids interrupted power supplies to the city to the extent that the Linotype machines could not be used (there was not enough gas pressure to melt the lead used in typesetting). The Newspaper Society (Fletcher, 1946: 42-46) describes how on the morning of November 15 the entire staff moved to Birmingham, with the exception of reporters who were left behind to cover the story of the devastation, working out of the Post Office where a room and a phone line were provided. The claim by both producers and the Newspaper Society was that the paper went on sale that day – albeit not in the city centre itself – not least because there were no newsagents left. [72]

> "The continuance of the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* and its prompt appearance on sale in the ruined city had a psychological effect on the community. The bewildered public realised that the life of the city had not been entirely paralysed".(Fletcher, 1946: 44).

The Newspaper Society's narration prioritises the efforts of staff to maintain publication. In 1942 the *Yorkshire Evening Press* and *Yorkshire Herald* were produced from Leeds for six days after their own base was damaged. The proprietor wrote:

> "In a spirit of determination. .. the men, women, girls and boys … have toiled and sweated practically and continuously in dirt and filth to turn

There were an estimated 1,000 deaths on that night and 32,000 homes were destroyed.

[72] This claim is disputed by the Communist Party, which had a strong membership among the factory workers in the city, and which said its own publication, the *Daily Worker*, was the only paper to be on sale thanks to the efforts of members who brought them from London, then sold them on the street (Hinton, 1980: 95).

> chaos into disorder and then disorder into production…Day after day, night after night, they never flinched or complained or swerved their purpose." (Fletcher, 1946: 62).

This construction is also evident in the columns of the newspapers; even the one-page emergency joint edition produced in Bristol by the *Evening World* and *Evening Post* includes reference to a statue of a rampant lion in the doorway of a wrecked shop " defiantly challenging entrance" (Fletcher, 1946: 37). A close reading of the *Midland Daily Telegraph* in the immediate aftermath of the 1940 reveals how the paper sought to support its community – both via the stories it chose to cover but also via the advertisements and public notices, which provided a clear information service to the city.

The first report of the blitz on Coventry appeared in the paper of the morning of November 15 1940. Despite the widespread devastation, the lead story was the "biggest-ever" air raid on Berlin – probably due to the timing of the damage to Coventry. The story about the city's ordeal fills the first three columns on the front page. In addition to headlining the 1,000 casualties and the destruction of the cathedral, it states "The people of Coventry bore their ordeal with Great Courage", set in bold, capitalised type. The story is also not just limited to what was destroyed but states what was still functioning: the damaged hospital is still open and feeding centres were helping those made homeless (*MDT*, 15.11.1940: 1). In addition, the report included damage to other anonymised towns in the Midlands and quoted the brief, official communiqué: "Last night enemy air attacks were mainly directed against the Midlands. A very heavy attack was made on one Midland town." (*MDT*, 15.11.1940:1)

The paper the next day is unequivocal: "Crippled Coventry carries on" was the strapline over the headline of "The King's visit to Damaged City", and a sub-deck of "swift measure to restore normal life". The report of King's visit was touching in its defiance: "It was a brave people the King met. Everywhere he went the King was met with cheers and frequent shouts of such slogans as "We can take it". The newspaper celebrated the story of the greengrocer who opened up his bombed shop with the notice, "Business as usual, nuts to Hitler"

(*MDT*, 16.11.40: 1). The spirit of Coventry is personified in Mrs Thomas Arnold, featured in the newspaper on Wednesday November 27, 1940. Aged 73 Mrs Thomas has done nothing more newsworthy than stay at home – it's just her house is the last one standing in her road. "People who do not know the steel and whipcord of her character would consider her too delicate to stand the slightest shock," the MDT reporter wrote, "but at the age of 73 she is the person who typifies the spirit of the women of Coventry." (*MDT*, 27.11.40: 4).

The *Midland Daily Telegraph* of this period also conveyed practical information. The Ministry of Information recognised the importance of newspapers in providing information and the Regional Information Officers saw reviving the press in bombed areas as a "vital task" because it alleviated any sense of isolation (McClaine, 1979: 134). Contemporary Ministry of Information reports suggested there was a hiatus in official communications in Coventry in the immediate aftermath of the bombing due to a lack of preparedness by official organisations (McClaine, 1979: 131). The *MDT* of November 16 told the population there was no power, but that the postal service should be back up and running in a day. Don't use the phones unless necessary, citizens were advised; if you have got a car, lend a hand transporting people; if your home is undamaged, take in as many people as you can. This service developed over the ensuing days as different organisations were faced with reaching different people. Did you work for Owen, Owen, the department store which had been bombed, one advert asks? "All instructions to staff will be published through the columns of this paper" (*MDT*, 19.11.40:2). The same edition carried a warning from the Ministry of Health about the danger of typhoid due to extensive damage to the sewers.

The newspaper did not though dedicate space to its own story of continued publication. The only indication given of the *Midland Daily Telegraph's* predicament was a brief mention of damage to a 'newspaper office' within one story (MDT, 16.11.40: 1). An earpiece advert on the front page of Monday, November 18 says the Hertford Street office was "open for business as usual". By November 22, the paper reported its phone line has been restored, "a tribute to the Post Office engineers". Another indication of the disruption was

the changing public notice stating where the paper was printed. So, November 15 – printed by the Birmingham Gazette Ltd, Corporation Street, Birmingham. By December 9 the paper had found a new home at the offices of the Nuneaton Newspaper Ltd in the nearby market town. The exception is via the comment piece, "A Warwickshire Man's Diary", which appeared regularly in the paper. In the edition of November 30 it carried a tribute to the *Midland Daily Telegraph* from "an old journalistic friend".

> "The city has reason to be proud of the fact that despite all that a fiendish enemy could do, your paper has surmounted every conceivable obstacle and has not for a single day suspended publication." (*MDT*, 30.11.40: 6)

However, this construction of a defiant community put forward by the paper is at odds with evidence from the Mass Observation reports of the city in the aftermath of the attack and also the dissenting voice of the *Daily Worker*. Mass Observation began in 1937 in an attempt to supply accurate observations of everyday life. After the outbreak of World War Two the organisation geared its attempts towards the war effort and began a wide-scale observation of the reaction of communities to the blitz, including that in Coventry (Harrison, 1976: 11-15). The reports left by the unit contradict the 'blitz spirit' embodied in the paper to the extent that it is worth quoting at length.

> "…..the investigators found an unprecedented dislocation and depression in Coventry on Friday [the day after the bombing]. There were more open signs of hysteria, terror, neurosis, observed in one evening than during the hole of the past two months together in all areas. Women were seen to cry, to scream, to tremble all over, to faint in the street, to attack a fireman, and so on.
> "The overwhelmingly dominant feeling on Friday was the feeling of utter helplessness [original emphasis]. The tremendous impact of the previous night had left people practically speechless in many cases. And it made them feel impotent…On Friday evening, there were several signs of suppressed panic as darkness approached. In two cases people were seen fighting to get on to cars which they thought would take them out in the country, though in fact, as the drivers insisted, the cars were going just up the road." (Mass Observation 495: 2)

Official reports indicated that morale was similarly poor in other provincial cites subjected to widespread devastation[73]. In Coventry the effect was magnified by the concentrated nature of destruction; because the town was relatively small, everyone knew someone who had been directly affected by the bombing. This accelerated both the impact and the exaggeration of that impact, the Mass Observation report proffered. The city had also attracted many migrant workers to work in the aircraft industry which expanded enormously in the late 1930s when Shadow Factories were set up by the car manufacturers for which the city was famed it produce arms (Hinton, 1980: 93). As such these workers had no particular allegiance to Coventry and were ready to condemn it as "finished". In addition, official measures to alleviate suffering were inadequate to the extent that the Mass Observation made recommendations to prevent such a failure in future, including the provision of adequate air raid shelters – something the *Daily Worker* campaigned for –, rest centres, mobile canteens and transport. Part of these recommendations included improving the public's access to information via loud-speaker vans and "special facilities for getting newspapers delivered and sold in the streets" (Mass Observation 495:6).

The Provincial Press and morale

The notion of morale is recognised as a complex construction by both contemporary sources and academics (McLaine, 1979; Calder, 1991). Calder theorises this process in his analysis of the blitz spirit – a contemporary construction of Britain in World War Two which draws on the heroism of the First World War 'Tommy" to construct the myth of a nation which can take it (Calder, 1991:16-18). In this reading the blitz spirit is a purposeful construction of the national as resilient and defiant by the elite (including

[73] In Bristol, people felt let down by Government, Portsmouth suffered from looting and lawlessness which the police were unable to control, and Plymouth had been pushed beyond it's limit. The Bishop of Winchester reported that "morale had collapsed" in parish after parish in Southampton (Ponting, 1990: 164).

propagandists and politicians), embodied in Churchill's now-legendary rallying cry, quoted at length by Calder: "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end…we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender (ibid:110). It is epitomised by the phrase "we can take it", at first applied to London and then widely adopted by provincial victims of the bombing. Heartfield (2005) traces the origin on the phrase to a Ministry of Information film, *London Can Take it*. This London-centric message, argues Kelsey (2010), became the model for the nation – despite the reality of the situation in provincial cities. Provincial journalists were also given tours of the blitz-stricken capital, during which the ability of Londoners to "take it" was emphasised (Calder, 1991: 128). In this way the provincial press became part of the construction of this myth, presenting coverage of disaster in its own area in a way which propagated the perspective, which "could now be transferred *en bloc* to any other city." (Calder, 1991: 128).

In the way that the Mass Observation suggests that *the Midland Daily Telegraph's* reporting was overtly heroic, Kelsey compares this construction to the reality to analyse the strength of the myth of the blitz spirit. While propaganda proclaimed "London can take it", in fact that the opposite was often true; contemporary reports of life in East End revealed a lack of staples like bread and milk, or essential services like gas and water. Crime increased by 60 per cent, juvenile crime by 41 per cent as did the systematic persecution of racial and ethnic minorities. At the same time class divides were amplified as the rich continued to enjoy a good standard of living while the working classes were sheltering underground (Kelsey, 2010: 26-27). However, Heartfield (2005) argues that the myth also evoked pride for its contemporary audience; this, therefore, meant that it was difficult for those who felt differently to speak out despite the reality they might be facing. Despite the strength of the myth, some voices in the provinces were prepared to speak out about their experiences. One civilian in beleaguered Liverpool recalled marches in favour of peace (Levine, 2006: 412); another how "Churchill was telling us how brave we all were and that we would never surrender. I tell you something – the people of Liverpool would have surrendered overnight if they could have. It's all right for people in authority, down in their steel-lined

dugouts but we were there and it was just too awful. People were walking out of the town to escape the bombing" (Levine, 2006:412).

In the *Midland Daily Telegraph* the criticism of the city's reaction to the bombing was muted; the odd letter of criticism, the appeal for information about a missing girl, who, it was reported two weeks later, had been dead all along, giving a hint of the chaos and grief; the suggestions of rocketing rents for those homes which remained intact, reports of homeless people who had been wandering the streets for a week in search of shelter, indicative of the lack of support for those in need. But the newspaper presented a picture of unerring positivity, which was criticised by observers, who saw "exaggerated accounts of 'marvellous courage' etc. put out in the press" as "out of key with real feeling in Coventry, the courage of which is quite enough not to require being turned into a miracle….. Our evidence shows that the exaggerated treatment also makes people suspicious and has now been done so often that it encourages few." (Mass Observation 495: 9)

An assessment of the extent to which the provincial press was able to contribute to the morale of the civilian population is beyond the scope of this study. What can be established, however, is that the provincial press constructed a narrative for itself of serving the good of the community by supporting its morale. It was understood to be significant in this process by contemporaries within and without of the industry. Concessions were also made to the provincial press in terms of censorship, such as allowing them to name local targets for bombing while suppressing the same information in the national press, and by confidential briefings to local editors who could then deny unfounded rumours (Balfour, 1979: 203). At the same time the trading conditions created by the conflict made wartime highly profitable for provincial newspapers. Even in war time, the industry's claim to serve the good of the community has to be understood alongside its strategy to ensure the financial health of the business and maximise profitability. It is this strategy which takes centre stage in the discussion of the introduction of computer technology into the provincial newspaper industry which is at the heart of the next chapter.

Chapter 9: ‘New technology’ and deunionisation in the provincial press

> “[*The Coventry Evening Telegraph*] has one of the most complex editorial systems to integrate its various editions. To indicate its scope, here are the titles and timings of the editions on a typical day, Friday 19 February 1988; 4 are for the Coventry area and the others are for surrounding communities. The timings are ‘off-stone’ times for the final page – the ‘off stone’ term being derived from the days of hot metal printing, now replaced by electronics. The front-page headlines are also quoted.
>
> “10.45am — *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, ‘Lunch’ edition.
> Land Rover Deadlock: strike is on
> “1.00pm — *Nuneaton Evening Telegraph*
> ‘90 More to Go” sour news at Sterling’…
> *Bedworth Evening Telegraph*
> Same headlines and front page as Nuneaton.
> “1.10pm — *Leamington and Warwick Evening Telegraph*
> ‘Strike Mars “Victory” at Pottertons’….
> *Stratford-on-Avon Evening Telegraph*
> Same headlines and front page as Leamington edition
> “1.15pm — *Rugby Evening Telegraph*
> ‘Escape from a Takeover turns sour’
> “1.40pm — *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, ‘Late City’ edition
> ‘Overkill on city staff is admitted’….
> “2.15pm — *Coventry Evening Telegraph* ‘City Final’ edition
> ‘City Payroll is Over the Top’…..
> “4.15pm — *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, ‘Night Final’
> The ‘city centre’ edition, maintained in case of major late news in the afternoon
>
> “For the 5 primary editions there are changes on up to 6 or 7 inside news pages. The Nuneaton, Leamington, Rugby, Bedworth and Stratford titles are published every day, with 2 further editions specially flagged for Kenilworth and Hinckley. The Bedworth and Stratford editions have extra slip pages 3 days a week.” (Hetherington, 1989: 131-2)

Alistair Hetherington describes in detail the workings of the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* in 1988. Writing about the paper as part of a survey of the local

news landscape he captures the workings of 100 journalists producing 11 editions of the established newspaper. The development of the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* has been charted at regular intervals in this thesis; this is a portrait of it at its peak with a circulation of 96,000 in Coventry and Warwickshire (ibid: 131).

This description also highlights key areas of development for the provincial press at this time; firstly we have numerous editions, many of which have a localised title, which accounts for the rise in the number of evening papers at a time of continued increasing concentration of ownership for newspapers. Secondly, Hetherington describes how "that production is made easier by the introduction of electronic equipment. Stories can be stacked in word processor 'baskets', and alternative versions can be prepared simultaneously. Editors, news editors, sub-editors and picture editors all have access to the texts in preparation, without interrupting whoever is working on them." (ibid: 139).

Writing only of the editorial team, Hetherington's description belies the seismic changes experienced in the provincial newspaper industry in the 1970s and 1980s. This is an industry that was restructured by the introduction of computerised newspaper production, enabled by a politically-motivated move to emasculate the unions which had dominated the industry for the preceding 80 years. At the same time the newspaper market itself was influenced by rising production costs – which drove the will to introduce efficiency measures made possible by new technology – and an ever-increasing concentration of ownership of provincial newspapers by conglomerates for whom newspapers were just one revenue stream among many. In addition, increased competition from free newspapers and other local news providers – including television and radio – meant more people chasing what profit there was.

This chapter examines the legacy of this process of technological innovation, introduced against a backdrop of the recession of the 1970s. As such it describes at length the economic circumstances which enabled the provincial newspaper industry to harness new technology to improve profitability; the

depth of this analysis acknowledges the impact of these changes on both the shape of ownership of newspapers, but also the context in which those who produced those titles were working and indeed their ability to serve the community they professed to focus on in the face of more homogenised, centralised and remote working practices. The result was an increasingly commercialised provincial newspaper industry, operating in an increasingly remote relationship with the community it professed to serve, with a deunionised workforce which lacked the means to either resist or benefit from the changes.

This analysis does not construct the provincial newspaper as victim of technological determinism. While improvements in production processes are undoubtedly significant to this period of development, their legacy owes more to the way it enabled an ideological shift in the purpose of the newspaper, than in the processes themselves. Curran argues that the effect of new technology introduced in the 1980s in the national newspaper industry has been largely "mythologised"; while it did restructure the production workforce, the idea of new technology as revolutionary was a "rainbow that came and went" (ibid: 101) because computerisation left the basic economic structure of the newspaper industry unchanged. Similarly, this analysis positions technological innovation against that economic backdrop – of monopolistic circulation areas, which guarantee advertising revenues and, therefore increases reliance on them for profitability – and sees it as a tool in facilitating the industry's pursuit of profit. The reliance on advertising income stream is such that the free newspaper becomes an established and competitive form, which employs new technology so that a few journalists can produce entire titles. Increasingly companies diversify so that the newspaper is just one interest among many and is functionally no different as a profit centre than a wallpaper factory.

The result of this process is newspapers held for the benefit of shareholder profit alone. This marks an ideological shift which redefined the purpose of newspaper content so that its social role becomes subsumed to the purpose of profit and editorial is one cost among others to be controlled (Simpson, 1981:115). As such, new technology fails to deliver the possibility of

increased choice in newspapers – and therefore augment the Fourth Estate (Curran and Seaton, 2003: 353). Such is the impact of the changes charted here that they are at the core of the arguments framing the relationship between provincial newspapers and their communities (as analysed in depth in Chapters 10 and 11) and the economic context which currently frames the discourse of decline surrounding the industry (see Chapter 12).

The changing shape of ownership.

When ACAS (the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service) surveyed the provincial newspaper industry in 1974, it found the trend towards the concentration of ownership of the industry established in the aftermath of the World War Two had continued. Looking at the UK as a whole, around 200 companies owned between one and 23 titles, which were organised around 280 'publishing houses'. [74] These were centres for newspaper production and associated printing activities (ACAS, 1977: 6-7). Of these, 115 were in the hands of 'groups', which owned more than one publishing house; the largest of these were Westminster Press, Thomson Regional Newspapers, Associated Newspapers, Scottish and Universal Investments Ltd and United Newspapers. The first three of these also held interests in national papers (ibid). This meant that the 17 morning papers published in 1974 were produced out of 17 publishing houses but were in the hands of just 12 different companies. The ownership of the evening press was more concentrated with 75 titles produced in individual houses owned by just 30 companies. These titles were often stable-mates with morning and Sunday papers – all of which were published from houses that also published evening papers (ibid). The weekly newspaper market had seen the largest increase in the concentration of ownership with the top groups holding one third of all titles, as opposed to around 15 per cent in 1961. The concentration of ownership was also

[74] This compared with more than 490 separate companies in 1961 (Royal Commission, Vol 1, 1977: 20).

increasingly consolidated in geographically regional areas (Royal Commission, Vol 1, 1977: 25)
In 1974, around 45,000 people worked in provincial newspaper, compared with 35,000 in the national newspaper industry. Nearly half, 42 per cent worked in production and 22 per cent in editorial. These proportions varied, though, from title to title and generally speaking, the higher the circulation, the lower the proportion of production employees (ACAS 1977: 12-13). In comparison the national industry employed more production staff (58 per cent) – an anomaly which the ACAS report was unable to explain (ibid: 12) although it may have been due to the established practice of union over-manning at national titles. Across both sectors, just 28 per cent of workers were women, making up most of the tele-ad departments (82 per cent) and clerical sections (72 per cent). Conversely they made up just 17 per cent of the editorial work force and only five per cent of management (ACAS, ibid: 14). Significantly these businesses had also become increasingly diversified so that newspaper publishing was just one revenue stream among many, and, sometimes, a lesser stream at that. This marked a shift in company structure since 1950 (Royal Commission, Vol 1 1977: 141). The Royal Commission of 1977 found no evidence of this structure being abused, for instance by papers showing favouritism to allied interests (ibid: 149). But it remarked that "the British press is now owned to an usual extent by businesses with outside interests which have come in recent years to predominate over press interests" (ibid)[75]. This meant that unprofitable titles could be cross-subsidised either by profitable titles, or by other business sectors.

The changing economic landscape of newspaper production had been a driving force in the creation of the 1977 Royal Commission on the Press – the

[75] Reed International Ltd epitomised this diversification. It was a holding company for a group of businesses ranging from the "production and marketing of decorative products including wall coverings, paint, textiles, furnishing fabrics and carpets, the printing and publishing of newspapers, consumer and business magazines, books, directories and general printing; and the manufacture and marketing of building products" (Royal Commission, 1977, Vol II. Appendix A). Its business interests also extended to Australia, Canada and South Africa. This meant its holdings of 17 UK-based newspapers, including the *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror*, accounted for just under 20 per cent of its total profits. Even the Daily Mail and General Trust, which included Associated Newspapers, held interests as diverse as furniture, transport and restaurants in addition to its substantial holdings of newspapers (ibid).

third to be held by Government into the newspaper industry in some 30 years. Not only were MPs concerned about the effect of ownership on diversity of newspapers, which should have been regulated following the introduction of legislation requiring newspaper acquisitions to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1965 (Royal Commission, Vol 1 1977: 4), but they were also interested in editorial standards and, in echoes of the prompt for the 1940s commission, a supposed anti-Labour press bias (ibid: 2). By 1977 there were 12 provincial morning papers in England and Wales, compared with 18 in 1948 each competing with the national press, rather than with each other (Royal Commission, Vol 1 1977: 13). It is worth noting that at this time the *Manchester Guardian* (considered a national title) the *Daily Telegraph* and the popular daily nationals all published a northern edition. However, with a total circulation of just one million a day, there were also gaps in the regional mornings, with the South East and East Midlands of England both without this class of newspaper (ibid). At the same time there were a total of 77 evening newspapers and each one held a monopoly position in the location they served except for in Sandwell in the West Midlands where papers in Birmingham and Wolverhampton circulated editionalised titles. These editions accounted for an overall increase of two in the number of evening papers since 1961; although nine papers had closed, 11 had been launched. Figures also suggested around 150 fewer weekly titles, leaving around 1,070 (ibid: 14). More striking was the fall in the number of towns with a choice of weekly paper owned by different companies from 226 in 1961 to 146 (ibid).

Rising costs of newspaper production

The 1970s marks a shift in the balance of costs for the provincial newspaper. In real terms, a newspaper page cost twice as much to produce in 1974 as it did in 1961, the Liverpool Daily Post and Liverpool Echo Ltd contended (Royal Commission, 1977, 8E1: 5). This was due to a combination of rises in wage and capital costs and, in particular, the cost of newsprint which trebled in price between 1973 and 1977 (Royal Commission, Vol 1, 1977: 41). The steepest rise came between July 1973 and July 1974 when the cost per tonne

of 50-gramme newsprint rose from £88.60 to £154.73 (ibid: 57)[76]. These rises led to an increasing reliance on advertising revenue to maintain profits as well as a concerted effort to cut costs. The rising cost of paper also led newspapers to make the most of every column inch of space and became one driver for the modernisation of production processes.

In 1972 the Government had imposed a national wage freeze and the NUJ reported job losses among editorial staff (NUJ, 1972: 12). The Newspaper Society went so far as to suggest that wages represented 50 to 60 per cent of the provincial newspaper industry's total costs (although not as high as at national newspapers); this, coupled with the high capital costs, meant newspapers needed to make 25 per cent profit as a percentage of turnover. Despite this, contemporary research categorised the year of 1973 as one of boom; although wage costs were high, profit margins were higher. This reflected the locally monopolistic position of most newspapers which ensured healthy advertising revenues; lack of competition also meant that titles could more easily increase their cover prices to help meet inflationary costs (ACAS, 1977: 9)[77].

However, the effect of the 1970s recession was a fall in operating profits of between 30 and 60 per cent for provincial newspaper producers (ACAS, 1977: 9). The Royal Commission suggested that while the evening newspaper remained highly profitable, morning papers were being subsidised by being grouped into publishing centres to share costs. Publisher's own allocation of costs suggested that eight of the 15 regional mornings investigated were

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[76] The rapid rise was due to price rises in production essentials including oil and wood pulp and a fall in the value of sterling which made imports relatively more expensive - and continued to rise at a rate which it was impossible to match by increased cover prices (Royal Commission Appendix D: 117-9). However, despite this the proportion of newsprint and ink as a total cost remained fairly stable (35 per cent for a provincial evening in 1960 and 23 per cent in 1975), indicating that other costs rose rapidly too. (Royal Commission, Vol 1. 1977: 41).

[77] These commentators contrasted this position with that of the national newspaper industry; the Royal Commission reported that "several of the nine daily and seven Sunday national newspapers are, and look likely to remain unprofitable or profitable only in good years" (Vol 1, 1977:73). This was attributed to a lack of cost control – which had seen some titles with rising circulations miss out on economies of scale (ibid: 49) – including rising labour costs. In some cases, subsidies were keeping titles going, either in order to drive out competition or because proprietors felt there was a public interest in doing so (ibid: 50).

making a loss in 1975 (Royal Commission, Vol 1, 1977: 31). In contrast the provincial evening was such a profitable sector that even commercial radio was unlikely to destabilise the business model (ibid: 32). In effect, by the time of the Royal Commission, competition between the same class of local newspapers had ceased to exist, such was the structure of the industry. Instead competition came from other sorts of newspapers, as well as broadcasting. This made cross-ownership and multi-title publishing centres attractive methods of cutting costs (ibid: 51).

This cross-subsidy meant the entire industry was becoming more reliant on advertising revenue because of its reliance on the profitability of the evening paper – a position which made it vulnerable to prevailing economic conditions and also competition for advertising revenue (ibid: 34-5). The Royal Commission described a complex financial picture in which the evening paper had remained profitable, despite falling circulations (the number of adults over 16 reading an evening paper was said to have dropped by 19 per cent between 1969 and 1975). This was because fewer papers, containing more pages – and so holding more adverts – were being sold for much higher cover prices. The provincial evening press was also particularly dependent on revenue from classified adverts – which includes homes and jobs advertising – a revenue stream which was again particularly vulnerable at times of recession and which had suffered during the economic downturn of the 70s (ibid: 40). At the same time, such were the potential gains from advertising revenue, the free weekly paper had also made an incursion into the market so that by 1975 advertising income in these titles amounted to £18 million – 20 per cent of that found in the paid-for weekly press (ibid: 41)[78].

[78] Thomson Regional Newspapers contended that profitability had been achieved despite a "drastic deterioration" in the sale of the Saturday sports editions, changing social habits, increased competition from other media, and rising transport costs brought about by the 1968 Transport Act (Royal Commission 1977 14EI: 29). To mitigate these effects, the company had raised cover prices, so that between 1967 and 1974 circulation revenues had actually risen by £8.6 million (Royal Commission 1977 14EI: 29).

Competition in the regional news market: broadcasting and the alternative press

A total of 20 BBC local radio stations had been established since 1962 and there were 19 commercial radio stations which had been broadcasting local news since 1973. In addition, national radio and television were both broadcasting double the news output compared with 1961 (Royal Commission, Vol 1, 1977: 18-19). Those companies that published newspapers were also increasingly investing in these alternative forms of media, although Government policy limited the extent of these holdings so that they did not have a controlling interest[79]. Two years after its launch, ITV was attracting £13.7 million in advertising and a year later total ad spend on ITV outstripped that of the entire press (Crisell, 2002: 106). By the time of the 1977 Royal Commission, 57 companies with interests in newspapers and periodicals also had investments in commercial television programme companies (Vol 1, 1977: 28). Around 70 companies also had interests in local commercial radio stations (ibid: 29) which had been created by the Tory government under the Sound Broadcasting Act of 1972 as a challenge to the BBC's range of 20 local radio stations (Crisell, 2002: 196)[80].

In addition, an unknown number of community newspapers were also circulating, with 22 in Leicestershire alone at the time of the 1977 Royal Commission report. These titles set out to "carry information about local events, foster a sense of community …. and provide an arena for debate on local issues" (Vol 1 1977:15). As such they often gave a voice to people who were marginalised by the established press and earned themselves the moniker of the "parish magazines of the dispossessed"; the most successful were often the most local (Harcup, 2013: 55). Significantly these titles appeared when the commercial imperative of the traditional provincial newspaper industry was in the ascendency, with its increased reliance on

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[79] Associated Newspapers had been among those to invest in the early days of commercial television and the company formed part of Associated Rediffusion which won the franchise for London weekly television in in 1955. The company sold its interest after two years although the franchise was to turn a profit of £5 million before the decade was out (Crisell, 2002: 93).
[80] By 1977 there were 19 Independent Local Radio stations; this figure had grown to 43 by 1983 (ibid: 196-7).

advertising revenue. This suggests that at this time there was already an anxiety about the ability of these titles to fulfil their role in serving the good of the community in the face of this commercial restructuring – an argument which is also strengthened by the resurgent academic interest in the sector at this time.

These community magazines were in addition to the political press, which had grown to around 200 periodicals by 1977. Around 150 were classified as "alternative" – in so far as they were published by enthusiasts rather than commercial publishers. These titles also often challenged the political elite and capitalised on representing opposition, particularly to the Thatcherite offensive against the trade unions. Those writing for these titles were then accorded privileged access to communities who viewed the 'established' press with suspicion, for instance being allowed behind the picket lines during the 1984-85 Miners Strike when other journalists stood alongside those who were policing them (Harcup, 2013). Often those working on these titles had no formal journalism training and the titles may not have a had a traditional editorial hierarchy, and were instead run a on co-operative basis. Because – rather than in spite of this – they were capable of "genuine revelation" (Harcup, 2013: 56). Significantly, such was their perceived contribution to the "diversity of voices" that the Royal Commission suggested that a method be found to support them, for instance by providing subsidised printing facilities in an argument which prefigures those rehearsed in relation to the continuance of local media in this decade and explored at length in Chapter 11 (ibid: 123-4). These two forms of publication faced problems when trying to compete with the established press. The community papers faced no problems with distribution, because their circulation areas were small[81]; however, it is likely that these areas were too small to support an advertising base necessary to cover costs. For the political periodicals, although foundation costs could be relatively low, as little as £100 the Royal Commission said (Vol 1 1977: 56), the biggest barrier to success was the cost of distribution (1977ibid: 71), which was highly concentrated in the hands of established companies

[81] Tony Harcup's engaging account of the alternative *Leeds Other Paper* (2013) includes details of how the title was sold by those who produced it round pubs and community groups as well as through newsagents.

including WH Smith and Menzies (Whitaker, 1981: 87). This meant that the political aims were often subsumed to more commercially-orientated content, such as listings, in order to elicit revenue (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 127); towards the end of its 20-year life the *Leeds Other Paper*, for instance, became more of a what's on magazine than a newspaper and, as such, lost its original aim to "counteract the existing establishment propaganda" of rival newspapers (Harcup, 2013: 38).

One further piece in the non-traditional jigsaw were the civic newspapers, run by local authorities, of which there were around 40 in 1977 (Royal Commission, Vol 1, 1977: 15) but the number of which grew rapidly in subsequent years (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 134) reaching a peak of 97. With guaranteed circulations concomitant with the number of households to which the papers were distributed for free, these titles were feared for their 'agitprop' potential, to the extent that Conservative governments introduced legislation to limit the amount of money which would be spent on them (ibid: 132). It is noteworthy that Labour-controlled councils were more likely to publish their own newspapers than Conservative-controlled councils (ibid: 151). These publications were largely enabled by the professional PR staff in councils who had experience as journalists and who were able to harness new technology to produce high-quality publications to rival the commercial provincial press. While some of these were relatively simple four-page issues, others used full colour printing and took adverts to fund up to 48 pages in order to offset the cost to taxpayers (ibid: 138).

Ceefax, Oracle and Viewdata

Technological innovation had also enabled new text-based broadcast platforms, including Ceefax, being developed by the BBC, the Independent Broadcast Association's version Oracle and Viewdata – a similar service which the GPO (General Post Office) was attempting to launch (NUJ, 1977: 4). All were defined as "genuine electronic newspapers" by the Institute of Journalists, saw itself as a champion of new technology in the newspaper

industry and introduced a column, fronted by Fred the precocious caveman to keep members up to date with changes (see figure 9.1 IOJ 1981b: 2).

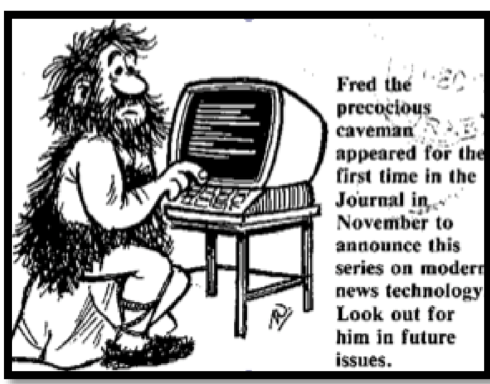

Figure 9.1

The Post Office service Prestel (the trade name for Viewdata) was seen as the biggest threat – possibly because of its nationwide coverage. Prestel was a text-based information service available to telephone subscribers. It enabled organisations to lease pages for information dissemination and the NUJ not only had 20 pages itself, but listed newspaper companies, including the Birmingham Post and Mail, Eastern Counties Newspapers, the Bolton Evening News and Yorkshire Post Newspapers, which had taken pages "as an insurance policy" (NUJ, 1979: 3). The technology was greeted differently by the national and provincial press and this disparity in concerns was reflected in a new structure for the NUJ, which created separate councils for each (NUJ, 1976: 12). However, it was also seen to present opportunities for NUJ members and was positively championed by the Institute of Journalists (IOJ), which gave front page coverage to British Telecom's Prestel Pressy awards in their members' paper *The Journal* in June/July 1981.

Among the most successful of these products was Viewtel 202, launched by the Birmingham Post and Mail in 1978. Content included national and international news, as well as features and advertising, and by 1981 subscribers were accessing it three to four million times a year (IOJ 1981: 1).

The service included 150-200 news pages a day, carrying a total of 30 stories in addition to sport and features. A total of 20 staff were employed to provide the service, which was available for 18 hours a day, seven days a week. The aim was to update each page at least once a day with most copy coming from the Press Association or other news agencies. The service was free to those who subscribed to Prestel (ibid). Interviewed by the Institute of Journalists in the edition of *The Journal* of June/July 1981, the editor of Viewtel202, Alan Durrant, predicted that traditional newspapers would not be able to compete with Teletext and Prestel, because of the speed of the electronic versions (ibid). However, as it turned out, Prestel was not the success it was forecast to be, attracting fewer than 100,000 users at its peak, while similar services, the BBC's Ceefax and ITV's Oracle, did enjoy some longevity. Both Prestel and Oracle also had the potential to host advertising (NUJ, 1977b: 14)

Free newspapers.

The biggest rival to the traditional paid-for provincial newspaper though was the free newspaper, whose advent has been charted in Chapter 8. Described by Franklin and Murphy as "the single most significant development in the structure of the local press since the 1960s" (1991: 76), these free newspapers ranged from advertising-based 'shopper' newspapers, to sophisticated news titles. They were born out of a variety of circumstances, ranging from entrepreneurs with no experience of journalism who wanted to benefit from advertising revenues, to established publishers who would launch free titles to protect their circulation areas by deterring incursions by would-be entrants[82]. The success of these papers was down to a combination of factors, including a political climate which favoured the ideology of the market, and importantly the new technology which enabled them to be produced cheaply by reducing staffing levels (ibid: 81). With minimal editorial and admin costs,

[82] Goodhart and Wintour (1986) chart the origin of the free newspaper in the UK back to Lionel Pickering, who brought the newspaper form from Australia where it was well established. He established the *Derby Trader* in 1966 with just £4,800 in capital; by 1986 he had 10 titles turning over £10 million a year with a 10 per cent profit margin (ibid: 86).

they were typically run by just three or four people, yet offered blanket coverage of an area to advertisers, who "enjoyed being courted." (ibid: 87).

The NUJ annual reports reveal that competition from free newspapers was cause for concern. In the annual report for 1970 (which covered the year 1969-70), the union created a policy to protect journalists working for "give-away publications"[83]. Often the staff producing these titles would be untrained or new entrants and, as such, deserved protection, the NUJ ruled. However, ironically perhaps, not all staff of such titles were eligible to join the union, because its own rules precluded the inclusion of staff on "adventitious publishers of free-distribution publications"; the NUJ maintained that the biggest threat posed by free newspapers was their ability to take advertising revenue from "orthodox" titles (NUJ, 1971: 15). However, by the time of the Royal Commission in 1977, established newspaper companies had increased their share of this market to the extent that they argued that the growth of the product offered protection against increased concentration of ownership in the industry. Among them was Westminster Press Ltd, which, in 1977, published 12 free titles, 11 of which had been launched since 1971. It also noted that among its competitors was the *Oxford Journal*, a free title with a circulation of 100,000. Giving evidence Mr JL Barrons, deputy managing director, claimed the form enabled titles to succeed where paid-for papers had failed (Royal Commission 1977, 17OE1: 13-14). A weekly paper yielded just 10 per cent of its revenue from sales, Mr Barrons explained. Going "free" therefore became a marketing exercise whereby the 10 per cent was sacrificed for a much larger advertising revenue (ibid). Among the companies to embrace free papers was Reed Regional Newspapers, which by 1991 published 100 free titles, with an aggregate circulation of 5.8 million. Reed even launched a free daily title in 1984, the Birmingham-based *Daily News*, which at its peak employed around 40 journalists (ibid: 77-8).

[83] Give-away publications were defined as being "produced by publishing enterprises usually adventitious in character outside orthodox newspaper publishing", and those "produced by orthodox newspaper enterprises" to defend a circulation area, as market research and pilots enterprises for new publications, and as special one-off publications for readers and advertisers (NUJ, 1970: 14).

Because of their dependence on advertising revenue, the number of these titles fluctuated with the state of the national economy. In 1974 there were thought to be around 150, compared with 130 two years later (ibid). While some publishers may have dismissed free newspapers as ephemeral as "feathers in a breeze" (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 76), the impact of the proliferation of this form of publication was considerable. By 1991 Franklin and Murphy cited 1,156 titles with a circulation of 43.5 million copies (ibid: 85); financially successful, these titles came to be predominately published by established newspaper companies (ibid: 87). Significantly, Franklin and Murphy contend, the traditional local press itself had created the conditions under which these titles could thrive, firstly by operating monopolistic circulation areas which were open to competition and secondly by entering the market themselves (ibid: 82). In the new millennium the free paper has found a new form in the daily metro paper – a model which has been embraced by the *London Evening Standard* – in a process explored in Chapter 11.

Computerisation. The end of an era?

The advent of computerised production methods for newspapers was heralded as the beginning of a new era which would ultimately result in the fully electronic newspaper foreseen by the end of the 20th century (Royal Commission 1977 14E1: 50-51). For the newspaper producers in the 1970s improved technology offered the potential to produce a better quality product – or to reduce the unit cost of production, or find a balance between the two.[84] The Liverpool Daily Post and Echo Ltd had moved its daily titles to a £9 million computerised centre in 1973. For them it offered an increased capacity to create distinctive 'localised' editions, as described by Hetherington at the outset of this chapter, as well as the potential to save money on production

[84] Curran argues that new technology did little to reduce costs for national papers because of the investment necessary. As such, despite the effect on wage bills, the fundamental economics of newspaper publishing – and its reliance on advertising revenue – were unaltered (2003: 99)

(Royal Commission 1977 8E1: 44-45). Describing the radical extent of the changes in 1975, Thomson Regional Newspaper Ltd emphasised present – and future benefits. "New technology will enable us to utilise newsprint more productively, reduce unit costs substantially, offer relatively cheaper advertising and broaden our market potential…….. Regional newspapers in this country are at the end of one era and at the beginning of what could be an even more exciting one" (Royal Commission 1977 14E1: 50-51).

Underlying this rhetoric was the potential of new technology to restructure the newspaper workforce. The highest cost was labour in relation to production, costing typically one third of total costs but rising to as much as 60 per cent (Royal Commission, Vol 1 1977: 42). This labour was also highly unionised and the print unions especially, had traditionally wielded power over the production process because of their ability to halt it. In a highly perishable market such as newspapers, this gave them a strong bargaining position. The main unions representing production workers in the provincial press at this time were the National Graphical Association (NGA), representing the skilled print workers, and the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants (Natsopa) representing the non-skilled print workers[85] (ACAS, 1977: 26). Editorial staff were mainly represented by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), although a relatively small number (see Table 9.1) were members of the Institute of Journalists, which although it was a recognised Trades Union, was not affiliated to the TUC (Institute of Journalists*:* 1978).

Table 9.1. IOJ membership. 1972-1979.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Fellows	120	110	112	114	115	114	115
Members	1723	1614	1703	1808	1851	1888	2118
Junior, probationers and affiliates	167	138	145	141	158	182	188
Honorary	7	6	5	2	2	2	2

Figures taken from the annual reports in *The Journal*, 1977-1980.

[85] In 1982 Natsopa merged with the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (Sogat) which represented clerical workers, including advertising staff, to form Sogat (82) (ACAS, 1977: 26).

The NGA in particular had high levels of membership; this reached 100 per cent where employers recognised trades unions and negotiated with them, even though 29 per cent of publishing houses did not operate a 'closed shop' – meaning you had to be a member of the union to work (ACAS 1977: 27). However, despite this concentration, the NGA still had relatively small numbers of employees in the provincial industry compared with the national newspapers, which limited the sphere of influence for the union [86] (ibid: 27-8)).

The NUJ also had a policy of supporting its chapels in negotiating "100 per cent post-entry membership" (Royal Commission, Vol 1 1977: 157), a policy which was seen as controversial by some as limiting the 'right to write' (ibid: 158) and which lost them some members of the Institute of Journalists, which opposed the 'closed shop' membership. This concern was underpinned by a belief that the editorial closed-shop could threaten the freedom of the press, a stance which led to an attempt to introduce legislation to protect that freedom (ibid: 160). The later Royal Commission though noted that the legislation ignored production workers – who were equally able to limit the freedom of the press, and which had actually "attempted to influence editorial content by taking industrial action" (ibid: 161). In practice, however, the Commission noted that just two national titles and one provincial title achieved total membership – although they reported that editors and managers managed to work well with those titles (ibid: 159).

It is clear that new technology offered a way of undermining this unionised power by radically altering the role of labour within the newspaper industry. As such, its introduction signalled the end of wholesale unionisation for the provincial newspaper industry. The move was also contextualised by a widespread political offensive embodied in legislation introduced by the Conservative administration to limit union power across all industries. Many of those involved in the newspaper industry felt that the introduction of new technology was aided and abetted by those determined to undermine the power of the unions. In its report *Journalists and New Technology*, the NUJ

[86] These leaders are called Fathers or Mothers of the Chapel – traditionally the organisational unit of the NGA and NUJ.

stated its belief that technical innovation was enabling managers to gain control of the production process, and, ultimately undermine the power of the trade unions – a process made easier because the industry itself had been beset by infighting between the unions involved in it (1977b: 17-22). As the introduction of new technology progressed it became characterised by in-fighting between competing unions against a vicious backdrop of anti-union Government legislation. Such was the bitterness of the opposition of employers to unions that industrial relations historian Gregor Gall (1993) argues that it can be characterised as an "offensive" designed by provincial newspaper employers to undermine the NUJ.

The implementation of computerisation.

It was the provincial newspaper industry which began the process of modernisation, facilitated by a history of smooth labour relations. Innovation dated back to the late 1960s and by 1974, 38 of the publishing houses surveyed by ACAS for the Royal Commission had introduced at least one new technology process in the composing room (where the pages were assembled) in the previous three years (ACAS, 1977: 10). The report found that more innovation was found in papers owned by groups – presumably because they could afford the investment. The cost benefits were also greatest for publishers of evening papers, because of the relationship between circulation and first copy costs and also because modernisation could enable the titles to increase their circulation and therefore increase efficiency. The technology also took up considerably less physical space (Royal Commission, 1977: Appendix 1: 18). But at this time, the technology used was far from wholesale; for instance, it was common to find visual display terminals (VDTs) being used to compose advertisements only, while the editorial pages themselves were still made up using traditional Linotype/hot metal processes (see table 9.2).

Table 9.2: Technical processes used by the provincial newspaper industry. 1977.

Technology	% of houses by numbers employed					% of total sample
	Less than 100 employees	101-250	251-500	501-1,000	More than 1,000 employees	
Origination department						
Hot metal Linotype	73	73	69	74	80	74
Computer typesetting	22	35	41	63	20	36
Photocomposition	23	60	51	58	40	43
OCR[87]	0	6	10	10	0	4
VDU[88]	7	29	26	32	20	19
Machine room						
Letterpress	70	70	68	74	100	70
Web-offset	20	35	32	42	20	28
Photogravure	0	1	0	0	0	1

Source: ACAS report 1977: 10

The NUJ categorised the technical innovation between 1968 and 1978 in terms of three phases. Phase one was a move towards web offset printing using photographic plate processes (produced as thin plastic 'letterpress' plates or as direct lithographic printing) (NUJ, 1977b: 6). This printing technology paved the way for phase two – whereby, instead of operating a Linotype, the compositor keyed words into computer which justified, stored and photoset the text which was turned out on photographic paper. By 1977 more than 130 of 220 production centres in the British provincial newspaper industry were using photocomposition (ibid: 7). Phase three was direct input; the journalist keyed in the text, which was 'read' by a photosetting machine, using Optical Character Recognition technology.

The NUJ stressed that the technology was 'modular' so that the introduction of one phase paved the way for a subsequent innovations (ibid: 17). For the

[87] Optical Character Recognition
[88] Visual Display Unit

traditional production department of a newspaper, phase three was the most contentious, because it made the job of the compositor redundant. The centralised 'on-line' system of production saw advertising and editorial staff input copy on to a computerised system; copy could then be electronically transferred and recalled using visual display units. It was this "capturing of the initial key stroke" which rendered the compositor redundant. While the compositors – represented by the NGA – were likely to be put out of a job by these innovations, the NUJ saw aspects of technological innovation as offering increased opportunities for journalists (NUJ, 1977b: 14) and it was this divergence between unions which was seen to pave the way for the deunionisation of the industry in the 1980s. At the time of the Royal Commission VDTs were being designed which could enable on-screen page make up – the logical final step in the process (Royal Commission, 1977: Appendix 1).

The first fully computerised title in England was the *Reading Evening Post*, which had been created from a pre-existing weekly title by Thomson Regional Newspapers Ltd (Royal Commission 1977 14OE1: 42). The ACAS report contained mixed reactions to the changes ranging from "a reluctant acceptance of the inevitable to enthusiastic endorsement due to increased earnings, improved job security and the opportunity to learn new skills and do a more varied range of work. Against this several FOCs [Father of the Chapel] and managers told us that many jobs have become deskilled and boring." (ACAS, 1977: 12)

The NUJ, though, was sceptical about the extent to which technology was being harnessed for the benefit of the employees. "In practice," the union reported, "automation is applied selectively by management to cut jobs; lower the price of labour by reducing dependence on expensive skills; progressively remove from the worker control of the process and transfer it, via the machines, to management." (NUJ, 1977b: 17). By 1976 the NUJ had begun to monitor the influence of "technological development" and its impact on staffing levels. In the year 1975-1976, 4.2 per cent of the workforce was lost to redundancy or non-replacement. In total this meant 168 people were lost

from a staff of 3,869 across 115 chapels (NUJ, 1976: 12). The attitude of the union, though, seemed to be one of co-operation with those introducing new technology, in an attempt to gain the most benefits from it for its members[89].

The NUJ set out its policy on innovation in a popular pamphlet, *Journalists and New Technology*, published first in 1978 and reprinted and revised in 1980. The intention was to discuss how "information technology" could be harnessed to benefit workers in the journalism industry – rather than leaving it to owners to use it to maximise profit (NUJ, 1977b: 1-2). It drew on estimates from the Royal Commission process that it would cost the national newspaper industry more than £50 million to innovate but the proposed savings were so high that this cost would be recouped in fewer than three years (NUJ 1978: 18). In the provincial industry, newspapers were saving £100,000 on the annual wage bill from an investment of between £150,000 and £200,000. For instance, while a Linotype cost £14,000, a visual display terminal cost just £4,000 and the wage of an operator (of between £7,000 and £14,000) was also saved (ibid: 19). Therefore, the trades which were worst hit by the introduction of these systems were those allied to the printing process – and in particular compositors, so that by 1977, the NUJ described it as a "dying" trade (ibid: 21). Between 1967 and 1976 63,000 jobs had been lost in the printing industry reducing the jobs total to 196,000. Those jobs which remained were also becoming deskilled (ibid).

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[89] This attitude was formed against a background of substantial job losses forecast for national titles, the *Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror* and the *Sunday people* and *Telegraph* – largely because the facsimile (fax) meant pages could be sent from London to Manchester, so regional production workers were no longer needed. (NUJ, 1976: 12). Such was the feared impact that the then on-going Royal Commission, issued an interim report into the national newspaper industry. The issue was debated in Parliament on January 20, 1976 – a month before the publication of the Commission's report – as signifying a de-facto end to the northern editions of the national press. Speaking on the issue, the Labour MP Alan Finch, said up to 700 jobs would be lost as a result of the move, which would cost the *Daily Mirror* alone £2.3 million (Hansard, 1976: 1302).

Industrial disputes.

The power of the newspaper unions had been effectively challenged by the high-profile dispute at the *Nottingham Evening Post*, in a highly politicised battle. Planning for new technology at the title dated back to 1967, and the publishing company, T Bailey Forman, had first used OCR technology in its accounts and advertising departments (NUJ 1978: 33). In 1973 a dispute over the introduction of Letterflex plastic printing plates saw the unions represented in the workplace, including the NUJ, NGA, SOGAT and NATSOPA, locked out. Contemporaneous campaign material produced by the unions publically vilified the managing director of the paper, Christopher Pole-Carew. In an undated description of the events held in the Nottinghamshire Archive, the author describes the dispute as "all out war" (Anon: n.d ref: DD213/1/1-2). Writing in the first edition of *The Press* – an improvised 'alternative' paper produced by the T Bailey Forman Trades Union Joint Liaison Committee – the striking workforce challenged the view that new technology would improve the newspaper itself, claiming that "they [journalists and printers] are so bogged down in unwieldy methods that it makes it difficult for them to maintain interest in their crafts" (*The Press*, 9.7.73: 2).

The unions enjoyed widespread support from the city's Trades Council and received £1,000 in funding from the miners (Anon: n.d ref: DD213/1/1-2). They also won the support of the Labour-controlled city council which not only barred 'blackleg' staff from the *Evening Post* from its meetings, but also placed valuable adverts in *The Press*, which no doubt helped it sustain it until its final edition on July 27, when agreement on a return to work was reached. The council justified its decision on the grounds that the circulation of the *Nottingham Evening Post* was so haphazard as to make advertising worthless (*The Press*, 11.7.73). Following the strike, the *Evening Post's* sister morning paper, *The Guardian Journal*, was closed and 120 editorial and production jobs were lost. This was the first step on the road to modernisation which was to result in "reporters at the keyboards of visual display unit, sending their copy direct to the computer" (NUJ, 1977b: 33). But further disputes ensued, including the exclusion of 28 NUJ members for taking strike action in 1977-8 (ibid: 34).

The dispute around Eddie Shah's *Messenger* series of newspapers in Warrington in October to November 1983 was equally – if not more – acrimonious. Shah had launched his first free paper in Sale and Altrincham in 1974 and by 1982 had expanded the company's portfolio to five *Messenger* titles (Goodhart and Wintour, 1974: 18). These titles employed a total of 70 people, just seven of whom were journalists (ibid: 86). The dispute centred on disagreements over pay and union rights at a new typesetting plant opened in Bury in 1982; Shah employed non-NGA labour and paid workers less than employees working for a subsidiary owned by him, Fineward Ltd. He also opened a new printing plant in Warrington in 1982 and again, employed non-unionised labour; the NGA suggested that in fact these employees had been selected because of the vehemence of their anti-union stance (Gennard, 1990: 486). It also had a personal aspect, for instance, with Shah and his family being sent coffins as a signal of their unpopularity (Goodhart and Wintour, 1986).

John Gennard (1990), in his history of the NGA, posits the *Messenger* dispute as a key event which, due to its timing, tested Conservative legislation designed to limit the powers of the trade union movement. Such was the significance attached to it that at one stage the entire cohort of NGA national officers were working on the *Messenger* dispute alone (ibid: 485). The dispute saw the use of legal action on both sides, culminating in a high court order which fined the NGA £100,000 and more than £500,000 in two separate judgements and sequestered its assets; in turn this prompted a show of support in Fleet Street so that no national newspapers were published over the weekend of November 25-26 1983 (ibid: 485). The dispute culminated on the night of November 29-30 with a picket by more than 4,000 union members (ibid: 488); after a series of failed negotiations it ended in January 1984 when the NGA called a halt to action. As such, successful use of the Conservative labour relations legislation demonstrated that powerful unions like the NGA had been "substantially curtailed" (ibid: 492). Changes in legislation around picketing also meant that the union was unable to halt production; the legislation enabled employers to move production from sites which were being picketed – but forbade the pickets from following the production to the new site. It also saw the police successfully implement

tactics against mass pickets – tactics which would be seen again on a larger scale against the miners in 1984/5 and also during the News International 'Wapping" dispute in 1986/7 (ibid: 492).

Gennard argues that the strength of union opposition to the *Messenger* dispute mitigated efforts by the provincial newspaper industry to force through the introduction of new technology. This approach was epitomised in the Newspaper Society's *Project Breakthrough* initiative, which was designed to introduce single keystroking – i.e. where journalists directly enter words onto a computerised system for printing without the need for "second keystroking" by typesetters – in the industry by the end of 1984 (ibid: 491). However, the NGA was not able to win the unswerving support of fellow unionists in the NUJ and in Sogat (82). This led to independent agreements between the NGA and employers at Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers in 1985, which included no compulsory redundancies and the transfer of some NGA members to the editorial department where they would stay members of the NGA. This agreement prompted a strike by the NUJ because the NGA had negotiated rights over editorial (Gennard, 1990: 494). In turn this meant the NUJ did not support the NGA in a dispute over attempts to modernise the Wolverhampton *Express & Star* and in fact agreed new working practices around direct input during the NGA's dispute (ibid). Eventually the NGA abandoned its action against the title and found work for its members elsewhere (ibid: 496); this course of action was also the result of action against the *Kent Messenger,* again because SOGAT and NUJ negotiated working agreements over the new technology. Significantly, for the future of newspaper production, the titles were able to carry on production without any NGA members being at work. As such, the power of the print union was undermined (ibid: 498).

Gennard suggests that the legacy of the NGA action in this respect had been to increase the cost of introducing new technology because of the costs incurred by industrial action (ibid: 496); it was also a painful path to a joint accord between the NUJ and NGA in October 1985 which set out terms for future changes. By 1987 a total of 67 such accords had been signed in the provincial newspaper industry although these were eventually undermined by

employers who negotiated agreements with the lower paid clerical workers of Sogat (82) in preference to the NGA. The NUJ was also negotiating its own New Technology agreements – 102 of which were signed between 1985 and 1991 (Gall, 1993: 616).

Although these agreements were negotiated at company level, and so marked the end of national bargaining between the NUJ and the Newspaper Society, Mike Noon argues that their existence is a marker of the NUJ's relative success. Many of the agreements contained verbatim tracts of the model agreement drawn up by the NUJ and, as such, were tribute to the organisation and effort the union put into the move to direct input. The technology also increased the significance of the journalist to the organisation (Noon, 1991: 270-2). However, direct input was also being introduced without any such agreements; by 1988 15 companies had done this, including four subsidiaries of Westminster Press and subsequently an increasing number of employers repudiated existing agreements (Smith and Morton, 1990: 108-114). By 1988 the NGA conceded that it had failed in its fight for the provincial newspaper industry. Gall (1993) argues that from this point the spotlight fell on the NUJ and attempts by provincial newspaper employers to undermine its presence in the industry. He argues that the strategic devices employed – epitomised in Project Breakthrough – means the process of derecognition, whereby collective agreements with chapels were replaced with individual employee contracts, can be characterised as a hostile "offensive".

The legacy of new technology: working practices and content.

When considering the far-reaching implication of technological changes for the newspaper industry, the NUJ rightly focused on the impact on the editorial staff and how the move to direct input would greatly increase the role of the journalists who were "keyboarding" when they wrote. However, the immediate impact of technological change for those on the ground was often chaos – despite claims of success from management. Workers at the *Wakefield Express* complained of: "Slightly fewer editions … no revision … more literals … deadlines made progressively earlier (36 hours earlier in the case of one

weekly) to avoid overtime. Breakdown of computers fairly frequent, bringing everything to a halt". The *County Express* (Stourbridge): reported: "Printing times earlier, so late news restricted … Most early pages now 24 hours earlier … more difficult to change or revise copy once it has been set". The *Western Mail* told of: "Copy lost in the computer, earlier deadlines, no training, no consultation", while the *Belfast Telegraph* said circulation was "falling rapidly" because of a change to photo-setting. (NUJ, 1977b: 24) For workers this meant earlier shift times – to account for earlier deadlines due to longer production times caused by slow out-putting and correction processes. This also meant more pages had to be prepared in advance of publication – which had a greater effect on feature and inside pages, which became "less topical" (NUJ, 1977b: 27). The new processes also meant re-organised copy flow processes, including the use of more pictures, and a shift of power away from the reporter to the production subs (ibid).

In theory the move gave journalists a greater role in the production process; but direct input also brought greater responsibility, for instance demanding greater accuracy, which would 'inevitably distract attention from the more genuinely creative aspects of writing" (ibid: 41). The journalist would become proof-readers, typesetter and stone sub (who actually shifted blocks of type) all in one, while never leaving the VDT. A survey in 1987 showed that journalists received wage increases ranging from zero to £40 as a result of these changes (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 14). The NUJ also encountered claims that the technology was undermining once-efficient employees and production processes. The technology was also thought to be less suitable for employees aged over 40, while the health and safety concerns around eye-damage, posture and radiation were also well documented (ibid: 48-53). However, surveying the impact of new technology on the *Nottingham Evening Post*, Institute of Journalists' convenor John Lucy said that these teething problems could be overcome. For him, the innovations meant a cleaner, slicker working environment with staff able to work more quickly to amend and edit content.

> "What are the advantages for journalists? For reporters – a clean, efficient operation with no scratching about for copypaper, and a

> better comprehension of how the stories are developing. Easy change of text.
> "For sub-editors – a straightforward edit function. Gone are the days of messy proofs. A to-the-millimetre read-out of the lengths of stories which enables easy and quick page make-up. The lay-out man's dream! Flexibility to change stories and design at a moment's notice….
> "For Editors – a slicker all-round performance with information at their finger-tips. From a news system directory which gives an at-a-glance guide to the overall status of the paper." (Institute of Journalists 1982: 1)

At the same time the free newspaper had critically challenged the link between editorial quality and circulation. With the free paper the customer was no longer a reader but the object for an advertiser for whom a circulation within a defined socio-economic group could be defined. As such the role of news was compromised; it needed to be interesting, but not so interesting as to detract from the advertising (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 78). As a direct consequence, these titles developed an amended organisational structure, including a dominant advertising department, smaller – and, critically, cheaper - editorial staffs, for instance by favouring untrained staff, who were less likely to be members of the NUJ and so were likely to be paid less and have worse working conditions (ibid: 79-80).

The NUJ had issued warnings about the potential detrimental effect of new technology on editorial quality. The union described how "raw untreated copy including press releases can be fed direct into the …various editions and subsidiary publications via copy typists on a "never mind the quality, feel the width" basis. Anything can be used to fill the space between the advertisements" (1977b: 34). For the NUJ this was a result of the technology being used for "producing private profit" (ibid: 37) rather than for the benefit of product or employee, a process which free titles were able to exploit in the face of less resistance from unions (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 80). Significantly this argument about the relationship between editorial quality and the reader is at the heart of concerns about the ability of the local newspaper to serve the interests of the reader today (see Chapter 10) and presages the work done by Nick Davies into the origins of editorial content for newspapers in 2008.

DH Simpson (1981) suggests that new technology itself disrupted the relationship between editorial content and sales across the entire provincial newspaper industry because it shifted power from editorial staff and put it firmly into the hands of the commercial managers of newspapers. As such, the innovations in production methods were used to maximise profit through cost control "via a reduction in the labour forces and thus costs, by the introduction of greater mechanisation, providing greater managerial control inside the plant" (1981: 22). In turn this led to the "bureaucratisation of editorial work" (ibid) which conflicted with an editorial philosophy which emphasises "artistry and flair" (1981: 86-7). This position was embodied by newspaper owners like Roy Thomson who openly professed to own newspapers solely for the purpose of making money.

Delano argues that an unforeseen consequence of the introduction of new technology was the loss of "higher age stratum of experienced journalists who had been trained and conditioned in a way that began to disappear", choosing redundancy over the shift to computer from pencil and ruler (2000: 265). This in turn disrupted what Delano has termed the "socialization" of the replacement staff members into the hegemony of the newsroom. This opened the possibility that those values held dear by journalists could be open to dilution and open the doors to a redefinition of the purpose of newspaper content. The ideological value of serving the good of the community may have been prized by editorial workers, but they were no longer in control. As such that social role was subsumed to the purpose of profit and editorial became one cost among others to be controlled (Simpson, 1981:115).

> "Thus news gathering, according to the commercial manager, can become ordered and even governed by strict rules. The hectic sprint for the scoop is replaced by the orderly dissemination of the news from regular and certain sources. Thus news in the main can be efficiently collected from the institutions such as the courts, council meetings, police stations etc., and from the 'wire' (news agencies), and to a large extent this is 'static news' which requires no large journalistic staff to acquire it. Indeed there is no competition to be first or even totally up-to-date, for news that is not reported, of whatever significance, is not news because it is not reported. It may become

> news the next day and because there is no competition, it is seen by readers to be up-to-date." (Simpson, 1981: 115)

Therefore, at a time when the space for editorial was rising through increased pagination[90], the work of the editorial staff was increasingly regulated and controlled. This, Simpson argues, changed the nature of the role of the reporter who became increasingly desk-bound and relied on easily available sources and information to provide the "filler between the ads" (ibid: 167) in a process which Davies cites in the national press some 30 years later (2008). These staff were also low-paid, in line with their value to the organisation, which led to a high turnover and subsequent lack of local knowledge (ibid: 178-9).

By the end of the 1980s the process of cost-cutting had become established across much of the provincial press due to the "asset-stripping mentality of the conglomerate owners" (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 50). Citing the example of Reed International, Franklin and Murphy described an exemplar of the decline; two weekly papers each had an editor, a photographer and six reporters. First one editor oversaw both titles, then the titles were combined and half the staff lost; that paper combined with another and staffing levels were reduced by two thirds, it finally merged with a fourth title leaving "a freesheet with one staff reporter" instead of a series of papers employing 25 staff (ibid: 50-51). This went against the potential of new technology to offer the plurality of local papers – due to reduced entry costs and "black-box" production methods (ibid) which were easier to master – which had been recognised by Franklin and Murphy. This process took place without the resistance of journalists "apparently indifferent to the opportunity for control of their professional fate offered by technology and unconcerned by drifting occupational values", due in part to the conflicting professional identity of journalism and the rupture of its tradition with the loss of experienced workers (Delano, 2000: 271-2). Instead new technology had been harnessed for the benefit of the market and profit in a move defined as "giantism, based on economies of scale", within the provincial press – a philosophy which came

[90] In the papers he surveyed, Simpson found a 50 per cent increase in space, with just a 10 per cent increase in staff (1981: 171)

to characterise ownership, marketing and production of local papers. Publishers of local newspapers therefore increased their dominance in a local market by rationalising products and establishing monopolies across increasingly large areas. The result was a provincial press which was increasingly homogenised and less local.

> "A new sort of commercial local press has developed: owned by conglomerates, driven by the need for advertising, employing fewer journalists who are low-paid and producing news which is geared to low-cost production in the interests of sustaining more advertising. "The localism of the local press is increasingly illusory; the market, ownership, the political system and cultural influences such as notions of style are increasingly homogenized and centralized." (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 195).

Significantly these titles no longer retained a link with the communities they claimed to serve, but were increasingly remote. As such these local titles became increasingly "local in name only; the town or city emblazoned on the newspaper's masthead may be one of the few remaining local features of the paper" (Franklin, 2006a: xxi). Simpson sums up the shift in purpose for these papers: "their main aim is to make a sufficient return on capital, rather than to provide a community with information of local and national events. They still do report local and national news but this is merely a means to an end. Editorial departments are constrained in attempting to search for the 'truth' and have to report that news which is easiest to collect." (Simpson, 1981: 210). The impact of these changes on the claims of newspapers to serve communities is the subject of the following section of this thesis.

Section 3: Contemporary perceptions of provincial press and the good of the community.

Chapter 10: The "good of the community" and newsworkers.

This thesis has charted how newspapers employed the notion of the press as a Fourth Estate as a way to legitimise their business in the mid-nineteenth century (see Chapter 5). As the century progressed, this position was refined for the burgeoning mass-market provincial press into a form of the notion of the local newspaper existing for the good of the community, in a process described in detail in Chapter 6. It also gained traction with journalists – who gained respectability from a higher purpose – and, as such, informed their practice. At the same time it came to inform what society expected of the local press (Conboy, 2004: 272) and this role was publicly proclaimed, as evidenced by the Newspaper Society's narration of World War Two (see Chapter 8). By the 1970s, promoting a sense of community was identified as the most significant function of the local paper by Jackson (1971: 273). It is a position which is still articulated by the industry, as exemplified by Boris Johnson's quote in support of Local Newspaper Week in 2013: "the fact that local newspapers remain at the heart of communities is testimony to the energy and enthusiasm their journalists bring to the stories they tell – shining a light on what really matters to people" (Newspapersoc.org.uk 2013b). As such, serving the good of the community can be considered a 'justificatory ideology' for local news practice; for those working in the provincial press it is actualised in the norms and routines of their working lives and is a shared norm which organises their work.

However, while it is clear that serving the good of the community is a key concept to the local newspaper, what is less clear is the meaning of the concept and indeed the relationship between a newspaper and its community. Increasingly the economic restructuring of the provincial newspaper industry, triggered by the advent of digital technology (see Section 4), is also calling into question the ability of those working in the traditional provincial press to

function in a way which aligns to this notion. Additionally digital newcomers to the local news landscape are challenging the notions which underpin it, while in equal measure using it to justify their own existence. What each of these are able to draw on is, simultaneously, the often unquestioned assumption that local news is central to the well-being of informed, democratic communities, together with the fluidity of the notion of community itself.

Benedict Anderson considers this contested nature of community within the context of national identity. Community is necessarily "imagined" and "limited" by a finite boundary; while members may not actually know each other, the nature of community means they imagine that they do (1991: 6-7). Therefore, one way in which a local community may be 'imagined' is by a local newspaper which both employs and creates a form of "parish pump patriotism" (Franklin and Murphy 1991: 56). Anderson suggests that the newspaper is a powerful instrument in imagining; not only is content significant, but in a process appropriate for the mass circulation printed newspaper, the very act of reading it becomes a "ceremony" which simultaneously links members of the community. This may be a visible process in which the reader observes "exact replicas of his own newspaper being consumed" and so it becomes "visibly rooted in everyday life" (ibid: 35-36). This notion is particularly compelling for the traditional pattern of sale for provincial newspapers, produced for instance on market days in their earliest forms when readers would gather together in a regular event, or as a mass market evening title sold at times to coincide with the end of the working day. Anderson argues that this regular pattern of publication also creates a sense of "temporal coincidence" (ibid: 24) that reinforces the construction of community.[91]

The narrative of the local community by a local newspaper normalises its ideological construction. Hall (1978) suggests that the media order events in

[91] This notion is disrupted by the fact that increasingly newspapers are available in an a-temporal, digital format; those titles which are printed are produced as early as possible – to make their 'shelf-life' as long as possible – so that the coincidence of purchase is also disrupted.

terms of “maps of meaning” to enable the audience to “make sense” of events according to an assumed shared knowledge in a “social process – constituted by a number of specific journalistic practices, which embody (often only implicitly) crucial assumptions about what society is and how it works” (ibid: 55). The notion of community is constructed and reinforced by that mapping, which itself refers to a system of shared values and beliefs which it is assumed the audience shares. The process creates a “consensus” that community exists and is reflected in the concept of the role of the paper demonstrated by journalists interviewed for this section of this thesis, the results of which are interrogated in the next chapter. It is particularly strong among staff working at an independently-owned weekly title who see their title as the “establishment” and the inclusion of information within it makes it meaningful for readers – despite the availability of other digital and social media channels which those readers might have at their disposal.

> “We’re totally embedded in the psyche of [here][92]. Anything that goes on [here], they expect to be in the paper, whether it’s a court case, whether it’s a village fete, whether it’s a cheque presentation or a dog show. The tiniest little thing to the biggest thing they expect to see in the paper. You still have to get in all your WI reports, your school productions. So you have to make space for that as well as all your sexy reports. It’s easy to forget that those things are still as important to people. We do all of those, golden weddings, five generations of the same family, we do all of that. It’s the official thing. There’s a certain kudos because we are the establishment.” (Interviewee 1IWDE)[93]

Martin Conboy (2002 and 2006) has demonstrated this process in the British popular press – and in particular the tabloid press – to show how it constructs a particular notion of community. These titles exploit language to communicate a “shared idealization” (2006: 10); for Conboy the tabloid newspaper’s use of language to articulate a form of British national community is also a highly successful commercial strategy which enables it to retain a large share of the national newspaper market (2006: 13). This use of language is a specific editorial strategy, connected to others, such as news

[92] The name of the place has been removed to conform to standards of anonymisation guaranteed as part of the interview process.
[93] See Appendix 4 for the coding key which relates titles and staff to the identifying codes used here

values which dramatise the human experience (Conboy 2006: 14-16). In a similar way local newspapers exploit place to create a community centred on a geography concomitant with this circulation area. The local newspaper foregrounds its localness with such strategies as signalling its name in its title and by including stories which have a connection to its circulation area. Although increasingly titles are criticised for being "local in name only" (Franklin 2006), in a process which will be explored later in this section, the interviews carried out here show that for staff a local connection with their title is still prized. Repeatedly those interviewed proclaimed their links to the area, almost as a route to authority in their professional position. The deputy editor at the independent weekly title referenced above summed it up as, "most of us went to school here. You know the people. It's the centuries of knowledge really, you know stuff from years ago or you know someone who does and you ring them up" (Interviewee1IWDE). Similarly the chief sub-editor at another title said he was "basically a local person, subbing for his local paper" (Interview 6GDWS).

Existing research has attempted to clarify what 'existing for the good of the community' means to the practice of those who produce newspapers. Cox and Morgan identify "the good of the town" (1973: 108) as an organising factor for the production of titles on Merseyside. However, they conclude that the "innocuous" concept is ill-defined by those within the industry.

> "At best it involved the attempt to foster community consciousness. At worst it often identified the interest of a section of townspeople as the interest of all. It was in both respects, in short, the local equivalent of the hackneyed concept of 'the national interest'." (1971: 108)

Similarities can be drawn between this conception of more than 40 years ago and the way in which the group editor of a stable of titles, owned by one of the largest companies in England, saw the role of his newspaper.

> "It should be a fairly accurate reflection of the community it serves. I think a good vibrant local newspaper is an essential part of community cohesiveness; it can bring people together to do things, to campaign against things and it has a vital role in democracy."(Interviewee 5GDWGE)

Ian Jackson sets out to clarify "the role of local newspapers in their communities" (1973: preface). His analysis leads to a detailed consideration of the impact of the good of the community on the ideology of the local newspaper, [94] which can "project itself as a community conscience, idealist, standard bearer of local pride and recorder" (ibid 273). This process is aligned to a set of journalistic practices which govern the content of these titles. Chief among these is an overwhelming emphasis on local content (just three of 45 stories of 10 column inches surveyed by Jackson were non-local) within the paper and on the front page (ibid: 82). Thus a title gives prominence to, and campaigns for causes and issues within the geographical area with which it is aligned. For Jackson the monopoly held by a title over its circulation area can add to the degree to which a community identifies with it is then seen as "our paper" by a readership (ibid 23). As such, titles become 'the establishment' – as expressed by the interviewee above and an assumed mandate for the watchdog role (ibid: 274). The corollary to this is the need for accuracy, because expert local readers would notice mistakes.

As such, local institutions are valued by local papers and all but one hyperlocal blogger[95] interviewed in the course of this study placed a value on this type of content to their publication. For the independent weekly staff interviewed here, whose circulation area is directly concomitant with a local authority area, covering courts and councils was seen as key and something to which considerable resources in terms of editorial staff are dedicated (Interviewee IDWDE).

The result for Jackson is a number of recurring themes in terms of the content of a local newspaper including: crime and subsequent court hearings, exposure of error, neglect or faulty procedure (as an adjunct to the watchdog

[94] For him, the local press has four main roles; firstly it acts as a local watchdog or "moral guardian" (ibid 131) safeguarding the reader against the actions of local institutions; secondly it is a pump-primer which suggests ways to improve the community (ibid 144); thirdly it can be a "booster " which celebrates achievements associated with the community (ibid 146), and; fourthly, a paper can act as a detached "reflector" which offers an impartial account of events (ibid 145).

[95] This blogger stated that he could not seek to cover institutions comprehensively due to the workload it would entail. He did though sometimes monitor institutions digitally to create content (Interviewee 2IBB).

status), acts of heroism and public service indicating good 'citizenship', local celebrity – to include personal landmarks like wedding anniversaries, coverage of local institutions and organisations – including sport (ibid: 82-109). His analysis suggests that those within the local newspaper industry see the reporting of local government as their "prime function" and research carried out nearly 20 years later demonstrated that 23 per cent of stories analysed in 18 weekly papers reported councils or regional authorities (Franklin and Murphy 1991: 64). Jackson suggests that the approach to this content is couched within the context of enhancing the status of a given community (ibid: 111). The interests of title and authority are aligned because both ascribe to the notion of serving the good of the community and such reports present a picture of positive contributions to local community life" (ibid: 110). Additionally, Franklin and Murphy argue that the embodiment of the community is its institutional representation so that council, MP, court, emergency services are all given prominence as sources (1991: 58). Even the reporting of what Jackson terms "disorder" news –including crime and violence – can ultimately have a positive effect on the community, he argues, by promoting the work of the police and legal system which ultimately "reassures" readers (ibid: 93).

Ideally the standards of the paper should be those articulated by the *Darlington Evening Despatch* in 1968, that "a newspaper should reflect the community it serves – warts and all. When a mirror it holds to society reveals neglect, injustice, inhumanity, ignorance, or complacency, the mirror should not be clouded but polished, so that these things can be eradicated rather than ignored" (ibid: 286). For staff in today's industry the ability to probe, interrogate and hold to account was still prized as a marker of professionalism – even if doing so could potentially alienate part of either your readership, for instance by criticising large employers in an area, or business audience.

> "Sometimes it's difficult; you're reporting something that a significant part of the community will think you've done wrong in reporting because it's upsetting the applecart. But you have to live with that." (Interviewee 1IWE.)

The themes identified above are aligned with those embodied within the training syllabus of the National Council for the Training of Journalists, which was set up to accredit training for the newspaper industry in 1951. A knowledge of court reporting and local government are essential components of the qualification for those wishing to work in regional newspapers (NCTJ.com: 2013); this aligns with the required ability of a local newspaper reporter. It is worth noting that all of the editorial staff interviewed in the course of this study had followed the NCTJ training route. In this way the ideology of the journalist as local guardian is disseminated to would-be entrants into the industry and is subsumed into a pattern of work routines. This system of training also embeds the coincidence between circulation area and community. It is an ideological position which can be found both in the trainee and the editor alike, as former editor Sara Hadwin said "….the role of an editor is to produce a newspaper which serves the community in which it circulates and is bought willingly because it has the long-term interests of its readers at heart, satisfies their curiosity, enriches their lives, expands their horizons and helps an informed enlightened public opinion to emerge" (Hadwin, 2006: 146). This position was expressed by a reporter at the independently-owned titles as "we scrutinise – the council, the hospital. I think we have a vital role. Anyone who doesn't have a voice I think we serve." (Interviewee 3IDDCR). For the editor of the independent weekly, the role is one of "watchdog of all that goes on in public and private life. Keeping an eye on local government, local health services, our MP" (Interviewee 1IWE). Increasingly these norms were also being adopted by one of the bloggers interviewed, largely due to the need to provide a flow of copy which brings an increased reliance on official sources like the police.

> "We did take the view early on that we weren't going to cover crime because people's lives are miserable enough…. We don't take that view anymore. Pretty much every press release which we get from the police we put out now, probably because we're locked into this thing that we've got to have lots of stories going on." (Interviewee 71BB)

However, Cox and Morgan (1973), argue that this process outlined above is not aligned with the benefit of the community, but is an organisational strategy to benefit the business of the newspaper itself. As such they

emphasise the significance of the good of the community to the political economy of the local newspapers; acting as a watchdog is an increasingly idealised position for staff. Jackson's research was also carried out against the background of a shift in the ideological backdrop for the provincial paper described at length in Chapter 9[96]. He expressed concern that elevating the profit motive above all others, would result in a "world of candy floss and puff" content favoured by "consensus-seeking market journalism" (ibid 286-7). Therefore, while the notion of the local press serving the good of the community may remain "an essential part of its public legitimacy" (Conboy, 2004: 127), increasingly the extent to which a highly-commercialised local press, faced with the challenge of digital media, is able to fulfil this role is called into question. Franklin and Murphy suggest the proposition that communal life depends on this form of news reporting creates an ideology of news production which serves the economic interest of the localised provincial newspaper industry (1991: 56). As such, the idea that the journalist serves the good of the community is further degraded to a 'functionalist' notion, employed by an editorial team organised for the pursuit of profit (see Simpson's analysis in Chapter 9). As the blogger quoted above expresses; crime is not covered for reasons of public interest, but because police press releases provide an accessible source of content for hard-pressed producers.

> "Central to it is the idea of a community, a social unit of indeterminate size united by a common set of interests and worldview which differentiate it from the wider social world which constitutes its environment. There is then a definitional equation between the life and events of the people in that community and its institutional structure, so that the version of events promulgated by powerful individuals within this institutional order become the established truth of communal life. The market, in the form of the circulation area of the newspaper, is also identified with the community so that even if they are not definitionally identical, the two are at least in a mutually supportive relationship. And the role of the journalist is formulated precisely in functionalist terms; to provide a record of the community, to make people publicly accountable who should be; to participate in

[96] For instance, Jackson expressed concern over the rise in conglomerate ownership, suggesting that around 55 per cent of daily and 25 per cent of weekly regional and local titles were owned by 'chains' – by which he meant the News of the World Organisation Ltd, Associated Newspapers, United Newspapers, The Thomson Organisation and the Westminster Press Group (1971: 23-25).

> the system of social control; and to do this in the context of a set of relationships, with 'contacts' chosen by their roles in the institutions which they themselves and the newspaper identify as the defining structure of the community." (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 59).

Journalists' ability to sustain the value of serving the good of the community can therefore be challenged by the commercial environment in which they are working. Russo suggests that this tension can lead journalists to seek to sustain their identity as a 'professional', wedded to the value of public service, over their allegiance to the business organisation if their "work requirements" are not "compatible with their professional role requirements" (1998:79). For the editorial staff interviewed here, the fragility of this ideological position is increasingly manifest in a split definition of the community; which sees it concomitantly defined as the community-as-reader and the community-as-funder – that is as advertiser – commonly called the "business community". Other categorisations were of the community as stratified, for instance by age or interest; the clearest sense of a split though was between those who purchase the paper and advertisers who pay to be in the paper. For one editor, the community is "the business community" and "the readers" both of whom "have a vested interest to operate in a way which supports the local community and what it needs" (Interviewee 6GDWGE). This relationship of the paper to the community, therefore, becomes one of maximising the latter without alienating the former. Such are the stresses of managing these twin demands that another editor described it as "riding two horses" (interviewee 5GDWDE).

> "If you speak to someone from the business side, it's a profit-making centre, it's a business like any other, which it is, but it has a dual role in that sense that for me, I am still a journalist. I am a manager, but I consider myself a journalist and the public service element is the one that gets me up in the morning." (Interviewee 5GDWDE)

At the heart of this process is the irony that monopolistic ownership of local titles – and the concomitant centralisation of production and reduction in the number of journalists working within it – has removed them from the communities they seek to serve. Bob Franklin has outlined the way in which titles have increasingly been physically removed with the closure of local

offices and printing and sub-editing being centralised into regional hubs. Typical of this is the move by Newsquest[97] to create a regional subbing hub in South Wales to produce newspapers from as far afield as Darlington and York (holdthefrontpage.co.uk, 5.3.14); journalists are less likely to be locally-based and the "serious consequence here is the loss of routine contacts with the local community in which the paper circulates" (Franklin, 2006a: xxi). This process is keenly felt by editorial staff in particular interviewed as a part of this thesis and, perhaps unsurprisingly, was most vehemently expressed by those staff with most years of experience who have had first-hand experience of these changes. One chief sub-editor (interviewee 6GDWS) was interviewed as "title champion" of a local weekly paper. This role replaces that of individual editor as the production of the title shifted from the town it professes to serve via its masthead to a centralised production base some 20 miles away. This journalist had trained on that title (when it was still based in the town) more than 20 years ago; at time of interview he was among 16 people facing redundancy with the move to a centralised subbing hub[98].

In addition to remoteness and the changing patterns in the way in which local papers are read, free "Metro" titles, distributed through commuter routes, offer an apparent regional alternative, although they are filled with centrally-produced copy which bears no connection to place. This removal of titles from their locale was also cited as a direct cause for the creation of one of the hyperlocal blogs investigated here.

> "Most regional newspapers are just becoming more and more centralised and less connected with the community. There are lots of hyperlocal sites which are one person, who's passionate about the area doing what they can to get the story out there." (Interviewee 7IBB)

[97] Newsquest is in fact a subsidiary of the US-based newspaper company Gannett.
[98] The terms of the offer of continued employment included relocating on a lower salary, because all pages would be laid-out to pre-set template.

A tangled web? Relations with the community in the era of Web 2.0

Combining this picture with the impact of digital technology creates a "revolution of epic" proportions, according to Sue Robinson. The "internet, citizen interactivity, ubiquitous news and information, globalization and mobile technologies" are all redefining what it means to be a local news outlet and that outlet's relationship with its community (2014: 114). This distance undermines traditional notions of what it means to be a newspaper with a strong relationship to its community. For Robinson, local is still closely inter-twined with proximity, although that may not require physical proximity but can instead by thought of as a form of connectedness via interest, enhanced by digital technologies. Reader and Hatcher define "nearness to people" as a common theoretical anchor among scholars of community journalism[99]. Reader, however, widens the notion of physical closeness to one of connectedness and the "study of relationship dynamics between journalists and the communities they serve" becomes the study of "the degree and implications of "connectivity" between journalism and communities" (2012: 5).

Hess and Waller (2014) suggest that "geo-social" is a better way of defining newspapers which proclaim a link to place in their masthead in the digital age. This concept recognises the significance of the link to place by both reader and journalist, but recognises that the link may be digital, the result of interest or nostalgia as well as physical location. In this instance the news provider can use place as a defining factor, but necessarily as a limiting one; instead it becomes a "node" within a network of information. The geo-social breaks the functionalist link between geography and community; readers are situated with a location, but are not defined by it.

> "A "sense of place" differs from the more collective, cohesive notion of "community" and does not assume that individuals have shared values, points of view or common interests merely because they reside in a particular geographic space or have some connection to it. It

[99] Community Journalism has been defined as specialist branch of journalism study which focuses on small, local newspapers; it is prominent in US studies of journalism practice due to its tradition of independent, small circulation, weekly newspapers.

> serves like a magnetic force in digital space where individuals are drawn towards certain nodes in information flows that resonate with their "sense of place". (Hess and Waller, 2014: 126).

This notion of creating communities of interest is exemplified in the complex social media strategy employed by the sports editor in charge of a daily newspaper to bring together sports fans around the daily title's online presence.

> "We have a Twitter account, we have one devoted solely to [football team]. We have Facebook and our website is developing quickly. Our fulltime [football team] correspondent does an hour's web chat on Twitter. Everybody's an expert, everybody knows best, everybody's got an opinion and I think that's something we've developed. There's lots of interaction." (Interviewee 5GDWSE)

However, for most of those interviewed, digital technology has not disrupted what they understand to be a palpable physical relationship with the area they seek to serve, possibly because it is engrained in practice to the extent that it difficult to re-imagine. Hess and Waller also suggest that the physical proximity of producer and locale remains significant within the "geo-local" concept, because a sense of place helps to "provide news and commentary on their audiences' place in a highly connected world" (ibid: 130). For this reason, they are critical of moves to centralise newspaper production in the UK, because journalists need to preserve their connection to a geographical location in order to "develop a specialized understanding of the land they report on" (214: 128). This suggests that even professionals who are removed from their locale by centralisation need to retain their claim to authority over a geographical area, as exemplified by the pride in local links described above. Thus the reporter who has a 40-mile round trip from her head office to her "patch" can make up for this by her connection via family.

> "Nowadays it's harder not being based there and that's where knowing the area anyway gives you the upper hand. We work probably 15 to 20 miles from [the town named in the title]; we are there a couple of times a week – we get out there as often as we can but if you've got to do a round trip then it's a couple of hours in the car." (Interviewee 6GDWSR)

However, the advent of digital technology also changes the notion of what it is to be a journalist working in the local news industry and threatens what journalists see as their 'professional' value due to its challenge to "one of the most fundamental 'truths' in journalism, namely: the professional journalist is the one who determines what publics see, hear and read about the world" (Deuze, 2005: 451). While similarities with established practice may persist, such as the continuation of a physical proximity to the readers, the journalist now has to reach out to, and bring together, a virtual community – as exemplified by the sports editor quoted above – as well as those defined by a particular geographic locality. Reader and Hatcher (2012) describe "a community connector who has both a professional and a personal stake in that community". Seth Lewis et al (2014) have developed the notion of connectedness into one of "reciprocity", where journalists actively engage with their audience – largely via social media – to build an ongoing and active relationship. Journalists are "community builders who can forge connections with and among community members by establishing patterns of reciprocal exchange" (2014: 237). One way the journalists interviewed here are seen to be employing this strategy is in terms of reaching different sections of the community, especially younger audiences who are seen to favour digital platforms. Two of the titles in this study have launched websites specifically aimed at a demographic younger than those who buy the newspaper. In this way journalists are innovating their practice to take advantage of new technologies. This was apparent in news coverage – where social media and live blogging platforms are used to provide immediate information to audiences – and feature sections where technology enables new forms of engagement with audiences, for instance via podcasts of music.

> "Certainly a lot of the people who read the stuff I write tend to do so online. I write about music and arts stuff and a lot of those people don't buy the paper." (Interviewee 5GDWF)

These notions also shift the traditional function of a journalist from that of one-way information provider to one who can promote a 'conversation' between news provider and audience. Mark Deuze describes the product of

this as a form of "open" journalism, produced by the journalist and reader-as-citizen-journalist together; the apotheosis of this is a form of 'dialogical' journalism (2003: 218) "where the contents of a news medium … are fully maintained by journalists interacting with citizens". The impact of this on the business of journalism is profound because the news provider no longer has a monopoly on content but is instead placed somewhere "on a continuum between content and connectivity" (ibid: 220), which has implications for its organisation and, significantly, its role in the community.

This context has enabled the emergence of a "citizen journalism" which "offers new opportunities to cover news on a town, neighbourhood or even street level" in a form which has become known as hyperlocal media (Paulussen and D'heer: 2013)[100]. This may be in a form which is integrated with professional news outlets – for instance by allotting certain web pages to citizen journalists – or in an independent form such as online news sites which "operate at the crossroads of highly focused, locally-orientated news with technology-enabled potential as tools for civic engagement" (Kurplus et al, 2010: 360).

This study has found that this relationship has been harnessed in two key ways: one is to provide content for the printed newspaper by allowing "user generated content" to be submitted and included.[101] More radical is a collaborative approach to content production, exemplified by the blogger who cites his background in blogs as enabling this fresh approach to provincial news production.

> "Our belief was that you put editorial up to a certain point but you don't know absolutely everything about it, all you do is gather what you can at the time, and we were very fortunate in the commenters that we've grown over the year are incredibly well-informed and leave intelligent comments." (Interviewee 21BB)

As previously cited, the proliferation of hyperlocal websites in the UK has been seen as an attempt to seek to fill the gap left by the decline of a

[100] The phenomenon understood as hyperlocal media is also explored in Chapter 13.
[101] One daily title interviewed here described creating a page lead out of readers' pictures of garden birds.

traditional local media; Lilly Canter (2013) has described a collaboration between the *Leicester Mercury* and community reporters which has seen the latter given space in the columns of the newspaper. However, the relationship between traditional providers and community or hyperlocal ventures is not always an easy one, because they are viewed as competition for revenue. This was apparent in the views of staff at the independent weekly who saw the established hyperlocal website as an incursion into their circulation area (Interviewee 1IWCE).

Research also suggests that a sustainable funding model for community-based hyperlocal ventures has not yet been found and this view was strongly echoed by both bloggers interviewed here. As such, "it is not enough to declare hyperlocal[102] media operations the antidote to the decline of traditional media outlets" (Kurplus et al, 2010: 372). It has also been argued that there is still a high demand for professional, trusted local media outlets within communities even within areas which have a hyperlocal website; those who work in hyperlocal news do not appear to see themselves as challengers to traditional providers and "characterize themselves neither as news makers nor as journalists and are insistent that they could not and should not be seen as replacing journalists" because often the content they post is driven by personal interest and what "they happen to come across in the street" (ibid: 35). This context, therefore, suggests an uncertain future for local news provision. The interviews explored in detail in the next chapter suggest that workers in the regional news industry still attach a great significance to the concept of community and their relationship with it. All of those questioned recognised the significance of the notion of community to their working practices; however, when questioned closely, differences emerged which suggest that the relationship with community varies according to issues of ownership, investment and resources.

[102] Research by Lilly Canter suggests that both citizen and professional journalists wish to see the lines of demarcation remain. Professional editorial staff who collaborate with citizen journalists viewed themselves as trained, objective and as producing work which conformed to professional standards; as such they had a greater "credibility" than their community counterparts and did not feel threatened by the collaboration (2013: 16).

Chapter 11: Journalists' perceptions of the 'good of the community'.

This next section of this study investigates the relevance of the idea of community to the practice and role perceptions of staff working in the provincial newspaper industry in light of the changes outlined above. A wave of semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees on weekly and daily newspapers in England. Hyperlocal bloggers working in two of these circulation areas were also interviewed. The intention was to explore if these employees placed a value on serving the good of the community, and how they understood the concept and its impact on their working routines. This approach would, therefore, elucidate the relevance of the good of the community as an ideological value in relation to how newspaper employees understand their role and also a functional value in relation to news practice. The interview was selected as a research method because of its ability to yield data which is not held in more freely available sources, such as the trade press and annual reports, although these can provide supporting information on matters of financial information and business strategy. As previously discussed, other forms of testimony, such as written biographies or autobiographies, are also often partisan or, particularly in relation to journalists, heroised. In contrast, face-to-face interviews enabled data to be collected from those working on the frontline of provincial newspapers. The interviews also enabled those sectors of the organisations who are often missing from those written accounts – in particular those involved in the distribution and advertising sections of the newspapers – to be included.

By constructing a sample across editorial and commercial departments the study enabled data to be collected so that the concept could be tested not only against the idealistic value identified as significant to the identity of journalists, but also in relation to the ways in which other newspaper employees give value to their working lives. In addition the data can elucidate the ways in which the concept has a functional value for working practices within an organisation. The findings therefore offer an addition to the previous work carried out in this area by investigating the significance of the good of the community to the range of departments in the provincial

newspaper industry, in addition to its place for the emerging hyperlocal news environment.

Importantly, the interviews also enabled this significant concept to be explored as part of the lived experience of employees, rather than as an abstract ideal, and therefore enables a shift to the particular from the more generalised descriptions offered by the historical analysis in the preceding parts of this thesis. By positioning this investigation within the context of the day-to-day working lives of these varying participants, this study also offers the potential of being able to "illuminate the complexity of the larger structures" (Newcomb and Lotz, 2002: 63) – for instance by testing the concept in relation to the context in which the participants are working, such as the impact that distribution patterns have on the understanding of community or the impact that staffing levels might have on their understanding of how they may be able to uphold the value of serving the good the community.

The data yielded, and its subsequent analysis, therefore enables the concept of the good of the community to be assessed in relation to these key areas: its meaning for employees and the ability of those employees to act in a way which upholds that meaning. These areas are further contextualised by the shift to a post-industrial landscape for those newspapers examined and specifically on the impact of digital platforms on the concept of serving the good of the community. It therefore sheds light on a key aspect of professional identity for these workers within the actual environment within which they operate at a time of change for that environment. This detailed analysis therefore complements the political economic approach explored at length in this work and also enables the interdependence of the various factors, including issues of policy, to be considered here and within the concluding part of this thesis.

The sample was constructed to include a range of newspaper types according to ownership. These were independent paid-for weekly (the *Isle of Wight County Press*), independent paid-for daily (*Wolverhampton Express & Star*), group-owned free commuter title (the Birmingham edition of *The Metro*), two

group-owned paid-for daily and associated weeklies, including paid-for and free titles (The *Oxford Mail*[103] and weeklies; the *Worcester News* and weeklies including the *Evesham Journal*[104]). Hyperlocal bloggers working in the circulation area of the *County Press* and part of Birmingham were also interviewed.

The *County Press, Express & Star, Worcester News* and *Oxford Mail* are all traditional provincial newspaper titles. *The Worcester News* is among those papers to lay claim to England's oldest, tracing its origins to the *Worcester Post-Man* of the early 1700s. Owned by Newsquest, a subsidiary of US media conglomerate Gannett, it is based in Worcester and in recent years the city office has become a permanent home to the various weekly titles held in the same stable so that a combined team produces a series of titles. At the time the interviews were carried out (December/January 2013-2014), the sub-editors were being further centralised to a "subbing hub" based in Newport, Wales. Similarly, The *Oxford Mail's base* is also the seat of production for a range of titles; in addition to the city's weekly, the *Oxford Times*, it is also the production centre for a range of free weekly titles. At the time of interview sub-editors were still based in Oxford although they were due to be relocated to Newport early in 2015. Both titles were originally evening titles but now publish in the morning, six days a week and they both have accompanying websites. In contrast the *Express & Star* is a family-owned newspaper, whose roots are explored elsewhere in this study. It is part of the Midland News Association, which also publishes the sister title, the *Shropshire Star* and a range of 16 weekly titles. Organisationally, this means employees can work across more than one title, in common with those at the Worcester and Oxford publishing centres. The paper's head office is in Wolverhampton. In contrast the *County Pres*s is a single family-owned weekly paper based on the Isle of Wight. Founded in 1884 it is published on Friday; it was published as a broadsheet until 2008 when it switched to a compact 'tabloid'. It has had a

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[103] The *Oxford Mail* is produced at a Newsquest publishing centre. As such, staff also work across weekly titles including the *Witney Gazette* and ,*The Oxford Times*.
[104] Similarly, the *Evesham Journal* is a Newsquest title published at a centre which also produces the daily *Worcester News* title as well as other weekly papers covering the county.

web presence since 1999. The company's interests also include a print division and a bookshop.

As far as possible a variety of staff were interviewed at each publishing centre to cover editorial (senior and junior), newspaper sales and advertising departments. Interviews were sought with staff at Birmingham edition of the commuter title *The Metro* newspaper, which is owned by DMG Media and which is distributed for free at key transport hubs Monday to Friday. The organisation of *The Metro* is such that its editorial is produced centrally in London and its advertising is sold on a franchise basis at regional centres; therefore only advertising staff were included. The sample was completed by two hyperlocal bloggers who run local news websites. One has a background in technology writing and has been running his blog for nearly 10 years with the help of his partner; the other has a fulltime job but blogs on matter of interest to his community in his spare time. All results have been anonymised and sources coded according to publication type and role (see Appendix 6). For the purpose of the results, identifying factors have been removed, as signified by inserts in square brackets [ ].

Interviews were carried out within the workplace with the relevant permission of each company and individual as necessary. Each discussion was centred on a schedule of questions which sought to investigate: the perceived role of the title, the perceived community it sought to serve, the impact of resources on the individual's ability to fulfil this role, and the impact of digital developments on each of these concerns. This research method enabled a qualitative exploration of the journalists' responses which would not have been possible with a questionnaire. Additionally, it is doubtful whether hard-pressed newsworkers would have had the time to respond to a lengthy questionnaire[105] whereas the access negotiated enabled them to take time out

[105] In his seminal study, *Journalists at Work* (1971), Jeremy Tunstall describes how he sent out a 22-page questionnaire to those included in his survey. Revisiting this study, Howard Tumber (2006) praises Tunstall for his pioneering work which eased his access to journalists who are now "inundated with requests for interviews and survey responses from students as well as academics and consequently are not as cooperative as they were" (2006: 61).

of their working day to speak to me[106]. The interview transcripts were read and re-read to saturate the researcher in the material they presented and results were analysed and tabulated to discern particular patterns of response.

How 'serving the good of the community' resonates with news workers.

These interviews suggest that workers in the regional news industry attach a great significance to the concept of community and their relationship with it. As previously noted, all of the editorial staff questioned had completed formal training via the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) – which sets standards of practice via the Editor's Code – and, therefore, have been inducted into journalism via a shared body of knowledge and ethical principles. Interviews with members of staff from other departments show that the value of service to the community also has resonance with those involved in the sale and distribution of these titles and for one of the hyperlocal bloggers involved in the study. This suggests that the value has a wider significance to the political economy of the local news industry and also to its perceived value as a cultural practice.

However, the interviews do reveal differences in the way that the concept is understood by these editorial staff; in particular, the extent to which the notion of community is understood as inclusive varies between titles so that for staff at some publishing centres it is equivalent to a paying audience – either of readers or advertisers. This suggests that the notion of serving the good of the community is influenced by the context in which these staff are working and specifically by the particular newsroom ideology in which they find themselves.

[106] Although personal contacts were used to establish access at some titles (the *Oxford Mail*, *Evesham Journal* and the *County Press*), other access was negotiated via letter and telephone conversations with relevant personnel, during which I outlined my own professional experience as a journalist as well as my academic credentials. I am pleased to say that this approach elicited just one negative response.

The workers who exhibited the strongest sense of the significance of the community to their organisation were those working for an independent weekly title. As previously cited, the deputy editor summed it up as being “embedded in the psyche” of the area.

> “We reflect everything that goes on [here]. We’re such a part of life that people expect everything that they do to be in the [paper](Interviewee 1IWDE)

The concept is also valued by commercial workers in the organisation. “You're there to service your community; I think you're there to provide quality information in a rapid or digestible way, certainly rapid nowadays in terms of website business. I do strongly believe in the community role.” (Interviewee 1IWCD). The community is tangible but inclusive with no apparent split between funders and readers as described in the previous chapter. The definition of community for this title is geographically concomitant with its circulation area and it is inclusive of everyone within that locality – even those who may not consume or contribute financially to the business.

Staff at the independent daily newspaper company expressed a similar conception of the significance of the community; “Our newspaper is here to serve the community, I very much believe that – especially with the lack of alternatives in this area. We give people a voice and we scrutinise, the council, the hospital. I think we have a vital role”, was how one reporter expressed it (Interviewee 31DDCR). This commitment extends to the work routines of editorial staff, who attempt to cover as much as the routine events such as court and council as possible. “That’s the backbone,” said interviewee 3IDDCR. “I will rarely see a journalist from another paper.” The offices are also still based in the city centre, and staff believe they are physically close to the people they seek to serve; one story described to me centred on a building opposite theirs.

Both managing editors at the publishing centres ascribed to the notion that their titles play key roles in their communities with one professing the idea that this should translate into action: “The point is that if you want to be a

community newspaper you have to walk the walk." (Interviewee 6GDWGE). The notion is also central to hyperlocal news practice; "What's driven people from the beginning is the idea of serving the community because of the love of it," was how one blogger expressed it (Interviewee 71BB).

However, despite these superficial similarities, a deeper exploration of how these workers understand community reveals differences which can be related to the context in which they are working. The understanding of community shifts according to the direct impact of the financial imperative on the ideology of the newsroom. The most inclusive definition of community was found at the independent weekly title, where the business model supports investment in that community; significantly this is achieved via an investment in people so that the number of staff has remained constant in recent decades. However, the definition of community can be seen to fracture at other titles, for instance so that at one of the publishing centre advertisers are given editorial preference. The logical conclusion of this decline is the free commuter title for whom the community is not relevant as a concept in itself; the paper is understood purely in financial terms, as a method of presenting advertising to a demographic.

Staff at the independently weekly title defined their community as coterminus with its circulation area to the extent that the editor called it a "small nation'"; it becomes everybody who lives – or indeed has ever lived – in that area. The community and circulation area for the printed newspaper are equivalent and both were clearly understood in terms of delineated geography. The population is also understood to be loyal to the area and underpinned by generational links. Because staff are in part chosen for their links to the area – and all live in the area – they are also part of the population which strengthens those ties.

> "Because everybody knows everybody you can guarantee you're going to pick up the paper and open it and you're going to see someone you know or you know their family." (Interviewee1IWDE).

The staff also believe that the community has a particularly strong identity and a great allegiance to both the area, and the paper.

> "There are some transient people but not as many as you would find in [another] town now I think. There are lots of people who have been here for a number of generations and they are fiercely interested in what goes on around them." (Interviewee 1IWE)

For other titles, though, their conception of community is more selective so that only certain people – the readers who buy the paper– were considered to be the community under consideration. Thus the relationship between market factors – sales – and the community is explicitly articulated. This approach was manifest by the staff at the independently-owned daily newspaper who spoke in terms of a fragmented community which was, in effect, multiple communities stretched across a regional area. For this reason, perhaps, the title has traditionally produced a range of geographically-aligned editions but staff also expressed a belief that those titles were not targeting everyone within a given area because certain people were not part of the community either due to transience or difference. "In a fast-moving conurbation you've got different demographics and it's harder to communicate with those," explained Interviewee 3IDAM.

> "Our core market is people who were born and bred within their local communities and that tends to be in the more affluent areas rather than the city centres. You've got a lot of ethnic diversity that has no allegiance to the community or town so what's the appeal of a local paper to them." (Interviewee 3IDCM)

For this title, communities are stronger in stable areas of population.

> "We've got a lot of communities, because we cover a large patch. We have lots of parochial areas, that is where the local newspaper comes in. Cities care less about what their neighbours are doing." (Interviewee 3IDDE)

The circulation manager, who has been with the company for 35 years. related these shifts in notions of community to shifts in physical proximity. For him the title's relationship with its community had been built on a strategy of

nearness, manifest in the home delivery strategy. This aimed to deliver as many papers as possible through the letterbox, so the company literally knew where their readers lived. At its height 82 per cent of all papers sold were delivered; such was the closeness of the relationship that the company would also take the newspapers to the traditional holiday resorts the readers went to so the sale was maintained.

> "There's been so much movement now of the population transferring. I've done it. I'm born and bred in [place] and now I live 30 miles away. The community is so diverse now and if you try and be all things to all people you lose your focus. It's knowing what your core market is." (Interviewee 3IDCM).

This notion of fragmentation and change is visible in particular in one of the group publishing centres, which defines its core community in terms of both key geographical areas, key social demographics, but also in terms of age. "If you're young and fancy free you're part of the world and not part of the community," was how feature writer Interviewee 5GDWF put it. "My community is different from the news community. It's like a Venn diagram, isn't it?" These employees therefore also ascribed to a fractured notion of community, largely centred on defined demographics or "core areas".

These editorial staff also described a working routine which has distanced them from physical proximity with the titles they seek to serve. Staff working in both the group-owned publishing centres were in the throes of negotiating far-reaching changes to their working practices. Sub-editing has been centralised so that titles were being produced across several counties from one base. In one centre visited (centre 6), editorial staff had also been organised into central news teams working across seven titles, with the loss of one editor and one reporter. One centrally-based sub-editor was charged with producing a weekly title for a town 12 miles away with no dedicated reporter to generate copy. "When I came here there would have been seven district reporters who had worked for the company for donkey's years and two or three more in head office and that has now gone." (Interviewee 5GDWS).

This sub-editor was also expected to help maintain the website and produce pages for the daily title and other weekly titles produced from the location. This situation was directly attributed to reduced resource levels.

> "The issue is one of manpower. You get trainees with some degree of local knowledge but not all of them have it." (Interviewee 5GDWS)

At another publishing centre staff were overtly prioritising those communities which contributed financially. One head of content remarked: "a lot of the features stuff that we do now is a little bit more blurred about how commercial it is and if I know that somebody is a good advertiser then I will happily give them the biggest coverage." (Interviewee 6GDWGE). The one title which eschewed the principle of serving the community was the free regional daily newspaper. The one staff member interviewed in association with this product dismissed suggestions that it had a community role because "it doesn't have the hacks out in the community and I don't feel it understands the key things which are important to people in the community" (interviewee 4GDFSD). As such it is set apart from the other titles in this study.

The 'good of the community' as a functional principle.

The analysis above demonstrates the way in which the good of the community is understood by news workers is contextualised not only via a set of values acquired via occupational socialisation, but also by the organisational reality of their day-today-working lives. It is therefore possible to relate their understanding to the political economy of the individual businesses in which they are working. By doing this we are able to elucidate the ways in which the business strategy can enable – or disable – workers in their ability to uphold this value.

For the independent weekly title, the relationship with the community is fundamental to the business strategy and the subject of direct and indirect investment in both monetary and non-monetary terms. This investment is

seen to sustain the community, which in turn sustains the business in a "virtuous circle" (Interviewee 1IWCE).

> "It's a bit of a win-win situation, the more we invest in the community the healthier it might become, how you judge that may be up for discussion, but therefore, the more money we make because we're serving a healthy community." (Interviewee 1IWCE)

The board members of this company include descendants of the founding family.[107] It articulated a sophisticated conception of its relationship with the community, expressed in the ideology of "social capitalism" (see interviewee 1IWCE below). The newspaper and community co-exist in a relationship of mutual dependency; as such, existing for the good of the community translates into action and investment, for instance via an awareness of the impact of pay levels on staff, who are themselves seen as active members of that community, and sponsorship for good causes within its area. This position is explicitly linked to the nature of the ownership of the business – which is both local and independent.

> "All of the decisions that we make are made in the room just next door by people who all live [here]. That is quite important in terms of the adhesion the business has with the community. It's actually in the editor's contract he has to live [here] and … it's in my contract to live [here]. So we're independent, we're locally owned….There is a thinking called social capitalism where business are much more aware of the relationship they have with the community in which they operate. There's a real social investment, a belief in the product. The directors aren't in it for a fast buck definitely." (Interviewee 1IWE)

This relationship is manifest in an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between title and reader, evidenced via feedback and interaction with those readers. For instance, key life events for people living in the area are marked by inclusion within both the editorial and advertising columns of the paper,

[107] The title boasts a readership of more than 91 per cent of its target population. Competing media within its circulation area include two radio stations and two websites but no other printed newspaper. In the financial year to June 2013 the company made a pre-tax profit of nearly £355,000 on a turnover of £5.1 million – a result described as "reasonable" by the company chairman.

which takes its responsibility to mark these events seriously. As such the paper's content conforms to the pattern described by Jackson outlined in the previous chapter. This means the title has invested in its product both in terms of its online presence but also by increasing the pagination of its paper product to accommodate as many stories as possible. The editor described how in 1984 the-then broadsheet paper was regularly 32 pages – equivalent to 64 tabloid pages. In 2014 the paper is regularly 200 pages long.

> "One of my great indicators for the paper which I think shows its importance to the community here is our births, marriages and deaths column. Most papers you look at round the country have half a page; this week we've got four pages. We burst four pages last week because of the sad death of two people in a road crash. It's a massive indicator, I think, that if it's happened, if you've been born, if you've died, if you've married, it's got to be in the [paper]." (Interviewee 1IWE)

The importance of supporting the community also translates into action for the commercial arm of the organisation. The advertising director – who has worked across regional titles in a variety of ownership – sees supporting the community as key to building readership because it preserves "integrity". Key to this is investment in a high-quality product.

> "I come from a background where I've seen, particularly in reaction to the recession, newspapers cull certain things to try to produce something on a much more streamlined basis, but to the point where it lost its local identity. We have a lot of staff for what is a weekly paper. I'd be surprised if there's a bigger staff anywhere else in the UK; we're strong in the market because of the resources we have." (Interviewee 1IWAD)

This means a commitment to staff in terms of numbers (the newsroom has a staff of 28 – a level which the editor says is unchanged in 30 years), job security and allowance for community-based activities such as serving as local councillors. The community, therefore, is not purely a source of income for the business; in fact the business sees itself as much a contributor to the community as vice versa. This strategy is directly contrasted with that of the large regional newspaper groups.

> "We're very aware that we've got Newsquest and Johnston Press [nearby]. Johnston Press have got an accounts department [nearby] so if we became part of JP we wouldn't need an accounts department, but equally they wouldn't need a managing director here, equally they wouldn't need so many journalists, they'd sling them, sub it all [nearby]. You've probably added another half a million pounds in net profit. It's great for JP, not good for [here] and certainly not good for our staff so we want to maintain our independence."(Interviewee 1IWCE)

The business is also actively part of the community by supporting the direct involvement of staff members acting as individuals and by their visibility within the community both indirectly and directly as representing the company. Maintaining staffing levels – for instance the paper has four photographers – is also seen as key because they can work within the community and be seen as on the "inside" of things (Interviewee 1IWAD).

> "The thing that always surprises me when we take a photographer out with us is that the people we're going to see probably don't really know me or the editor but immediately know the photographer. It always underlines to me how important our staff are." (Interviewee 1IWCE).

In the same way the editor believes his presence out and about has an impact.

> "The fact that I go to a quiz night at the local pub in aid of some charity – there's fifty people there who say 'the editor of the [paper] came along; the paper cares'. That's really important to me." (Interviewee 1IWE)

Uses of social media are also seen to have a role in reinforcing the presence of a title in its community. An interviewee claimed:

> "We didn't used to tweet from meetings and we do that now. I think there's a value in doing it in showing that were there so people know that we're keeping an eye on what's happening." Interviewee 1IWRW

Staff at the independently-owned daily title also express a belief in the value of involvement in the community. However, this involvement was related to the health of the business – rather than the community – by raising its profile.

> "We do business awards, community awards, we've just launched tourism and leisure awards. So we put the brand out there in many many ways and that works really well and we get a lot of kudos and respect for doing that, which ties back in with trust. It's very much a case of taking part in the community. " (Interviewee 3IDAM)

For staff working at the group publishing centres, the business strategy of the business was described as having a direct impact on their working routines – and how they understood their role in relation to their communities. One subeditor articulated the company's "core area strategy" as one which geared editorial content around certain advertising demographics (Interviewee 5GDWS). He therefore described serving the community an "ideal" but said "these days the role of the newspaper is to make money" (ibid). Even when the title was directly involved with the community, in this instance via sponsorship of children's football, the reason for it was articulated in relation to its functional role of generating content – and ultimately readers.

> "We publish every week a page of goal scorers to get as many names in the paper as we can. Sport is one of the few things that unites everyone and the interest in it is massive." (Interviewee 5GDWSE).

As described above, for staff at the other group publishing centre this position has impacted on the value of editorial independence and the operation of news values so that advertisers were given priority in terms of editorial space (Interviewee 6GDWHC). There was also increased co-operation between editorial and advertising staff.

> "We do try and work with them, more so than ever before. We do try to pass on leads to them and a lot of the features stuff that we do some is a little bit more blurred about how commercial it is." (Interviewee 6GDWHC)

This title had set aside its usual rules governing advertorials for a campaign to stimulate a high street disrupted by roadworks by giving feature coverage to the business community. "At the moment we're promoting them for opening an hour extra – they're getting a lead length piece." (Interviewee 6GDWSR)

Notwithstanding this, the value placed on editorial independence was common to all those interviewed for this study and expressed varyingly as: an ability to scrutinise and hold to account and an ability to represent – especially those who are unable to represent themselves. Covering 'bad news' as well as 'good news' is also seen to be vital to the health of the title and this extended to risking the wrath of readers; "you're reporting something that a significant part of the community will think you've done wrong in reporting because it's upsetting the applecart," (Interviewee 1IWE) was typical of the stance.

> "Some of the business leaders aren't happy about the headlines but they say our leader columns have always been fair. We're not in the process of sensationalising but we have to be independent." (Interviewee 3IDDE)

Blogger 7 articulated this stance through his perceived need to resist intervention from his local council.

> "They [the council PROs] went from being really lovely to berating us for our coverage. So we're like, what the hell are you talking about, who do you think you are trying to tell us how we report the news. So then that sort of set the tone for the relationship." (Interviewee 7IBB)

For both of the group editors, a key indicator of their ability to serve the good of the community was their ability to retain their independence from other stakeholders within that community as well as from commercial pressures; both expressed a willingness to sacrifice commercial gain for editorial independence. "There is a line and I'm the one who has to decide where that line is.," said editor 5GDWGE.

> "Exposing wrong doing could have a big commercial impact on your business. We ran a front-page story a few days ago, a picture of heat loss coming out of the [business name] headquarters. Some of our readers criticised us for doing that, for biting the hand that feeds us, attacking one of the city's biggest employers, but in terms of free speech which the paper is based on it's absolutely right that we're …raising this issue." (Interviewee 6GDWGE)

However, the other group editor (Interviewee 5GDWGE) was candid in his appraisal of his continued ability to fulfil the function of serving his community in the face of reduced resources. He described the recession of 2008 as a "double whammy" with revenues and profits now 50 per cent on what they were in 2007.

> "We don't do as much local government as we used to, we don't do as much of anything as we used to. We do everything we can flat out the best we can. This is due to reduced resources, as a result of cuts to satisfy shareholders and maintain a falling profit caused by the advent of digital and the recession. Editorial here comprises 55 per cent of our total budget and we've worked incredibly hard and fought a really quite protracted rear-guard action to protect what we've got. I don't think we've got enough people. We're flat out." (Interviewee 5GDWGE)

This balance between editorial and commercial considerations is not an issue for one of the bloggers interviewed, who does not seek to make money from his part-time activity (Interviewee 2IBB). For the other, for whom his news site is his full-time job, his values of transparency lead him to declare any and all commercial relationships. If necessary the community is prioritised over commercial gain.

> "We used to run Amazon stuff but actually that's taking trade away from the local shops so is that something you really want to be doing, so we decided to take those links down." (Interviewee 7IBB)

There is then, a notion that the integrity of a product is significant to its relationship with the community. The commercial director of the independent weekly clearly links this value with the critical relationship between product

and reader on which revenue is built (Interviewee 1IWCD). For the news producer with his roots in blogging, “transparency, truth and accountability” (Interviewee 7IBB) are at the heart of what he does. This value of integrity is allied with those of trust and accuracy – “there’s not the perception of how daft you make yourself look to the readers by getting the basic stuff wrong”, said sub-editor 5GDWS – and if a product gets it wrong, they expect their readers to let them know, because “people care ever such a lot about it.” (Interviewee 1IWDE).

Significantly this relationship is broken in the model of the free regional daily paper which is distributed via free pick-up points at transport hubs. As previously noted, this product is not seen as seeking to ascribe to the notion of the good of the community.

> “You tend to find that people aren’t that bothered – if there are typos in it, they’re not that bothered. You tend to find it’s read quite quickly; [the paper] is left on transport etc.” (Interviewee 4GDFDSD)

Other than this free commuter title, none of the other interviewees expressed a difference between the communities for their paid-for and free titles. The independent weekly has a limited part of its distribution as free, the independent daily company has accompanying free titles, as do the group publishing centres. “We put the same amount of care into the free titles as we do into the paid-for titles,” explained one editor (Interviewee 6GDWGE).

Virtual communities.

This fragmentation of the relationship between community and geographical location expressed by the regional press appears to be the space where hyperlocal bloggers intervene in the news landscape (interviewee 7IBB). Both bloggers interviewed for this study articulated the significance of community to their activities, largely because they define themselves as connected with

the hyperlocal blogging community[108] and recognise the significance of community to that practice.

> "It was all about raising my own social capital because from the outside it looks like you're giving back to the community, giving them your own time. I don't think I did it because I necessarily cared about [place] than anywhere else but I think doing hyperlocal has that semblance of being community-minded." (Interviewee 2IBB).

They also both expressed the view that their audience was overwhelmingly those connected to their geographic locale – despite the potential for technology to reach further.

> "Our community is [residents] and ex-pats – People who used to live here. We get over 50,000 hits. It's 95 per cent UK traffic; the problem with IP addresses is that you can't really tell beyond that. All we know is that mention the name, people know us." (Interviewee 7IBB)

The bloggers interviewed for this study also see themselves as directly linked with the people within their locale via their web presence. Despite their virtual presence, there is also a palpable physicality to their experience of producing online news. Blogger 2IBB articulates how stories literally "appear before him" such as from notices on trees. Both describe personal validation from, and interaction with, people in the community, such as Interviewee 21BB who said: "I didn't realise the butcher knew me until he said "you've got to write a story about me, I've won this award".

> "We get out a lot less than we used to, because when we're out people are always talking to us and it felt like an extension of work." (Interviewee 7IBB)

All those interviewed for this study exploit the interactive elements of their web platforms to build connections with their audience. However, their approach to this process differs in significant ways. Blogger 7IBB puts interaction and comments at the core of his online strategy.

[108] Interviewee 7IBB classes himself as a 'small news organisation' rather than a one-man hyperlocal blogger

> "Public commenting means you're not just a lone voice. We felt it was important to allow people anonymity because people within an organisation may well provide us with information we wouldn't have otherwise. We have house rules but as long as they're not breaking those house rules they can comment." (Interviewee 7IBB)

This differs starkly with the independent weekly newspaper circulating the same area, which demands all commentators be identified and comments moderated **"**because they put on all sorts of shit on there." (Interviewee 1IDWDE).

This connection can be emphasised to the degree that the audience becomes the content provider. This process is visible in the organisation of blog 7 which sees commentators adding to the content of the story. Staff on the independent daily newspaper emphasised the role of the website in generating content for online and printed products; this extends to a user-generated content section of its website, special features in the paper made up of contributed content and using social media to source information from emergency services.

> "The [UGC section] does fill our pages. For instance we asked people to send in bird pictures from their garden and you've got a page lead." (Interviewee 3IDDE)

The independent weekly has also started to use comments as source material for the newspaper.

> "It seemed like common sense; you do it already via letters to the editor but that's quite archaic now. Six comments within 100 on a web story can easily be lost but if the editor thinks there is some value in them you can pull them out." (Interviewee 1IWE)

For the newspaper groups in particular, the connectedness of their websites is seen as building new and future readerships. Both hyperlocals and newspaper companies alike dismiss the value of 'expat' web traffic because it does not lead to advertising revenue; instead the web-based products are seen as reaching different parts of the community. These audiences may be separate

from those for the printed product. This is particularly true of special interest groups, such as followers of sport at one of the group owned centres.

> "You've got two chances now; buying the paper is still very much a generational thing. I think if you went out and asked a lot of [football team] supporters under 30 how often they've physically been out and bought the paper you would find very few said yes. However, if you asked whether they follow you on Facebook and Twitter they would say yes." (Interviewee 5GDWSE)

The independent weekly is also using a digital platforms to grow its younger audience, a section of the community it "struggles" to reach (Interviewee 1IWCE). Therefore, for the newspaper companies there is a strong perception that the web-based products serve a different purpose to the printed product; this is aligned to different editorial strategies for each. Thus the content which makes it on the website or social media is that which is "already out there" (Interviewee 1IWRW) or content which appeals to a different demographic from that which is seen as engaging with the printed product, or a teaser for the printed version.

> "I make a point of tweeting something when I've spoken to someone interesting, or they've said something or there's an announcement which has come in. Obviously Twitter has to link back to the website, it's all about generating hits." (Interviewee 5GDWF)

This separation is the justification for harvesting content from one source for the other, such as using online comments in the printed product.

> "People don't necessarily look at the website and also there's some proof that say you had a big fire for example, even if it's been covered on the website, it wouldn't stop people buying the paper the next day. People may want both and we may cover the content as well." (Interviewee 6GDWHC)

For editorial staff the web is seen as having a dramatic effect on working patterns; this is visible in relation to shift in deadlines related to news.

> "If you had an RTA [road traffic accident] in the old days you would expect to open the newspaper and find out about it. Now you would

> expect to click on the website and find out about it immediately." (Interviewee 1IWDE)

This is most marked with reference to moderating comments made by readers on the site, which is seen as an additional workload. For the weekly paper which would not normally run weekend shifts, it means a changed pattern of working: "I hate moderating comments. Every weekend somebody's got to do it, so it means you never get any time off," said Interviewee 1IWDE. At the same time, digital sources have resulted in fewer staff at the independent daily; "The [UGC section] does fill our pages, so we've got less photographers." (Interviewee 3IDDE)

The editor of the independent weekly described how the web has impacted on the skills required of reporters.

> "You're constantly having to ask people to work a bit harder, a bit differently. They've taken to tweeting from council meetings, putting stuff on the website if they've done the calls at the weekend, whereas they used to write it down and wait until Monday to write it up. Now they've got to get it on the website and they've learned how to do it themselves." (Interviewee 1IWE)

The pressure of the constant demand of the web was echoed by the bloggers, who expressed a recognition that they had to limit their input into their sites in order to preserve some semblance of work-life balance. This issue of sustainability has resulted in both deliberately curtailing the time spent on news production.

> "We don't go out so much now and we feel that we are becoming a bit like regional news is criticised for 'not at things' but it's so engrossing during working hours." (Interviewee 7IBB)

This wish to protect personal time is echoed by the other blogger.

> "There's quite a community of web people around [place] who seem willing to give up hours to do stuff; it's very civic-minded and I've always resisted that. I'm not particularly proactive. It probably takes a bit more energy than I've got." (Interviewee 2IBB)

When the 'good of the community' rings hollow with journalists.

This study has sought to shed light on the meaning of community for workers in the regional news industry. It suggests that, while the notion of existing for the good of the community is valued by all those interviewed, the way in which it is understood and enacted differs in relation to the context in which they are working and particularly, in relation to the amount of investment aligned to it. It also suggests that the notion of community is still largely defined in terms of geography, despite the advent of digital versions of news products, and that the value of "integrity" (or independence) is key to the commercial exploitation of the good of the community. As such, the good of the community has greatest resonance with news workers – and the greatest functional value to the structure of a business – when all three elements are present.

In this study the workers who demonstrated the strongest commitment to the good of the community were those working for an independent newspaper company. The newspaper is a key part of that community to the extent it is "embedded in the psyche" (Interviewee 1IWDE) of the community. It forms part of the "establishment" and key events in life of the population are validated by inclusion within it – a role which the company maintains through investment by providing space to cover such events. Significantly the title's penetration of 91 per cent suggests that reading is still Anderson's "ceremony".

Thus this title goes beyond "reflecting" the community to being an active component of it. Staff are required to live within it, and many are drawn from its population. Significantly the company devotes resources to this notion in terms of people, who are encouraged to perform civic duties; as such the title propagates Jackson's ideal values of the community in practice as well as on paper. This investment sits alongside direct financial intervention, in terms of sponsorship and maintaining staffing levels so that employees are visible in the community. The prized value is "integrity" (Interviewee 1IWDE) and editorial resources ensure the routine coverage of institutions and "the

minutest thing" (Interviewee 1IWDE). Drawing on Jackson, this title's monopolistic position helps shore up its position.
The definition of community exhibited here rests on a geographical definition and is seen as being inclusive of everybody with links to its circulation by virtue of current or past residence. However, this claim to inclusivity is challenged by two factors; firstly the company does not seek to enhance its links with non-resident readers – probably because they are outside of their target advertising market. This is true of all those interviewed. Secondly the independent online news site serving the same geographical area sees its role as giving a voice to sections of the community.

> "It's very feudal in the way in which people with money exercise control by their position, if you don't support me you speak against me. For example, we were getting voxpops and people were saying 'I don't know anything about it but if they're behind it, I support it' because their control is so strong. In pubs and between friends they're saying they're idiots but would never say anything out loud." (Interviewee 7IBB).

This position begins to reveal the extent to which the ideological construction of the community is aligned with the commercial benefit of the organisation. The established newspaper insists that all comments are publically named, which might silence those who challenge the established view; in contrast, the blogger enables anonymous comments precisely to enable that view to be challenged. For the newspaper company named comments are functional and can be monetised as an additional content stream for the printed paper because they can be verified and attributed to a source. In the same way, residents marking life events results in revenue from classified advertising; high pagination enables higher quantities of display advertising. The circle is therefore called "virtuous" because it sustains the revenue stream of the business.

As investment is stripped out of the day-to-day operations of these companies, so the commercial benefit of existing for the good of the community is increasingly laid bare. Russo suggests that the boundaries between values such as serving the good of the community and the business organisation are

“permeable” but for the journalists interviewed in her study it was the belief that their work held value for society which gave meaning to their work and “served as the basis for what is, for many journalists, their dominant identity”. “When their enactment of their roles met their own expectations, they described greater satisfaction with their work” (Russo, 1998: 102). Similarly this study has demonstrated that journalists will amend their “justificatory ideologies”(Elliott, 1978: 182) in response to those organisational pressures in an attempt to retain value in their work. This study has demonstrated how the result of that shift can be that the community identified by employees becomes fractured so that only certain populations are targeted. Increasingly the community is, therefore, recognised as only the readers of the product – rather than the idea entirety of population within an area. Practically this means the operation of the organisation can be streamlined around a core area strategy as fewer staff deliver a product to fewer people. Production of these titles can then be centralised in the process described by Bob Franklin and exhibited in the operation of the two group publishing centres described here.

However, this study suggests that this centralisation can only go so far before the aspiration of existing for the good of the community is undermined. Sub editors complain of too few staff to provide local copy, editors cannot provide staff for routine coverage of those institutions identified as significant by Jackson. Attending council meetings “seems to be regarded as a fairly odd thing to do” (Interviewee 5GDWS), courts go uncovered because there is no-one to do it (Interviewee 6GDWSR); the position of acting as a ‘watchdog’ for the community is unsustainable. The commercial imperative comes to challenge the position of editorial independence; editorial staff give priority to businesses which advertise as the lines between advertising and editorial become “blurred” (interviewee 6GDWHC); integrity, seen as key to building relationships with the community, is lost.

This streamlining also breaks the link between community and geography, which appears to be significant to the conception of serving the good of the community. Thus even bloggers subscribe to serving the community within which they are located; in an echo of Hess and Waller’s suggestion that

journalists need to be geographically within their communities, blogger 2IBB explains his relationship with his community via a sense of "place". "I couldn't imagine blogging about a place and not living there, by doing it by proxy. I just couldn't imagine being that interested in a place." (Interviewee 2IBB). Those organisations interviewed here also overwhelmingly rely on those geographical areas for their revenue; thus the "ex-pat" audience garnered by websites is ignored because it is of no interest to locally-based advertisers. Criticising the core area strategy, Interviewee 5GDWS said "if you ignore the areas outside you're cutting your nose off to spite your face. Anecdotally the advertising reps say they find it hard to sell outside the town".

This suggests that disrupting the link between title and geography ultimately disrupts the business model for the regional news industry; however, as I write, centralisation has been the overwhelming strategy for regional newspaper groups in recent years so that presence in local communities is increasingly rare, despite opposition from the National Union of Journalists which argues that "the best hope for growth and success is to invest in newspapers to produce quality journalism which is delivered from the centre of towns and communities" (National Union of Journalists 2014). This suggests a commercial strategy outlined by Philip Meyer, in which companies drop their ideological commitment to the community and instead take advantage of vestigial loyalty to once-present integrity to the point at which that loyalty expires – and the title closes.

> "A stagnant industry's market position is harvested by raising prices and lowering quality, trusting that customers will continue to be attracted by the brand name rather than the substance for which the brand once stood." (Meyer 2009: 14)

As such, the ability of conglomerate-owned, centralised titles to sustain a relationship with their community is called into question. At the same time, the uncertain sustainability of alternative providers such as hyperlocal platforms questions their ability to fill the gap left by the traditional press. It is these issues which are explored at length in the closing section of this thesis.

Section 4. Local newspapers: present forms and future forecasts.

Chapter 12: Crisis – what crisis? The survival of the fittest.

The recent past has seen the provincial press in England mired in a prevailing discourse of crisis based on tumbling revenues which has formed the backdrop for a seemingly never-ending round of cuts, mergers and consolidations. Five years ago Claire Enders, chief executive of Enders Analysis, made her now-notorious prediction that half of the then extant 1,300 local newspapers in the UK would close by June 2014 due to a structural shift in the industry caused by a decline in advertising spend (Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2010: 12). The prediction was echoed by both the large group owners of newspaper, including Trinity Mirror and Johnston, and the NUJ, which reported the closure of 60 local papers in the 12 months to May 2009 (ibid). However, it was with a degree of glee that Paul Linford, editor of the regional news website Holdthefrontpage (hereafter HTFP), challenged this view on the anniversary of the prediction. "Obtaining a precise figure of the number of local newspapers that have closed since the start of the recession in 2008 is not easy, but whatever the exact number, it is clear that her initial estimate of 650 has proved way off-beam. Our own estimate, based on the stories we have covered on this site, is that there have been just over 100" (*HTFP*: 16.6.14)

The structural complexity of the regional news industry can make such tasks as counting individual newspaper titles difficult; therefore, as Linford suggests, quantifying exact statistics can be challenging, especially as some "closures" may be a rationalisation of geographical editions or a move to online rather than a complete withdrawal from the marketplace. Whatever the exact number, Linford suggests, the significance of his analysis is twofold; firstly the pace of closures predicted was vastly exaggerated, and secondly, many of those titles which did close were free titles. The implication of his

analysis is that as the economy picks up, so will the fortunes of the regional press as profitability – based on advertising revenues – is restored. This though is a perspective which glosses over alternative interpretations of the current state of the regional news industry which posit it as being in the throes of a longer-term reaction to the twin drivers of social change and technological innovation. In this interpretation, the 2008 recession, and ensuing falls in advertising revenue, may have exacerbated, but is not the cause of, income trends. As such, an understanding of the future direction of travel for the local newspaper needs to account for those trends and in this respect the narrative of crisis is too simplistic and fails to explain significant variations in response. More useful is the approach suggested and developed by the work of Bob Franklin, who has instead framed these reactions within an evolutionary context, whereby newspapers are on the latest stage of a Darwinian journey and adapting to change (Franklin, 2008: 631); such an approach frees us from the simplistic message of the imminent death of the newspaper and instead enables us to engage with the complexities of the many potential futures of local news practice.

Local newspapers; shifting landscapes.

Rather like Mark Twain, actual figures for local newspaper titles in Britain would suggest that reports of its death have been greatly exaggerated. When Bob Franklin scoped the extent of decline between 1985 and 2005, he noted a loss of 24 per cent of titles across 20 years. However, the lion's share of that loss had occurred between 1985 and 1995, with the period of 1995 to 2005 representing one of "virtual stasis in the number of newspapers published" (Franklin, 2006: 5); this analysis has implications for subsequent explanations of this decline discussed below. While aggregate number of titles may have been relatively untouched, though, the form those titles took was not and Franklin identifies a rise in the number of paid-for weeklies – and decline in free weeklies –as well as the emergence of free Sunday and free morning *Metro* titles. At the same, time circulations of paid-for titles fell from 47,870,000 in 1989 to 41,000,000 in 2004; the decline in free titles was

equally marked declining from 42 million in 1989 to 24 million in 2004 – despite the introduction of the free Metro commuter paper which made up around 4.5million of that total (ibid). This picture signified that "fewer and fewer people are reading local papers" (ibid).

Revisiting those figures nine years later demonstrates that the overall number of titles has declined by a further 175 (see table 12.1 below). What is marked is the shift in definition of types of title to take account of the evolution in distribution methods. The time of publication for daily newspapers – morning or evening – as an identifying factor has been lost and replaced with a definition around distribution; titles are now defined as paid-for or free, a definition which has long been associated with weekly newspapers, or as distributed in a new hybrid form – that is part paid-for and part free in either selected areas or on selected days. Free papers are then further sub-divided into papers delivered free door-to-door, or papers with an element of free pick-up at selected outlets. These new definitions also extend to the weekly newspapers and an additional frequency of publication is added in via fortnightly or monthly titles.

Most marked is the shift in the way that total circulations are calculated. The Newspaper Society puts total circulations for local newspapers at 40,607,310 in 2014, including all regional free dailies such as the *London Evening Standard* and *Metros*, but this total is an aggregate of paid-for, free and hybrid titles; compare this with the total cited for 1989 of 89,870,000 and the decline in printed newspaper circulations is evident. The methodology for ascertaining circulations has also become more complex, with around 100 titles opting out of the Audit Bureau of Circulations' verification process (*Press Gazette*. 27.2.2014) in favour of alternative independent auditors. [109]For individual titles the falls are startling, as the table demonstrates.

[109] The figures used in table 12.2 below are those displayed on the Newspaper Society's online NS Database which also includes those alternative auditors.

Table 12.1: Local newspapers: declining number of titles 1985-2014.

Newspaper type	**1985**	**1995**	**2005**	**2014**
Morning Paid	18	17	19	-
Morning Free	-	-	8	-
Evening	73	72	75	-
Paid dailies	-	-	-	87
Free dailies	-	-	-	12
Part paid/part free daily	-	-	-	2
Weekly paid	749	473	526	462
Part paid/part free daily	-	-	-	122
Weekly Free	843	713	637	345
Sunday paid	4	9	12	11
Sunday free	-	-	9	2
Fortnightly and monthly titles	-	-	-	68
Total	**1,687**	**1,284**	**1,286**	**1,111**

Source: Franklin, 2006: 4 and Newspaper Society 2014.

However, what 2014 does yield is a total of 1,700 "associated websites" for local newspapers which attract 79 million unique users each week (Newspaper Society 2014b). Figures to the end of 2013 available via the Audit Bureau of Circulations suggests that the *Manchester Evening News* had 140,959 online daily browsers; the *Liverpool Echo* 124,238; the *Birmingham Mail* 68,853; *Leicester Mercury* 37,243; and *Newcastle Journal* 13, 629. Of these, only the latter recorded a fall of 12.1 per cent. The others had all recorded a year-on-year rise with the *Birmingham Mai*l recording a 65.9 per cent rise, the *Manchester Evening News* 34.3 per cent and the *Leicester Mercury* 32 per cent (*Press Gazette* 27.2.14).

Table 12.2: Circulations of selected daily titles. 1995-2014.

Newspaper title	Circulation 1995	2005	2014
Wolverhampton Express and Star	212,739	158,130	70,979[110]
Manchester Evening News	193,063	144,201	42,629[111]
Liverpool Echo	168,748	130,145	65,956
*Birmingham Mail (*formerly *Evening Mail*	201,476	93,339	31,331[112]
Leicester Mercury	118,594	82,232	35,006
*Yorkshire Post (*formerly *Evening Post)*	106,794	68,737	31,022
Eastern Daily Press (Norfolk)	79,596	68,599	42,632
Western Morning News	52,123	42,325	26,699

Source: Franklin 2006: 6 and Newspaper Society database[113]

The growth of digital is also reflected in shifts in profit sources for the major newspaper companies. In the early part of the millennium, profit margins of between 25 and 30 per cent were typical for the big local newspaper groups (Franklin 2006; 8). The recession of 2008, and the resulting declines in advertising revenues, though, means that local newspapers are a less profitable business than they were – though profitable all the same. For example, the most recent annual report for Archant (2013), which publishes a total of 63 titles, including the *Eastern Daily Press* in Norwich, paints an optimistic picture. The company reported an operating profit of £9.4 million on a turnover of £126.6 million. Significantly, 19.3 per cent of its revenue – a total of £7.2 million – was made from online with most revenue coming from display advertising, particularly jobs, mobile sites and apps (ibid: 21). For Johnston Press, the third largest publisher of local newspapers in Britain (see table 12.3 below) £24.6 million of its total £291.9 million revenue came from

[110] 70,979 paid-for Monday to Wednesday and Friday; 118,091 paid-for and free Thursday.
[111] 42,629 paid-for Monday to Wednesday; 126, 293 including bulk deliveries Thursday, Friday.
[112] 67,759 free, Friday; 31,331 paid-for Monday-Thursday, Saturday.
[113] Figures for Jan-June 2014.

digital sources – a 19.4 per cent rise on the previous year (Johnston Press 2013: 6).

The past 20 years has also seen an increased rate of consolidation of companies that own newspapers so that in 2005 there were 87 companies publishing local papers, down from 137 in 1998 and 200 in 1992 (Williams and Franklin 2007). In 2014 this number had increased slightly to 103, largely reflecting the rise in small, single-title publishers (see Appendix 7). These include the advent of print titles such as *Macclesfield Today*, which have been produced by online news providers (*Cheshire Today* 22.8.13). The arrival of Local World in the top 20 regional newspaper groups of 2014 would also suggest that there is still life in the regional news business; Local World was formed in January 2013 with the acquisition of Iliffe News and Media, the publishing subsidiary of Yattendon Group, and Northcliffe Media, the regional publishing arm of Daily Mail and General Trust, which retains a 39 per cent stake in the company (DMGT 2013: 6). Trinity Mirror also has a 20 per cent stake in the company both as an investment, but also in order to take advantage of "any future opportunity for industry consolidation which may emerge" (Trinity Mirror 2012: 11)

Table 12.3: Top 20 regional newspaper groups. 2008-2014.

Rank	**2008**			**2014**		
	Company	Titles held	Weekly Circulations	Company	Titles held	Weekly Circulations
1	Trinity Mirror	186	12,494,145	Trinity Mirror	130	8,533,436
2	Associated newspapers	12	9,709,115	Newsquest media group	185	5,434,471
3	Johnston Press Plc	295	9,406,659	Local World	107	4,697,195
4	Newsquest media group	210	9,172,723	Johnston Press Plc	213	4,362,909
5	Northcliffe Media Ltd	130	8,021,009	Associated Newspapers Ltd	1	3,871,525
6	Guardian Media Group	44	3,005,492	Evening Standard Ltd	1	3,454,450
7	Archant	63	2,477,705	The Midland News Association	17	1,987,183
8	The Midland News Association	18	1,965,099	Archant	66	1,463,939
9	DC Thomson and Co Ltd	6	1,884,392	DC Thomson and Co Ltd	6	1,357,608
10	Tindle Newspapers	66	1,400,028	Tindle Newspapers Ltd	110	981,065

11	Iliffe News and Media	35	1,154,365	City AM	1	645,605
12	Kent Messenger Ltd	21	778,072	Independent News and Media	6	446,343
13	Independent News and Media	6	710,521	Romanes Media Group (formerly Dumferline Press Group)	28	398,941
14	Observer Standard Newspapers	10	486,673	NWN Media Ltd	14	398,187
15	CN Group Ltd	10	449,809	Bullivant Media Ltd	9	305,303
16	NWN Media Ltd	12	407,619	CN Group Ltd	10	297,906
17	Dumferline Press Group	16	389,969	Irish News ltd	1	245,502
18	Irish News ltd	1	291,678	KM Group	16	244,906
19	Clyde and Forth Press Ltd	14	280,579	Guiton Group	5	189,144
20	Guiton Group	5	224,412	Champion Newspapers	8	163,140

Source: Newspaper Society Intelligence Unit 1 January 2008 and 1 January 2014

Reviewing the state of the industry in 2006, Franklin wrote "local newspapers remain highly successful and profitable business organisations despite these long-term downturns in circulations and readerships. The explanation of this apparent paradox is the adoption of a business strategy designed to maximize revenue, especially advertising revenue, while minimising production costs" (2006: 7). This strategy is supported by the structure of the industry whereby titles have held a monopoly over defined advertising markets, whilst enjoying the economies of scale afforded by centralised ownership; significant to proft margins has been "the relentless downward pressure on the number of journalists employed and their salaries/wages" (Williams and Franklin 2007: 15). This description of the business strategy seems little changed in nearly 10 years, despite challenges to the advertising revenue posed by online competitors, including international sites such as eBay, and the economic recession (ibid: 14).

However, despite the downturn in advertising, the free newspaper continues to yield enough revenue to make it a popular form. This is evidenced by the success of the *Metro* series of free daily newspapers, aimed at commuters, which yielded a revenue of £80 million in the financial year 2012-2013 (DMGT 2013: 21). Launched in 1999 in London (Franklin, 2006: 155) and published by the Daily Mail and General Trust, the title has editions in London, Sheffield, Leeds, Wales, Merseyside, Midlands, Scotland and the North East, published by regional centres on a franchise basis. These centres retain a share of advertising revenue and may profit by printing the title. The largest holder of franchises is Trinity Mirror, which sees the urban market the title targets as being very different to the traditional market for regional daily papers, despite fears expressed by some newspaper workers with the advent of the *Metro* that it would harm established publications (Williams and Franklin, 2007: 43). In the Midlands the free daily's circulation is more than 90,000 – around double that of the *Birmingham Mail* and *Coventry Telegraph* combined. The success of the product, which claims to be the third largest daily paper (DMGT 2013: 21) with a circulation of 1.3 million (*Press Gazette* 10.5.14) is seen to be its ability to target young (up to 35) professionals – but the regional centres have little or no editorial input into the product and high production values are not seen as a core part of the title. Speaking in 2013, a senior member of the sales team

at Trinity Mirror Midlands who was interviewed in the course of the previous section of this thesis, said:

> "It was another title and revenue stream, we also do the printing, so for us it was a no brainer. What we found was that it didn't have any impact at all on the other titles, because it was a different tone. You tend to find it's read quite quickly, Metros are left on transport etc. What we find is that if people pay for things they tend to hold on to them for longer. However, the unique nice thing about Metro is that the recession didn't affect it. It really didn't see any of the large declines that other titles saw, because it was a good way to get out to mass market." (Interviewee 4GDSD – free)

Francois Nel has categorised approaches to the impact of digital within the regional newspaper industry in terms of the "cyclists", who see the current downturn "as a consequence of recurring fluctuations in the economic cycle", and the "structuralists', who see its impact as revolutionary (Nel, 2013: 4). From this perspective, the depth of change caused by digital technology on the newspaper is such that it is "challenging its nature, its relationship with its audience – which contributes as well as consumes – and so the role of the journalist in this process and the even those who may be called a journalist" (Franklin 2012: 599).

The cyclists see the issue as almost cosmetic, whereby the print product is reimaged with a "digital facelift" (Nel, 2013: 4) and, therefore, they assume that as the economy recovers so will advertising revenues. This approach describes the digital strategy put forward by Trinity Mirror in 2000 when it intended to create a network of national and regional news websites "to capture a substantial share of online advertising and e-commerce through the development of the UK's leading 'local portal'." However, it was not until 2004 that the company's digital sector made money – following a strategy of cost-cutting after an initial investment in platforms and people (Williams and Franklin, 2007: 49). By 2006, its strategy has developed to use technology to enable cost cutting (ibid: 59). The approach by Johnston Press Plc, suggested a more radical reappraisal of the basic newspaper concept. Simon Reynolds, editor of the *Lancashire Evening Post*, the pilot for Johnston's "newsroom of the future" said in 2006, "not only have we reinvented the newspaper …but

we are effectively not a newspaper any more. We have been transformed into an integrated fully-converged news operation." (*Press Gazette*, 6.11.06). The pilot included the creation of an "integrated news-provision team … the creation of digital editors to manage online content; reporters that produce video and audio as well as words on the page; sub-editors that work on paper and the web; and the introduction of a web-first news publication strategy". (Williams and Franklin 2007: 53).

However, what seems evident from a review of these approaches is that neither put forward an alternative revenue structure other than making money from advertising. Nel's work to investigate the extent to which companies were adopting an approach of structural change suggested that in 2010 the 66 newspapers surveyed were engaged in creating complementary websites for their print products. They were still relying on advertising, however, to create a revenue stream (ibid: 368). The continued relevance of the basic business model is evidenced by Johnston Press' latest annual report (2013:10), which sees itself has providing a multi-media "one stop shop" for advertisers (see Appendix 8) within a "digital-first" strategy which prioritises digital products accessed via computers, but also increasingly on mobile devices and via social media.

For Trinity Mirror, more recently, this has meant a restructuring of its editorial organisation into the "newsroom 3.1" which focuses content production on "digital audience spikes' through the day. That same content is then "packaged" into familiar newspaper titles (Trinity Mirror plc 25.2.14). Similarly, Johnston Press have rationalised both their press centres and offices – including selling their landmark Leeds building. Instead the company has provided editorial staff with laptops and smartphones which they say has "helped to greatly improve the quality, quantity and timeliness of multi-media content available on websites, mobile sites and tablet apps" (2013: 23).

Their now redundant headquarters has been demolished – a fact publicised via Twitter by the company's Group Editorial Development Director Paul Napier (see figure 12.1).

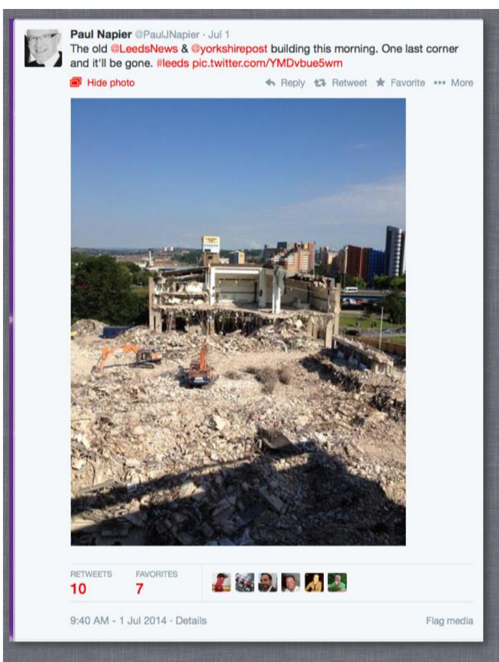

Figure 12.1

Nikki Usher has termed such shifts as Trinity Mirror's 'newsroom 3.1' as representing a cultural shift in the workplace; companies create 'post-industrial' newsrooms whereby the structural shift in response to digital has a physical manifestation. Usher admits that companies make money from rationalising their property holdings, but "ultimately the relocations make most sense because newsrooms don't need the space they historically did to create what was once an industrial product" (2014: 4). The nature of making newspapers is changing and in many cases staff are leaving half-empty, run-down buildings, housing presses which no longer run, for modern work spaces which enable "workflows that are more responsive to a digital environment" (ibid:4) and facilitate "a cultural shift toward a digital-first mentality" (ibid: 5).

The impact of digital on editorial working practices

The disruption to editorial working practices caused by digital innovation is reminiscent of those experienced by print workers with the advent of on-screen composition and described at length in Chapter 9. In 2007, the NUJ introduced its report, "Shaping the Future" with a direct comparison to its response to new technology with the ADM Committee on Technology (NUJ 2007: 8). For journalists, therefore, these changes are profound both in respect of the skills they are expected to exercise but also in terms of the relationship they have with their audience, other content producers and the nature of their professional identities.

Initial digital strategies required print journalists to begin to produce the same stories in a variety of formats, for instance employing broadcast-based skills of producing video or podcasts. Sub-editors were then expected to repurpose print stories for the web, upload and re-headline them. Reporting on the effect of Johnston's pilot project in 2006, Williams and Franklin (2007) recorded the disruption to traditional ways of working.

> "The problem is with online you're asking the reporter to do three jobs. There's an interview where they have to write everything down in shorthand for the newspaper, possibly then a sound and video interview where you have to ask different questions as it's a different format and it's gotta sound right, then if those stories then go up on the internet with no subbing or quality control you're going to have a disaster." (ibid: 55)

The NUJ reported that the demarcation between roles was becoming blurred with editorial staff expected to: take, edit and upload photos; record and edit sound and video, lay out and edit print pages, lay out and edit websites; provide still and moving graphics; produce emails; manage multimedia workflows (NUJ, 2007: 18). Often training was perfunctory and staff forgot what they had been learned, because they were given too little opportunity to practise their skills. Sometimes, investment fell short of providing the required software (Lee-Wright et al, 2012: 74). But the advent of websites – with the ability to constantly update content – also changed shift patterns and

increased working hours for editorial staff – a trend noted by newsworkers interviewed in the previous section of this work.

> "It's not just a matter of a heavier workload or even longer hours, but also different hours. As newspapers where staff have worked predictable hours go over to web-first publication, extra shifts are required at unsocial hours, notably at weekends……The chapel at a Johnston Press daily reported that staff delivering new media "are not paid a penny extra", despite the fact that new working practices had increased workloads. A Newsquest chapel said that increasingly integrated online/newspaper practices had led to rising workloads, but no extra money has been negotiated." (NUJ, 2007: 12)

The NUJ also suggested that the web was expanding the remit of editorial staff; email meant journalists were increasingly communicating directly with readers and providing "customer relations" (2007: 25) while staff working additional hours were unable to take time off in lieu – in part because it meant even more work for already-stretched colleagues (ibid: 14).

Critical appraisals of early attempts by the regional news industry to innovate suggested that that the quality of work produced – particularly in relation to video where reporters may simply has read print stories to a camera – was also so low as to be positively harmful. Staff at the *Manchester Evening News*, which moved to a multi-media newsroom in the first years of the millennium, said reporters had been asked to do too much at once; "of course they can't handle all those things …we thought that's what multi-media journalism was and it gave convergence a bad name" (Lee-Wright et al 2012: 76). These strategies were also criticised for amounting to little more to a proposal to move the paper online – and integrate sound and moving image – rather than a radical approach to rethink its presentation, which required a "paradigm shift" in the way stories are told to enable interactivity (Franklin and Williams, 2007: 99). Significantly they didn't even appear to make money; when the *Manchester Evening News* was sold to Trinity Mirror, the department which produced video (Channel M) was not included in the sale (Lee-Wright et al, 2012: 78).

These changes were not met without any opposition from editorial staff, who found themselves required to expand their skills set without training. At Trinity Mirror in Wales the NUJ placed a moratorium on its members handling video, because no additional pay was offered. In Liverpool, members took industrial action in protest at additional workloads, which resulted in concessions around training and workloads. In Norwich, the union had negotiated a bonus system whereby staff working on Archant titles received extra payment in relation to the number of "hits". In 2007, staff received an additional £120 as a result (NUJ, 2007: 12). But most employers justified the lack of additional pay with the response that multi-skilled staff were more "marketable" (ibid). Editorial workers in the regional press also cited a lack of training as hampering their ability to produced good quality multi-media content. The NUJ described how at one Archant title just two of 12 editorial staff had received 18 hours of online training at a local college. As a result, the staff said, their video was "embarrassing" (2007: 18). For that reason, the NUJ report suggested that newspapers should adopt the broadcast industry's training standards of the Broadcast Journalism Training Council, in addition to the National Council for the Training of Journalists, which has traditionally set standards for newspapers, and ideally suggested the two accrediting bodies should merge (ibid: 19).

More recent evidence also suggests that technological innovation is still being accompanied by cost-cutting in little change to the "minimax" model. Archant's most recent cost control has included a strategy of rationalisation resulting in loss of 50 full-time equivalent jobs (out of a total of 1,652), including 24 across its East Anglian titles (*Press Gazette*, 13.3.13). A further 19 jobs were lost with the closure of six regional monthly lifestyle magazines (*Press Gazette*, 4.6.13). Johnston Press has shifted all of its papers to the same production template format in order to "have a platform to provide greater efficiencies in our content-gathering operation from our journalists" (Johnston Press 2013: 7). The previous section included personal testimony in relation to Newsquest's centralisation of print production in Newport – a move which prompted strike action (*Press Gazette* 18.2.14) and criticisms from industry observers for a lack of quality in subsequent products (*Holdthefrontpage* 5.3.14).

Despite these pressures, research carried out into journalists' reactions to multi-media innovation reveal little resistance in principle, despite its impact on some of the basic principles of a journalist's identity. O'Sullivan and Heinonen suggest that editorial staff are happiest with technology when it complements traditional ways of working; using the internet for research, email instead of fax, or enjoying the speed and immediacy of digital publication platforms are "embedded in newsgathering and news-processing routines" (2008: 359). Therefore, as digital technologies develop, so do the skills demanded of editorial staff. Interviews conducted as part of this thesis revealed that journalists adapt and employ platforms as they develop, for instance integrating Twitter and Storify into their reporting toolbox to break news online. However, these journalists have been less keen to embrace the interactive elements of the internet, including chat rooms and blogs, which blur the distinction between the audience and the professional journalist and which may be seen as competitors to their practice. "User-generated content, while it has a role in modern media, is not a replacement for quality professional journalism", the NUJ concluded when considering the integration of 'user-generated content' into websites. These included the creation of 'micro-sites' by Trinity Mirror, which in turn generated enough material to be published as weekly or fortnightly print titles (NUJ, 2007: 26). Instead, journalists articulate the growing importance of their professionalism in comparison to the "amateur" blogosphere (O'Sullivan and Heinonen, 2008: 359). "The profession has striven for its status among other professions in society since the 1800s. Even now, there seems to be an internal need to adhere to practices which ensure that status, and to maintain the particular values that both generate and legitimize those practices." (ibid: 368). In a longitudinal study of the Newsquest-owned *Northern Echo*, MacGregor suggests that the financial context in which journalists were working between 2006 and 2011 was a significant factor in reactions to technology, due to the "perception of shortage of income, loss of circulation, and drastic decline in staff resources" (2013: 167). Newsworkers described the twin demands of print and editorial as a "balancing act" and "plate-spinning", which "attest to the opacity of market logic in the day-by-day lived routines of one newsroom" (2013: 168).

The challenge to the traditional role of the journalist has grown with the development of Web 2.0 technology – increasingly delivered via mobile devices – which enables the audience to take an active role in publishing directly to the web. This technology challenges the role of the journalist as 'gatekeeper', filtering user-generated content and, ultimately, controlling what is published; instead "some of the institutionalized communication functions of agencies and journalistic media can be performed by individual society members and organisations" (Domingo et al, 2008: 331). Canter's investigations into the relationship between journalists and readers at two regional daily titles in England (2013b) suggests that management systems actually serve to limit, rather than encourage, participation – for instance by insisting on moderation of comment threads and by the lack of participation of journalists in that process. Her study of collaboration between professionals at the *Leicester Mercury* and a community reporters' network in the city also suggests that "rather than embracing citizen journalism with the civic aim of widening political engagement, it may be more realistic to suggest that local British newspapers are utilizing active readers as a form of free labour" (Canter, 2013: 3).

This view is supported by evidence from the major local newspaper publishers. "We now have a platform to provide greater efficiencies in our content-gathering operation from our journalists, freelance contributors and readers. Using web-based editorial software the Group is now allowing trusted contributors the ability to author content directly", Ashley Highfield, chief executive of Johnston Press wrote in 2013 (Johnston Press 2013: 7-8). In a 2,000-word letter to staff, Local World chairman David Montgomery outlined a vision of a news organisation largely drawing on user-generated content, where one senior journalist would have sole charge of "content segments", for which they would source and publish content (*Press Gazette* 21.11.13). In 2014 Local World has enabled the police to upload content directly to selected news sites (*Press Gazette* 14.3.14).

One area in which participation may be growing is in the use of social media. Studies suggest that via platforms including Facebook and Twitter, individual journalists are beginning to engage the audience in an increasingly

participatory manner – although this may well be in spite of, rather than because of, institutional organisation. Dickinson suggests that local reporters have embraced the social media platform of Twitter in a variety of ways; these include: finding stories, testing story ideas, seeking support from colleagues, communicating with individuals via the private message function and generating sources and contacts (2011: 3-4). In this way these journalists are engaging different aspects of their audience in a dialogue. This compares with the institutional use of social media platforms, which remains a one-way use of automated "linkbots" to send out links and generate traffic or profile for the news brand. What both Dickinson and Canter (2013c) identify is that it is the editorial staff on the ground who are innovating; "it is individual journalists rather than their news organisations that are taking the lead in increasing interactivity with readers. The traditional linkbot approach is negligible amongst reporters, and instead they are increasingly engaging in a two-way conversation via social media" (Canter, 2013c: 492). Dickinson suggests that local reporters may be more willing to innovate "because they are on the front line of an industry in crisis and therefore more aware of the need to cement relationships with their audiences": in this way individual editorial staff are building a name for themselves as individuals within an organisation (2011: 8). The result is an opening out of the editorial process so that journalists are seen by audiences as "ordinary, fallible individuals rather than authoritarian gatekeepers." (Canter, 2013c: 493).

The ideological challenge for the future of local newspapers.

Those who seek to pursue a more radical future for local news contend with those who influence the structural environment in which the industry operates and especially the current conglomerate owners who act to preserve their domain. This positioning has led to an exploitation of the dominant discourse of financial crisis in order to protect the current economic structure of local news in which local news provision becomes the victim of a tug-of-love battle between big business and public benefit.

It was one fight in this battle in which the established industry was victor which put paid to a BBC initiative to invest in local news in 2008. The BBC proposed to expand its online regional journalism service by investing £68 million in an on demand video-only local service but intense lobbying by industry leaders – who found a supporter in the then shadow secretary of state for Culture, Media and Sport, Jeremy Hunt (Newspaper Society, 30.10.08) – resulted in Ofcom concluding that the proposal would have a "significant negative impact on commercial providers" and would particularly stifle innovation among local news websites (Ofcom, 2008: 1). As a result the BBC Trust rejected the proposal so that "local newspapers …can invest in their online services in the knowledge that the BBC does not intend to make this new intervention in the market" (BBC Trust, 21.11.08). With the benefit of hindsight, critics dispute the fact that this investment happened; in evidence to the parliamentary inquiry into the Future of the BBC in 2014, Steve Barnett argued that there has been no "evidence of new initiatives or investment from commercial operators" to the detriment of the public (House of Commons, 28.4.14). Similarly, research by Fenton et al showed that "the gap in local news provision that prompted the BBC local proposals has not been filled" (2010: 18). Despite this, familiar arguments about the BBC presenting unfair publicly-funded competition have also been rehearsed during the 2014 inquiry, with one suggestion being that the BBC pay the regional newspapers as content providers (House of Commons 28.2.14).

This positioning by the regional news industry to protect the existing market environment extends to calling for further deregulation of the rules governing media ownership to allow even further consolidation. The arguments in favour of this move are partially persuasive. At the heart of this perspective in the United Kingdom is an ideological commitment to the liberal view of the press, which inextricably links the "freedom of the press" to express a view with the industry's economic freedom. Therefore, Government policy is traditionally averse to interference in the regulation of newspapers – particularly in the wake of the ideological dominance of Margaret Thatcher's free market (Kuhn, 2007: 31). This argument has been at the fore of the debate over the future of press regulation in the wake of the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press (House of Commons, 2012:

4) and has been widely employed by the editors and owners of newspapers to defend their practice on the grounds of public interest rather than self-interest (Kuhn ibid: 33). More recently it has been employed to criticise the current limits on cross-platform ownership, which prevent a newspaper group with a market share of more than 20 per cent from holding a licence to provide a regional Channel 3 or Channel 5 service (Department for Media Culture and Sport 2013: 6); this seems outdated when as much competition comes from new media as old, a perspective which was supported by MPs who considered the future of local papers in 2010 (Culture Media and Sport Select Committee, 2010: 23). Significantly those within the industry argue that relaxing the rules would extend opportunities for economies of scale, such as former editor Neil Fowler whose consideration of the future of the industry led him to conclude that "consolidation and title swapping should be made easier, especially geographically. Plurality is a red herring with the competition for both advertising and comment created by the Internet and should not be used to hold up further mergers. These changes will not necessarily produce vast savings – but will help." (2011: 44).

Critics of this perspective argue that instead of being a guarantor of freedom, the market is in fact an enemy of it, because it distorts the relationship between content and reader; firstly, the quest for a mass market promotes a press which minimises difference in favour of a middle-of-the-road consensus (Curran and Seaton 2003: 90), secondly, content is 'dumbed-down' to promote lifestyle and human interest stories over political and 'hard' news to attract advertisers (Kuhn, 2007: 40), thirdly, proprietors may influence editorial content, either directly or more subtly by emphasising the "bottom line" (ibid: 38) and fourthly, the necessity to service shareholders results in the pursuit of profit over investment in editorial; this then makes the argument that looser controls will enable growth in editorial positively "counter-intuitive" (Franklin 2009) at a time when what is needed is "more emphasis on editorial quality, diversity, independence and robustness" (Barnett, 2010: 17).

For these critics the survival and revival of local journalism does not lie with those established companies who are guilty of "decades of neglect" (Engel, 2009: 61) but instead with those below; it is true that the surge in hyperlocal

news providers has attracted attention from both those interested in the democratic purpose of local news and would-be funders (Williams et al, 2014: 8). These sites are fairly easy to establish, using low-cost, entry-level technology such as blogging templates, and most cover content which has "civic and cultural values, including news about local community groups and events, and local government issues (particularly planning)" (ibid: 4). However, their sustainability is more open to question; while over half of those surveyed in the 2014 study identify themselves as local journalists, more than half (57 per cent) work fewer than 10 hours a week on their sites (ibid: 26), just one in six of those questioned actually made a profit from their work, and only one third attempted to generate revenue (ibid: 28) which has "implications for the medium-to-long-term viability of these nascent online publications" (ibid: 32). Whatever the intention of those who produce them, the ability of these sites to reach communities is also in question with almost 40 per cent of sites surveyed reaching fewer than 10 per cent of their potential audience (ibid: 23); while a few attract between 10,000 and 100,000 unique visitors a month, the median audience was 5039 (ibid: 4).

More significantly, the dogma of the free market prevents a debate about the value of journalism in a democracy, and similarly an informed appraisal of the role of local papers in relation to their communities. Writing of journalism in America, Robert McChesney argues that the value of journalism should no longer be weighed in terms of revenue, but instead in terms of public value in an effort to reveal the true worth of an occupation whose relationship with advertising is drawing to an end.

> "For the past century, the public good nature of journalism was masked by the infusion of advertising to provide the vast majority of revenues supporting the news. But advertising had no specific attachment to journalism, and is jumping ship as better alternatives present themselves in the digital universe, especially as news media appear less commercially attractive. Journalism increasingly is left standing naked in an unforgiving market, and it is shriveling in the cold gusts." (McChesney, 2012: 619)

McChesney builds on two principles to argue for public subsidies; these are firstly, that democracies need journalism, and secondly that journalism is a complex process which needs strong, functioning institutions to enable its delivery. The market is not able to guarantee either of these; the fact of the matter is that the public have never fully funded journalism – which has always relied on the advertising subsidy. Latterly corporate journalism is underfunded and weak while new digital news platforms, instead of offering the promise of a reinvigorated public sphere, tend to replicate, rather than originate content (ibid: 618-9). Further to this, Entman (2010: 106) argues that the benefits of good journalism in producing informed citizens, go wider than the quality of the product produced. But because these benefits are indirect, they do not offer an incentive to readers to pay higher rates for the product itself.

The regional news industry in the UK makes claims to seeing public subsidies as an anathema; according to Geraldine Allinson, chairman of the KM Group, companies see themselves as "very much commercial organisations and we want to remain commercial organisations, and any idea of any sort of subsidy I think would fill all of us with horror" (House of Commons 28.2.14). However, indirect subsidies have been, and are currently, enjoyed by the industry. In the United Kingdom, newspapers are currently exempt from paying Value Added Tax (Currah 2009: 145). Local authorities are also required to advertise public notices in local papers, providing an income valued at £67.85 million in 2012; this financially binds local watchdogs to the authorities they claim to scrutinise (Local Government Information Unit, 2012: 1). It is not, therefore, too much of a conceptual leap to consider subsidies such as those in place in Scandinavia or piloted in France to promote plurality (Franklin 2009) and discussions around such proposals have come from quarters other than the industry itself. In 2009 the Institute for Public Policy Research proposed a levy on the major media corporations to finance public service journalism (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2009). A further innovative idea to use part of the BBC licence fee to pilot three "independent news consortia" to enhance local journalism content across a range of platforms was suggested as part of the 2009 Digital Britain report produced by the Labour Government-led administration only to be shelved by Coalition culture minister Jeremy

Hunt (*Press Gazette* 8.6.10). Andrew Currah has proposed Government intervention – for instance in the form of tax breaks on revenue associated with content which may be defined as in the public interest (2009: 146) and a simplification of the charitable giving regime to promote a philanthropic engagement with journalism. The aim would be to create a "pluralistic ecology of news production", with the Government pulling "legislative levers" to accomplish this (ibid: 145).

Where else lies the future?

> "..The more that life becomes globalized, digital and virtual, the more I would argue, people will seek out products like newspapers that slow things down a little and tell us what's important and what's not, especially at a local level. And let's not forget that physical newspapers, like books, are superb examples of industrial design, which, if invented today, would be greeted as a miracle innovation. They don't need power, there's no screen glare, they don't crash and when you're finished with them they can be safely recycled." (Watson, 2007: 37)

The local journalism landscape outside of the confines of the conglomerate owners does offer some alternatives to the "minimax" model as favoured by the large corporate owners outlined above. Reactions to the decline of the provision by those holding the largest numbers of titles, include those within the industry who are working with the existing principles of providing a news service to an identified audience, funded by advertising, albeit often on a different scale to those described above. Among those succeeding in this area is Sir Ray Tindle, who, like Richard Watson above, has retained his commitment to the printed product. He has expanded his print newspaper business via a focus on "local newspapers, local people, local names, local events, local places" and highly localised editions – full of stories about that place – and largely produced by the groups within it. "We do rely on the

community to submit their news, but for our part we try our best to make sure it always sees print. Without a doubt, this contributes to the perceived "community ownership", it gives locals a vested interest in the paper, and increases the affection for it," Andrew Adamson, publisher for the *Tenby Observer*, said (Adamson, 2013: 81). In July 2014, Sir Ray Tindle himself forecast a return in the fortunes for the weekly newspaper industry, saying advertising revenues at a local level were beginning to make up for the loss in national revenues. Throughout the recession, though profits have fallen, his company had never made a loss and that in the past six years he had launched 19 new titles and bought an additional 21. "We believe we have safely reached the turning of the tide and the beginning of the recovery. Forecasts of the early demise of us were certainly mistaken. The public still want their 'local' and most people still want it in its present printed form." (*Press Gazette*, 9.7.14).

But simply advocating a 'back to the future' approach to the local newspaper industry as its survival strategy ignores the possibilities opened up to the form by both digital technology and alternative business models. This traditional view also ignores the social changes which have impacted on newspapers; such is the argument put forward by Peter Preston, and reviewed at length by Bob Franklin (2008: 633) that the evening paper in particular suffered because "people didn't work set hours in offices and factories any longer, they worked at home or in industrial estates on the edge of town; they drove home rather than got the train; they found they couldn't get an evening paper delivered any longer because the traffic was too impenetrable; and the paper they could sometimes get – because it went to press at noon instead of 3.30 – didn't have any of the facts that drove purchase …. no late racing results or cricket scores for instance ... So the reason for buying a paper which often wasn't in the right place at the right time anyway, was hugely diminished" (ibid).

This thesis has sought to chart the development of local newspapers, to reframe the current debate which swings between the entrenched discourses of such legacy value and imminent death. Specifically it has highlighted that during the course of its development as a sophisticated industrial product with diverse constituents differentiated for varying markets, the provincial

press has cemented a particular relationship with its audience by constituting it as a community which can be served by a local paper. As such serving that community has become a core value for those working local papers and it informs the occupational routines of individuals as well as the organisation. That that newspaper has been, in its dominant form, a commercial product is not a logical necessity for that relationship; during the era of the mass-market newspaper, this relationship has been established as a value giving meaning to the lived-experience of newsworkers, and leveraged for commercial purposes so that for much of its history, the local paper has been funded through advertising revenue with the audience bearing little of the production costs. Still, it remains that the relationship between advertising and editorial has been, as McChesney points out, largely "opportunistic" (2012: 619).

It is this key troika of content, audience and advertiser, which has been revealed and interrogated; as such, the notion that the current balance of power between these elements is an absolute pre-requisite for the existence of local papers has been tested as its relevance to the existence of the product has been weighed in relation to alternative functions, for instance that of a political organ as in the 1800s. As a consequence the nature of the relationship between a title and its community has also been critically assessed and tested and it has been demonstrated that a title's ability to serve the good of its community depends on its ability to match that aspiration with editorial commitment; failing to invest in this function – for instance by prioritising shareholder profit – undermines the ability of a paper to continue to ascribe to this value as demonstrated at length by the interviews with news workers within the present industry. As such the market logic applied to the local newspaper industry in a time of falling revenues is shown to be counter-productive as cost-cutting strategies designed to maintain profit margins actually undermine the product itself; newspapers are left trading on their residual worth as businesses enter the "harvesting" phase of reaping every last penny of profit, as identified by Philip Meyer (2009: 13), without sowing the seeds for future years – and so, bereft of quality, the paper starves to death.

The irony is that despite these economic strategies, audiences continue to

want the relationship with their local newspapers that these titles purport to provide and it is this conflict between a desire for a local newspaper as a public service in the face of declining quality in the service provided which is perhaps at the heart of the dichotomy facing the newspaper today. Research carried out by the Media Trust in 2010 revealed strong support for a model of local journalism which is associated with traditional local newspapers; professional journalists, based in a locale, reporting on matters of public interest, despite increased access to digital technology and its concomitant impact on notions of place.

> "People feel a genuine loss of independent reporting that provides information, investigation, analysis and community knowledge in the coverage of local affairs. Reporting the local news means telling citizens a little of what they know and a lot of what they would not otherwise know about an areas that they know well. Independent reporting …should dig deeper and provide people with insight that takes time and resources to reach. This is the watchdog function of news and it is a function that is still at the heart of what people want from their local news service." (Fenton et al, 2010: 25-6).

This study has suggested that editorial staff in particular working in the local news industry are all too aware of the pressure on their ability to maintain working practices which uphold their interpretation of serving the good of the community in the 'mini-max' business environment described in this thesis. At the extreme are disillusioned journalists who are caught in a Sartrean chasm of bad faith. They understand themselves as journalists and key to their identity is serving the good of the community, which should be enacted through certain editorial rituals, such as covering local councils. Not being able do so – because it is seen as a "faintly odd thing to do" (Interviewee 5GDWS) – at best creates tension between their conception of themselves as journalists and their allegiance to their employers (Russo, 1998). At worst it undermines the status of journalism by reducing it to a set of practices divorced from its ideological justification. And because journalism has a conflicted and uncertain professional status, it is "powerless to influence the increasing concentration of the media that employs them in the hands of omnipotent and indifferent controllers" (Delano, 200: 272).

I would suggest that a fuller understanding of these conflicts is key to charting a future for the local newspaper, be it on paper or in an alternative digital format. Conboy argues that journalism needs to harness a perspective which brings together both "idealism and pragmatism if journalism is going to be able to attain a level of public appreciation which, at best, it would appear to deserve". This requires a focus on the value of journalism – and significantly journalism practice – not only from without the industry, but also from within and from journalists themselves in a sustained and cohesive manner (2011: 177). Therefore, the local newspaper,cannot be understood wholly in commercial terms and this is where the discussions about the future of the newspaper which dominate within the industry flounder. They focus on the technological drivers of digital technology and the economic context of revenue streams as discussed at length in the pages of this thesis. But the level at which those working within the local newspaper engage with the social benefit of their work is also largely reduced to an economic instrument, so that the ideology of the market hampers discussions and explorations of alternatives, such as subsidies either in the form of financial support or collaborative content production, as demonstrated by Canter (2013).

This dogma is most evident at the corporate end of the scale of ownership of local newspapers and there is some evidence of challenge to this position. The least radical shift is that expressed by the managing director of the weekly newspaper interviewed as part of this thesis who conceptualises his business as one based on "social capitalism" in which the newspaper and community are mutually dependent. As such the "good of the community" is not just a concept to be exploited for profit – it is also also enacted via a business strategy which, for instance, maintains a team of four professional photographers, not only because they can provide material to fill the paper but also because their presence out and about in the population cements the relationship between paper and people (see interviewee 1IWCE). It translates into action and investment in that community. For this company this ideological position is enabled by the family ownership of the title, which frees it from the tyranny of the dividend.

The *West Highland Free Press* has taken community benefit to the heart of its

business structure, which is based on the co-operative ideal. The independent title, which has a background in campaigning for the rights of those living in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, is an independent title which was bought by its employees in 2009 and which is run as a co-operative business. The managing director, Paul Wood, believes this model offers a future for local newspapers; with a turnover nearing £1 million, co-operative ownership has "kept the newspaper firmly rooted in the community it serves, secured its long-term future and legacy through practising what it so passionately preached, and importantly, kept the newspaper independent and out of the hands of many of the much larger, predatory, circling publishers" (Wood, 2013). In a strategy similar to that described at length by staff at the family-owned weekly newspaper interviewed as part of this thesis, this business sees its survival in its relationship with their community and see that relationship as being sustained by investment – not cuts.

For both of the examples cited above, the funding model is still the traditional one of harnessing revenue from advertisers; however, what is evident is a shift in emphasis from the revenue for the benefit of shareholders to revenue for the benefit of the community. In turn this begins to shift the terms of the debate about the future of newspapers in two significant ways: firstly, towards the emphasis on the community-as-audience in the troika of audience, advertiser and content, and secondly, and crucially, towards the consideration of alternative sources of funding to sustain that relationship. What is no longer important is the form – in this case the newspaper – which is a familiar but expensive legacy of some 400 years of history.

> "A newspaper mustn't define itself by its medium. It isn't just a paper. Its strength and value do not come from controlling content or distribution. And protecting those dwindling advantages is not a viable strategy for growth – or survival." (Jarvis, 2007: 45)

In the vision put forward by Jarvis it is the journalism which survives, not the printed product, and that journalism is "a service, a process, an organising principle" (ibid) which enables the relationship between a community and journalism to be recreated. Importantly, the community is not a reductive

concept to be sold to advertisers, but a pre-existing entity which journalism seeks to inform. For Jarvis, the advertiser is still the revenue stream and so to maximise that a "newspaper" will network with its audience using digital technology to reduce costs and increase content. The inverted commas around newspaper are intentional; in the way that "record companies" no longer produce vinyl (Farkas, 2007: 16) so "newspaper" companies may no longer produce newspapers, but disseminate content via a plethora of digital platforms. Nonetheless, the journalist who is equipped with a recognisable skillset is not replaced; "we add journalism, engaging in the reporting, investigation and editing that will always be needed. The more we increase the value of the network, the more each member's value grows" (ibid).

By placing an emphasis on the relationship with the community, this vision of the future of the local newspaper opens the door to new business models. As Richard Watson unequivocally suggests "newspapers' primary role is to inform the public, not sell them things…Newspapers may have to divorce themselves from their old business models. Either accept that you are an advertiser-driven business and become a free or low cost "newszine" or remove yourself from the fence and become publicly funded or find a committed benefactor who is interested in something beyond quarterly results." (2007: 37). This public funding may come in the form of grants to sustain "local media hubs" as envisioned by the Media Trust (Fenton et al 2010: 5) or in the form of partnerships, for instance with universities, as set out by David Hayward, Coventry University Senior Lecturer, formerly of the BBC College of Journalism (5.12.13), in the creation of a local news online service for the city. The Media Trust concluded "independent, not-for-profit (or not primarily for profit) newsrooms are critical to the survival of local news and the fostering of a democratic wellbeing" (Fenton et al, 2010: 47).

My intention in taking an historical approach to the development of the local newspaper has been to reframe the debate surrounding its future. This analysis began as a quest for the "golden age" of the local newspaper, which was bandied about as myth during my time working in newsrooms. I am – perhaps surprisingly – happy to say I never found any evidence that that golden age existed, only evidence that generations of journalists in the past

100 years or so seemed to hark back to halcyon days, as epitomised by the debate which introduced the 1947 Royal Commission. Instead I began to reflect on the development of that context I was so integrally a part of in an attempt to interrogate that myth.

Martin Conboy (2004:3) suggests that considering journalism as a discursive process enables us to consider its concrete forms, including the provincial press, as manifestations of the power relationships in society but also, and perhaps more significantly, they are social objects whose very definition is a manifestation of the operation of those competing for power. Significantly, taking this view of the regional press enables us to take a fresh look at claims which those engaged in journalism would have us take as constant principles, such as that of existing to promote the 'good of the town' or that of the local paper as the 'watchdog' of the local arena. This is particularly useful at times of change such as now, when these roles are being challenged and contested. It is not my intention to attempt to shore up journalism with a narrative of continuity; instead, after Foucault, "the tranquility with which they [these pre-existing forms of continuity] are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction, the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinised." (Foucault, 1972: 25). We can, therefore, examine how these claims to an historical continuity serve the interests of the various vested interests, be they newspaper workers, owners or external stakeholders, such as politicians, which in turn informs the debate about the significance of change. As Conboy (2004: 7) suggests, "the present forms of journalism bear all the hallmarks of these historical influences. That is why history is so important to understanding the journalism of the present day".

This approach then leads me to four key considerations: firstly, the current forms – both physical and economic – of the provincial press are not absolute or fixed; their variety represents a picture of the industry at a moment of time, and, as such, are open to change. Secondly, digital technology has undoubtedly had a profound effect on, not only the business model of the provincial press, but also its forms and possible futures by enabling the relationship with the audience to be re-envisioned. However, and thirdly, technology in itself is not

the only driver of this change – social and cultural shifts are also impacting on those possible futures. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, people still care about their local news. Epitomised in the Media Trust research, this is evidenced variously by the success of Tindle's business, by those who create and consume hyperlocal news or those academics, politicians and stakeholders, who continue to discuss its future. In light of this, I would suggest that we need to reframe the debate surrounding the future of the local newspaper to shift it away from the dominant discourse of profitability put forward by corporate owners and instead re-emphasise the public benefit of the process of local journalism. Historiography promotes this process because "an historical understanding of any cultural form allows us to appreciate…. their "constructedness". By viewing them as constructed within such a network of influences, we might be better able to consider the prospects they have in the future." (Conboy and Steel, 2008: 650). In this view the history of the provincial press in England is the history of the shifting relationships between its constituent elements, as indeed is its future. Therefore, we can begin to suggest that the future of the local newspaper in particular lies in the "why" of the profession – in its journalism based on its perceived role and relationship with its community, because that is what is valued, not only as an ideological justification made actual by working practices in local newspapers, but also by the audience they seeks; that is the key to its future sustainability whether that comes from private or public funds. What is not important is the "how" of its delivery – the newspaper itself; as Jane Singer prosaically proposes, "journalism needs to claim – or reclaim – both its role and its soul. The role remains what it always has been in a democracy; providing the information that citizens need to be free and self-governing" (2008: 129).

Appendices.

Appendix 1: *Northern Courant*, page 1. 23.12.1710

THE

NEW-CASTLE GAZETTE:

OR, THE

Northern Courant,

Being an Impartial Account of Remarkable Tranſactions Forreign or Domeſtick.

From *Saturday*, December 23. to *Monday*, December 25. 1710.

Genoa, November 30.

YEſterday arriv'd here the Worceſter, a Britiſh Man of War from Port Mahon, having on board the Colonels Bowles and Munden, who are gone to day for England. Col. Bowles has with him all the Colours and Standards which were taken by the Britiſh Troops in the Battle of Saragoſſa. Theſe two Officers were about two Months at Port Mahon, waiting for an Opportunity to come hither, and therefore know not how Affairs go in Spain. The Britiſh Fleet commanded by Sir John Norris, having taken in Neceſſaries at Port Mahon, ſail'd from thence the 13th Inſtant for the Streights in queſt of ſome Ships of War that were cruizing there, and had taken divers Merchant Ships. Some Engliſh Men of War which had been at Algiers, were return'd to Port Mahon, having renew'd Amity with the new Bay there. Two Men of War which came from Port Mahon with the Worceſter, are put into Leghorn. All the French Men of War that were fitting out at Thoulon, are put to Sea, and five of them are cruiſing in the Heighth of Corſica.

Petersburg, Nov. 14. The Marriage of the D. of Courland with Princeſs Ann, the Czar's Niece, has been lately ſolemnized here. Prince Menzikoff gave a magnificent Feaſt upon this Occaſion. His Czarian Majeſty was preſent, and took the whole Entertainment upon himſelf.

Vienna, Dec. 3. They write from the Imperial Camp at Cepuza in Upper Hungary, the 21ſt paſt, that the Caſtle of Jaſſow, three Leagues from Caſſovia, has ſurrender'd to General Virmont. The principal Officers took Service under the Emperor, and the reſt of the Gariſon were conducted to Caſſovia; but without their Colours or Drums. The Caſtle Craſnahorka demanded to Capitulate, and Hoſtages were exchang'd; but the Caſtle of Murani ſtands out ſtill, the Governor confiding in the Strength of the Place. We hear from Poland, that Count Berezini is in Poliſh Ruſſia, near Sambor, where he has purchas'd ſome Lands.

Dantzick, Dec. 11. They write from the Fronti-

Chriſtian Princes. The Plague is intirely ceas'd in this City.

Paris, Dec. 19. Beſides the Armaments at Toulon and Marſeilles, 16 Men of War are equipp'd at Breſt, Port Louis and Rochelle. There has been a violent Tempeſt of Wind and Rain in Alſace. It continued eight Days, inſomuch that about 200 Trees are torn up by the Roots, and the Fortifications of Kiel much damag'd by the Overflowing of the Rhine.

Hague, Dec. 23. A Dutch Frigate having ſaluted the Caſtle of Cronenburg, a Daniſh Man of War pretended to force the Dutch to ſalute a ſecond time; and conſidering the Danes have ſeveral times attempted to make Innovations, which are not to be allow'd, the States have written to the King of Denmark, demanding that the Captain who affronted their Flag, be puniſhed, and that the Men of War may be forbid to attempt any ſuch Innovations, which would infalliby occaſion a Breach in the good Correſpondence between his Majeſty and this State. Mean time the Captains of our Men of War are ordered to obſerve the ancient Cuſtoms, and to repel Force by Force. Before Prince Eugene's Departure, all Things concerning the Troops to be ſent to Catalonia were agreed upon.

Yarmouth, Dec. 18. On Saturday laſt came in her Majeſty's Ships the Foulkſton and Advice Prize, with about 40 Sail from Holland; as did yeſterday ſome Light Ships from the Southward. This day ſail'd hence 10 Sail of Light Colliers, and a Ship with Recruiting Officers and Soldiers from Holland for New-Caſtle. Captain Edwards is Commandant of the ſaid Recruiting Officers, who go from New-Caſtle to Scotland.

Harwich, Dec. 19. Her Majeſty's Ship the Adventure is arrived here from the River with a Fleet of Merchant Ships from Hambrough; and the Nightingal and Deal-Caſtle from the Northward. The Eagle Packquet-Boat is ſailed hence with the Mail for Holland, &c.

Deal, Dec. 19. There are in the Downs her Majeſty's Ships the Boyne, Yarmouth, Reſtauration, Lancaſter, Mary, Reſerve, Tilbury, Portſmouth, Charles Galley, Mary Galley, Fortune Storeſhip and Hound. The Outward-bound, &c. are ſtill here.

Shields, Dec. 23. Several Ships from Archangel are come in here. On the 16th inſt. came in the Archangel Merchant, Captain Joſeph Sandwell, Commander, the Owners Adventure of Margate,

Appendix 2. *Newcastle Courant*, page 1. 6.8.1711

Numb. 3. A

THE

Newcaſtle Cou[illegible]ant:

WITH

News Forrei[illegible] and Domestick.

From *Saturday*, Auguſt [illegible] to *Monday*, Auguſt 6th. 1711.

Milan, July 16.

THERE [illegible] New fr[illegible] the Frontiers of Savoy, except that all the Advices agree, that the Duke of Berwick has abandon'd Chambery and Montmelian; & ſome of them ſay, hat he was retir'd from Fort Barreux, and narch'd towards Briancon; which, if true, he Duke of Savoy muſt of Conſequence be Maſter of Grenoble, ſiuce he will ſoon reuce Fort Barreaux, which will enable him o take Winter-Quarters on this ſide the Mountains: But this Piece of News wants Confirmation, as does that of the Duke of Savoy's taking two French Battalions in he Caſtle of Miolens, tho' 'tis agreed on ll Hands, that the Caſtle it ſelf is taken. Whatever be in the Matter, it is certain hat the D. of Berwick has writ to Court, hat he cannot defend ſo great an Extent of Ground, with ſo ſmall an Army; and ſome Advices from Baris ſay, that a Detachment is to be ſent thither from the Rhine; which renders the News of the Elector of Pavaria's having laid aſide his Deſign of making the Campaign on that Side, the leſs improbable.

Madrid, July 20. In this City, Toledo and Alcala, they have pronounced Sentence of Baniſhment after a time Limited againſt ſeveral Perſons, as well Eccleſiaſticks, Regulars and Seculars as others, for having ſhewed too much Joy and Committed Extravagances the Year paſt, when the Enemy was in thoſe parts.

Bern, July 22- Mr. Manning has writ to the Dyet of Baden, to give them an Account iu what Manner it had been attempted to aſſaſſinate him; and that after he had receiv'd ſeveral Wounds, he had no other Way left to preſerve his Life, but by throwing himſelf down a Precipice, whither the Aſſaſſins durſt not follow him. That he had ſeen thoſe Perſons two or three Days before tn the Retinue of the Sieur Merveilleux, who had bragg'd at Zurich, that he had caus'd him to be aſſaſſinated in that Manner. That Gentleman demands, that the neceſſary Pequiſitions may be made, for diſcovering the Truth of the Fact, and puniſh-

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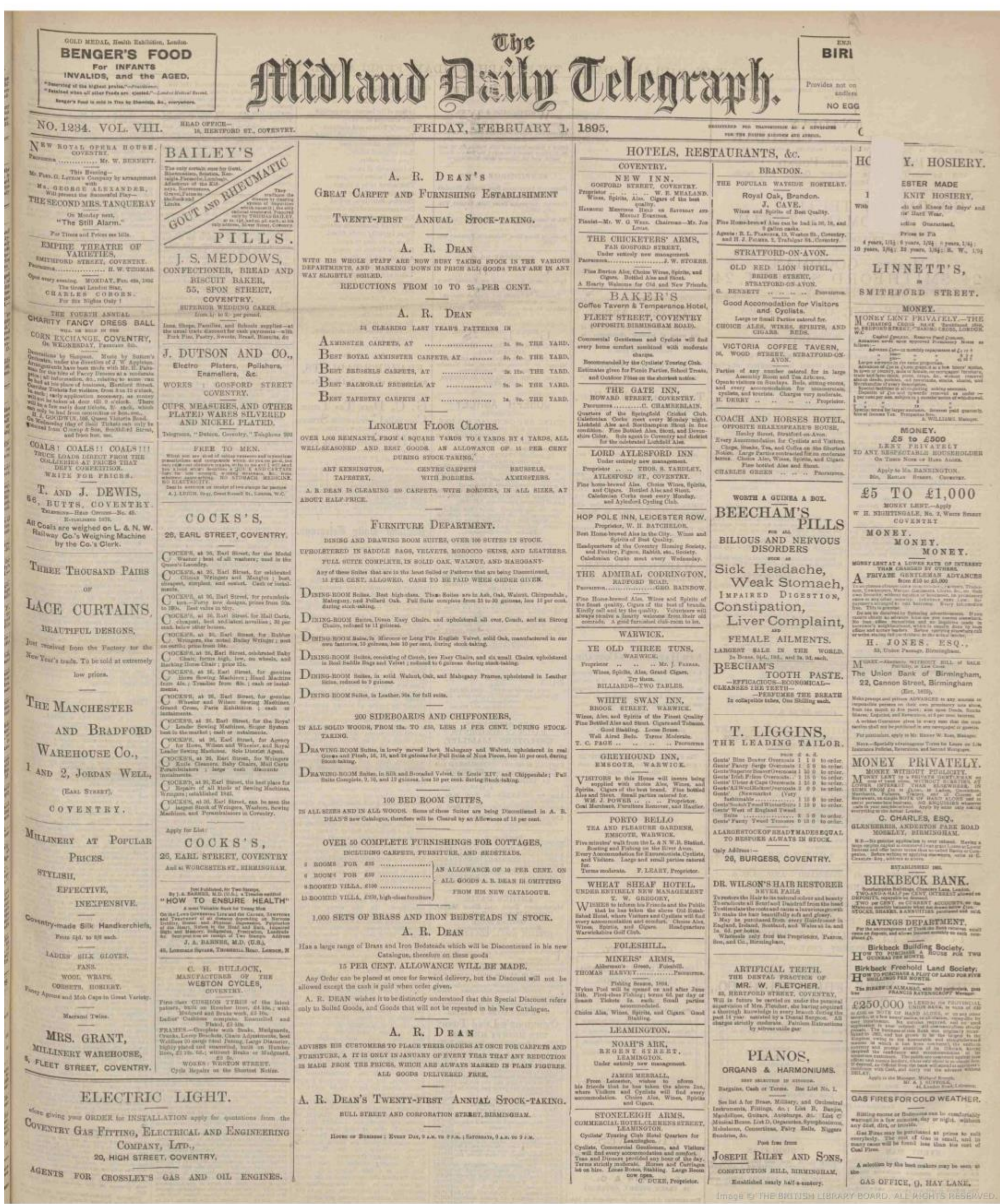
Appendix 3. *Midland Daily Telegraph*, page 1. 1.2.1895



GOLD MEDAL, Health Exhibition, London.
BENGER'S FOOD
For INFANTS
INVALIDS, and the AGED.

The Midland Daily Telegraph.

NO. 1234. VOL. VIII. HEAD OFFICE— 18, HERTFORD ST., COVENTRY. FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1895.

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This Evening—
Mr. GEORGE ALEXANDER,
Will present the Successful Play—
THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY
On Monday next,
"The Still Alarm."
For Times and Prices see bills.

EMPIRE THEATRE OF VARIETIES,
SMITHFORD STREET, COVENTRY.
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The Great London Star,
CHARLES COBORN.
For Six Nights Only!

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On WEDNESDAY, February 6th.

COALS! COALS!! COALS!!!
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WRITE FOR PRICES.
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All Coals are weighed on L. & N. W. Railway Co.'s Weighing Machine by the Co.'s Clerk.

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BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS,
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EFFECTIVE,
INEXPENSIVE.
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LADIES' SILK GLOVES.
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C. H. BULLOCK,
MANUFACTURER OF THE
WESTON CYCLES,
COVENTRY.
WORKS: WESTON STREET.

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GREAT CARPET AND FURNISHING ESTABLISHMENT
TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL STOCK-TAKING.

A. R. DEAN
WITH HIS WHOLE STAFF ARE NOW BUSY TAKING STOCK IN THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS, AND MARKING DOWN IN PRICE ALL GOODS THAT ARE IN ANY WAY SLIGHTLY SOILED.
REDUCTIONS FROM 10 TO 25 PER CENT.

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BEST ROYAL AXMINSTER CARPETS, AT	5s. 6d. THE YARD.
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UPHOLSTERED IN SADDLE BAGS, VELVETS, MOROCCO SKINS, AND LEATHERS.
FULL SUITE COMPLETE, IN SOLID OAK, WALNUT, AND MAHOGANY.

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100 BED ROOM SUITES,

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INCLUDING CARPETS, FURNITURE, AND BEDSTEADS.

1,000 SETS OF BRASS AND IRON BEDSTEADS IN STOCK.
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Proprietor..................J. W. STOKES.

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(OPPOSITE BIRMINGHAM ROAD).

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HOWARD STREET, COVENTRY.
Proprietor..........C. CHAMBERLAIN.

LORD AYLESFORD INN
Under entirely new management.
Proprietor ... THOS. S. YARDLEY,
AYLESFORD ST., COVENTRY.

HOP POLE INN, LEICESTER ROW.
Proprietor, W. H. BATCHELOR.

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RADFORD ROAD.
Proprietor.....................GEO. RAINBOW.

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YE OLD THREE TUNS,
WARWICK.
BILLIARDS—TWO TABLES.

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T. C. PAGE ... Proprietor.

GREYHOUND INN,
EMSCOTE, WARWICK.

PORTO BELLO
TEA AND PLEASURE GARDENS,
EMSCOTE, WARWICK.
F. LEARY, Proprietor.

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UNDER ENTIRELY NEW MANAGEMENT
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THOMAS HARVEY..............Proprietor.

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AND
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—EFFICACIOUS—ECONOMICAL—
CLEANSES THE TEETH—
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Established nearly half a century.

HOSIERY.
LINNETT'S,
IN
SMITHFORD STREET.

MONEY.

MONEY.
£5 to £500
LENT PRIVATELY
TO ANY RESPECTABLE HOUSEHOLDER
Apply to MR. BANNINGTON.

£5 TO £1,000
MONEY LENT.—Apply
W. H. NIGHTINGALE, No. 2, White Street
COVENTRY

MONEY.
MONEY.
MONEY.
MONEY LENT AT A LOWER RATE OF INTEREST THAN CHARGED BY OTHERS.
A PRIVATE GENTLEMAN ADVANCES from £10 to £5,000
H. JONES, ESQ.,

The Union Bank of Birmingham,
22, Cannon Street, Birmingham

MONEY PRIVATELY.
MONEY WITHOUT PUBLICITY.
C. CHARLES, ESQ.,
GLENBERRIS, ANDERTON PARK ROAD
MOSELEY, BIRMINGHAM.

ESTABLISHED 1851.
BIRKBECK BANK.
SAVINGS DEPARTMENT.
Birkbeck Building Society.
Birkbeck Freehold Land Society.
£250,000

GAS FIRES FOR COLD WEATHER.
GAS OFFICE, 9, HAY LANE.

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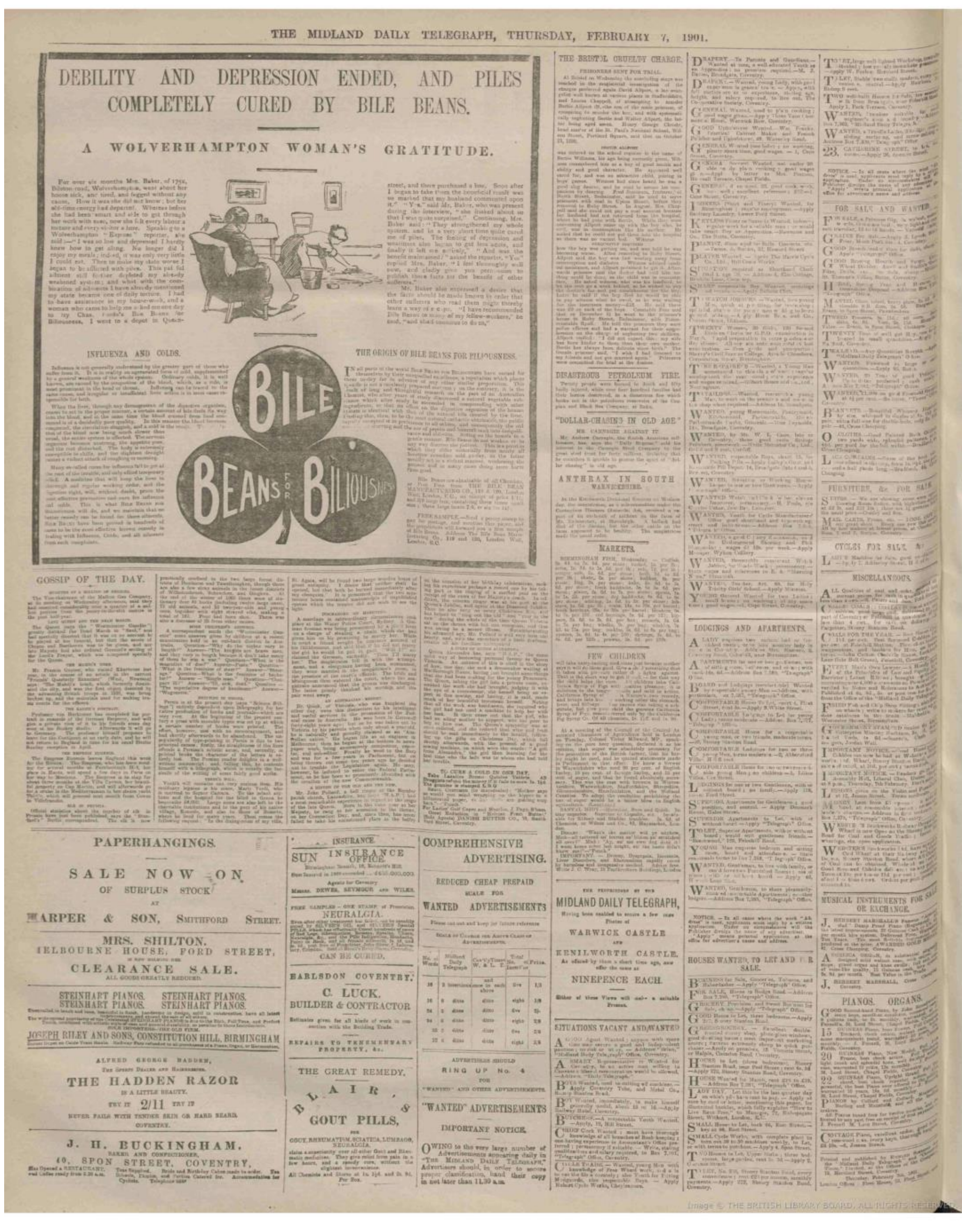
Appendix 4: *Midland Daily Telegraph*, February 7, 1901



THE MIDLAND DAILY TELEGRAPH, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1901.

DEBILITY AND DEPRESSION ENDED, AND PILES COMPLETELY CURED BY BILE BEANS.

A WOLVERHAMPTON WOMAN'S GRATITUDE.

INFLUENZA AND COLDS.

THE ORIGIN OF BILE BEANS FOR BILIOUSNESS.

GOSSIP OF THE DAY.

THE BRISTOL CRUELTY CHARGE.

DISASTROUS PETROLEUM FIRE.

"DOLLAR-CHASING IN OLD AGE."

ANTHRAX IN SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE.

MARKETS.

FEW CHILDREN

PAPERHANGINGS.

SALE NOW ON OF SURPLUS STOCK AT HARPER & SON, SMITHFORD STREET.

MRS. SHILTON.
MELBOURNE HOUSE, FORD STREET,
CLEARANCE SALE.
ALL GOODS GREATLY REDUCED.

STEINHART PIANOS. STEINHART PIANOS.
STEINHART PIANOS. STEINHART PIANOS.

JOSEPH RILEY AND SONS, CONSTITUTION HILL, BIRMINGHAM

ALFRED GEORGE HADDEN,
THE HADDEN RAZOR
IS A LITTLE BEAUTY.
TRY IT 2/11 TRY IT
NEVER FAILS WITH TENDER SKIN OR HARD BEARD.
COVENTRY.

J. H. BUCKINGHAM.
BAKER AND CONFECTIONER,
40, SPON STREET, COVENTRY.

INSURANCE.
SUN INSURANCE OFFICE.
Agents for Coventry
Messrs. DEWES, SEYMOUR AND WILES.

NEURALGIA.
CAN BE CURED.

EARLSDON COVENTRY.
C. LUCK.
BUILDER & CONTRACTOR
Estimates given for all kinds of work in connection with the Building Trade.
REPAIRS TO TENEMENTARY PROPERTY, &c.

THE GREAT REMEDY.
BLAIR'S GOUT PILLS,
FOR
GOUT, RHEUMATISM, SCIATICA, LUMBAGO, NEURALGIA.
All Chemists and Stores at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. Per Box.

COMPREHENSIVE ADVERTISING.

REDUCED CHEAP PREPAID SCALE FOR WANTED ADVERTISEMENTS

ADVERTISERS SHOULD RING UP No. 4 FOR "WANTED" AND OTHER ADVERTISEMENTS.

"WANTED" ADVERTISEMENTS
IMPORTANT NOTICE.
OWING to the very large number of Advertisements appearing daily in "THE MIDLAND DAILY TELEGRAPH," Advertisers should, in order to secure proper classification, hand their copy in not later than 11.30 a.m.

MIDLAND DAILY TELEGRAPH,
WARWICK CASTLE
AND
KENILWORTH CASTLE.
NINEPENCE EACH.

SITUATIONS VACANT AND WANTED

LODGINGS AND APARTMENTS.

HOUSES WANTED, TO LET AND FOR SALE.

FOR SALE AND WANTED.

FURNITURE, &c. FOR SALE.

CYCLES FOR SALE.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE.

PIANOS. ORGANS.

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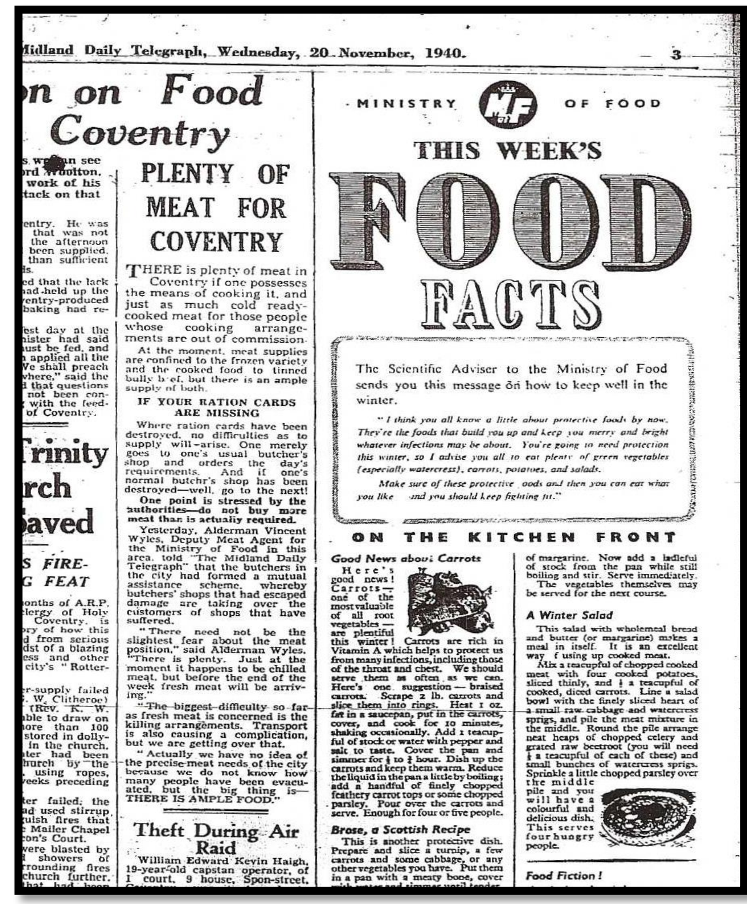
Appendix 5: Food Facts – *Midland Daily Telegraph*, 20.11.1940



Midland Daily Telegraph, Wednesday, 20 November, 1940. 3

...n on Food ... Coventry

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of Coventry.

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PLENTY OF MEAT FOR COVENTRY

THERE is plenty of meat in Coventry if one possesses the means of cooking it, and just as much cold ready-cooked meat for those people whose cooking arrangements are out of commission.

At the moment, meat supplies are confined to the frozen variety and the cooked food to tinned bully beef, but there is an ample supply of both.

IF YOUR RATION CARDS ARE MISSING

Where ration cards have been destroyed, no difficulties as to supply will arise. One merely goes to one's usual butcher's shop and orders the day's requirements. And if one's normal butchr's shop has been destroyed—well, go to the next!

One point is stressed by the authorities—do not buy more meat than is actually required.

Yesterday, Alderman Vincent Wyles, Deputy Meat Agent for the Ministry of Food in this area, told "The Midland Daily Telegraph" that the butchers in the city had formed a mutual assistance scheme, whereby butchers' shops that had escaped damage are taking over the customers of shops that have suffered.

"There need not be the slightest fear about the meat position," said Alderman Wyles. "There is plenty. Just at the moment it happens to be chilled meat, but before the end of the week fresh meat will be arriving."

"The biggest difficulty so far as fresh meat is concerned is the killing arrangements. Transport is also causing a complication, but we are getting over that.

"Actually we have no idea of the precise meat needs of the city because we do not know how many people have been evacuated, but the big thing is—THERE IS AMPLE FOOD."

Theft During Air Raid

William Edward Kevin Haigh, 19-year-old capstan operator, of 1 court, 9 house, Spon-street,

MINISTRY MF OF FOOD

THIS WEEK'S FOOD FACTS

The Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Food sends you this message on how to keep well in the winter.

"I think you all know a little about protective foods by now. They're the foods that build you up and keep you merry and bright whatever infections may be about. You're going to need protection this winter, so I advise you all to eat plenty of green vegetables (especially watercress), carrots, potatoes, and salads.

Make sure of these protective oods and then you can eat what you like and you should keep fighting fit."

ON THE KITCHEN FRONT

Good News about Carrots

Here's good news! Carrots—one of the most valuable of all root vegetables—are plentiful this winter! Carrots are rich in Vitamin A which helps to protect us from many infections, including those of the throat and chest. We should serve them as often as we can. Here's one suggestion — braised carrots. Scrape 2 lb. carrots and slice them into rings. Heat 1 oz. fat in a saucepan, put in the carrots, cover, and cook for 10 minutes, shaking occasionally. Add 1 teacupful of stock or water with pepper and salt to taste. Cover the pan and simmer for ½ to ¾ hour. Dish up the carrots and keep them warm. Reduce the liquid in the pan a little by boiling; add a handful of finely chopped feathery carrot tops or some chopped parsley. Pour over the carrots and serve. Enough for four or five people.

Brose, a Scottish Recipe

This is another protective dish. Prepare and slice a turnip, a few carrots and some cabbage, or any other vegetables you have. Put them in a pan with a meaty bone, cover

of margarine. Now add a ladleful of stock from the pan while still boiling and stir. Serve immediately.

The vegetables themselves may be served for the next course.

A Winter Salad

This salad with wholemeal bread and butter (or margarine) makes a meal in itself. It is an excellent way f using up cooked meat.

Mix a teacupful of chopped cooked meat with four cooked potatoes, sliced thinly, and ½ a teacupful of cooked, diced carrots. Line a salad bowl with the finely sliced heart of a small raw cabbage and watercress sprigs, and pile the meat mixture in the middle. Round the pile arrange neat heaps of chopped celery and grated raw beetroot (you will need ½ a teacupful of each of these) and small bunches of watercress sprigs. Sprinkle a little chopped parsley over the middle pile and you will have a colourful and delicious dish. This serves four hungry people.

Food Fiction!

Appendix 6. Anonymised interview key.

Title Number	Ownership Type	Frequency of publication	Interviewee Role	Code
1	Independent (I)	Weekly (W)	Editor	1IWE
			Deputy Editor	1IWDE
			Advertising director	1IWCD
			Reporter Web editor	1IWRW
			Circulation	1IWC
			Chief Executive	1IWCE
2	Independent	Blog (B)	Blogger	2IBB
3	Independent	Daily	Deputy Editor	3IDDE
			Circulation Manager	3IDCM
			Advertisement Manager	3IDAM
			Deputy Chief Reporter	3IDDCR
4	Group (G)	Daily	Sales Director	4GDSD - free
5	Group	Daily/Weekly	Group Editor	5GDWGE
			Sports Editor	5GDWSE
			Subeditor	5GDWS
			Feature Writer	5GDWF
6	Group	Daily/Weekly	Group Editor	6GDWGE
			Head of Content	6GDWHC
			Senior Reporter	6GDWSR
			Newspaper Sales	6GDWNS
			Subeditor	6GDWS
7	I	Blog	Blogger	7IBB

Appendix 7: Newspaper Society. All Regional Press Publishers Jan 2014

All Regional Press Publishers
Jan 2014

Based on total weekly circulation of regional and local newspapers published at least weekly and listed on the Newspaper Society database; audited circulations only

Rank	Group Name	Total		Dailies Paid & Free				Sundays Paid & Free			Weekly paid		Weekly free		Weekly Mixed Distrib		Fortnightly/Monthly
Wkly				Titles			Wkly circ	Titles									Titles
Circ		Titles	Wkly circ	P	PB	B		P	F	Wkly circ	Titles	Wkly circ	Titles	Wkly circ	Titles	Wkly circ	
1	Trinity Mirror plc ~	130	8,533,436	18		6	6,281,949	4		397,160	49	439,429	42	1,088,852	10	326,046	1
2	Newsquest Media Group	185	5,434,471	19			2,232,360	1		24,881	57	531,433	84	2,105,315	24	540,482	
3	Local World	107	4,697,195	16		2	2,708,857	1		78,189	39	472,549	29	1,079,315	20	358,285	
4	Johnston Press plc ~*	213	4,362,909	16		1	2,158,092	1		37,407	153	1214253	39	953157			3
5	Associated Newspapers Ltd ~	1	3,871,525			1	3,871,525										
6	Evening Standard Ltd	1	3,454,450			1	3,454,450										
7	The Midland News Association Ltd*	17	1,987,183	3			1,546,140				3	19,503	9	376,973	2	44,567	
8	ARCHANT *	66	1,463,939	2	2		537592		2		11	71,897	19	391,904	29	462546	1
9	D.C. Thomson & Co Ltd	6	1,357,608	4			1,041,104	1		263,612			1	52,892			
10	Tindle Newspapers Ltd *	110	981,065					2		16,265	18	110,202	33	611,952	24	242,646	33
11	City AM	1	645,605			1	645,605										
12	Independent News & Media	6	446,343	1			295,368	1		45,768			4	105,207			
13	Romanes Media Group	28	398,941	1			76,638				17	105,762	7	200,724	3	15,817	
14	NWN Media Ltd	14	398,187	1			71,610				4	31,513	9	295,064			
15	Bullivant Media Ltd	9	305,303										9	305,303			
16	CN Group Ltd	10	297,906	2			155,004				5	63,614	3	79,288			
17	Irish News Ltd	1	245,502	1			245,502										
18	KM Group	16	244,906								8	85,119	6	92,737	2	67,050	
19	Guiton Group	5	189,144	2			189,144				2		1				
20	Champion Newspapers	8	163,140										8	163,140			
21	Garnett Dickinson Publ Ltd	3	139,133								1	24,897	2	114236			
22	Scottish Provincial Press Ltd	15	123,227								13	85,501	2	37,726			
23	The Barnsley Chronicle Ltd	2	96,909								1	32,215	1	64,694			
24	New Journal Enterprises*	3	79,155										3	79,155			
25	Baylis & Co Ltd	3	64,447												3	64,447	
26	George Boyden & Son Ltd *	2	64,215								1	11,098	1	53,117			
27	Hirst Kidd & Rennie Ltd.	2	55,225	1			55,225										1
28	N W Ireland Printing & Publishing	5	35,171								5	35,171					
29	Newbury Weekly News	2	33,668										1	14,975	1	18,693	
30	Heads (Congleton) Ltd *	2	33,574								1	16,603	1	16971			
31	Dumfriesshire Newspaper Group	4	31,547								3	9,210			1	22,337	
32	Hampshire Media Ltd *	3	31,000										3	31,000			
33	Isle Of Wight County Press	1	30,912								1	30,912					
34	Jewish News	1	30,816										1	30,816			
35	Newark Advertiser Co Ltd *	2	30,549								1	14,585	1	15,964			
36	Chronicle Publications Ltd	3	27,779								2	14,598	1	13,181			
37	Oban Times Ltd	3	23,563								3	23,563					
38	Gateway Newspapers	1	23,478										1	23,478			
39	Jewish Chronicle	1	22,460								1	22,460					
40	Advertiser & Times	2	19,184								2	19,184					
41	Cumberland & Westmorland Herald	1	15,722								1	15,722					
42	Belfast Media Group	3	15,126								3	15,126					

43	Edward Hodgett Ltd	1	10,194								1	10,194					
44	Higgs Group	1	10,112								1	10,112					
45	Mourne Observer Ltd	1	9,768								1	9,768					
46	The Shetland Times*	1	9,605												1	9,605	
47	Orkney Media Group Ltd	1	9,263								1	9,263					
48	Spectator Newspapers	1	8,741								1	8,741					
49	Newtownards Chronicle	1	8,497								1	8,497					
50	West Highland Publishing Co Ltd	1	7,750								1	7,750					
51	Trident Midland Newspapers Ltd	2	7,647								1	7,647	1				
52	Wigtown Free Press	1	7,027								1	7,027					
53	River Media	1	4,672								1	4,672					
54	E & R Inglis*	1	4,532								1	4,532					
55	Banbridge Chronicle	1	3,884								1	3,884					
56	Round & About Publications Ltd	13															13
57	Alpha Newspaper Group	10	-								10						
58	Observer Newspapers (N I) Ltd	8	-								7		1				
59	Taylor Newspapers	7	-										7				
60	HUB Media	5	-								1						4
61	J & M Publishing Ltd	3	-								3						
62	W Peters & Son Ltd	3	-								3						
63	Ashton Weekly	2	-								2						
64	Courier Newspapers	2															2
65	Docklands Media	2	-										1				1
66	G H Smith & Son	2	-								2						
67	Joterce Ltd	2	-								2						
68	Knaphill Print Company Ltd	2															2
69	Newquay Voice	2	-								2						
70	Southwark News Ltd	2	-								1		1				
71	St Ives Printing & Publishing Ltd	2	-								2						
72	Baycro Ltd	1	-										1				
73	Birmingham Independent	1	-										1				
74	Cheadle & Tean Times	1	-								1						
75	City of London & Docklands Times	1	-														1
76	Clifton Chronicle Ltd	1	-								1						
77	Coates & Parker Ltd	1	-								1						
78	Derry News Ltd	1	-								1						
79	Ellesmere Press Ltd	1	-										1				
80	Essex Enquirer	1	-										1				
81	Essex Recruitment Express	1	-										1				
82	G W Mckane & Son	1	-								1						
83	Holderness Newspapers Ltd	1	-								1						
84	Lincolnshire Telegraph Ltd	1	-										1				
85	Local Publications Ltd	1	-										1				
86	Macclesfield Today	1															1
87	Mail Publications Ltd	1															1
88	Medgagroup Pembrokeshire Ltd	1	-								1						
89	Methodist Recorder	1	-								1						
90	MGMT	1	-										1				
91	New Charter	1	-												1		
92	Normanton Advertiser	1	-										1				

93	**Purbeck Media Ltd**	1															1
94	**Swadlincote Post**	1	-										1				
95	**The Cleethorpes Chronicle***	1	-												1		
96	**The Echo Newspaper Group**	1	-										1				
97	**The Press Newspaper Ltd**	1	-										1				
98	**The Teesdale Mercury Ltd**	1	-								1						
99	**W Y Crichton & Co Ltd**	1	-								1						
100	**Ware Publishing**	1															1
101	**Wealden Advertiser**	1	-										1				
102	**Wythenshawe World Ltd**	1	-														1
103	**Yorkshire Reporter**	1															1
		1,111	**40,607,310**	**87**	**2**	**12**	**25,566,165**	**11**	**2**	**863,282**	**462**	**3,608,206**	**345**	**8,397,136**	**122**	**2,172,521**	**68**

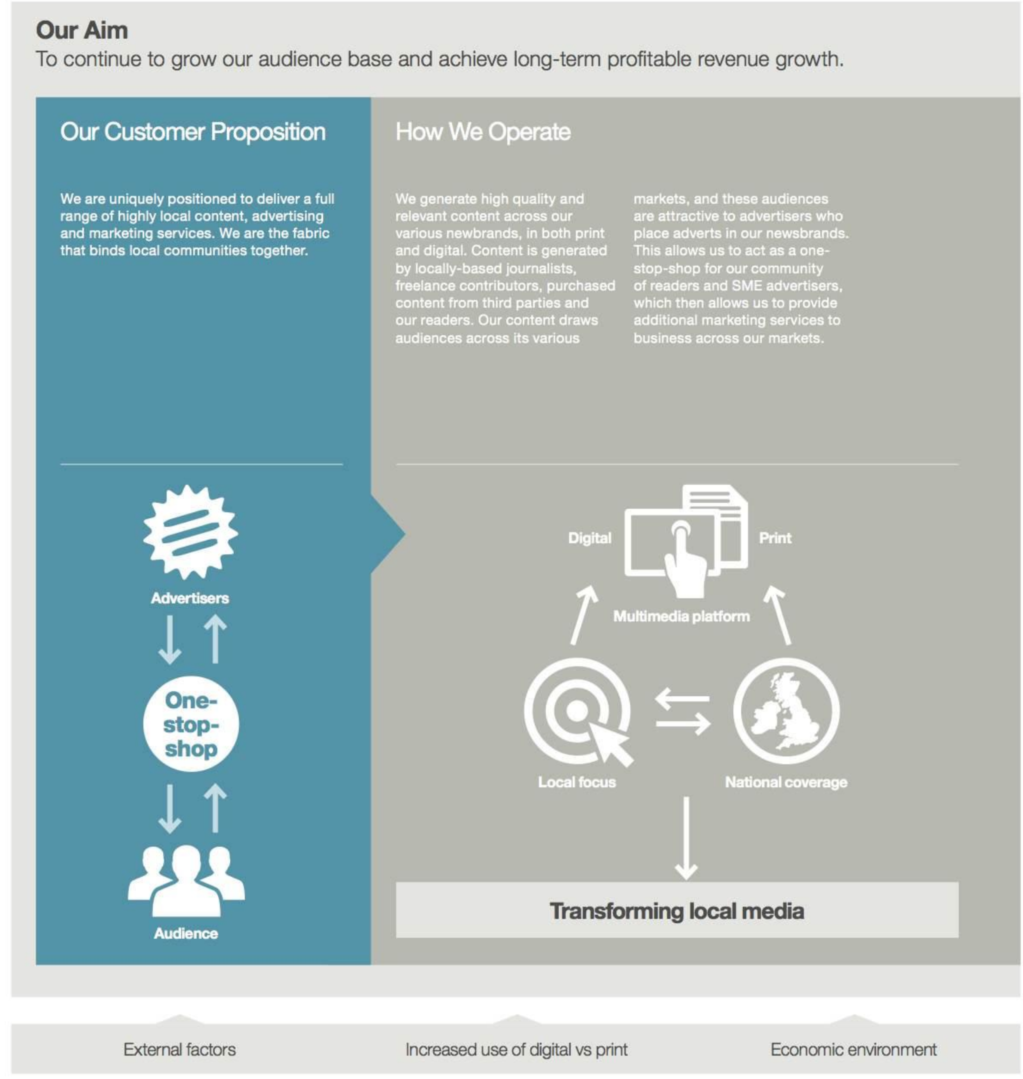
Source: Newspaper Society Intelligence unit Jan 2014, ABC/Independently audited figures

~ Metros are included under the publisher responsible for distribution and local advertising sales
Includes London Evening Standard, Daily Record, Sunday Post, Sunday Mail and all regional daily free titles

Notes: Based on newspaper titles with their own circulation/distribution figures, as listed on the NS database
This does not necessarily show all titles published by each group (see online Sections & Supplements database)
Excludes Monthly and Fortnightly titles of which there are 31.
** Includes titles with independently audited circulation figures*

P - Paid
PB - Paid with free pickups
B - Free pickup
F - Free door to door
PF - Paid with free door to door

Appendix 8: Johnston Press Business Strategy



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